

## The Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States of America at the Present Stage

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### Abstract

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At the end of XX century and in the first decade of XXI century the relations between Turkey and the United States of America attracted the attention of the international community. Since the end of the Cold War, the relationship between the Republic of Turkey and the United States has been mainly focused on security. The foreign policy of the two countries, from time to time was conducted in completely different directions. Parallel to this, the periods of ups and downs had an impact on economic relations as well. It was the security policy that carried out mutual cooperation between the two countries. On the one hand, it was the USA – one of the leaders of the Cold War, and, on the other hand, Turkey - very important in the region, but the most dependent on the US. Despite being in the NATO bloc together with the USA, Turkey has never felt secure itself. Assessing Ankara's domestic and foreign policy, it is necessary to take into account the relationship with the United States, as it has had the biggest impact on Turkey's policy. Although the real and potential power of these two countries was not equal, during the Cold War Turkey became a stronghold of NATO and the West bloc against the Soviet Union. Turkey was one of the countries that appeared on the border between the eastern and western hemispheres. Perhaps due to the peculiarities of its geographical location, Turkey became a country with special conditions in world politics. The relations with the United States have evolved precisely in this direction.

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### Introduction

The disappearance of Turkey's main threat - the Soviet Union from a political map in the 90s of XX century, gave Ankara a chance to act independently in the region, although it never refused such a strong partner as the US. Nevertheless, the relations between these two countries were not smooth due to some difficulties, and this fact was determined not only by the difference in their objective interests, but due to the controversial viewpoints of their political leaders on the ongoing processes in the region or in the world. The fundamental changes in Turkey – America relations have begun since 2002, when the "Fair and Development" Party of the Islamic direction, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan - the current president of the country, came to power in Turkey. According to a foreign strategy of this new political force, the author of which was the former Prime Minister of the country - Ahmet Davudoglu, Turkey was considered a powerful independent country with its own geostrategic interests [7.c.256].

The relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States of America at the present stage America – Turkey relations are more important, more difficult and at the same time less predictable at the modern stage than before. Today, the uncertainty prevails in the relationship between the two countries, what is caused by the following reasons:

1. Turkey - US political views on the ways of resolving such conflicts as the Cyprus' one, as well as regulation of contradictions existing between Greece and Turkey, Turkey and Armenia;

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2. Turkey has shown that it is ready not to support America in regard with the issues on Syria as well as on the war in Iraq and the Kurds' problem;
3. Turkey is trying to implement a foreign policy independent from Washington. Nevertheless, the United States and Turkey have common interests on some issues. In general, the Turkish-US cooperation is based on the following:
  1. It should become a restraining force of the Russian and Iranian geopolitical ambitions in the region, what is unanimously recognized by the Turkish elite;
  2. Ankara is interested to participate in the development of the European defense system. It strives to become a full-fledged member of the EU, and the US greatly supports its willingness;
  3. 80 percent of Turkey's military arsenal is the US-made weapon, what indicates close cooperation between these countries;
  4. Using the advantages of the cooperation with the US, Turkey is trying to ensure such a successful project as "Baku-Ceyhan" ; at the same time it strives to increase its influence on the Black - Caspian Seas region, which is quite rich in energy deposits;
  5. Turkey is ready to establish the US missile defense system on its territory, as it could not only provide additional resources for the country and increase its military security, but strengthen its significance in the region as well.

Assessing Turkish-American relations, it would be better to use the term "strategic partnership". For example, since 2002 Turkey has been trying to pursue a "zero problem with neighbors" policy and in this context, friendly steps were taken with regard to economic cooperation with Syria and Iran, with which America does not have friendly relations. These steps do not exclude a strategic partnership, but in 2003 Turkey did not allow the American armed forces to use Turkish military bases for the war with Iraq, what contradicts the basic principle of "strategic partnership". After this fact, the Americans have not mentioned the "strategic partnership" for a long time. And after the warming in relations, American politicians began using this term again. On November 5, 2007 the then President of the United States - George Walker Bush mentioned this term again during the visit of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the United States.

So, where was the borderline in the Turkish-American relations in the end of the XXI century? First of all, let's consider the most urgent issues. The terrorist act of September 11, 2001 against the United States has had a strong influence on the Turkish nation. Shortly after the terrorist attack, the Prime Minister Bullen Egevia attended the meeting in the US embassy and expressed his condolences to the American people, but a month later, on October 7, 2001 the American and NATO military forces launched a war against al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, and on March 20, 2003 they attacked Iraq, assuming there the existence of the mass destruction weapons. On February 15, 2002 Turkey sent its troops to the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul, but refused to take over the leadership of the NATO Armed Forces without any financial guarantees. The US plans to extend an anti-terrorist military campaign outside Afghanistan, outlined new contours in Ankara's strategic partnership. There was a serious disagreement between Ankara and Washington regarding Iraq. Turkey was particularly opposed to conducting offensive operations against this state and expressed fear that this would cause discontent in Turkey itself.

The officials in Ankara thought it would be difficult to deny the United States to use the Turkish air bases to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. In their opinion, only close cooperation with the United States would give Ankara the possibility to resist the formation of the Kurdish state or any autonomous entity in the post-war Iraq. These events have shaped the Turkish people against the United States. The information provided by Iraq was interpreted by Turks as an attack of the American Armed Forces against the Muslims. At the next stage of the "Cold War", one of the main reasons for strained relations between the US and Turkey is still considered the sultan's recognition of the Armenian genocide. In due time, the US Congress of International Relations adopted a resolution condemning the fact of the mass extermination of Armenians by the Turks in the beginning of XX century, although, under the influence of the administration, such a resolution was removed from the agenda of the Congress. Despite this, the official Ankara strongly reacted to the Committee's decision, and it immediately invited for consultation his ambassador from the United States. It should be noted that Turkey has taken a similar step in 2007, when the Congress Committee adopted the so-called "Armenian Resolution" [2.c.367] (in 1974 and 1985 the attempts were made to decide on the genocide, however, to no avail). Although, the ambassador soon returned to Washington, the relationship between the two countries significantly cooled and the US rating in Turkey fell sharply, what was confirmed by the sociological surveys carried out to reveal the foreign policy sympathy of the country?

In particular, at the end of January 2001 the Turkish newspaper "Jumhuriyet" published the results of a survey conducted by Ankara University sociologists, according to which only 9.9 percent of respondents preferred a rapprochement with the US [9.c.38].

The issue of recognition of the Armenian genocide by the US is periodically aimed at "intimidating" Ankara. "Let no one think that Turkey will frightenly take such steps in which it is not sure", said Turkish Foreign Minister Akhmed Davudoglu after the meeting with the US First Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg in Munich. In his words, the resolution, adopted by the Congress Committee, does not meet the interests of Turkey, nor Armenia, nor the United States, and it only inflicts damage instead of making profit [8.c.32].

With the ultimate recognition of genocide, Washington would lose a significant partner in the face of Turkey. Everybody expected that the US President B. Obama used the word "genocide" on the 95th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, but he did not. Thus, he "angered" the Armenians, but expressed his readiness to "reconcile" with Turkey [4].

Another reason for disagreement between Turkey and the US is Israel. After Turkey joined NATO in 1952, the close relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv were established. Together with other countries Israel became one of the main suppliers of arms for Turkey.

By the beginning of XXI century Turkey was the second closest state to Israel after the United States. Despite the traditional alliance, the relations between the two states have dramatically cooled. The relations worsened in 2008, when Israel attacked the Gaza Strip, killing about 1400 Palestinians. For this reason, Recep Tayyip Erdogan appealed to the Prime Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres on Davos World Economic Forum with the following words: "You, the Jews, know how to kill people." Turkey threatened Israel that in the case it continues the war campaign in the Gaza Strip, Ankara would take appropriate measures. As a result of the US involvement, Israel suspended the war campaign and tension between Ankara and Tel Aviv was eased at that stage.

In early October 2009 Ankara did not allow Israel to take part in the NATO military trainings on the territory of Turkey. The Prime Minister of that time R.T. Erdogan reported that this step was taken as a result of public opinion, according to which the population of Turkey does not approve the actions of Tel Aviv in the Gaza Strip, although, some experts explain Erdogan's decision by other causes and suggests that the step, made by Erdogan, may indicate a significant geopolitical change in the Middle East [3.c.58].

The tension between Turkey and Israel reached the peak on May 31, 2010, when Israel attacked a ship sailing under the flag of Turkey and carrying a humanitarian aid in Palestine. Israel explained that it was made for self-defense purposes [6.c.634]. Nine Turkish citizens were killed as a result of the attack. Ankara requested an international investigation into the incident, but it understood that the US would not take any concrete steps to "punish" Israel. In this regard, the former Foreign Minister of Turkey, Akhmed Davudoglu said: "Psychologically Israel's attack is similar to the terrorist act of September 11 in Turkey. We will not be silent. Turkey is not happy with American actions"[4]. The third source of tension between the US and Turkey represents the Iranian issue. Washington believes that the diplomatic means to stop Iran are not yet exhausted, and it tries to find a common language. However, it hinders Turkey, which is trying to maintain good relations with Iran and solve all problems. According to R.T. Erdogan announcement, "diplomacy, diplomacy and only diplomacy can solve the Iranian problem" [4].

The US was extremely irritated by Turkey's support for Iran's nuclear program. It can be said that at that moment Ankara became a diplomatic ally of the Islamic dictatorship of Tehran. Turkey and Iran have sought to regain the nuclear energy exchange plan, which was outlined by the Obama administration in 2009. Being a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Turkey obviously caused the West's dissatisfaction by refusing to impose additional sanctions for Iran in March 2010. It is noteworthy that during his visit to Iran in 2010 Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan blamed the West for "double standards" and unfair attitude towards Iran, and stated that "the rumors of the Iranian military nuclear program are unreasonable and may not be true." It should be said that such a Turkish position was a surprise to the West. The current course of Ankara enables Iran to be more resistant to economic pressure and promotes the strengthening of Iranian influence in the region, which, from a strategic point of view, may be the most erroneous calculation from the Turkish side. Nevertheless, the competition between Sunni Turkey and Shiite Iran can become acute and open due to the current situation in the Middle East.

Despite the number of disagreements between Turkey and the United States, the economic partnership is developing between them. Being one of the countries with the largest economy in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Turkey takes the 17th place in the world and 6th - in Europe. Nevertheless, both the lack of investments and trade relations cannot change the fact that the Republic of Turkey is a country of political and strategic importance in the eyes of American politicians. In most cases, the US does not notice an economic growth in the light industry of the Republic of Turkey. This contributes to the political variation between the two countries. Although the short-term investment and commercial growth are not easy to achieve, both sides are trying to make economic cooperation more important and noteworthy.

Despite the fact that international business and investments have declined due to the global economic crisis, the free business has increased revenues 11 times for the last 15 years, while at the same period the investments outside the borders have been increased 10 times. Although the US is the largest foreign investor in the world with \$ 3.9 trillion, Turkey's share of this amount is quite a small indicator - just 5.7 billion dollars [11]. About half of these investments have been carried out in recent years, when Turkey pursued a policy related to the establishment of political stability in the country. The Turkish investments are relatively small (supposedly less than \$ 2 billion) in the United States, but we should not forget that Turkey has not been an exporting country for the last time [10.c.79].

In the trade field it has increased by 25 times since 1980, and by 2010 it reached \$ 300 billion. Since August 2011 Turkey has been the 6th largest business partner in Europe [12]. Competing markets like the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), Europe and the USA have 65 percent of Turkey's total exports. European and US-like competitors have 65 percent of total exports from Turkey. Bilateral trade relations between the United States and Turkey somewhat intensified in 1985 and in 2007 increased only 7 times. Such an increase is certainly a low indicator. In 2007 the bilateral trade relations amounted to 12,226 billion dollars [13]. The United States is the 7th largest export and 5th largest import market for Turkey. The US market holds only 3,9% of Turkey's export, and 4,8% of import. The Turkey's share in the US market is very significant. The open and diverse economy of Turkey contributes to the development of major national activities necessary for strong democracy. Turkey, with a relatively developed economy, can be a model for countries in the region both economically and politically.

Such a position of Turkey makes it a "major economic partner" for the US.

In 2009 US President Barack Obama and Turkey President Abdullah Gül came to an agreement that a strong and intense economic cooperation is required for the further strengthening of strategic economic partnership between the two countries. Turkey and the US also pay great attention to cooperation in the field of power engineering, which includes both electricity and renewable sources. In addition, the parties do not exclude a commercial cooperation in the field of nuclear energy development. During the negotiations Turkey and the US agreed to be actively engaged in economic projects in North Africa and Eurasia regions.

Turkey is a potentially growing market for US businessmen. In its turn, the US is the largest market for Turkey. Since Turkey is located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and it has good economic relations with its neighbors, it is an important partner for the United States in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asian markets. Together with the US, Turkey can help North African countries to revive their economy. The US recognizes the importance of strengthening economic ties with Turkey and wants to bring it to such a level of cooperation that has long existed between the two countries in the military and political spheres.

As President B. Obama noted in his speech to the Turkish parliament in 2009, "Turkey is the most important part of Europe and the most significant ally of the United States. Turkey and the United States should stick together to overcome the challenges existing in the world today" [1.c.89], but sometimes there is a period when the relationships between Turkey and the United States become particularly difficult. In this regard, it should be noted that the period of uncertainty between the two countries began after a coup attempt on July 15, 2016 in Turkey. The White House responded to the events occurred on July 15, 2016 in Turkey, according to which US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry came to an agreement that all the parties in Turkey have to support the democratically elected government to avoid violence and bloodshed. The US Secretary of State underscored that his State Department would pay attention to those citizens of the United States who stay in Turkey. Together with the others General Bekir Erjan Van - the head of the NATO airbase "Injirlik" in Turkey, was accused of participating in a military coup in Turkey. The mentioned airbase was used by the USA and the allies to carry out air strikes in Syria and Iraq.

The blocking of the "Injirlik" base caused a lot of discontent and resentment in Washington. In this regard, it is interesting to note the interview from "The Voice of America", given by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and US ex-Ambassador to Azerbaijan Matthew Bryza, in which he said that "the United States fully supports the democratically elected civilian government of Turkey" – this was the first reaction of the White House to events taking place in Turkey.

After the revolt, the Turkish government demanded an extradition of Gülen. President Erdogan released a statement saying that any country that would support Gülen, is Turkey's enemy. If such a fight continues, the most pessimistic forecasts for the Turkish-American relations are expected. Not so long ago, the NATO summit considered how to protect Turkey (according to Article 5) from the "Islamic State", and today the NATO member, Turkey restricts the military operations to NATO countries, including the United States, with the base of "Injirlik".

The US does not intend to give Petella Gülen to the Turkish side. A magazine "The Wall Street" writes that the official Ankara could not provide enough evidence on the organization of Guillen's involvement to the attempted coup and, therefore, failed to persuade the American side to extradite Gülen. The new US president Donald Trump stated that the leader of Turkey should protect the rule of law and the standards of Western justice. Speaking about the events in Turkey in the interview with The New York Times, he said that he appreciates Erdogan's actions: "I highly appreciate Erdogan's actions. He has managed to stop the coup attempt. Some say it was a staged performance, but I do not think so", noted Trump.

Rex Tillerson, the newly elected US Secretary of State, announced that "the US would like to resume relations with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey is our oldest NATO member country. The USA's least activity in the region has forced Turkey to turn toward Russia. Russia is not a permanent partner of Turkey and we have to prove that America is the only ally of Turkey" [5]. Compared to Russia, the US has the largest military-strategic access to the region.

On May 16, 2017 the meeting of President R. T. Erdogan and President Trump took place in the White House, where the US president pointed out: "We have always had good relations with Turkey and we are going to continue them in the future." Ultimately, the Erdogan government occurred in such a situation where, on the one hand, straining relations with Russia did not bring significant dividends to any direction, and, on the other hand, the confrontation with the West reached its peak.

## Conclusion

It is interesting to know how the current political course of Turkey affects its relations with the US? Erdogan's foreign policy for the last 2-3 years has questioned Turkey and the US partnership. And today, when the relations with Russia warmed again, Turkey's policy towards Russia will primarily depend on the US's cooperation with Ankara. We believe that the stable relations with the US will not cause desire in Turkey to seek an alliance in Russia. In the Middle East issue, related to the Syrian problem, Turkey has become an unintentional participant of the game of great states - on the one hand, America, and on the other hand, Russia. The US's recent bombings in Syria led the Turkish position to the side of America. It can be said that Turkey takes up a vacillating position in the above mentioned issue. However, in the Syrian war Turkey has its own interests, due to the Kurds' problems, which are one of the components of Ankara's new course.

Turkey could not gather around itself and led any Turkish territorial states. It could neither become the leader of the Islamic world, nor accelerate its entry into the EU. More successfully, it managed to use the problem of refugee in the relations with the NATO, although, there is still a lot to do and not everything is clear. If Turkey wants to become a country with the "first rank world economy" and a liberal democracy, it should strengthen the relations with the US, which would partly require changes in priorities of its foreign policy and an establishment of a certain distance with the Muslim world.

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