

TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY TAKES A NEW TURN AFTER THE 2014 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

P rime Minister Recep Erdoğan sustained a convincing victory at the presidential election held in Turkey in August 2014, receiving a nationwide mandate of trust. In tandem with the new prime minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, he will try to boost the country's domestic political capital and reach new frontiers of cooperation with the main external partners. In so doing, the Turkish government will retain its balanced

course in two geopolitical directions—European and Eastern.

Nevertheless, the country's authorities will have to constantly adjust their plans regarding the adjacent regions to meet the interests of the powers having an interest there.

These efforts aim to define both the main driving forces behind Turkey's foreign policy choice and the interests of the Western and Eastern political centers.

KEYWORDS: *Turkey, the U.S., Russia, the EU, the SCO, Turkish tandem, Turkey's European perspective, the EU's Eastern alternative.*

Introduction

The new Turkish government took up its position on the political arena in September 2014. After familiarizing themselves with the members of the cabinet of ministers, Turkish commentators can say that Recep Erdoğan is sooner in charge of the government than ex-minister of foreign affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was appointed prime minister. Turkish experts think that the latter has been prepared the role of so-called technical prime minister under a strong president who has taken all the reins of power into his own hands.

However, Ahmet Davutoğlu is unlikely to be content with the standard regalia of head of government, particularly in the foreign political sphere. As the author of the Strategic Depth Concept and associated with Turkey's recent active position along the entire perimeter of its borders, he will most likely busy himself with making adjustments to the country's foreign policy doctrine.

What can be expected from the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu tandem in terms of Turkey's regional interests? We can confidently say that it will concentrate its efforts on increasing pragmatism while strengthening Turkey's position in the Eastern vector and preserving close ties with the Western powers.

The West Continues to Influence Turkey

In his first programmed speeches, Ahmet Davutoğlu emphasized that several of the countries' previous foreign political goals are still very pertinent. They include Turkey's accession to the EU, which has long brought a condescending smile to the lips of domestic and foreign experts in the know. It is highly unlikely that the Turkish flag will ever be raised in Brussels, while the leading experts of European policy describe Turkey's positioning itself as a potential member of the EU in the discomfiting terms of some political farce.

Nevertheless, promoting the EU accession, the deadline for which has already been designated (2023, which will mark the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Turkish Republic) will allow the Turkish tandem to play its European card.

Euro-Atlantic circles regard Ahmet Davutoğlu as a sober pragmatist who was able to balance out the foreign political impulsiveness of Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan in previous years. Washington and Brussels would prefer Ahmet Davutoğlu to take control over all the key stages in the development and implementation of Turkey's foreign policy course, leaving Recep Erdoğan to engage in domestic problems, including promoting constitutional reforms.

Nevertheless, this "division of labor" between the recognized Turkish leader and the "technical" head of government is rather abstract. The president, who has a nationwide mandate of trust, is unlikely to restrict himself to narrow domestic affairs. It will be up to Turkey's Euro-Atlantic partners to tune the above-mentioned tandem to the necessary rhythm of cooperation with more or less precise gradation of domestic and foreign functions.

In the past 12 years of Recep Erdoğan's presence as Turkey's leading state official, American influence on the country's elite (political, military, and business) has perceptibly decreased. However, Turkey is not striking out on its own. Moreover, private conversations with Turkish experts indicate that members of the ruling Party of Justice and Development (PJD) and the medium-rank party bureaucracy are becoming increasingly unhappy about the country's worsening relations with the U.S.

Turkey is standing on the threshold of new geopolitical tests, which means it does not have the luxury of disregarding Euro-Atlantic support and partnership with the U.S. Local political scientists are arguing along approximately the same lines.

However, this discourse in no way implies that Turkey must stop exerting efforts in the Middle East vector. On the contrary, the new power structure welcomes the country's balanced political orientation toward both Europe and the Middle East at the same time. The Erdoğan-Davutoğlu tandem has been called upon to lower the tone of discord in the PJD, while further enhancement of economic relations with the West will make it possible to meet the requests of the business circles that sponsor the party.

During the years that Recep Erdoğan has been in power, Turkey has decreased its dependence on the West in some spheres. The matter primarily concerns issuing loans and making investments in a country with an average annual economic growth of 5%. Recep Erdoğan's hope for an economic miracle could not be justified without large external borrowing and fallout of foreign capital in the local market.

Implementing joint defense programs and enhancing military-technical relations were another vector in Ankara's cooperation with Washington and other Western capitals, which it was in dire need of. Since 1948, the U.S. has supplied Turkey with military aid totaling \$13.8 billion (\$8.2 billion of which were gratuitous grants and \$5.6 billion were loans). The current level of U.S. military

aid to Turkey is extremely modest—up to \$5 million in annual installments under joint defense programs.¹

Given the U.S.'s continued protection, Ankara has managed to make significant achievements in the military-technical sphere. For example, a major contract is being discussed for supplying Turkey with 100 F-35 fighter planes manufactured by America's Lockheed Martin.

Close cooperation between the two countries is also manifested in the support the U.S. is rendering to Turkey's multitude of domestic and border problems on international platforms.

At present, there is a noticeable decrease in the Turkish authorities' interest in the above-mentioned vectors of cooperation.

Turkey Is Being Blocked in the Middle East and Not Being Accepted into the EU

In recent years, Turkey has made a sharp turn in its foreign policy toward the Middle East; expanding and intensifying relations with the largest states of the Arab world has become a high priority for it. However, focusing on the Middle Eastern vector has not given Turkish diplomacy the anticipated breakthrough (at the same time, Turkish businessmen have succeeded in strengthening their position in the Middle Eastern markets).

This brings to mind something that happened two years ago. On 30 September, 2012, the 4th congress of the ruling PJD was held in Ankara, which became the Turkish leadership's latest claim to a leading position in the Islamic world and a pivotal role in the regional processes in the Near and Middle East. One of the foreign guests at the congress was Politburo Head of the Palestinian HAMAS Movement Khaled Mashal; in his words of welcome, he said the following: "Erdoğan, you are not only the Turkish leader today, you are a leader in the Islamic world."

The Turkish leader has certainly justified this high rating of trust he received two years ago from the Middle Eastern Arabs. Turkey has succeeded in becoming a regional leader that is claiming its exclusiveness and domination. Nevertheless, the country often tries to bypass the intense events occurring in this conflict-prone region, since anything else would be fraught with unpredictable consequences. A case in point is when Islamic State fighters captured and held prisoner employees of the Turkish Consulate General in the Iraqi town of Mosul. This event forced the Turkish authorities to take a super cautious position with respect to the U.S.'s plans in the struggle against the so-called extremist international.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that the U.S. has blocked all the main vectors in Turkey's Middle Eastern policy, the active efforts of which have been replaced with a certain amount of disappointment. The limited nature of Ankara's external independence is becoming increasingly obvious, and the obstacles being raised in its way in the region are coming into sharper relief.

Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Israel, and even the Arabian monarchies of the Persian Gulf have begun treating Turkey with mistrust. The almost only outlet for the Turkish government in the Eastern vector has been attempts to establish relations with Iran and build a stable partnership among Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan with its sights on the Central Asian region.

¹ See: J. Zanotti, "Turkey: Background and US Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, 1 August, 2014, available at [<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41368.pdf>].

The National Intelligence Service and its leader Hakan Fidan personally, who is one of Recep Erdoğan's most authorized representatives, have been keeping a file on how relations are developing with Iran.

Turkey's supreme army command holds a strong position in the Georgian-Azeri vector.

The country's foreign policy department was engaged in the Euro-Atlantic vector when Ahmet Davutoğlu was foreign minister without any particular successes or failures.

Striving to draw closer to the Turkish political elite, the Americans made all kinds of promises to Recep Erdoğan's government. In particular, they promised to put pressure on France and Germany and force them to change their positions regarding Turkey's accession to the EU. This continued until approximately 2011; when the Syrian crisis began gaining momentum, the Barack Obama administration exerted particular efforts to put American-Turkish relations on a different track.

The idea of a "model partnership" with Turkey put forward in April 2009 by the White House (during his speech to the local parliament, Barack Obama called this country a "critically important ally" of the U.S.) has remained nothing but an "exercise in words," as, incidentally, have many other "revolutionary" proposals of the democratic president regarding the Middle East.

Barack Obama, whose sojourn in the White House will end in two years, has the rather modest task of not doing anything to further spoil relations with Recep Erdoğan, who has already openly expressed discontent about Washington on several occasions. In this respect, there is no longer any talk in Washington's corridors of power about lobbying Ankara's interests in its accession to the EU.

The pragmatism and Euro-Atlantic tendencies of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu could play a significant role in keeping American-Turkish relations going until the end of 2016.

There is an opinion that Turkey has reconciled itself to the role of "eternal candidate" for accession to the EU and that this suspended situation gives it the opportunity to advance its own foreign political position, primarily in the Middle Eastern vector; for example, German experts are pointing out that today, by holding these talks, both Turkey and the EU are pursuing pragmatic goals that do not really have very much to do with the country's accession to the EU.²

If it acceded to the EU, could Turkey keep up the active efforts in the region it has been exerting for quite a long time now? For if it acceded, Turkey would have to follow the general European position on foreign policy and security issues, which would be restraining for a country with a healthy regional "appetite."

Nor should we forget about Turkey's ambitions to become an energy hub at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. The EU's unified energy policy might also prevent Turkey from acquiring a pivotal role that would allow it to distribute energy resources and not only gain advantages from their transit.

The Turkish leadership has no illusions about the country becoming a EU member. Moreover, a provisional deadline has already been set; by 2023, Turkey will either become a part of Unified Europe, or will ultimately give up this prospect, but that will most likely be a tactical step. Ankara's strategy (if, of course, it is ultimately formulated) lies in a different foreign policy plane. In the next decade, during which Recep Erdoğan will most likely remain president, the country must draw the maximum benefits from the negotiation process with the EU, and not from the result. The passive course of the talks leaves room for maneuver and makes it possible to play in several geopolitical vectors at once.

² See: "Alexander Rar: Turtsiia ne budet chlenom Evrosoiuzza, etot vopros zakryt," IA REGNUM, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1665433.html>], 30 May, 2013.

Ahmet Davutoğlu's Pragmatism and Recep Erdoğan's Impulsiveness Serving Regional Stability

The resonating admissions Recep Erdoğan made at the peak of the presidential election campaign about how he had not been in direct communication with President Barack Obama for a long time later acquired an interesting nuance. Recep Erdoğan was essentially saying that he had turned responsibility for managing all affairs with the Americans over to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu. In his words, his contacts with the White House administration were limited to communicating with U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden. So we wonder whether or not Barack Obama was a "lame duck" for the Turkish side from the very beginning.

Incidentally, the strained relations between the heads of these two states did not prevent them from talking directly to each other at the NATO summit in Newport. According to the U.S. National Security Council, on 5 September, 2014, presidents Barack Obama and Recep Erdoğan privately discussed a wide range of urgent international issues relating to the joint struggle against ISIS and the need for coordinating efforts to intercept the uncontrolled flows of fighters to Syria and Iraq. The Ukrainian problem received its share of attention too.

We will note that the brief press release from American Security Council administrators can hardly seem serious against the general background of growing mistrust between Ankara and Washington. The U.S. continues to respond negatively to Turkey's active involvement in Middle Eastern affairs and is trying to redirect its attention in other geopolitical directions. However, the Americans did not succeed in drawing Turkey into NATO's anti-Russian axis in Eastern Europe. NATO's southeastern flank remained indifferent to the thrusts to encircle Russia's western borders.

Whatever the case, the Euro-Atlantic pragmatism of Ahmet Davutoğlu and the impulsiveness of Recep Erdoğan move into the background when it comes to NATO encouraging Ankara to oppose Moscow.

Right after visiting Northern Cyprus and Azerbaijan, the Turkish president went to the NATO summit in Wales. In so doing, he never once said anything that could be interpreted as hostility toward Moscow. In his speech on the second day of the NATO summit, Recep Erdoğan noted that Turkey did not recognize the Crimea's unification with Russia, which led to the isolation of and pressure on the Crimean Tatar people, and will continue to support Ukraine regarding political independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty, and national unity. The Turkish leader also added that efforts aimed at looking for a political solution to this problem should be supported.

Unlike its Western partners, Turkey has shied away from any confrontation with Russia after the referendum in the Crimea on 16 March, 2014. Official Ankara is limiting itself to periodic statements in protection of the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatar population of the peninsula. This kind of reaction fits the latest non-recognition by the West of the political and legal consequences of the referendum.

Turkey has declared respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and voted for the adoption of a corresponding resolution at the U.N. General Assembly sitting held on 27 March, 2014. However, the Turkish side has made no foreign political demarches, such as recalling its ambassador from Moscow for consultations or joining the personal, sectoral, or any other economic sanctions imposed by the West against Russia. Ankara has taken its customary and essentially only correct position in the current situation of equidistancing itself from Moscow and the Western capitals opposing it.

Despite all the Turkish leadership's dissatisfaction about the decades-long delay in its accession to the EU, the development of the events around the Crimea revealed an unexpectedly positive side—Ankara's disengagement from the obligations to the EU. If Turkey had been an equal member of the European family, it would have encountered serious economic dilemmas. Any hint from Ankara, which highly values its role as Russia's major energy partner, at joining even limited sanctions against it could have led to unpredictable consequences for the Turkish economy.

Turkey was again able to adjust its status as NATO member to the new geopolitical reality in the Black Sea Region. The Alliance's military potential for restraining Russia was not reinforced in Turkish territory as in the case with Poland, Rumania, and the Baltic republics.

Moreover, Ankara remained true to the international obligations within the framework of the Montreux Convention of 1936. The Russian Foreign Ministry expects consistency from its Turkish partners in adhering to the legal regime on use of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits by non-Black Sea nations (as in the fall of 2008).³

Turkey Scares the EU with the “Shanghai Alternative”

Even though the U.S. could not pave Turkey's way to the European “elite club,” why not have Erdoğan-Davutoğlu government ask its Russian partners for diplomatic support in implementing other interstate integration schemes? There is a well-ingrained opinion that Turkey's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) or Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) will never be an alternative to its accession to the EU (this lack of alternative will continue for long years to come), and this of course is true.

Nevertheless, this state of affairs cannot go on forever. In 2013, Turkey was approved as an SCO dialog partner, while just recently the country's leadership expressed the desire to join the free trade regime with the other EEU countries.

Turkey was assigned the status of SCO dialog partner at the Organization's summit on 6-7 June, 2012 in Beijing, and it was officially confirmed in April 2013. According to the SCO authorized documents, the status of dialog partner is lower than the status of observer (for example, partners cannot participate in all the SCO events and do not have access to its non-public documents), but it does give its holder the opportunity to join the Organization's functional.

Turkey was to be accepted as a partner in the SCO as early as the summit in 2011 in Astana, but several technical problems (in particular, the fact that the Uzbek leaders disagreed with it) prevented this position from being reinforced. In 2012, Turkey's recognition as an SCO partner has not met with any essential objections from the Organization's members, all the decisions of which, as we know, are made on the basis of consensus.

In January 2013, Recep Erdoğan stirred up the public opinion of his country again and gave his Euro-Atlantic partners cause for worry. In an interview to a local television channel, the Turkish prime minister announced that Turkey's possible accession to the SCO would be examined by the cabinet of ministers he headed. At the same time, he criticized several EU states that stubbornly refuse to see Turkey as a member of United Europe.

³ See: Response of the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry A.K. Lukashevich to the media's question on Turkey observing the Montreux Convention, available in Russian at [http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/2AA87F2720DC85AD44257CBA004F3833], 14 April, 2014.

Recep Erdoğan's speech aroused active discussions in the country's public and expert circles. Despite the fact that opinions differed, everyone agreed that replacing full European integration with some alternative in the Eastern vector would be of no benefit to Turkey.

At the turn of 2013, the Turkish leadership was literally gushing with new ideas about how to reinforce its role in the regional processes. In addition to tentatively suggesting its accession to the SCO, Ankara was involved in initiating the so-called Lira Zone (in the fall of 2012, Recep Erdoğan voiced the idea of creating a regional currency union based on the Turkish lira), as well as the talks with the Kurdish leaders. This active stance seriously concerned even Turkey's closest Euro-Atlantic partners, who increasingly saw symptoms of it playing a double game.

In 2013, Recep Erdoğan began voicing his concern, which resulted in the country searching for its place within the Eastern multidimensional formats of cooperation, but in so doing he did not slam the door completely in Brussels' face.

Recep Erdoğan repeated the idea of Turkey joining the SCO in the fall of 2013 during his visit to Moscow (at that time the country had already acquired the status of SCO dialog partner). Foreign experts, who paid even greater attention to Recep Erdoğan's latest message, did not miss the chance to note that this was not the first time he was hinting at Turkey's ultimate rejection of EU membership if his country were asked to join the SCO.⁴

The next wave of criticism from Ankara regarding the procrastinating Europeans came in the fall of 2013 during the acutest American-Turkish disagreements around Syria. However, it, just as the urgency of Turkey's claims to EU membership, was perceptibly dampened by the advent to power in Germany of the Grand Coalition (CDU/CSU-SDP) and Angela Merkel's reelection to a third term as chancellor.

Experts are beginning to view Recep Erdoğan's enthusiasm about Turkey's accession to the SCO as a political balancing act, even if only because the possibility of bringing Ankara closer to the multidimensional integration schemes under the joint aegis of Moscow and Beijing has no strong economic backing.

Russia and China— Turkey's Escorts into the Eastern Integration Clubs?

Turkey's likely accession to the SCO raises several geo-economic questions for Russia and China. The Organization, which unites the Central Asian republics, Russia, and China into one Eurasian bloc, is still primarily a political institution with an economic cooperation component that is still underformed. It is known that at the previous stages of the SCO's formation, Moscow and Beijing had different views on the priority of particular economic initiatives. For example, Russia put forward the idea of forming a SCO Development Fund, while its Chinese partners preferred to ponder establishing a Development Bank in the Organization's structure.⁵

The two main poles of power in the SCO still have to come to some common denominator. In this context, Turkey, which has declared its intention to become one of the top ten world economic

⁴ See: Z. Keck, "Turkey Renews Plea to Join Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The Diplomat*, 1 December, 2013, available at [<http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/turkey-renews-plea-to-join-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>].

⁵ At present, Russia is not against the Chinese idea, but is putting forward a counter proposal—to create a SCO Bank on the basis of the Eurasian Development Bank in Kazakhstan's Almaty.

powers by 2023, might be a destabilizing factor for the SCO if it becomes its equal member. In this respect, experts often look at the possible problems through the energy prism.

Ankara's strategic goal, which envisages all energy flows from CA and the Middle East to Europe passing through Turkey, might be raised in the context of the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu tandem to a higher level of priority, which contradicts the interests of Russia and China (whose energy routes go in directions that do not suit the Turkish side).

However, as experts note, if Turkey's claims to the status of energy hub between Asia and Europe are manifested with new gusto, the country's government will be equally interested in developing relations with both Europe and CA, where Russia and China prevail.⁶

In addition to the energy aspect, there are several other issues related to Turkey's stronger economic position in CA that concern Moscow and Beijing. The expansionist plans of the previous Turkish government with respect to the economies of the region's republics still apply today; the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu tandem will in all likelihood try to breathe new life into them. For example, the Turkish government will be able to take advantage of the opportunity to strengthen cooperation with the region's countries through free trade regimes and, in the future, by means of more advanced economic cooperation formats.

Turkey's most intensive economic cooperation with the current EEU participants has been established with Kazakhstan and Russia. It accounts for a multibillion goods turnover, which is significantly diversified with respect to the export items of Turkish goods to the Kazakh and Russian markets.

In 2013, Turkey engaged in trade with Kazakhstan for a total just shy of \$3.5 billion. A significant place in bilateral goods turnover between these countries is occupied by products of the Kazakh fuel and energy complex. At the same time, Ankara is becoming more interested in raising the share of raw material from CA in its market. Moreover, plans are being made to expand the transit of Kazakh oil in the westerly direction via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. The anticipated volumes of oil transportation from the Tengiz fields via the BTC in 2014 amount to 3 million tonnes.⁷

Creating free trade zones (FTZ) will make it possible for Turkey to buy energy resources from Kazakhstan and Russia under very preferential conditions. This, in turn, could become an important motivator for launching technical talks between Turkey and the EEU countries. Incidentally, all participants in the future FTZ can expect lengthy discussions on a wide range of issues.

In the next decades, Turkey will remain a net importer of liquid hydrocarbons,⁸ and will look for any opportunity to procure perks from partners in the cost segment of deliveries. Joining FTZ with exporters of energy resources of the Eurasian integration bloc will help Turkey to achieve many goals, one of which is to ensure its sustainable economic development. In exchange, future partners in free trade will require their share of preferences from Turkey.

Experts are insisting that FTZs are advantageous for Kazakhstan as well, but they are not providing any detailed confirmation of this. However, there is already a preliminary idea about the main

⁶ See: St. Blank, "Turkey and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Motives and Consequences," *CACI Analyst*, 23 April, 2014, available at [<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12958-turkey-and-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization-motives-and-consequences.html>].

⁷ See: "Oil from Kashagan Will Be Pumped via BTC—Azerbaijan Minister of Energy," available in Russian at [<http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2658474>], 15 May, 2014.

⁸ Turkey is buying around 90% of the oil and 98% of the gas being consumed in the domestic market. The country's energy consumption is growing by 4-5% every year. According to expert assessments, in the next 15 years, the Turkish economy will need more than \$100 billion in investments in the energy sector, that is, between \$6 and 8 billion annually (see: T. Babali, "The Role of Energy in Turkey's Relations with Russia and Iran," available at [http://csis.org/files/attachments/120529_Babali_Turkey_Energy.pdf], 29 March, 2012).

vectors of economic trade cooperation, within the framework of which Kazakhstan and Russia could demand that Turkey revise its customs duties with respect to certain types of goods, primarily, products of the light industry, which, according to some estimates, have formed the basis of the country's export in recent years.

The export of clothing, textiles, carpets, and other similar products forms around 12% of Turkey's GDP. There is no shortage of textile products in the Russian and Kazakh markets. However, these goods are sold at special prices, which arouses the interest of Kazakh and Russian economic entities. It goes without saying that Ankara will try to have the same mechanism applied to energy prices.

It stands to reason that FTZ efficiency will mainly be gauged by the development of Russian-Turkish trade. In 2013, the two countries raised their goods turnover to an impressive \$32.7 billion. The goal is to bring the volume of bilateral trade up to \$100 billion by 2020 (an indispensable tool in reaching this high level could be introducing the free trade regime).

The prospect of Turkey's full integration into the SCO is extremely vague, but if the free trade regime between Ankara and Moscow and Astana works, the question of its accession to the EEU might be considered in the future.

Turkey is not going to do anything to jeopardize the economic and credit-financial relations it has been reinforcing with Europe during the years it has been a candidate for EU membership. We will give just one figure: at present, investments from the EU member states in Turkey amount to more than 77% of all foreign investments.

Ankara is keeping close tabs on its political steps for the future. One of them has been to put forward the idea of accession to the SCO, which pursues entirely pragmatic goals. In so doing, Turkey reminded the Europeans again of its dissatisfaction.

The country's leaders are intentionally adhering to both European and Eurasian integration.

Orientation toward the West is making it possible for Turkey to count on intensifying economic and financial cooperation with Europe's most advanced economies.

In the eastern vector, it is striving to fortify its position in CA and enhance its relations with Russia, China, and Iran.

The SCO summit held in Dushanbe on 12 September did not reveal any qualitative shifts in Turkey coming closer to Eurasian integration. However, Turkish Foreign Minister M. Çavuşoğlu's arrival in the Tajik capital gave reason to conclude that Ankara is focusing greater attention on the Organization's activity (in 2013, Turkey did not send its delegates to the September SCO summit in Bishkek).

Conclusion

The initial reaction of official Washington to Recep Erdoğan's statement about Turkey's integration into the SCO had a touch of diplomatic irony. Representatives of the U.S. State Department said they thought it would be very interesting to see how Turkey, as a NATO member, would be able to join the SCO.

Incidentally, despite the objectively currently existing contradiction between Turkey's membership in NATO and its striving (albeit still abstract) to join the SCO, the Americans need to stay on the alert for any possible surprises from eccentric President Recep Erdoğan. This is precisely why the role of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu is rising in the eyes of those in favor of keeping Turkey in the orbit of primarily Euro-Atlantic influence.

Recep Erdoğan's standoff with Turkish preacher, leader of the Hizmet Movement Fethullah Gülen shows both an increase in the striving of the leading PJD to dominate in the country's socio-

political field and preservation of the sensitive issues in Turkey's relations with the U.S. and Europe.

Despite his pragmatism, Ahmet Davutoğlu is still compelled to support President Erdoğan's fundamental undertakings. The head of government has already announced that the Turkish authorities will double their efforts to extradite Fethullah Gülen from the U.S. to Turkey, where serious accusations have been made against him.

Turkey can say all it wants about the eastern alternatives to EU membership, hint at establishing a Lira Zone, and discuss the possibilities of joining a free trade zone with the EEU countries. But we need to remember that it will be extremely hard for the current Turkish government to give up the prospect of joining the EU or its membership in NATO.
