

## THE SECURITY PRIORITY OF TURKEY AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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### Abstract

This article discusses the problem of ensuring regional security in the Middle East region is extremely urgent. Historically, this region is the leader in the number of crisis and conflict situations. The main reason for such "leadership" is the lack of special tools for maintaining stability in these regions, as well as the lack of a general security system that has never been rationalized in the region. For a long time, the Middle East region has been the center of concentration of threats to international security.

**Keywords:** The Middle East, The Arab Spring, Ankara, Baghdad, security, Qatar.

### Introduction

The problems arising from the countries of this region threaten the security not only of the countries of the Middle East, but also of the whole world. The most urgent threats include terrorism, internal and interstate conflicts, and the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.[1]

In addition, the Middle East is a battleground for the leadership of various countries in the region. The political specificity of the Middle East region is that there are several centers of power in the region that are equal in terms of political and economic potential. However, their contradictions are so deep and fundamental that they make it practically impossible for the states of the region to coexist on a conflict-free basis. Therefore, on the one hand, the region is in constant tension, on the brink of war and peace, and on the other hand, it attracts the attention of major international players who are making serious diplomatic and military efforts to maintain relative stability in the region and take advantage of the center of world hydrocarbon production. Currently, in the Middle East, researchers have identified three countries that claim regional leadership: Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The main non-regional players in the Middle East are France, Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as the United States and the European Union, represented by Russia and China. These countries pursue different interests in conducting their policy in the region, and different and sometimes completely opposite approaches are emerging in solving various regional situations (Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, the Syrian conflict). Thus, the overlapping interests of regional states, as well as the competition of extraregional powers, have the potential for great conflict.[2] It follows that Turkey is among the countries claiming leadership in the region, and the place and role of the Middle East is important in its foreign policy and security policy. With the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party, Turkey intensified its activities in the struggle for leadership in the Middle East. Ankara through his

attempts to strengthen his position in the region, it showed its claim to the role of world leader on this basis.

The Arab Spring brought major changes to the political situation in the Middle East. Changes in the geopolitical configuration of the region have increased its regional importance and this has also become important for the hegemonic powers. Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences V.V.Naumkina unfortunately, revolutionary uprisings in the region intensified the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites and brought their conflict to the last point.[3] These processes were also influenced by the ambitions of regional and global power centers.[4] The religious and political conflict between Shia and Sunni Muslims should also be included among the problems of the Middle East. In recent years, the differences between Shiites and Sunnis have come to the fore, as they have a significant impact on the regional security of the Middle East region. At the same time, the Sunni-Shiite conflict has been described by a number of authors as between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, who traditionally claim leadership in the Sunni and Shiite worlds. viewed from the point of view of opposition. Saudi Arabia and Iran use the existing religious antagonism between the two main streams of Islam to politicalize religious differences in pursuit of their national interests.[5]

It should be said that at the current stage of international relations, the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites is the most vivid example of the manifestation of the religious factor in international relations.[6]

The origin of the modern conflict between the Shias and the Sunnis is the mass oppression of the Shias and the Kurds, who form the absolute majority of the population of Iraq, by the Baathist rule. At that time, they faced mass repression for any protest. However, the reason for this was not classical ethnic or religious antagonism. The main reason for this was the paradigm of the rule of "homoideologicus" [7], which meant cleaning the political space from those who did not correspond to the ideology introduced by the directive. Thus, the Kurds did not fit into the ideological structure of pan-Arabism because they defended the rights of other non-Arabs, while the Shiites were objectionable because they emphasized their religious identity, which went beyond the principle that the Arab nation is one and its mission is sacred. As for the Sunnis, they proved to be the most convenient group for the Baath authorities in terms of ideological and political regulation, although any dissent among them was brutally punished.[8] Currently, the region is extremely complicated from a political point of view. Many attempts by the world community to resolve various conflicts, as well as to create a stable system of regional security, did not lead to significant results, which exacerbated existing threats and caused new crises.

One of the most important problems in the region are the problem of regional and international terrorism. A number of Middle Eastern countries use terrorist groups to realize their political ambitions and try to undermine the position of regional competitors. For example, most groups are divided into Iranian-funded Shiite movements (Hezbollah, Mahdi Army) and Sunni movements, which are Salafi, close to Al-Qaeda and "moderate", which include Hamas and others. Muslim Brotherhood groups. Salafi groups are controlled by the

Saudi General Intelligence Directorate with the participation of Saudi special forces officers. Muslim Brotherhood units are coordinated by Qatar with the help of Qatari special forces. Since 2011, Syria has become the main battlefield of Shia and Salafist groups[9] and Libya was no exception. Efforts by the Syrian leadership to resolve the situation in Syria have eased. However, the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites has spread from this country to Lebanon and Iraq, threatening to turn into a major regional war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It should be noted that Islamic terrorism threatens not only the Middle East region, but primarily the European Union and the United States.[10]

On May 22, 2016, the resignation of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmed Davutoğlu, became important in Turkish politics. It took time for Ankara to grasp the depth of the changes, which led to delays in changing its foreign policy direction. The events of the Arab Spring became a test for the regional foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey and demonstrated its ineffectiveness. Turkey's pursuit of an exclusive regional policy has led to the deterioration of relations with neighboring countries. At the moment, Ankara's modern foreign policy in the Near and Middle East stems from the events of the "Arab Spring". In order to strengthen its leadership in the region, the Turkish leadership should create a favorable configuration for the Middle East subsystem. Ankara is trying to use all available foreign policy tools to strengthen its position in the region. Thus, Ankara's foreign policy tools can be divided into those used:

in the military-political sphere - military exercises, military operations, construction of military bases;

in the economic sphere - attracting investments to the economy of Turkey and direct investments to the economy of the regional countries;

in the ideological sphere - humanitarian aid, promotion of the Turkish model of education.

At the same time, the tools of the military-political sphere can be used for political support, military power and protection of national interests.

Turkey's military-political interests are helped by military exercises conducted in cooperation with Middle Eastern countries, which increases the influence of the Turkish armed forces in the eyes of regional players. The presence of a disciplined and well-trained army allows Ankara to act as a security guarantor in the region. Turkey's military-political interests are helped by military exercises conducted in cooperation with Middle Eastern countries, which increases the prestige of the Turkish armed forces in the eyes of regional players. The presence of a disciplined and well-trained army allows Ankara to act as a security guarantor in the region. It is in this spirit that regular joint exercises are conducted between the armed forces of Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

In 2016, the armed forces of Ankara and Riyadh took part in maneuvers three times.[11]

Among them, the air force exercises held in February of the same year should be highlighted.[12] At that time, the possibility of conducting joint military operations using the Incirlik airbase against the Islamic State banned in Russia was actively discussed. In February-March 2016, Turkey participated as an observer in the "Northern Storm" military exercises held in Saudi Arabia.[13] In April 2017, the parties also held joint exercises called

"Desert Wolf 2017" near Ankara, the capital of Turkey.[14] In addition, Ankara often conducts military maneuvers against the background of an important event for the region, acting as a way of political pressure or support. In particular, on September 25, 2017, Turkey and Iraq conducted military exercises on the border of the two countries at the time when the referendum on the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan was being held, and these referendum processes are not in the interests of either Ankara or Baghdad.[15] This episode serves as an example of the use of maneuvers to exert political pressure. The joint military exercises with the Qatari armed forces in June and August 2017 demonstrated the support of their Qatari counterparts by the Turkish leadership in the context of the blockade of Doha by the Gulf monarchies due to political isolation and ideological differences. The construction of military bases in the territory of Middle Eastern countries has become an important direction and importance for Turkey. In November 2016, Qatar and Turkey signed an agreement on cooperation in the military field, which provided for the construction of a Turkish military base on the territory of the emirate.[16] The military base has been operational since 2017.[17] Turkey is opening its largest military base in Qatar, and this military base is located on the site of the largest US military base in the Middle East and the headquarters of the US Central Command, and the reason why it was established in this regard Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey M. Chavushoglu comments "to ensure the security of the entire Persian Gulf region"[18] this shows the long-sighted ambitions of the Turkish regime. In addition, during the visit of Turkish President R. Erdogan to Saudi Arabia in July 2017, King Salman offered to open a military base in the territory of the kingdom, but Riyadh did not respond to this initiative.[19]

Another mechanism for achieving foreign political goals in the military-political sphere is conducting military operations on the territory of the regional states. The main purpose of such operations is to try to eliminate the Kurdish threat, which occupies one of the main positions on the agenda of the Turkish leadership, because it threatens the national security of the Republic of Turkey.[20] With the start of the Arab Spring and the increase in instability in neighboring countries, Ankara regularly conducted military operations in Iraq and Syria. The aim was to inflict as much damage as possible on Kurdish units affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is banned in Turkey. Thus, in December 2015, Turkish armed forces invaded the territory of Iraq and remain there until now, despite the demand of the official Baghdad to leave the territory.[21] The reason for this, or in other words, the official excuse, emphasizes the fact that it began training self-defense units to fight the Islamic State, which is banned in the Russian Federation.

To counter the Kurdish threat, Ankara announced the launch of Operation Euphrates Shield in neighboring Syria in August 2016, which ended "successfully" in March 2017 ahead of Turkey's referendum. As a result of this, the Turkish leadership explains the victory of the operation to the unification of the two areas controlled by the Kurds on the Turkish-Syrian border with the fact that the Turkish troops were able to prevent the Kurds.[22]

However, the Turkish regime did not stop there. In January 2018, Turkish forces re-entered Syrian territory in the Afrin region to fight Kurdish forces controlling the area. The President

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of Turkey R. Erdogan says that the operation called "Olive Branch" is being conducted in order to ensure the "national security" of the country.[23]

Evaluating the effectiveness of Ankara's tools in the military-political sphere, one can say different levels of their effectiveness. Considering the effectiveness of military training, we can say that it is at a high level. Thus, Turkey-Iraq maneuvers in September 2017 caused M. Barzani to resign soon at the end of October of that year. The support provided by the Republic of Turkey to Qatar in the framework of military exercises, together with the support of Iran and Oman, T. It allowed the Al Thani government to remain in power. At the same time, the effectiveness of Turkey's advanced military operations on the territory of neighboring countries was not so high. During the Euphrates Shield operation, the goals put forward by the Turkish leadership were constantly changing, and the main task - the destruction of the Kurdish forces - was not achieved. According to information disseminated by the Turkish mass media, in particular, the "Milliet" newspaper, 67 Turkish soldiers were killed during the operation.[24] At the same time, Turkey managed to create a necessary buffer zone on its border. In addition, the decision to end the operation was due to domestic political reasons.[25] In this way, R. Erdoğan increased his influence in the country on the eve of the constitutional referendum, which he won by a small margin.

Middle East Institute expert M.V. Kazanin, citing information from Chinese observers, claimed that the Turkish army had lost up to 25 Leopard main tanks during Operation Olive Branch as of February 12, 2018.[26] At the same time, based on Turkey's national interests, it was assumed that Ankara would not complete the operation until the "terrorist" Kurdish detachments were completely destroyed.[27] This was evidenced by the transfer of Turkish special forces experienced in urban combat operations to the Syrian outskirts of Afrin in early March 2018.[28]

It is necessary to note emerging trends regarding the use of military-political mechanisms by Turkey. First, the number of military operations aimed at eliminating Kurdish terrorist groups in the region has been increasing recently by the Turkish armed forces. This shows that the leadership of Turkey is ready to protect its national interests independently without waiting for help from outside. Second, the construction and opening of a military base in Qatar shows Ankara's desire to act as a guarantor of the security and stability of the countries of the region, while at the same time strengthening its position in the region. Thirdly, there was a tendency to effectively use military exercises to achieve specific foreign policy goals. The general trend in the implementation of Turkey's military-political instruments can be called growing independence, independence from the wishes of external players and regional powers. The leadership of Turkey remains committed to its direction, implements and protects its foreign political interests. S.B. According to Drujilovsky, he puts forward the opinion that "the Turks are not used to being ruled, but they are used to being ruled".[29] It follows that Turkey is strengthening its position in the Middle East region and strengthening its influence in the region in every way.

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