

## TURKEY IN NATO: AN EXTRAORDINARY POSITION

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In this article the Turkish view on the membership of the country in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is analysed. Entering of the Turkish Republic into the organisation had been possible thanks to the multifaceted and stressful performance of the government of the country. Turkey's historically inherent ability to provide regional leadership was challenged. The geopolitical reality of the period after World War II required the search for allies. The confrontation between the USSR and the West began to determine the trends of world development, and the circumstance required Ankara to decide: to which pole to join. Joining NATO was chosen as more acceptable among both undesirable options. Subsequently, the influence of the region and the desire to ensure its own security mainly on its own repeatedly led Turkey to the need to defend exclusive national interests within the framework of the NATO. In addition, in a situation of permanent destabilisation in the Middle East, Ankara has not always agreed with NATO's strategy in this region, reflecting mainly US interests.

**Keywords:** Republic of Turkey; NATO; block confrontation; Turkey's European priorities; multi-vector policy of Turkey; Turkish critical westernisation.

## ТУРЦИЯ В НАТО: НЕСТАНДАРТНАЯ ПОЗИЦИЯ

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Прослеживается отношение Турции к деятельности в Организации Североатлантического договора. Вхождение Турецкой Республики в данный союз явилось результатом многогранной и напряженной аналитической работы руководства страны. Исторически присущая Турции способность обеспечить собственными усилиями региональное лидерство была подвергнута сомнению. Геополитическая реальность периода после Второй мировой войны требовала поиска союзников. Противостояние между СССР и Западом стало определять тренды мирового развития, и данное обстоятельство потребовало от Анкары решить, к какому полюсу примкнуть. Вступление в НАТО было выбрано как более приемлемое среди двух нежелательных вариантов. В последующем региональное влияние и стремление обеспечивать собственную безопасность преимущественно своими силами многократно приводило Турцию к необходимости отстаивать особые национальные интересы в рамках альянса. Кроме этого, в обстановке перманентной дестабилизации на Ближнем Востоке Анкара не всегда соглашалась со стратегией НАТО в данном регионе, отражающей преимущественно интересы США.

**Ключевые слова:** Турецкая Республика; НАТО; блоковое противостояние; европейские приоритеты Турции; многовекторная политика Турции; турецкая критическая вестернизация.

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## General prerequisites for the formation of the pro-Western position of Turkey in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The Republic of Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic Alliance since 1952. The Turkish armed forces are the largest and most powerful army in NATO after the United States army. The location of Turkey is critical both for the alliance and for the West as a whole. As a member of NATO, in the past it had the only common border with the Soviet Union (except for the relatively short Norwegian-Soviet border in the Murmansk region).

Determining the choice of NATO membership is a complicated history. The young Turkish Republic, headed by Mustafa Kemal (in 1934 he received the name Atatürk, which means father of the Turks) retook the occupied territories from Western countries (Great Britain, France, Italy and Greece) from 1919 to 1923. At the same time, for Turkey, the western world remained as an example of progress. Legislation of Western countries has also served as an example in the work on the constitution and legislation of the country. It strengthened its pro-western trends.

These trends, in turn, did not begin with the formation of a secular republic. The modernisation of the Ottoman Empire in the form of adaptation to the Western world can be traced in the late 17<sup>th</sup> – early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, during the reign of Selim III and Mahmud II, when the empire began to realise that the Ottomans were losing their superiority over the outside world. The idea of westernising or joining the Western alliance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not suddenly arisen and it was familiar to the Turkish political elite.

Atatürk was not the last leader of the Republic of Turkey, who regarded the West as the peak of civilisation for which the country should strive. On 19 May 1945, at the traditional festival of youth and sports, the second president of Turkey, İsmet İnönü, addressed the youth with these words: “We want to abandon a number of actions that we carried out because of the difficulties caused by the war. The conditions are created for the widespread use of democratic principles in the political and ideological life of our country”<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, he emphasised the role of the Great National Assembly, which, according to the president, “from the first day of its formation... remained our most democratic institution and, holding the steering wheel tightly, led our country along the path of democracy”<sup>2</sup>.

Turkey's, as a part of Europe with a predominantly Muslim population, pro-Western orientation was

strengthened even before the decision to join NATO. In order to understand the characteristic position of Turkey in the organisation itself, it is important to understand the motives and incentive of its choice, as well as the events that predetermined its distinctive behaviour in the alliance.

It is justifiable to call the country's position within the framework of NATO as characteristic for many reasons. Throughout its membership, Turkey has repeatedly stated its disagreement with other member countries. Knowing its special role and responsibility in the alliance, it proved that it would not leave room for doubts about its own independent position; and it does not necessarily support a priori policy of its allies, which is why it could not be called a satellite state. This was proved, in particular, during the Cyprus conflict (1974), the Persian Gulf War (1990–1991), the Iraq War (2003–2011), the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia (2008), and the Crimean conflict (with 2014).

And without restrictions, inherent to other NATO member countries, Turkey cooperates with the CIS countries, including the Russian Federation. Such cooperation can be seen not only in the field of economics, culture, or education but also extends to the defence industry. Ankara has restored a historically unique affinity with the former Soviet republics of Turkic origin. Family ties have a positive effect on Turkey's bilateral relations with these post-Soviet states in the field of culture, history and language.

It is important to emphasise: relations between Turkey and the Republic of Belarus have never lost their pace due to Western sanctions against Minsk. Both countries implement a coordinated line, supporting each other in international organisations, including the UN. Turkey significantly supports Belarus joining the World Trade Organisation, and not only.

At the same time, Turkey knows its rights well and does not ignore the fulfilment of its duties in NATO. The alliance is one of the important pillars in the Turkish defence and national security; Turkey also does not lose its special and important place among other members of the North Atlantic Treaty. Such a non-standard policy in the field of external priorities, as the Turkish government often reminds, does not mean that the country is going to change its foreign policy course.

## The formation of motives for Turkey's joining the North Atlantic Alliance

The brief analysis above, of the formation of the pro-Western orientation of the Republic of Turkey, does not provide an exhaustive answer to the question of its non-discussed decision to join NATO. It is important

to emphasise that it was the result of a response to a number of challenges after the end of World War II. The most significant of them is the change in the policy of the Soviet Union in the form of a territorial claim

<sup>1</sup>Иванов А. Ближневосточный отдел Наркоминдела. 25.06.1945 // Центр. гос. арх. Азербайдж. Респ. (ЦГА АР). Ф. 28. Оп. 4. Д. 22, л. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

against Turkey by its leader J. Stalin. This challenge predetermined the decision of Ankara to participate in the Korean War (which was not ratified by parliament, but received the support of various political forces of the country), and accordingly, the intention to get closer to the Western alliance.

The Stalin era put forward the USSR among the successors of the centuries-old fierce diplomatic struggle and wars for control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, respectively – the passage of ships from the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea. Throughout this period, Turkey has been the subject of claims because of its unique geopolitical position at the crossroads between east and west, south and north, and also because of its decisive role in the issue of straits.

Earlier, Turkey managed to avoid being drawn into the bloody World War II thanks to its multi-vector diplomacy. In May–June 1939, it signed agreements with Britain and France on mutual assistance in case of aggression in the Mediterranean region, and on 18 June 1941, an agreement on friendship and non-aggression with Nazi Germany. 25 June 1941, on the third day after the German attack on the USSR, Turkey declared its neutrality in the war. Later, on 2 August 1944, Turkey broke off diplomatic relations with the Third Reich, and only on 23 February 1945, it symbolically declared war on it.

Initially, Turkey's decision not to intervene in the war was welcomed by J. Stalin, especially during operation "Barbarossa". Indeed, in this way, the USSR was convinced of the security of the South Caucasus. But, by the end of the war, when the victory of the Allies became inevitable, he changed his mind about this. In October 1943, the Soviet leader bluntly stated: "At present, Turkish neutrality, which was once useful to the Allies, is useful to Hitler; he covers his flank in the Balkans," adding that if Turkey claims to participate in the post-war conference of countries-winners, "it is needed Turkey to contribute to the cause of victory and deserve to participate in a peace conference"<sup>3</sup>.

After World War II, the USSR began to rapidly expand its zone of influence at the expense of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Moscow considered that the domino effect would work, and Turkey would not be able to resist it either. At the same time, the problem of straits would be simultaneously resolved in a variant favourable to the Kremlin. But such a development of the situation was not geopolitically acceptable for Turkey. The Soviet plan did not work, but, on the contrary, caused Ankara to change its foreign policy priority, moving away from friendship with the Soviet Union and joining the Western world alliance.

At the same time, during the war, Turkey was able to maintain neutrality, which was favourable for the an-

ti-Hitler coalition. With the outbreak of war, Germany pressed on Turkey to let German and Italian ships pass through the straits under the Bulgarian flag. But the Turkish foreign ministry strongly opposed. On 11 July 1941, in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador S. Vinogradov, the leadership of the Turkish foreign ministry rightly noted that Bulgaria could no longer be considered a neutral country<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, Turkey passed the first exam on the implementation of the 1936 Montreux convention, which restored the sovereignty of Turkey over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles from the Black to the Aegean, and then to the Mediterranean. After this event, Turkey repeatedly proved its consistent allegiance to the legal letter of the convention.

In August 1941, Soviet and British troops entered neighbouring Iran, which caused some concern in neutral Turkey. Two weeks earlier, on 10 August Britain and the USSR made a joint statement that they would respect the regime of the straits and the territorial integrity of Turkey. The Soviet government also reaffirmed its allegiance to the Montreux convention and assured the Turkish government that it has no aggressive intentions and claims in relation to the straits. The Soviet side emphasised that it understands Turkey's desire to remain neutral, and therefore will provide it with assistance and assistance if it is a victim of an attack by a European power<sup>5</sup>. Of course, this refers to Nazi Germany and its allies.

However, on the other hand, in contrast to historical truth, after instructions from state authorities, post-war Soviet scientific literature began stubbornly to inflate the bugaboo of Turkish danger. In particular, it was alleged that Turkey is trying to take advantage of the fruits of German aggression and, expanding its borders, "unite all the Turks" under its own control. It was a question not only of Azerbaijani Turks but also of all the Turkic peoples living in the territory of the USSR – from the Gagauz people in the very west of the USSR to the Yakuts in the east (note: when the Russian Empire at one time intervened in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire through the Slavic and Orthodox peoples inhabiting it, Turkey also had suitable conditions and a reason to do the same).

The lack of anti-Soviet trends in Turkish politics was proved by the fact that even in the most difficult periods of the Great Patriotic War (especially when the German army approached the Caucasus), Turkey refused to declare war on the USSR. Although such an attack from the south could change the course of the war, and the factors mentioned above – the cultural, ethnic and historical proximity of Turkey to the region – could be a tempting reason for its entry into the war.

<sup>3</sup>Советский Союз на международных конференциях периода Великой Отечественной войны, 1941–1945 : сб. док. в 6 т. Т. 4. М. : Политиздат, 1984. С. 123.

<sup>4</sup>Шулумба Г. Справка на Н. Менеменджиоглу. 29.12.1944 // ЦГА АР. Ф. 28. Оп. 4. Д. 4, 1.75.

<sup>5</sup>Заявление советского правительства. 10.08.1941 // Арх. внеш. политики Рос. Федерации. Ф. 06. Оп. 9. С. 69. Д. 1071, 1.29.

Despite the blackmail and pressure from Germany, it was not possible to involve Turkey in the fascist bloc in the summer and fall of 1941. The then ruling elite of the Republic of Turkey showed decisiveness: first of all, former officers of the Ottoman Empire, who spent their entire youth on the fronts of the Balkan Wars, the wars in Libya with Italy, and the World War I. These were people, who knew the value of the peace well and saw with their own eyes how a huge empire collapsed because of these endless wars. Their position played the most significant role in maintaining the neutrality of their country during the World War II.

Then-president İ. İnönü assessed this situation as follows: "The movement began with the Balkan events, then step by step Iraq and Syria, our western and southern neighbours, fell into a state of war and dependence, and suddenly, like a miracle, rushing forward, it turned into a German-Soviet armed conflict. Thus, our northern neighbour is now burning in the fire of war, and our other neighbour, Iran, is experiencing the tragedy of occupation. The hostilities that swept our country from all sides have further strengthened our vigilance, and within the framework of fidelity to our obligations and our friendship, the pursuit of a sustainable peace that protects our honour and life forms the basis of our policy" [2, p. 20].

In 1943, another event occurred, indicating that Turkey should be trusted in the issue of implementation of the Montreux convention. Germany requested permission from the Turkish foreign ministry for the passage of its ships to Romania. The German naval attaché assured that they were not warships. Turkish foreign minister N. Menemencioglu said that permission can be given if the German ambassador in Ankara F. von Papen personally assures that the ships are not of military use. F. von Papen gave such assurances, and the minister considered them sufficient. But Turkish intelligence agencies found weapons, radar installations and sailor uniforms on the ship. As a result, the ships were not allowed in, but N. Menemencioglu paid for a possible violation of the Montreux convention; he had to resign right after the event.

However, these facts were not sufficient for J. Stalin to abandon claims against Turkey. On 15 July 1944, he wrote to W. Churchill: "Of course, you remember how insistently the governments of our three countries proposed Turkey to enter the war against Nazi Germany on the side of the Allies in November and December 1943. Nothing came of this. On the initiative of the Turkish government in May-June of that year, we again came up with negotiations with the Turkish government and twice offered them the same... Nothing came of this either. Except for some certain half measures from Turkey, at present, I do not see any benefit of this for

the Allies. In view of the evasive and unclear position taken by the Turkish government towards Germany, it is better to leave Turkey alone and leave it to its own free will, without making new pressure on Turkey. This, of course, means that the claims of Turkey, which has evaded the war with Germany, for special rights in post-war affairs will also disappear"<sup>6</sup>.

In 1944, a note "On the issue of the straits" was prepared at the Soviet foreign ministry. It spoke about the deprivation of Turkey's exclusive rights to control the regime of the passage of ships through the Black Sea straits. It was noted that Turkey would resist it and it would require the consent of many countries, especially the United Kingdom, to revise the convention. However, W. Churchill did not discuss this topic in October 1944 during a visit to Moscow [5].

Another similar attempt by J. Stalin occurred at the Yalta conference in February 1945. On the Montreux convention, in particular, he stated: "At present, this agreement is outdated and has outlived itself... Turkey has been given the right to close the Straits when it wishes so. It is necessary to change the existing order so far without prejudice to Turkish sovereignty" [9]. This time, Stalin's position, after the disapproval of it by the Allies, became softer: he reaffirmed the sovereignty of Turkey. As a result, the parties agreed that the three ministers of foreign affairs of the Allied countries at their next meeting in London will discuss the proposals of the Soviet government regarding the Montreux convention and report to their governments. In May 1945, in Moscow, the people's commissar of the USSR V. Molotov received the Turkish ambassador to the USSR, S. Sarper. The ambassador was instructed by Ankara to propose the conclusion of a new treaty of friendship and neutrality between the two countries, since the friendship agreement of 1925 was prematurely denounced by the Soviet side in March 1945. During the conversation, V. Molotov unexpectedly put forward two conditions:

- 1) return of territories transferred to Turkey in 1921, to the Soviet Union;
- 2) joint control over the straits and the deployment of Soviet military bases in the zone of the straits.

S. Sarper refused to discuss the conditions of the USSR. At the same time, the USSR's claims to the straits greatly surprised the leaders of the United States and Great Britain, since it was agreed in Yalta that this issue should be discussed with them, and not unilaterally, as did the Soviet government. Moreover, the allies did not support the unilateral demands of the Soviet Union on Turkey<sup>7</sup>.

On 7 August 1946, the Soviet note "On the Montreux convention on the Black Sea straits" was submitted to

<sup>6</sup>Переписка председателя Совета министров СССР с президентами США и премьер-министрами Великобритании во время Великой Отечественной войны 1941–1945. Т. 2. М.: Госполитиздат, 1989. С. 290.

<sup>7</sup>Советский Союз на международных конференциях периода Великой Отечественной войны, 1941–1945: сб. док. в 6 т. Т. 4. М.: Политиздат, 1984. С. 444.



the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs, which once again raised the question of deploying Soviet military bases in the zone of straits to exercise control together with Turkey. On 24 September the next note on the straits was sent to the Turkish government. On 18 Oc-

tober the Turkish government responded with a counter note. The positions of the parties remained unchanged. Ankara perceived the whole situation as an infringement of its regional powers and a weakening of foreign policy independence.

### The Korean War and Turkey's entry into NATO

Disagreements grew between Turkey and the Soviet Union regarding the straits and claims to the eastern Turkish provinces, while the exacerbation of the Cold War was approaching, so to say, the Korean War of 1950–1953. This event inevitably required a clear position of Ankara: which side to support in the Cold War. It became the starting point of the rapprochement between Turkey and the West, and later – the participation of Turkish troops in the Korean War itself.

The conflict between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea almost led to the third world war. Resolution No. 83 of the UN Security Council of 27 June 1950, contained an appeal to all member countries of this organisation to assist in confronting North Korean aggression. The resolution was supported by the majority of UN member states, while sixteen of them, including Turkey, went further, having decided to render military assistance to South Korea. Among them, the Turkish military contingent was sent to the peninsula too.

Turkey's participation in the Korean War accelerated the decision to join NATO. This decision has not been ratified by the Turkish parliament; it was adopted by the ruling party on its own. But membership in the Alliance was supported by many figures in Turkish politics, despite many years of opposition to the West by certain circles, mainly social democrats.

The decision was made by the new government of Turkey, formed by the Democratic party led by A. Menderes. The elected prime minister shortly before the war saw Turkey's participation in the war as an opportunity to achieve NATO membership, which, in his opinion, allowed achieving the key goal of foreign policy: to strengthen the national security of the state in the context of the emerging bipolar world.

The United States attached great importance to Turkey, emphasising its importance for American politics. However, it would be difficult to imagine Turkey preparing seriously for the North Atlantic bloc in 1949. And it was not included in the American plans, first of all, because of the geographical distance from the North Atlantic. But geopolitical circumstances forced Ankara to seek a collective defence zone, even by moving beyond the geographic range.

To understand Turkey's foreign policy strategy, which included the legitimacy of the decision to send troops to Korean Peninsula, a series of speeches by the leader of the opposition People's republican party,

İ. İnönü and Turkish prime minister A. Menderes at the sessions of the Turkish meclis, are of undeniable value.

An analysis of their speeches shows that Turkey's entry into the Council of Europe in the summer of 1949 was an important step towards its integration into Europe. In July, Turkey received an invitation to attend the Council of Europe session in Strasbourg. N. Sadak, who was the permanent delegate of Turkey to the League of Nations in the pre-war period, highly appreciated this achievement, considering the invitation of his country to be aside with the members of the Atlantic Pact quite satisfies Turkey. İ. İnönü also emphasised that "this is the organisation of a group of nations that belong to European culture and civilisation. Only those nations that are governed by democratic methods are allowed here" [2, p. 42].

Despite the fact that Turkey had a friendship with the United States and alliance with Britain and France, it was obvious that this was not enough for the allies to see Turkey in their ranks. By the way, territorial claims from the USSR did not disappear. Therefore, the Turkish leadership was considering the option of revising its place in the system of international relations through expanding ties with Western countries. New and more determined policies were needed to achieve concrete results. And now the new president of the country, C. Bayar, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, uttered prophetic words: "Get ready, brothers, we will join the Atlantic pact"<sup>8</sup>. His government had concrete plans.

Following the declaration of war on the Korean Peninsula, the UN called on member countries to participate in the formation of peacekeeping forces. Turkish minister of foreign affairs M. F. Köprülü on 30 June 1950, addressed the meclis on this issue. The government, in response to the UN call, decided to send a military contingent of 4 500 people to Korea. In this regard, US senator H. Kane, who was in Ankara, later noted that this decision facilitated Turkey's entry into the Atlantic pact. Turkey was the second country after the United States to respond to the call of the UN. In its 27-year history, this was the first time that the Republic of Turkey sent troops outside the country. The government attributed this to the fact that in the event of aggression against Turkey, it would ask the UN's assistance to the same extent that would be provided to South Korea. Rather, these were propaganda statements. Only the UN Charter imposes certain obligations on mem-

<sup>8</sup>Saray M. Sovyet Tehdidi Karşısında Türkiye'nin NATO'ya Girişi. III Cumhurbaşkanı Celal BAYAR'ın Hatıraları ve Belgeler. Ankara, 2000. P. 95–97.

bers of the organisation. In fact, the Bayar – Menderes team simplified the course towards NATO membership by getting into the Korean War.

But Turkey's entry into NATO did not happen right away. The Turks had to wait three years after the official application for joining the alliance. As diplomatic talks about membership continued, the success of Turkish soldiers in Korea provided real arguments for Turkish membership. This reinforced the ambitions of the democratic government in their desire to join NATO, while at the same time depriving the trump cards of opposition to criticise the government for participating in the war.

To justify sending the contingent to Korea, prime minister A. Menderes and minister of foreign affairs M. F. Köprülü put forward the following arguments: "1. The meclis' decision is not required to send troops to Korea, since this is not a declaration of war, but measures for peace-keeping. 2. The actions of the government are fully consistent with the 43<sup>rd</sup> article of the UN Charter. 3. Sending Turkish troops to Korea strengthens the United Nations and thereby enhances Turkey's security" [5, p. 102]. Both leaders have repeatedly stated that the nature of the request by opposition politicians and their interpretation of the UN Charter is more in line with the anti-Turkish point of view of the Soviet Union than the position of most UN member states.

The entry of Turkey and Greece into NATO was issued on 15 October 1951, in London. The USSR got this fact extremely critical: on 31 October the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (CPSU) approved the text of a note to the Turkish government. It noted that the invitation of Turkey to the bloc, which has nothing to do with the North Atlantic, pursues the goal of the imperialist states to use its territory for aggression against the Soviet Union and create a military base near its borders. The Soviet government demands an explanation from the Turkish side and announces that, as a neighbouring state, it will not remain indifferent to this issue<sup>9</sup>. It was a belated reaction. In 1952, Turkey applied for full membership of NATO (the decision came into force a year later), and it was largely a reaction to the unfriendly policies of the USSR and its territorial claims against Ankara.

Only after the death of J. Stalin, the new government of the USSR made an adjustment of its position. Moscow began to call the problem of the straits and territories of Kars and Ardahan as unresolved issues of Soviet-Turkish relations. The Soviet Union began to build a more realistic policy towards Turkey, abandoning the territorial requirements for it [8].

The Soviet Union in an official note to Turkey, already a full member of the alliance (dated 30 May 1953) stated that "in the name of maintaining good neighbour relations and strengthening peace and security, the governments of Armenia and Georgia found it possible to abandon their territorial claims against Turkey. As for the issue of the straits, the Soviet government revised its previous opinion on this issue and considered it possible to ensure the security of the USSR, as for the straits, on conditions equally acceptable for both the USSR and Turkey. Thus, the Soviet government declares that the Soviet Union has no territorial claims against Turkey"<sup>10</sup>.

A peculiar emotional assessment of the Stalinist policy towards Turkey was made by N. S. Khrushchev at the June 1957 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee: "Ruined the Germans. Our heads went round. Turks, comrades, friends. No, let's write a note, and they will immediately give the Dardanelles. There are no such fools. The Dardanelles are not Turkey, there is a knot of states. No, we took a special note, wrote that we cancel the friendship agreement, and spat in the face of the Turks... This is stupid. However, we have lost friendly Turkey and now we have American bases in the south that keep our south under fire"<sup>11</sup>.

It is hard to imagine if Turkey would become unfriendly to the Soviet Union if Moscow in those years did not exert unprecedented political and diplomatic pressure on it; if it did not threaten the sovereignty and integrity of the Turkish state. It is obvious that the rapprochement between Turkey and the West was the result of the anti-Turkish policy of J. Stalin and V. Molotov.

Turkey's participation in the Korean War became a reason only for rapprochement with the West. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that such UN peace-keeping contingents continued to play an important role in local conflicts and wars in the following decades; for example, in the Congo (1960–1964); the first (operation "Desert storm", 1991) and the second war in Iraq (since 2003), where military units of more than a dozen states took part. And the Turkish military contingents, except for the Korean War, participated in UN missions in Somalia (1993–1994); Bosnia and Herzegovina (1993–1995); Albania (1997); Lebanon (2006), and several other countries. In 2010s Turkey, as a member of NATO, participates in peace consolidation operations in Afghanistan (570 militaries) and Kosovo (280 militaries). Except for that, it has military bases in countries like Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Qatar, Syria, Northern Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Albania, Bosnia and Libya<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup>Решение Политбюро ЦК ВКП(б) о заявлении турецкому правительству в связи с приглашениями Турции в Атлантический блок. 31.10.1951 // Рос. гос. арх. соц.-полит. истории. Ф. 17. Оп. 3. Д. 1091, 1. С. 266–267.

<sup>10</sup>Советский Союз на международных конференциях периода Великой Отечественной войны, 1941–1945 гг. : сб. док. в. 6 т. Т. 6. М. : Политиздат, 1984. С. 514.

<sup>11</sup>Гасанлы Д. П. СССР – Турция: полигон «холодной войны». Баку : Адиооглы, 2005. С. 509–554.

<sup>12</sup>Relations between Turkey and NATO [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-nato-iliskileri.tr.mfa> (date of access: 29.04.2020).

### **In addition to NATO membership, Turkey has its own geopolitical priorities**

Turkey has a unique geopolitical location, which has been preserved throughout the entire period of membership in the alliance, which means that Ankara should follow not only the NATO strategy but pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, within the context of constant tension, instability and uncertainty in the Middle East region. It is reasonable that its political decisions and reaction to regional and world events will differ, for example, from the Netherlands', Portugal's or Canada's, around which a more or less calm situation remains.

This unique policy does not entail a change in the fundamental course or direction of Turkey in the modern multipolar world system, in contrast to the so-called axial dislocation. As a part of NATO, Turkey provides serious support to the alliance's strategy and operations, making a significant contribution to the implementation of its basic principle of indivisible security.

Moreover, like any other member of the alliance, Ankara naturally defends its national interests, as well as its own geopolitical priorities. Being united as a whole, they do not always in particular match up with the position of NATO allies. This is evidence that Turkey is far from being a satellite state neither in the alliance, nor international politics in general.

One of the best examples of that is the Cyprus issue. Cyprus peace operation is the name in the Turkish official sources for the 1974 event on this island. The same operation in the West and in Russian-language sources is called the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. One way or another, this event is perhaps the most striking example of Turkey's independent (for some, even "naughty") foreign policy.

The island of Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1571 to 1914. Later it became a part of the British colonial possessions and on 16 August 1960, gained independence. But the format of independence was limited by the Zurich – London agreements, according to which Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom were declared the guarantors of the "independence, territorial integrity and security" of Cyprus, which gave these states the opportunity to intervene in its internal affairs<sup>13</sup>.

In the summer of 1974, a military coup took place on the island with the support of the Greek military junta. President Makarios III was removed from power, and control of the island passed to N. Sampson, a representative of the Greek underground organisation EOKA-B, which advocated the accession of Cyprus to Greece,

that is to say, the so-called enosis. The coup was bloody. Due to the impossibility of a peaceful settlement of the conflict and for the protection of the Turkish community, the Turkish government sent troops to Cyprus, contrary to the resistance of the international community. No Western country has confirmed the legitimacy of this operation. One should notice that Ankara acted clearly against the will of NATO.

A significant part, approximately 37 % of the island's territory, came under the control of Turkish troops, which de facto led to its split into two parts. In 1983, the northern Turkish community declared independence and acquired the name Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The Turkish part of the island is recognised only by Turkey as an independent state<sup>14</sup>.

Negotiations on the unification of the island have been going on since the landing of Turkish troops in Cyprus. The solution to the problem, as proposed by the UN, was presented at a referendum in 2004. According to its results, 75 % of Greek Cypriots voted against the union, and 69 % of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour. Despite the clear desire of the majority of the Turkish community for unity on the island, in 2004 the Greek part of Cyprus and unilaterally joined the European Union alone<sup>15</sup>.

From the first day, the international community opposed the Turkish landing in Cyprus, and in the 2010s the situation did not change. Today the alliance does not share Ankara's position. The Cyprus issue remains one of the most difficult knots of Turkish diplomacy, and for many years the country has faced sanctions because of it. It is widely believed that one of the reasons for the long-term extension of the decision on Turkey's accession to the EU is the so-called Turkish occupation of part of Cyprus. However, Turkey does not change its position only because of pressure from the international community, continuing its presence in the north of the island.

The Cyprus issue is not the only example of the significant difference in the positions of Turkey and NATO. In a number of other events, Ankara has proved its principled independent foreign policy. Thus, Turkey did not respond to the call of the United States to participate in the alliance's invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Turkish parliament refused to support its ally, moreover, it did not allow its territory to be used during the war<sup>16</sup>. Ankara's independent policy was confirmed, which is not necessarily in parallel with Washington's policies.

<sup>13</sup>London – Zurich agreements of 1959 [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/garanti-antlasmasi\\_-zurich\\_11-sub-at-1959\\_.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/garanti-antlasmasi_-zurich_11-sub-at-1959_.tr.mfa) (date of access: 29.04.2020).

<sup>14</sup>Sibel A. Formation, development and results of the Cyprus peace operation from a military perspective [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://web.archive.org/web/20161226213555/http://arsivbelge.com/yaz.php?sc=71> (date of access: 29.04.2020).

<sup>15</sup>History of the Cyprus issue [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/kibris-meselesinin-tarihcesi\\_-bm-muzakerelerinin-baslangici.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/kibris-meselesinin-tarihcesi_-bm-muzakerelerinin-baslangici.tr.mfa) (date of access: 29.04.2020).

<sup>16</sup>Influence of the May 1 parliamentary resolution on sending military forces on Turkish politics [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://archive.is/Z9uJ9> (date of access: 29.04.2020).

During the conflict in South Ossetia in 2008, Turkey maintained a balanced policy within international law. It spoke out against the aggression of Georgia in the region, and the invasion of the Russian army in Georgia. And in the process of the conflict, Turkey prevented the delivery of US aid to Georgia through the Turkish straits. It did not allow the American squadron to go to the Black Sea, referring to the Montreux Convention.

Despite the close relations with Russia, Turkey's position in a number of situations is not consistent with Moscow. The events in 2014 on the Crimean Peninsula in Ankara, are called as the invasion of the Russian Federation, and the occupation is not recognised. Ankara unequivocally supports Ukraine in this matter<sup>17</sup>. Further: when Turkey decided to purchase a Russian-made S 400 missile system, which is cheaper than existing equivalents, its Western allies began to threaten sanctions for the military industry. This did not stop Ankara, and the country acquired this defensive system in 2019<sup>18</sup>. As one can see, against the backdrop of the confrontation between NATO and Russia, there is a conceptual difference in relations between the latter and Turkey.

Turkey met very critical assessments on the part of many member countries of the alliance due to its conduct in the second half of the 2010s military operations in northern Syria and Iraq. The operations, and among them such as "Claw" in Iraq, "Olive branch", "Shield of the euphrates", "Source of peace", provoked the most severe criticism in the West; in some circles, they even started discussing the likelihood of Turkey's exclusion from NATO<sup>19</sup>. But Ankara, seeing the need for them as a means of ensuring its national security, purposefully continued its actions in neighbouring countries.

The Turkish leadership sent troops to northern Syria to create a security zone for the voluntary return of refugees of up to 2 million (in Turkey there are more than 4 million refugees). Official Ankara emphasises that the operation complies with international law, UNSC resolutions 2249, 2254 and Art. 51 of the UN Charter on the right to individual and collective self-defense. At the same time, a special emphasis boils down to the fact that Turkey respects the territorial integrity of its neighbours, including Syria, which was one of the reasons for the operation "Peace spring" in 2019<sup>20</sup>.

## Conclusion

The difficult global situation in the first years after the World War II required the Republic of Turkey to clarify its geopolitical priorities through the choice of NATO membership. This strengthened Turkey's national security, but the regional situation in the Middle East remained permanently tense. The failure of the Alliance earlier and at the present stage to reduce the crisis potential there predetermined the non-standard membership of Ankara in this military bloc. Often, Turkey – contrary to NATO's strategic precepts, takes actions that are inconsistent or even contrary to principles of the organisation; this behaviour is associated with "critical westernisation"; allegations emerged that Turkey was moving away from the West. In fact,

the Turkish leadership, like the governments of several other states, considers it justified, avoiding confrontation with the allies, to take nationally motivated steps in creating a safe and favourable external environment for harmonious internal development.

The package of measures taken by Turkey to restore stability in the Middle East is called by Ankara as a contribution to the creation of sustainable peace. In order to maintain its own regional weight, the country is guided by its deeply rooted state traditions, demonstrates an independent position, while upholding the principles of equality between states, the value of good neighbourliness, friendship, cooperation and alliance.

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<sup>18</sup>10 questions about why Turkey buys C 400 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/10-soruda-turkiye-neden-s-400-aliyor/1412408> (date of access: 29.04.2020).

<sup>19</sup>Do not blame Turkey for NATO woes [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/03/dont-blame-turkey-for-natos-woes/> (date of access: 29.04.2020).

<sup>20</sup>Minister Cavusoglu – operation "Source of peace" was made against the terrorist organisation [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/baris-pinari-harekati/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-biz-baris-pinari-harekatini-teror-orgutune-karsi-yaptik/1631132> (date of access: 29.04.2020).



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