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Influence of Great Britain on Turkish Policy in the Transcaucasia and the Middle East

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Abstract. The study explores the Turkish-British partnership. The author verifies the thesis, which gained popularity after the beginning of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war in the Russian expert and journalistic community, that the United Kingdom had a significant impact on Türkiye's foreign policy in order to destabilize the South Caucasus and oust Russia from the region. Some experts hypothesize that London is trying to implement the "Great Turan" project in the post-Soviet space through the hands of Ankara to the detriment of Russian interests. One of the main arguments that Türkiye's foreign policy is managed from London is the appointment of former ambassador R. Moore, who has close contacts with Turkish President R.T. Erdogan, to the post of head of British Foreign Intelligence, MI6. To test this hypothesis, the author of the article analyzes the trade, financial, political relations between Great Britain and Türkiye, as well as the degree of similarity in their positions regarding the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. The author comes to the conclusion that Great Britain and Türkiye are indeed close allies. This is confirmed by the fact that the British government lobbied Türkiye to join the EU, refrained from interfering in internal affairs, supported R.T. Erdogan during the coup attempt in 2016, and did not criticize Ankara's pro-Azerbaijani position during the Karabakh conflict. At the same time, the lack of a high level of financial and economic interdependence, Türkiye's desire to play an independent role in the Middle East and Transcaucasia bypassing NATO, Ankara's close cooperation with London's geopolitical adversary Moscow, as well as differences in approaches to the Syrian conflict allow the author to refute the thesis that that Türkiye acts as a "conduit for the interests of Great Britain."

Key words: Türkiye, Great Britain, foreign policy, South Caucasus, Middle East

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Влияние Великобритании на политику Турции в Закавказье и на Ближнем Востоке

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Аннотация. Исследование посвящено изучению турецко-британского партнерства. Автор верифицирует приобретший популярность на фоне войны в Нагорном Карабахе 2020 г. в российском экспертном и журналистском сообществе тезис о том, что Великобритания оказывала существенное влияние на внешнюю политику Турции с целью дестабилизировать Южный Кавказ и вытеснить из региона Россию. Некоторые эксперты выдвигают гипотезу, что Лондон руками Анкары пытается реализовать проект «Великого Турана» на постсоветском пространстве в ущерб российским интересам. В качестве подтверждения гипотезы ее сторонники указывают на назначение бывшего посла Великобритании в Турции Р. Мура, имеющего тесные контакты с президентом Турции Р.Т. Эрдоганом, на должность главы МИ-6. Для проверки данной гипотезы анализируются торговые, финансовые и политические отношения Великобритании и Турции, а также степень близости их позиций относительно конфликтов в Сирии, Ливии и Нагорном Карабахе. Автор приходит к выводу, что Великобритания и Турция действительно являются тесными союзниками. Подтверждением этому служит то, что британское правительство лоббировало вступление Турции в ЕС, воздерживалось от вмешательства во внутренние дела страны, поддерживало Р.Т. Эрдогана во время попытки госпереворота в 2016 г. и не критиковало проазербайджанскую позицию Анкары во время карабахского конфликта. При этом недостаточно высокий уровень финансово-экономической взаимозависимости, стремление Турции играть самостоятельную роль на Ближнем Востоке и в Закавказье в обход НАТО, тесное сотрудничество Анкары с Москвой, являющейся геополитическим противником Лондона, а также наличие расхождений в подходах к сирийскому конфликту позволяет автору опровергнуть тезис о том, что Турция выступает «проводником интересов Великобритании» в Евразии.

Ключевые слова: Турция, Великобритания, внешняя политика, Южный Кавказ, Ближний Восток

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Introduction

Against the backdrop of the Second Karabakh War (September 27 — November 10, 2020), the thesis has gained popularity in the Russian expert community and the media that Britain manages Turkish foreign policy in order to “set fire” to the South Caucasus and oust Russia from there. Some experts are convinced that London has enormous influence over Ankara’s policies. Proponents of this hypothesis

argue that London has a strong influence on Ankara’s foreign policy, including the appointment of former British Ambassador to Türkiye Richard Moore, who has close contacts with Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as head of British Foreign Intelligence (MI6). “There is clear evidence to suggest that Britain and Richard Moore personally play a major role in Türkiye’s broad foreign policy offensive. Apparently, London has decided to make Türkiye a battering

ram to advance its interests, and Erdogan is satisfied that Britain supports its course... Britain, through the efforts as a head of MI6, is trying to use Türkiye to return to the Great Game that it has been playing in Eurasia since the 19th century,”¹ wrote political scientist Vladimir Kudryavtsev.

Kommersant newspaper also hinted at special ties between the two countries. It supported its arguments by the cooperation of Türkiye and Great Britain in the military-industrial complex, British support to Ankara in the dispute for the gas fields in the Mediterranean, and the “warm” stance of the UK government in the Second Karabakh war, which was beneficial for Türkiye and its ally Azerbaijan.² *Kommersant* also drew attention to the fact that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was “almost the first Western leader to hold telephone talks with President Erdogan on 28 September.”³

Associate professor of Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration Sergey Karnaukhov is sure that Moore is responsible for unleashing of the Second Karabakh: “Great Britain is going to produce Zangilan gold, and British Petroleum used Zangezur — Nakhichevan transit corridor to transport new stocks of Caspian oil to the West. One can trace the persistence in the formation of this corridor,”⁴ he wrote in his Telegram channel. Military expert Alexei Leonkov agrees with Karnaukhov, calling Britain “one of the instigators of the war in Karabakh.” “The war is

supported by Türkiye, Afghanistan and Pakistan. These countries were controlled by British intelligence in the past”, he told Channel One’s “Vremya Pokazhet”⁵ talk show.

Turkish Russian-speaking political analyst Kerim Has said in an interview that Ankara was “a conduit for British interests” in the South Caucasus. “Britain did not send its troops there, but this role was played by Türkiye. The outcome of the Karabakh war is in Britain’s interest,” Has noted. An increase in Turkish military activity in the South Caucasus, diverting Russian interests, is in Britain’s interest, he said.⁶

Given the claims by the Russian media, social media and the expert community that Britain influences the South Caucasus through Türkiye, which serves as a “vehicle” for British interests, this study seeks to find out the extent to which Ankara perceives and coordinates its policies with those of London in the region.

Literature Review

The topic of Türkiye’s allied relationship with the UK has been analyzed in the researches of a number of Russian and foreign authors in the field of international relations. In particular, V.A. Chmyreva writes about the “golden era” of British-Turkish relations after Brexit. The author draws attention to the conformity of economic, military and political interests, which “allows experts to state the formation of the British-Turkish alliance.” As evidence of the ‘golden era’ of British-Turkish relations, the following examples are cited: London’s support for Türkiye’s European integration, London’s solidarity with R.T. Erdogan during the 2016

¹ Kudryavtsev V. Britain resumes the Great Game // Strategic Culture Fund. November 15, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2020/11/15/britania-vozobnovljaet-bolshuju-igru-52264.html> (accessed: 23.12.2021).

² Anichkin A. What does the “Englishwoman” do? Is it worth looking for a British trace in the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict // *Kommersant*. October 12, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4519783> (accessed: 27.12.2021).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Telegram channel of Sergey Karnaukhov. November 11, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://t.me/sskarnaukhov/3814> (accessed: 29.12.2021).

⁵ Great war for Karabakh. *Vremya Pokazhet* TV show. Fragment of the release dated 09/29/2020 // Channel One. September 29, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/bolshaya-voyna-za-karabah-vremya-pokazhet-fragment-vypuska-ot-29-09-2020> (accessed: 01.03.2022).

⁶ Kerim Has: A look at the region // YouTube. December 11, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a67957dv3kA&t=2709s> (accessed: 01.04.2022).

coup attempt, Britain's restraint on Türkiye's military operations against Kurdish fighters in Syria, British funding for the maintenance of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, designation of R. Moore to a post of MI6 chief (Chmyreva, 2021, p. 230).

Modern Turkish-British relations are analysed in a study of E.A. Krasina "Brexit Outcomes: Global Britain and Russia's Counteraction" (Krasina, 2021). She draws attention to Moore's visit to Ankara and his meeting with the Turkish presidential spokesperson on 11 March 2020, where the problems of Nagorno-Karabakh, Libya, the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean were discussed. Krasina, citing V. Kudryavtsev writes that "Britain and personally Richard Moore play a major role in Türkiye's foreign policy offensive," and "London has apparently decided to make Türkiye a battering ram to advance its interests" (Krasina, 2021). K.B. Vlasova and V.A. Timchenko suggest that "the British foreign intelligence service under Richard Moore stays behind Türkiye" (Vlasova & Timchenko, 2021, p. 836). Vlasova and Timchenko believe that London is using Türkiye's foreign policy offensive to advance its own interests, primarily aimed at weakening Russia's position and overall strengthening of NATO and the US in the South Caucasus.

Turkish-British relations in the context of Brexit are examined by K. Godovanyuk (2021) and I. Gasimzade (2018). Gasimzade notes that Türkiye's potential accession to the EU, which created the threat of Syrian refugees and terrorists flowing through Turkish territory into the EU, was one of the main reasons for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the bloc. Godovanyuk recalls that Brexit supporters argued that the only way to avoid the emergence of a 'British-Turkish border' was to leave the EU (Godovanyuk, 2021, p. 25). She sees the Turkish-British alliance as a 'situational alliance' with a number of limitations, particularly in view of the value-oriented policies of the new Britain. A. Cianciara and

A. Szymański see Brexit as a 'window of opportunity' to strengthen Türkiye — UK relations (Cianciara & Szymański, 2019).

O. Örmeci (2016) analyses the relationship between Britain and Türkiye in the first half of the 2010s. He estimates that there are common interests between the countries in Syria and Ukraine. Both states fought against ISIS⁷ and opposed Russian policies. However, Türkiye's high dependence on Russian gas (55%) and London's refusal to recognize the YPG (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*) / PYD (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*) as terrorist organizations, according to the expert, bring discord to the British-Turkish partnership in the Middle East.

The history of British-Turkish relations between the two world wars is touched upon in the works of A. Boldyrev (2020), D.-Y. MacArthur-Seal (2018) and B. Dilek and S. Yilmaz (Dilek & Yilmaz, 2016). M. Bilgin and S. Morewood investigated Türkiye's dependence on Türkiye's political and diplomatic support against the USSR in 1943—1947 (Bilgin & Morewood, 2004). The period of Turkish-British relations on the eve of the World War I was studied by F. Ahmad (1966). The article of A. Zaguljaev (2016) analyses British support for Türkiye's accession to the EU in 1997—2004.

The regional aspects of British foreign policy, particularly in Türkiye, Iran and Transcaucasia, are analyzed in a study of I. Muradyan (2008). P. Henze (2002) looked at the opportunities and constraints to the promotion of Turkish political and economic interests in the Transcaucasian republics in the first decade after the collapse of the USSR. Like K. Oskanian (2011), who focuses on the second post-Soviet decade, Henze concludes that ethnic and historical factors related to the Turkish-Armenian and Azerbaijani-Armenian conflicts limited Ankara's ability to promote its interests in the Transcaucasia.

⁷ Hereinafter, an organization included in the list of terrorist organizations in the Russian Federation is mentioned.

The importance of Türkiye in realizing Britain's strategic objectives in Eurasia and North Africa is described in F. Hakura's report (Hakura, 2012) for Chatham House. The prospects for the Anglo-Turkish partnership are touched upon in C. Balım's interview with the Turkish Ambassador to the UK (Balım, 2020). B. Aras and P. Akpınar (Aras & Akpınar, 2011) examine Türkiye's relations with the Transcaucasian republics. They argue that Türkiye has shifted from being a Cold War 'buffer zone' to a 'central country.' The researchers conclude that Türkiye is an energy corridor linking the South Caucasus with Europe. The changes in Türkiye's Caucasian and Central Asian policy are outlined in the research paper of E. Tellel (2021). Demirel (2021) deals with political and economic interests of Türkiye in Libya.

Z. Sağlam (2006) studied the divergence of American and Turkish strategies in Syria before the civil war. A. Baharçipek and O. Ağır (Baharçipek & Ağır, 2020) evaluated the Russian-Turkish partnership in the context of Syrian crisis and the prospects of extending the Astana format to other conflicts. The history of Turkish-Syrian relations before and after the Arab Spring is analyzed by I. Korgun (2020). O. Okyar (2017) examines Iran's role in Turkish-Armenian relations. F. Erarslan and F. Özdemir (Erarslan & Özdemir, 2021) found that Turkish support for Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh war brought relations temporarily burdened by Turkish-Armenian normalization (2008—2009) to a strategic level. "In the Second Karabakh war, thanks to Türkiye's specific support, Azerbaijan liberated most of its occupied territories," the authors note (Erarslan & Özdemir, 2021, p. 331).

M. Ekşi (2009) sees the influence of Turkish-Armenian rapprochement in 2008 as one of the main reasons why Baku and Ankara have not reached the level of strategic partners. The historical development of economic, social and cultural relations between the South Caucasus countries and Türkiye is researched

by A. Avcı (2021). S. Suyundikov (2021) and N. Sarıahmetoğlu (2016) examine the role of Turkey and Russia in resolving the Karabakh issue. Turkish-Russian relations in the context of the South Caucasus have been researched by O. Ancak (2020).

Methodology

The author uses a comprehensive approach, which allows a comprehensive study of the interrelationships of the object under study. The method of logical analysis is used for structural analysis of the research object. The method of comparative analysis is used to identify differentiated approaches of the UK and other NATO and EU countries with regard to foreign and domestic political processes, such as the coup attempt in Türkiye and military operations in Syria and Libya. Quantitative methods were applied to assess the financial and economic importance of the Turkish-British partnership. Content analysis of various statements and materials by UK, Turkish and EU leaders and politicians is necessary to understand the depth of the political relationship between the two countries.

Political Relations

Britain and Türkiye have been allies and enemies at different times of their history. During the Russo-Turkish wars of the 18th and 19th centuries, London supported and incited the Ottoman Empire to take military action against the Russian Empire in order to prevent it from gaining access to the "warm seas" and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which would have challenged British maritime supremacy. However, by the beginning of the 20th century, when the position of Germany strengthened in the Porte and the Ottoman Empire joined the Triple Alliance in the World War I (1914—1918), London attempted to disintegrate the Ottoman Empire. The British Empire's anti-Turkish policy was symbolized by Lawrence of Arabia's special operations to provoke an uprising in the Arabian regions of the Ottoman

Empire, the Battle of Çanakkale in 1915—1916 and the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) on the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, which did not materialize.

The UK became one of Ankara's closest allies after the World War II, in which the Republic of Türkiye took a neutral position. In 1952, Türkiye joined the NATO military alliance initiated by former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Both countries are still part of the bloc. Furthermore, at the time of its membership of the European Union, London, unlike Paris and Berlin, lobbied for Türkiye's accession to the EU. During his visit to Türkiye, Prime Minister David Cameron stated that he was the staunchest supporter of Türkiye's accession to the EU and the expansion of Turkish influence in Europe.⁸

In 2010, Cameron expressed dissatisfaction with the slow pace of negotiations between Brussels and Ankara on Türkiye's membership in the European Union. There was a bipartisan consensus in the British parliament on Türkiye's accession. Conservative Cameron's predecessor, Labor's Tony Blair, openly welcomed the start of membership negotiations in 2004. His government saw Türkiye as a Muslim country where human rights were respected and which saw itself as a supporter of democracy.⁹

Britain's exit from the European Union has not weakened its partnership with Türkiye. During her visit to Ankara on May 28, 2017, British Prime Minister Theresa May announced the signing of a 100 million GBP deal to develop Türkiye's TF-X fighter jets. According to May's statement, the contract "marks the start of a new

and deeper trading relationship with Turkey."¹⁰

For his part, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stated his intention to bring bilateral trade from 15.6 to 20 billion USD.¹¹ The head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Boris Johnson during his visit to Ankara in March 2017, pointed out that Türkiye "will continue to be an indispensable partner in the post-Brexit era."¹² According to him, the withdrawal from the EU allows London to broaden its foreign policy horizons and strengthen its relations with the outside world (including Türkiye). It becomes possible for London to act within the paradigm of "Global Britain" as explained by Johnson in an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*. At the same time, he expressed support for Erdogan condemning the 2016 coup attempt, praised Türkiye's contribution to the fight against ISIS and the hosting of 4 million Syrian refugees in Türkiye, and pointed to close British-Turkish cooperation in the fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK).¹³

The 2016—2017 House of Commons report on Turkish-British relations states that the leaders of both countries refer to each other as "strategic partners."¹⁴ It also notes that Türkiye's foreign policy in the Middle East coincides with that of the Foreign Office on key issues: treatment of Kurdish groups inside and

¹⁰ Theresa May in Turkey: UK agrees £100m defence deal // BBC. January 28, 2017. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-38779669> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Demirtaş S. Turkey to remain an indispensable partner after Brexit: UK Foreign Minister Johnson // *Hurriyet Daily News*. March 27, 2017. URL: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-remain-an-indispensable-partner-after-brexit-uk-foreign-minister-johnson-111244> (accessed: 10.01.2022).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The UK's relations with Turkey. Tenth Report of Session 2016—17 // House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. March 25, 2017. URL: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaaff/615/615.pdf> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

⁸ Britain supports Turkey's accession to the European Union // *Vestnik Kavkaza*. July 27, 2010. (In Russian). URL: <https://vestnikavkaza.ru/news/23148.html> (accessed: 01.06.2022).

⁹ Turkey's entry into the EU: The opinions of Europeans are divided // *RBK*. December 16, 2004. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/society/16/12/2004/5703c4df9a7947dde8e0cc90> (accessed: 01.08.2022).

outside Türkiye, as well as responses to the Arab Spring revolutions. Meanwhile, British MPs stress that London should maintain close contacts not only with Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), but also with other parties and influential figures in Türkiye.

The close political ties are not denied by Turkish officials either. Speaking at a Turkish-British forum during a visit to the UK in May 2018, Erdogan recalled London's condemnation of the coup attempt in July 2016, saying "we will never forget this solidarity." The Turkish president called the United Kingdom "an ally and a strategic partner, but also a real friend."¹⁵ Speaking at a London forum organized by the Centre for British-Turkish Understanding, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar noted the "special relationship" and recalled the two countries' "deep historical ties." Akar equated Türkiye and the UK's post-Brexit position, saying that outside the EU, they are now the same — NATO allies outside the EU.¹⁶

Indeed, since 2017, London and Ankara have found themselves in a similar situation. Both countries needed to readjust their relations with Brussels: Britain because of its exit from the EU, and Türkiye after realizing it would no longer be a member state following the EU's condemnation of Türkiye's transition to a presidential form of government.

Two weeks before the outbreak of the Second Karabakh war (September 27, 2020 — November 10, 2020), on September 10, 2020, the Turkish ambassador to London U. Yalcın stated that British-Turkish ties were based on a "strategic partnership." He said Brexit

strengthens relations between the two countries and the visits of Erdogan in December 2019 and Turkish Foreign Minister M. Cavusoglu to London in July 2020 demonstrate the "strong relationship" between Türkiye and the UK. *The Daily Sabah* newspaper quoted a Turkish diplomat as saying that bilateral relations "have reached an extraordinary level in the last decade."¹⁷ Former Turkish diplomat O. Güler sees the reason for London's support for Erdogan is the desire for a new post-Brexit trade partnership with Ankara,¹⁸ which was reported to the House of Commons Foreign Policy Committee in March 2017 by the UK's Minister for Europe and the Americas A. Duncan. "We want a deep strategic relationship, which is of course political, but also based on trade,"¹⁹ Duncan said.

Financial and Economic Ties

Trade

Türkiye's close historical and political relationship with the UK is complemented by economic ties. It is worth recognizing that Türkiye is not among the UK's top trading partners, ranking only 14th. London's top ten includes eight European countries, the US (1st) and China (7th).²⁰ Türkiye, meanwhile, ranks first among Britain's Middle Eastern partners, slightly ahead of the UAE. The position of British business in Türkiye is much stronger.

¹⁷ Turkey — UK ties based on strategic partnership, Turkish envoy says // *Daily Sabah*. September 10, 2020. URL: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-uk-ties-based-on-strategic-partnership-turkish-envoy-says> (accessed: 11.01.2022).

¹⁸ Güler Ö. The Curious Love between the UK and President Erdoğan // *Institute.org*. July 20, 2020. URL: <https://www.institute.org/opinion/the-curious-love-between-the-uk-and-president-erdogan> (accessed: 12.01.2022).

¹⁹ A "strategic" relationship, and its implications for Turkey and the UK // House of Commons. March 23, 2017. URL: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcaff/615/61506.htm#_idTextAnchor028 (accessed: 13.01.2022).

²⁰ Workman D. United Kingdom's Top Trading Partners // *World's Top Exports*. February 27, 2021. URL: <https://www.worldstopexports.com/united-kingdoms-top-import-partners/> (accessed: 13.01.2022).

¹⁵ Turkey's Erdogan in UK, praises country as 'real friend' // *Fox Business*. May 13, 2018. URL: <https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/turkeys-erdogan-in-uk-praises-country-as-real-friend> (accessed: 10.01.2022).

¹⁶ Anichkin A. What does the "Englishwoman" do? Is it worth looking for a British trace in the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict // *Kommersant*. October 12, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4519783> (accessed: 27.12.2021).

The UK is Türkiye's second (after Germany) main trading partner. The two countries' trade turnover in 2020 was 11.2 billion USD (in pre-demonstration 2019 it was 16 billion USD). Although only 1% of all British exports are destined for Türkiye, the UK accounts for 6.6% of Turkish exports.²¹

Immediately after leaving the European Union on February 1, 2020, the UK began talks with the Turkish government to liberalize mutual trade. On December 29, 2020, Ankara and London concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, commenting on the agreement, said that "2021 will be a new era of success for Turkey and the UK."²² Erdogan called the deal "the most important agreement" since Ankara signed a trade agreement with the European Union in 1995. The FTA deal was not just a result of London's desire to compensate for its exit from the EU Customs Area, but also a necessity. Without the FTA, nearly three-quarters of Türkiye's exports to the UK would have been affected by the duties, said Turkish Commerce Minister Ruhsar Pekcan.²³

Investments

The UK is the 3rd largest investor in the Turkish economy after the Netherlands and the US. Between 2003 and 2020, it attracted 7% of all FDI in Türkiye.²⁴ Competition in the

²¹ Workman D. Turkey's Top Trading Partners // World's Top Exports. February 1, 2021. URL: <https://www.worldstopexports.com/turkeys-top-import-partners/> (accessed: 15.01.2022).

²² Aliyev A. British way out from under the umbrella. What does the rapprochement between London and Ankara mean? // TRT in Russian. January 28, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.trtrussian.com/mnenie/britanskij-vyhod-iz-pod-zontika-chto-oznachaet-sblizhenie-londona-i-ankary-4272996> (accessed: 15.01.2022).

²³ Turkey, UK sign historic free trade agreement // Anadolu Agency. December 29, 2020. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkey-uk-sign-historic-free-trade-agreement/2092362> (accessed: 22.01.2022).

²⁴ FDI in Türkiye // Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Investment Office. URL:

Turkish market is extremely strong. Slightly behind the UK are EU member states Austria (6.4%), Germany (6.2%), Luxembourg (6%) and the Gulf states (7%).²⁵ Between 2002 and 2017, the British invested about 10 billion USD in Türkiye.²⁶ Over the same period, 2.3 billion USD was attracted from Türkiye to the UK.²⁷ Türkiye is an attractive tourism destination for Britons. In 2017, it was visited by about 1.5 million British citizens.²⁸ About 2,500 British companies were operating in Türkiye that year, including BP, Shell, Vodafone, Unilever (UK), BAE, Aviva, Diageo and well-known retailers Harvey Nichols, M&S, Kingfisher and Laura Ashley.²⁹

Energy

British business plays an important role in the Turkish energy sector. For example, British Petroleum has a 12% stake in the gas pipeline that runs from Azerbaijan to Greece via Türkiye (TANAP).³⁰ TANAP has a capacity of 16 bcm per year.³¹ BP also owns 20% of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) from Greece to Italy, with a capacity of 10 bcm

<https://www.invest.gov.tr/en/whyturkey/pages/fdi-in-turkey.aspx> (accessed: 16.01.2022).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Commercial and Economic Relations between Turkey and the UK // Republic of Türkiye. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/commercial-and-economic-relations-between-turkiye-and-england.en.mfa> (accessed: 18.01.2022).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Number of UK residents' visits to Turkey from 2012 to 2019 // Statista. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/736071/united-kingdom-uk-travel-to-turkey/> (accessed: 18.01.2022).

²⁹ Guidance Overseas Business Risk: Turkey // Turkey Foreign & Commonwealth Office. March 9, 2021. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-turkey/overseas-business-risk-turkey> (accessed: 12.01.2022).

³⁰ BP acquires 12 percent stake in TANAP pipeline project // Hurriyet Daily News. March 13, 2015. URL: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/bp-acquires-12-percent-stake-in-tanap-pipeline-project-----79662> (accessed: 14.01.2022).

³¹ Ibid.

per year.³² TANAP and TAP are designed to transport gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field to Türkiye and Southern Europe.

Defense Industry

Turkish-British business is also developing in the defense sector. In 2017, Britain's BAE Systems Corporation signed a 100 million GBP deal with Türkiye's Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) to jointly develop Türkiye's first TF-X (Turkish Fighter Experimental) fighter jet.³³ The latter was to replace the American F-16s and complement the new F-35 fifth-generation fighter jets. Before its exclusion from the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter program (due to the purchase of Russian S-400 air defense systems), Türkiye has cooperated with the British BAE Systems. The British company accounts for 15% of the cost of each F-35 fighter jet produced.³⁴

Türkiye is a "priority market"³⁵ for British military products. Following the failed coup in Türkiye in July 2016, the UK government approved permanent export licenses worth 806 million GBP for arms exports to Türkiye.³⁶ British corporations are involved in the development of Turkish weapons systems.³⁷ One of the components for the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones was supplied by Brighton, England-based company EDO MBM, now a subsidiary of US-based L3Harris.³⁸ "It was with the help of British Hornet technology that the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 UAVs gained

the ability to launch missile strikes,"³⁹ Alexander Anichkin specifies. In particular, the British company shared bomb-dropping mechanisms and other technologies with the Turkish Baykar.

The UK is critical of the strengthening of cooperation between Russia and Türkiye.⁴⁰ London expects Ankara to cooperate with NATO countries rather than Moscow in the defense industry. In particular, the British cabinet is concerned about the deal for Türkiye to buy Russian S-400 air defense systems. "Our position is quite clear that we very much hope that Turkey will in the future look to its NATO allies, as the British ambassador looks to the U.K., for international defense industry collaborations, not to Russia,"⁴¹ the British ambassador to Ankara, Dominic Chilcott said in January 2021.

Coordination in International Affairs

Britain in the Second Karabakh War

One recent example of the UK's support for Turkish foreign policy is the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh. During the Second Karabakh war Ankara supported Azerbaijan's military action against the Armenian forces. While France and the US criticized Türkiye's actions, accusing it of sending mercenaries and fighters from Syria, Boris Johnson's government not only remained neutral but used its leverage, such as the veto at the UN Security Council (UNSC).⁴²

³² Favasuli S. Trans Adriatic Pipeline begins gas deliveries from Azerbaijan to Italy // S&P Global Platts. December 31, 2020. URL: <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/123120-trans-adriatic-pipeline-begins-gas-deliveries-from-azerbaijan-to-italy> (accessed: 18.01.2022).

³³ UK arms sales to Turkey // Campaign against Arms Trade. June 9, 2021. URL: <https://caat.org.uk/data/countries/turkey/uk-arms-sales-to-turkey/> (accessed: 14.01.2022).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Anichkin A. What does the "Englishwoman" do? Is it worth looking for a British trace in the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict // Kommersant. October 12, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4519783> (accessed: 27.12.2022).

⁴⁰ Britain expects that Turkey will refuse to cooperate with the Russian Federation in the defense industry in the future // TASS. January 28, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/10571431> (accessed: 12.01.2022).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² It was London that blocked the UN Security Council resolution on Karabakh, or Whom does Moore serve // Sputnik Armenia. November 7, 2020. (In Russian). URL:

The UK representative blocked a UNSC resolution, agreed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs (the US, France and Russia), calling for an end to military operations, to prevent the involvement of third countries and to stop the transfer of fighters to Karabakh.⁴³ Armenian experts linked this position to London's desire to strengthen ties with Türkiye after Brexit, to take advantage of its transit position, the personal ties between Erdogan and MI6 chief Richard Moore, and the presence of British capital (e.g. British Petroleum) in Azerbaijani oil production. They estimate that London was seeking to gain control of energy flows.⁴⁴

In addition to diplomatic support for Türkiye's ally Azerbaijan, Britain has also provided humanitarian aid. On September 1, 2021, the press service of the Foreign Office announced that the British government allocated 500 thousand pounds for demining of the territories in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone.⁴⁵

Coordination on Crimea

London and Ankara hold similar positions on the reunification of Crimea with Russia, considering it an "annexation" and a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. London's main motive is to counter Russia's growing influence and contain Moscow. Ankara acts largely with an eye to domestic political factors. Crimea is the historical homeland of the Crimean Tatars living in Türkiye and was once part of the Ottoman Empire. The UK and Türkiye actively supported the "Crimea Platform" summit convened in August 2021, which was attended

by delegations from 40 countries and international organizations. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said that the Crimean Platform would play an important role in the return of the peninsula to Ukraine.⁴⁶ For its part, in early 2021, the British embassy in Kiev promised to finance projects for the "reintegration" of Crimea into Ukraine, as well as in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics outside Ukrainian control.⁴⁷ The funding was part of the "Open Future" program, launched on January 1, 2021. The aim of the UK program is to "report human rights abuses" in Crimea and Donbass. Particular emphasis is placed on working with Crimean Tatars, encouraging their political and human rights activism.

Joint Struggle against ISIS

Of course, the fight against terrorism figures in Türkiye's cooperation with many other European countries, and the United Kingdom is no exception. However, given criticism of Türkiye by European media and parliaments for allegedly allowing fighters with EU citizenship in and out of Syria and Iraq, London's support is particularly important. In December 2014, Prime Minister Cameron met with his Turkish counterpart A. Davutoğlu in Türkiye confirmed that the two countries were "working hand in glove" against ISIS militants. At a press conference, Cameron noted that some British citizens are crossing the Turkish border or trying to return home by the same route, and added that the two countries are working "as closely as we possibly can"⁴⁸ to deal with the

<https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20201107/Imenno-London-zablokiroval-rezolyutsiyu-SB-OON-po-Karabakhu-ili-Komu-sluzhit-Mur-25211798.html> (accessed: 15.01.2022).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Great Britain allocated half a million pounds for demining in Karabakh // IA Krasnaya Vesna. September 1, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/36a12062> (accessed: 18.01.2022).

⁴⁶ Turkey said that the "Crimean Platform" will help Kyiv return the peninsula // RIA Novosti. July 23, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20210823/krym-1746917611.html> (accessed: 19.01.2022).

⁴⁷ Ispolatova V. Britain will finance the "reintegration" of Crimea into Ukraine // Gazeta.ru. January 21, 2021. (In Russian). URL: https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2021/01/12/n_15477860.shtml (accessed: 20.01.2022).

⁴⁸ Mason R. Cameron says UK and Turkey working hand in glove to stop Isis fighters // The Guardian. December 9, 2014. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/>

threat. To stem the influx of militants from the Middle East and curb their ideology, Türkiye and Britain have agreed to exchange information and cooperate more closely between intelligence agencies. Incidentally, during the same visit Cameron again advocated Türkiye's EU membership, which was extremely valuable to Ankara at a time of growing pressure on the British prime minister over the refugee crisis in Europe and the UK Independence Party's (UKIP) desire to withdraw the UK from the European Union.

Turkish Operations in Syria

In the Syrian civil war, London's position is the same as Türkiye's one. But in this, as in anti-terrorist policy, there is little that is unique. Syrian President B. al-Assad has been declared illegitimate by all EU and NATO countries. London and Ankara are no exception. At the same time, British military instructors were deployed in Kurdish-controlled territories (YPG) to fight ISIS, the exact number of which was kept secret.⁴⁹ The Kurds were seen by London as an ally in the fight against terrorists in Syria, and even after the US coalition operations ceased, the alliance continued. Türkiye's military operations against the YPG were alarming to the British government. In October 2019, during Operation Source of Peace, London imposed a ban on arms sales to Ankara, while specifying that it only applied to weapons used within Syria.⁵⁰ Other licenses, including BAE Systems' participation in the program to build Türkiye's first TF-X fighter, remained untouched.

politics/2014/dec/09/cameron-turkey-uk-cooperation-stop-foreign-islamic-state-fighters (accessed: 22.01.2022).

⁴⁹ Sabbagh D. UK and France to send further forces to Syria in aid of US withdrawal // *The Guardian*. July 9, 2019. URL: <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/09/uk-and-france-to-send-further-forces-to-syria-in-aid-of-us-withdrawal> (accessed: 21.01.2022).

⁵⁰ Wintour P., Sabbagh D. UK suspends arms exports to Turkey to prevent use in Syria // *The Guardian*. October 15, 2019. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/15/uk-suspends-arms-exports-turkey-prevent-use-syria> (accessed: 20.01.2022).

Then-British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab condemned Operation Source of Peace, saying it was worsening the humanitarian situation in Syria and undermining international efforts to fight ISIS. "This is not the action we expected from an ally. It is reckless. It is counterproductive and plays straight into the hands of Russia, and indeed the Assad regime,"⁵¹ he told British MPs. Raab criticized Erdogan's threat to send Syrian refugees to Europe, saying it was not the kind of rhetoric London expects from a NATO ally. The statements by the Conservative British government did not satisfy the opposition, represented by Labor and Scottish MPs. They condemned the British authorities for not allowing the EU Foreign Affairs Council to condemn the Turkish operation in Syria. Raab countered that London's aim was to find a balanced approach for the EU, taking into account Türkiye's concerns about the PKK (which the US, Britain and other NATO countries consider terrorist) in north-eastern Syria. He warned against steps that would "further push Turkey into the arms of Russia and Vladimir Putin."⁵²

Libyan Dossier

Although Britain, together with France, played a decisive role in overthrowing the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, London subsequently ceded primacy to Paris and Rome. Paris supported the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, based in the east, Rome the Government of National Accord (GNAC) in Tripoli. In 2019, London protested Haftar's attempts to take the Libyan capital by force and his support from Paris. On April 8, 2019, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt called on all partners to send unambiguous signals about the situation in Libya.⁵³ He denied

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Britain urged allies not to send ambiguous signals to Libya // *European Integration*. April 8, 2019. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2019/04/8/7094916/> (accessed: 22.01.2022).

any military solution and insisted on the continuation of the UN process. While not formally sympathetic to either side of the conflict, the FCO was demonstrating a commitment to a peaceful solution to the conflict, which could be seen as de facto support for the National Transitional Council (NTC).

Türkiye supported the NTC, and in January 2020 Ankara sent its military to Tripoli to repel another attack by Haftar's army.⁵⁴ In July 2020, Cavusoglu met with Johnson and Raab in London.⁵⁵ During the visit, the Turkish minister said both countries were banking on a diplomatic solution in Libya, hinting at the need to stop attacks by the LNA leader on the capital Tripoli. "We need to give pace to this political process under the roof of the UN,"⁵⁶ Çavuşoğlu said. The British security service has been in contact with Tripoli. For example, a British C-17 military transport aircraft was spotted at a military base near the Libyan capital in June 2021. British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace was in close contact with senior military officials in Tripoli.⁵⁷ Thus, the positions of London and Ankara in the Libyan dossier are close, but there is no full-fledged synergy or joint Turkish-British operations against Haftar. Unlike Türkiye, Britain has not sent its military to Libya to protect the NTC.

⁵⁴ Astafurov K. Erdogan announced the dispatch of troops to Libya // RBK. January 16, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/16/01/2020/5e2056de9a794751f3531728> (accessed: 24.01.2022).

⁵⁵ Kartal A. G. Turkey, UK 'very close' to free trade deal // Anadolu Agency. July 10, 2020. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkey-uk-very-close-to-free-trade-deal/1905885> (accessed: 26.01.2022).

⁵⁶ Kartal A. G. UK, Turkey in agreement on political solution in Libya // Anadolu Agency. July 8, 2020. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-turkey-in-agreement-on-political-solution-in-libya/1903871> (accessed: 24.01.2022).

⁵⁷ Stafford J. Why are British C-17s flying to Libya at night? // UK Defence Journal. June 18, 2021. URL: <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/why-are-british-c-17s-flying-to-libya-at-night/> (accessed: 25.01.2022).

London's Neutrality in the Mediterranean Gas Dispute

Another indication of London's special attitude towards Ankara was its neutrality during the escalation of Greece — Türkiye relations. In 2019, large gas reserves were discovered off the coast of southern Cyprus.⁵⁸ Their development by France's *Total* and Italy's *Eni* caused discontent in Türkiye. The latter signed an agreement with the Libyan NTC on the delimitation of borders in the Mediterranean Sea at the end of November 2019.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Israel, Greece and Cyprus have signed a deal to lay a gas pipeline to Europe. In 2020, Türkiye sent the ship *Oruc Reis*, escorted by five warships, to the shores of the Greek islands of Karpathos, Rhodes and Kastelorizo to carry out exploration.⁶⁰ The maneuvers led to a skirmish between the navies of the two countries, although there were no casualties. Subsequently, Greece and Cyprus began assembling an anti-Turkish coalition, which was joined by France, Egypt, the UAE, and Israel. Greece conducted military exercises with the forces of Cyprus, Egypt, France and Italy, and F-16 fighter jets from the United Arab Emirates arrived on the island of Crete.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Alifirova E. ExxonMobil discovered large gas reserves on the shelf of about. Cyprus. Will there be problems from Turkey? // Neftegaz.ru. January 3, 2019. (In Russian). URL: <https://neftegaz.ru/news/Geological-exploration/194188-exxonmobil-obnaruzhila-krupnye-zapasy-gaza-na-shelfe-o-kipr-budut-problemy-so-storony-turtsii/> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

⁵⁹ The Turkish parliament ratified the agreement with Libya on maritime borders // Kommersant. December 5, 2019. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4181794> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

⁶⁰ Turkish ship will go for seismic exploration near the islands of Greece // RIA Novosti. February 10, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20201012/seysmorazvedka-1579337963.html?ysclid=l8hg493vge257963508> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

⁶¹ Atanesyan G. Big game. What are Greece and Turkey arguing about in the Mediterranean and who is behind them // Center for the Study of Modern Turkey. August 31, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <http://ceist.ru/analitika/item/bolshaya-igra-o-chem-sporyat-greciya-i->

Paris has taken an openly anti-Turkish line in this dispute. In September 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron held a summit in Corsica with the leaders of the southern EU member states: Portugal, Italy, Cyprus, Spain, Malta, and Greece.⁶² They condemned Türkiye's behavior in the Mediterranean. On June 10, 2020, it almost came to an armed conflict between France and Türkiye when three Turkish warships "took aim" at the French frigate Courbet, which was trying to inspect a Tanzanian-flagged civilian ship escorted by the Turks.⁶³ Presumably, the ship could have been delivering arms to Tripoli in support of the NTC. In response to such behavior by Turkish ships, Paris has suspended its participation in NATO's Operation Sea Guardian. Another EU leader, Germany, tried to reconcile Greeks and Turks. Speaking back and forth between Athens and Ankara, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas compared the situation to "playing with fire" and warned of the risk of disaster.⁶⁴

turciya-v-sredizemnom-more-i-kto-za-nimi-stoit (accessed: 26.01.2022).

⁶² Macron announced support for Greece and Cyprus by the countries of Southern Europe // Regnum. September 11, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/3059949.html> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

⁶³ Wezel B., Dorokhov V. How the conflict in Libya quarreled NATO members Turkey and France // Deutsche Welle. July 3, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.dw.com/ru/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%84%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D1%82-%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D1%84%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BA-%D1%87%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%8B-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%8C-%D0%B8%D0%B7-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B8/a-54039523> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

⁶⁴ Atanesyan G. Big game. What are Greece and Turkey arguing about in the Mediterranean and who is behind them // Center for the Study of Modern Turkey. August 31, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <http://ceist.ru/analitika/item/bolshaya-igra-o-chem-spyrat-greciya-i-turciya-v-sredizemnom-more-i-kto-za-nimi-stoit> (accessed: 26.01.2022).

Unlike some leading NATO countries, such as France and the U.S., Britain has not sided with the anti-Turkish alliance. On August 11 the British government called on Greece and Türkiye to "dialogue" and "de-escalation."⁶⁵ When Athens and Ankara agreed in January 2021 to start talks on the disputed fields, London welcomed such measures. "We welcome the positive decision by both countries to restart talks later this month to seek a resolution to tensions in the Aegean — this will help ensure stability & prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean,"⁶⁶ tweeted⁶⁷ British Minister for European Neighborhood and the Americas Wendy Morton.

In the context of the fight for the Mediterranean, it can also be noted that Britain has military bases in Cyprus — Akrioti and Dekelia. Dekelia is on the firing line between the Turkish and Greek parts of the island. The location of the British military remains a guarantee of non-resumption of hostilities. As noted above, France has fully supported the Greek side in the Greek-Turkish confrontation. Against the backdrop of the British withdrawal from the EU, the deterioration of Franco-British relations due to the formation of the trilateral defence alliance AUKUS,⁶⁸ which caused Australia to refuse the purchase of French submarines, and the strengthening of Greek-French friendship, Türkiye could be seen by

⁶⁵ UK calls for dialogue and de-escalation between Greece and Turkey // In-Cyprus. August 11, 2020. URL: <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/news/local/uk-calls-for-dialogue-and-de-escalation-between-greece-and-turkey/> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

⁶⁶ Dağ B. UK welcomes exploratory talks between Turkey, Greece // Anadolu Agency. January 13, 2021. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-welcomes-exploratory-talks-between-turkey-greece/2107916> (accessed: 26.01.2022).

⁶⁷ On the basis on the requirement of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation dated February 24, 2022, access to the Twitter resource in the Russian Federation is limited.

⁶⁸ The acronym AUKUS is derived from the names of the members of the alliance: Australia, United Kingdom, and United States.

London as “a useful ally in the effort to revive a former foreign policy independent of the EU,” analyzed TRT on Russian.⁶⁹ “London is interested in maintaining a military presence on the island of Cyprus, which is drifting towards Paris and confronting Ankara,”⁷⁰ the article says.

Overall, the lack of statements supporting or criticizing Türkiye suggests UK neutrality in Ankara’s conflict with Athens. At the same time, on September 11, 2020, London and Ankara held joint naval exercises involving the British frigate HMS Argyll and the Turkish TCG Giresun (a former US Navy frigate).⁷¹ Other experts, such as K. Godovanyuk, have pointed out that in December 2020 Britain duplicated in its national legislation the restrictive measures imposed by the EU against Türkiye for the “illegal” development of gas fields in the Mediterranean (Godovanyuk, 2021, p. 28).

Interference in Internal Affairs

Unlike NATO allies and former European Union partners, the United Kingdom has traditionally refrained from criticizing the domestic politics of the Republic of Türkiye.

The attempted Coup d'état in Türkiye

The UK was effectively the only EU, NATO and Western state to condemn the attempted overthrow of Erdogan in July 2016. “We firmly condemn the attempted coup by certain members of the Turkish armed forces. Everything must be done to prevent further

⁶⁹ Aliyev A. British way out from under the umbrella. What does the rapprochement between London and Ankara mean? // TRT in Russian. January 28, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.trtrussian.com/mnenie/britanskij-vyhod-iz-pod-zontika-chto-oznachaet-sblizhenie-londona-i-ankary-4272996> (accessed: 26.01.2022).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Anichkin A. What does the “Englishwoman” do? Is it worth looking for a British trace in the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict // Kommersant. October 12, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4519783> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

violence,”⁷² the former British Prime Minister Theresa May said. The Foreign Office called the military putsch “a shocking attack on Turkish democracy.”⁷³ Former British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson held telephone talks with his Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and expressed support for Türkiye’s “democratically elected government.”⁷⁴ On September 27, 2016, Johnson was one of the first European diplomats to visit Türkiye, reinforcing Erdogan’s shaken legitimacy.⁷⁵

Expulsion of Diplomats

One example of Britain’s patient attitude towards the Turkish government was the scandal over the detention of human rights activist O. Kavala. On October 21, 2021, R.T. Erdogan criticized ambassadors of 10 countries (USA, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, Norway, and New Zealand) for interfering in the judicial affairs of the Republic. The diplomats of the said countries released a joint statement demanding the release of Kavala. Erdogan threatened to expel 10 ambassadors from Türkiye⁷⁶ but failed to materialize his

⁷² UK prime minister condemns coup attempt in Turkey // Anadolu Agency. July 18, 2016. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-prime-minister-condemns-coup-attempt-in-turkey-/610610> (accessed: 28.01.2022).

⁷³ Wintour P. British MPs say Turkish president using attempted coup to suppress human rights // The Guardian. March 25, 2017. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/25/british-mps-say-turkish-president-using-attempted-coup-to-suppress-human-rights> (accessed: 29.01.2022).

⁷⁴ UK underlines support for Turkey’s government-foreign minister // Reuters. July 16, 2016. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/turkey-security-britain-johnson-idINL8N1A20DD> (accessed: 29.01.2022).

⁷⁵ Turkey minister slams ‘Anti-Turkish’ Brexit rhetoric // Deutsche Welle. September 26, 2016. URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-minister-criticizes-anti-turkish-brexite-rhetoric-during-boris-johnson-visit/a-35896249> (accessed: 29.01.2022).

⁷⁶ Erdogan said he regards the new statement of the ambassadors of 10 countries as a “step back” // TASS. October 25, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/12759425> (accessed: 27.01.2022).

threat as Western diplomats later said they would respect Ankara's sovereignty. Remarkably, the UK was not among the Western countries criticizing the Turkish court for arresting Kavala. This once again proves the special relationship between London and Ankara.

The UK government's abstention from criticizing Türkiye's domestic politics can hardly be explained by the fact that London acts the same way towards other states. For example, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office was in the vanguard of countries demanding and pushing for the resignations of leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria during the Arab Spring.

The Personality Factor

The presence of loyal officials in the cabinets of both governments may have certain influence on the close partnership between the two countries. As noted above, Britain's MI6 intelligence agency is headed by Richard Moore, a notorious friend of President Erdogan. "Those around the Turkish leader said the Briton had done much to strengthen ties between London and Ankara. He is, moreover, owes his trips to London and support in the British media to the head of state. Moore, who is fluent in Turkish, has quickly established himself in local diplomatic circles. He was appointed ambassador to Ankara in 2014 and suffered a coup attempt two years later,"⁷⁷ *Izvestia* reported. During the coup attempt in Turkey, Moore, then British ambassador to Ankara, was the only Western diplomat to support Erdogan's government in its accusations against F. Gülen and the *Hizmet* movement. The British ambassador also showed his solidarity with the Turkish government by equating the Kurdish People's Defense Units

⁷⁷ Loginova K. Friendship against Moscow: Ankara, London and Kyiv create an unofficial alliance // *Izvestia*. January 17, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://iz.ru/1111605/kseniia-loginova/druzhiba-protiv-moskvy-ankara-london-i-kiiev-sozdaiut-neofitcialnyi-soiuz> (accessed: 02.01.2022).

(YPG) with the Kurdistan Workers' Party and pointing out their "links."⁷⁸ The Turkish army is fighting the YPG in Syria and the PKK in its own territory.

Moore struggled with the negative perception of his country in Turkish society, especially in Islamist circles. Former Turkish diplomat O. Güler recalls that the phrase "English game" and accusing the British of all mortal sins was a "national sport" for the Islamist and conservative circles, Erdogan's main electorate. In his attempts to remove clichés and convince Turkish society that the British Empire is long gone, Moore once even wrote an article for *Yeni Şafak*. This despite the fact that *Yeni Şafak*'s editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Karagül, was seen as a major supporter of conspiracy theories in conservative Turkish media.⁷⁹

British officials and ambassadors, including Moore himself, often wrote columns in pro-government newspapers. On July 15, 2017, *Sabah* (considered Erdogan's main propaganda resource because it was owned by the president's son-in-law Berat Albayrak) published an article by Richard Moore on the first anniversary of the coup attempt condemning it.⁸⁰ A higher-ranking British official, Minister for Europe and the Americas Alan Duncan, was also published in *Sabah*.⁸¹ Since 2017, British ambassadors and politicians have published at least eight articles in *Sabah*, notes Güler.⁸²

On May 5, 2020, R. Moore became head of MI6. On November 11, he travelled to Ankara, where he met with presidential spokesman

⁷⁸ British ambassador to Turkey says PYD, PKK are linked // TRT World. April 9, 2016. URL: <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/british-ambassador-to-turkey-says-pyd-is-linked-with-pkk-85156> (accessed: 02.02.2022).

⁷⁹ Güler Ö. The Curious Love between the UK and President Erdoğan // *Institute.org*. July 20, 2020. URL: <https://www.institute.org/opinion/the-curious-love-between-the-uk-and-president-erdogan> (accessed: 12.01.2022).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

Ibrahim Kalın.⁸³ According to Turkish media sources, they discussed further bilateral relations, Nagorno-Karabakh, Libya and security issues in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.⁸⁴

Speaking of the role of personality, some media also highlight former Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Turkish roots, which he does not hide.⁸⁵ Johnson is the great-grandson of the famous 20th century Ottoman public figure Ali Kemal. The latter served for about three months as foreign minister in the government of Damat Ferid Pasha, Grand Vizier of the Porte. Ali Kemal himself was assassinated during the War of Independence, after which his son Osman Ali fled to Britain, where he took the name Wilfred Johnson.

Turkey Is Not an Agent of British Interests in the Middle East and South Caucasus

The current state of economic, financial and political relations between the United Kingdom and Türkiye, as well as the two countries' positions on key international issues, suggest that they are full-fledged strategic partners. This level of relationship is confirmed by a number of facts. London, unlike many leading NATO and EU countries, firmly rejected the attempted coup in Türkiye in 2016, refrained almost entirely from criticizing Ankara's operations in Libya, Syria, Iraq and the South Caucasus, and also took a consolidated position with Türkiye on Crimea and Karabakh. Economically, Britain remains Türkiye's second main trading partner, and the latter is the UK's leading commercial partner in the Middle East.

⁸³ Senior Turkish official meets UK's spy chief // *Hurriyet Daily News*. November 12, 2020. URL: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/senior-turkish-official-meets-uks-spy-chief-159970> (accessed: 04.02.2022).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "Real Turk" Boris — Times tracked down Johnson's Turkish relatives // *RT*. July 30, 2019. (In Russian). URL: <https://russian.rt.com/inotv/2019-07-30/Nastoyashhij-turok-Boris--Times> (accessed: 02.06.2022).

Since Brexit, London and Ankara have further strengthened their ties by signing a free trade deal. At the same time, London's restraint in criticizing Erdogan's foreign and domestic policies does not at all confirm the thesis prevalent in the Russian expert community that London has overwhelming influence over Ankara's foreign policy or the hypothesis that Türkiye is allegedly a "guide" for British interests in the Transcaucasia and the Middle East. The partnership between the two countries is equal. The similarity of positions on a number of international issues is caused by the convergence of national interests. The Second Karabakh war is vivid proof of that.

Türkiye's Independent Course in the Karabakh Conflict

Since the foundation of modern Azerbaijan in 1991 and the First Karabakh war (1991—1994), Türkiye has fully supported Baku's position and its right to territorial integrity. No government in Türkiye has ever questioned whether Nagorno-Karabakh and seven districts around it belonged to Azerbaijan. Turkish authorities followed the thesis proclaimed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk "Azerbaijan's sorrow is our sorrow, its joy is our joy," as Erdogan declared at the victory parade in Baku on December 10, 2020.⁸⁶

Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan is dictated by a number of profound causes: ethno-linguistic proximity (the "one nation, two states" thesis), economic interests (joint projects such as the Baku — Tbilisi — Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku — Tbilisi — Erzurum gas pipeline and the Baku — Tbilisi — Kars railway), close contacts between the leaders and military alliance (joint military exercises and Türkiye's guarantee of Nakhichevan security).

⁸⁶ Tosun M, Kaplan E, Türkten F. Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Azerbaycan destan yazmaya devam edecek // *Anadolu Ajansı*. December 10, 2020. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycan-destan-yazmaya-devam-edecek/2071946> (accessed: 05.02.2022).

In short, Ankara did not support Baku because of British influence, much less pressure. Even if in theory Britain had any intention of somehow “squeezing Russia out of Transcaucasia,” Türkiye still acted primarily on the basis of its own interests, and not “at the behest” of London.

The same is true of Britain’s own position on Karabakh. The British veto of a ceasefire resolution at the UN Security Council is largely driven by British-Azerbaijani commercial ties. In the key Azeri — Chirag — Guneshli (ACG) oil field, British Petroleum has a stake of around 30%.⁸⁷ BP also has a 12% stake in the gas pipeline from Azerbaijan to Greece (TANAP).

The Second Karabakh war ended with Russia’s mediation. A Russian peacekeeping contingent is stationed in Nagorny Karabakh, and a Russian-Turkish monitoring center is stationed nearby in Aghdam. The unblocking of transport communications in the region in the “3+3” format is progressing with the efforts of Türkiye and Russia. And all these processes are taking place without any political and diplomatic role for London, which calls into question the argument of coordination between London and Ankara in the South Caucasus. Kudryavtsev’s thesis⁸⁸ about R. Moore’s visit to Ankara on November 12, 2020 as a confirmation of “Turkish-British collusion” against Russia does not look very convincing. After all, the head of MI6 went to Ankara after the Karabakh war ended and not before it.

Ankara’s Multi-vector Foreign Policy

Politically, the UK is Türkiye’s strategic, but not the only or key partner to keep Ankara

⁸⁷ Azeri — Chirag — Deepwater Gunashli // BP. October 22, 2021. URL: https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/who-we-are/operationsprojects/acg2.html (accessed: 12.02.2022).

⁸⁸ Kudryavtsev V. Britain resumes the Great Game // Strategic Culture Fund. November 15, 2020. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2020/11/15/britania-vozobnovljaet-bolshuju-igru-52264.html> (accessed: 23.12.2021).

dependent on London. Despite disagreements on a number of issues (Kurds, Erdogan’s domestic policy, S-400), Ankara remains an ally of Washington and still provides a military base in Incirlik to the Americans. In addition, Türkiye is a member of NATO, under which it is allied with three dozen countries. At the same time, Ankara also maintains strategic relations with NATO and US adversaries Russia and China. British-Russian confrontation in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, the Black Sea and other regions has not prevented Türkiye from acquiring Russian S-400 air defense systems, building Türkiye’s first nuclear power plant Akkuyu with Rosatom and implementing the Turkish Stream gas pipeline with Gazprom.

Economically, the UK is also not Türkiye’s dominant trading partner to dictate terms to Ankara. The UK accounts for just over 6% of Türkiye’s total exports. Germany, Italy and Spain account for about the same. The British are heavily behind Germany, Russia and China in Turkish imports, each accounting for 9—11%.⁸⁹ In terms of capital investment, Türkiye’s dependence on the UK is also not colossal and British investors face strong competition from the Netherlands, the USA, Austria and Russia.

Foreign policy disagreements on some issues also refute the thesis that Ankara and London’s foreign policies are interlocked. Even if British Prime Minister recognized the YPG as an offshoot of PKK in Syria, nevertheless, Britain, along with the US, supported the Kurdish militia in the fight against ISIS. The British deployed their military advisers in East Euphrates to train Kurdish fighters hostile to Türkiye.⁹⁰ If Ankara had “listened” to London’s opinion or had been an agent of British policy, then the Turkish Armed Forces did not carry out two military operations against Kurdish

⁸⁹ Turkey // OEC. URL: <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/tur> (accessed: 23.12.2021).

⁹⁰ Times: British special forces are preparing to leave Syria after the American troops // TASS. October 14, 2019. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/6999724> (accessed: 23.12.2021).

militants (*Olive Branch, Source of Peace*). London openly criticized the actions of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in Syria in 2019. The Foreign Secretary's statement confirmed the divergence of the two countries' national interests.⁹¹ On October 15, 2019, then British Foreign Secretary D. Raab said his country would stop issuing licenses for new arms supplies to Türkiye.⁹²

Perhaps to a lesser extent than in Syria, but the Second Karabakh war also speaks to a certain divergence between Britain and Türkiye. For example, reports of Türkiye allegedly sending Syrian fighters were spread largely due to the efforts of the British liberal daily *The Guardian*, which wrote that “deployment of 1000 Syrians to Azerbaijan — Armenia conflict shows Ankara's rise in region.”⁹³ Of course, the Conservatives were in power in the British parliament at the time and the media was an independent entity, but nevertheless the British government did not refute news that discredited London's strategic partner. Of the foreign policy disagreements, it is also worth recalling the UK joining the EU's anti-Turkish sanctions in December 2020 over disputes over the Mediterranean gas field.⁹⁴

Disagreements are not uncommon not only on foreign policy issues, but also on domestic policy issues. So, in 2017, Erdogan's adviser B. Kuzu spoke critically about the terrorist attack in London. “Terror attack in England. Terror says Europe: The UK is your safest

region? I would hit you in your safest place.”⁹⁵ This was followed by a tweet from Ambassador Moore.⁹⁶ “No condemnation? No solidarity? Shame.” N. Albayrak, editor-in-chief of the pro-government *Star Daily*, spoke out anti-Britishly, calling the attack a “comedy” and a planned action. He also criticized Turkish TV channels for “supporting the perception of the operation” carried out by the British.⁹⁷

In turn, the British parliamentarians in the report of the House of Commons questioned the involvement of F. Gülen in the 2016 coup attempt in Türkiye. “We found that the Turkish government's account of the Gülenists and the coup, which the FCO seems willing to accept broadly at face value, is not substantiated by hard, publicly available evidence, although as yet uncontradicted by the same standard. More broadly, we disagree with the FCO's implication that the severity of the measures undertaken by the Turkish government after the coup attempt is justified by the scale of the threat.”⁹⁸ The opinion of parliament is not the government's position, but it is still important in the context of bilateral relations, given that the United Kingdom is a parliamentary monarchy.

Expert Assessments

It is noteworthy that some Turkish experts focused on rapprochement with European countries, in particular the UK assess the degree of proximity between London and Ankara as insufficient. Giving examples of agreements between Germany and France, Great Britain and France in the field of defense, former

⁹¹ Britain suspended the sale of weapons to Turkey because of the operation in Syria // IA Regnum. October 15, 2019. (In Russian). <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2748770.html> (accessed: 16.02.2022).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ McKernan B. Syrian recruit describes role of foreign fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh // *The Guardian*. October 2, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/02/syrian-recruit-describes-role-of-foreign-fighters-in-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed: 18.02.2022).

⁹⁴ UK extended sanctions against Turkey after Brexit // MK Turkey. December 21, 2020. URL: <https://mk-turkey.ru/politics/2020/12/21/posle-brexit.html> (accessed: 16.02.2022).

⁹⁵ Pro-Erdogan journalist to UK ambassador: You are all sons of *itches! // Stockholm Center for Freedom. April 6, 2017. URL: <https://stockholmcf.org/pro-erdogan-journalist-to-uk-ambassador-you-are-all-sons-of-itches/> (accessed: 07.02.2022).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ The UK's relations with Turkey. Tenth Report of Session 2016—17 // House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. March 25, 2017. P. 3. URL: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmsselect/cmfa/615/615.pdf> (accessed: 08.02.2022).

permanent representatives of Türkiye to NATO M.F. Ceylan and T. Ildem point to the absence of such with Türkiye: “Among others, Turkey stands out as a good candidate for the UK to cooperate with in the formulation of such an agenda. Yet despite the generally excellent cooperation between Turkey and the UK, there is only a brief reference to Turkey in the list of countries in the UK’s IR 2021 with which the UK intends to develop further cooperation in security and defense. It does not seem to be prioritized as a major partner.”⁹⁹

Mehmet Perincek, Professor at Istanbul University, also doubts London’s influence on Ankara’s foreign policy. “The fact that the UK controls Türkiye’s foreign policy is nothing more than a myth. Richard Moore became head of MI6 after serving as ambassador to Türkiye. When he was ambassador, it was said that he had good relations with the Turks. It is from there that the legs of this delusion grow. For London, the main man in Türkiye is Abdullah Gül, the former president. The UK also has good ties with the mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem Imamoglu — he was once even invited to Chatham House. Both politicians, by the way, are now in opposition,”¹⁰⁰ Perincek said in an interview with the author of this research.

V. Chmyreva, who analyzed the partnership between the UK and Türkiye in Ukraine and the Black Sea region, questioned the strategic nature of their relations. “Talking about the establishment of an informal alliance between Ukraine, Türkiye and the UK is not possible at the moment. Based on the above, we are talking about the common tactical interests related to the projection of each party’s influence on the Black Sea region, based on

⁹⁹ Ceylan M.F., Ildem T. Security cooperation between Turkey and the United Kingdom after Brexit // European Leadership Network. June 4, 2021. URL: <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/security-cooperation-between-turkey-and-the-united-kingdom-after-brexit/> (accessed: 09.02.2022).

¹⁰⁰ Interview of M. Perincek by the author. Moscow, March 13, 2022.

their own trade, economic and geopolitical goals” (Chmyreva, 2021, p. 232). She also notes that despite Ankara and London’s “anti-Russian rhetoric,” they do not cut off Moscow’s “red lines” and do not rule out a dialogue with Russia on any international issues.

It is worth noting that in its 2016—2017 report on relations with Türkiye the House of Commons expressed concern that disagreements between Ankara and Washington pushing the Turkish government closer to Russia could diminish Britain’s influence over Türkiye. “We are concerned that the loss of influence of the UK’s international allies in Turkey might have a detrimental effect on the possible leverage that the UK might have on Turkey as well,”¹⁰¹ the document said. Since then, tensions between Türkiye and the US have not abated. Donald Trump threatened in 2019 to “destroy the Turkish economy”¹⁰² and his successor Joseph Biden in 2020 recognized as “genocide”¹⁰³ the mass extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. The British Parliament’s thesis is still relevant today, which means that the Turkish-British partnership is not as strong as some Russian experts such as S.S. Karnaukhov, A.P. Leonkov, V. Kudryavtsev, etc. believe.

According to Professor Rosemary Hollis of the University of London, the influence of the United Kingdom on Türkiye will decrease after Brexit.¹⁰⁴ As part of the EU, the UK had more

¹⁰¹ The UK’s relations with Turkey. Tenth Report of Session 2016—17 // House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. March 25, 2017. P. 15. URL: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaff/615/615.pdf> (accessed: 08.02.2022).

¹⁰² Trump announced plans to destroy the Turkish economy for attacking the Kurds in Syria // Vedomosti. September 10, 2019. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/2019/10/09/813330-trump-razrushit-ekonomiku-turtsii> (accessed: 25.02.2022).

¹⁰³ Stepanova O. The White House officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire // Zvezda. April 24, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/2021424196-KSqzO.html> (accessed: 16.03.2022).

¹⁰⁴ The UK’s relations with Turkey. Tenth Report of Session 2016—17 // House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. March 25, 2017. P. 25. URL:

opportunities to put pressure on Türkiye and criticize it for insufficient protection of human rights. After leaving the EU and withdrawing support from the other 27 member states, London's pressure on Ankara to democratize will be less significant. Hollis notes that after Brexit, "The Brits have got insufficient assets — with Brexit, now less than they had — to be much use to the Turks" as Britain cannot now impose sanctions in alliance with the rest of the EU, forcing the government in Ankara to change its behavior.¹⁰⁵

Divergence on a number of issues, such as Syria and relations with Russia, proves Ankara's autonomy in conducting its foreign policy. Ankara's prioritization of its own national interests over its special relationship with Britain allows for a conflict of interest on new issues as well. Ankara and London may diverge on issues such as Türkiye's new military operation in north-eastern Syria, anti-Russian sanctions in connection with the Russian special operation in Ukraine or recognition / non-recognition of the Taliban¹⁰⁶ government in Afghanistan. However, given the importance of mutual support, the existence of many joint economic projects and common political interests, we should not expect a serious confrontation between Türkiye and the United Kingdom in the current geopolitical realities.

Conclusion

The relationship between Türkiye and the UK is special and can really be assessed as a strategic partnership. They are manifested in a range of foreign and domestic policy issues,

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaff/615/615.pdf> (accessed: 08.02.2022).

¹⁰⁵ The UK's relations with Turkey. Tenth Report of Session 2016—17 // House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. March 25, 2017. P. 25. URL: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaff/615/615.pdf> (accessed: 08.02.2022).

¹⁰⁶ Hereinafter, an organization included in the list of terrorist organizations in the Russian Federation is mentioned.

where the two governments express solidarity with each other. However, a number of factors provide grounds to refute the thesis of London's influence on Ankara's foreign policy, in particular in the Middle East and South Caucasus. Indeed, the positions of Türkiye and the United Kingdom often overlap, whether in the Karabakh war or in Libya. However, their motives lie not in a coordinated strategy or a "strike against Russia," but correspond to strictly national interests of each of the two countries. Türkiye supports Azerbaijan and the NTC in Libya because of ethnic and economic interests, not out of loyalty to the UK. Strategic partnership is not a panacea for differences, and London's sanctions against Ankara's actions in Syria and the Mediterranean confirm this point.

Despite a number of differences, it can be assumed that the strategic partnership between Türkiye and the United Kingdom could be strengthened. There are several reasons for this. First, there is a set of unresolved tensions between Ankara and Paris: personal animosity between Erdogan and Macron, Türkiye and France's polar positions in Libya and Paris' support for the Greek coalition in the dispute over gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, relations between London and Paris have been deteriorating since mid-2021. On September 16, Australia terminated a 66 billion USD contract with France for the purchase of French submarines. The French foreign ministry saw this action as a "stab in the back."¹⁰⁷

At the same time, Australia joined the AUKUS military bloc initiated by London and comprising Britain, Australia and the US. In late October 2021, the French ambassador was summoned to the British Foreign Office because of the worsening dispute over post-Brexit

¹⁰⁷ Zabrodina E. France considers the failure of the contract on submarines with Australia to be a "stab in the back" // *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. September 16, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://rg.ru/2021/09/16/franciia-schitaet-udarom-v-spinu-sryv-kontrakta-po-podlodkam-s-avstraliej.html> (accessed: 16.02.2022).

fishing rights.¹⁰⁸ Against this backdrop, cooperation between the French and Greek militaries strengthens. On September 28, 2021, the two countries agreed to sell three French frigates to Athens.¹⁰⁹ France's growing friction with the United Kingdom and Türkiye provides further geopolitical justification for a Turkish-British partnership that could curb French ambitions. Joint Turkish and British naval exercises during the Greek-French maneuvers are further evidence of this trend.

At the same time, deteriorating US-Russian, NATO-Russian and UK-Russian relations over Ukraine could put Türkiye before a difficult choice. Türkiye's growing economic partnership with Russia will hinder Ankara and London's coordinated actions against Moscow. Türkiye is unlikely to risk confrontation with Russia out of solidarity with the UK, much less with NATO, with which Erdogan has great difficulties. Incidentally, Türkiye, even though it considers Crimea's annexation to Russia as an "annexation,"¹¹⁰ has not imposed sanctions against it. Türkiye, unlike the UK, has not imposed sanctions against Russia. Türkiye, unlike the UK, has not imposed sanctions against Russia even after the start of Russia's special operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Ankara is trying to mediate reconciliation between Kiev and Moscow.

On the other hand, one should hardly expect London to actively support Ankara in case Russian-Turkish disagreements in Syria worsen. Britain was rather reticent during the

¹⁰⁸ UK summons French ambassador amid fishing scandal // Interfax. October 29, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/800201> (accessed: 10.02.2022).

¹⁰⁹ France and Greece agreed to supply three frigates // International Affairs. September 28, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/31875> (accessed: 11.02.2022).

¹¹⁰ Polyakova V. Erdogan declared at the UN about the "annexation of Crimea" // RBK. September 21, 2021. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/22/09/2021/614a47879a79472518ac4cb6> (accessed: 13.07.2022).

Idlib crisis in autumn 2020 and the "aircraft crisis" in 2015, without expressing strong support for Türkiye in his confrontation with the Kremlin.

In view of Türkiye's growing strength in Syria, Libya and the South Caucasus, the weakening role of Europe, NATO and the EU in the aforementioned areas, and London's ambition to defeat Russia militarily during the special operation in Ukraine, there may be even more incentives for London to work more closely with Ankara. The Downing Street initiative to seek Türkiye's inclusion in a new anti-Russian alliance comprising Britain, Poland, the Baltics and Ukraine is one indication of this.¹¹¹ Cooperation with Türkiye could allow Britain to exert or maintain influence in the South Caucasus, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan, as well as increase political and economic pressure on Russia.

Thus, trade and investment, close political and diplomatic ties, personal high-level contacts, historical strategic partnerships, arms supplies to Türkiye, Ankara's membership of NATO and common interests in a number of conflicts in the Middle East and South Caucasus are the main factors influencing the development of British-Turkish relations. However, given Türkiye's growing independence, its deteriorating relations with NATO and the West, and Ankara's growing interest in the Asian region, Russia and non-Western alliances (Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS), the importance of the British factor in Turkish foreign policy is declining. Therefore, the hypothesis replicated in the Russian expert community "Great Britain controls Türkiye's foreign policy" seems untenable to the author of this article.

¹¹¹ Media: Johnson proposed to create an alliance to counterbalance the European Union // TASS. May 5, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/14745613> (accessed: 05.06.2022).

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