

## **Turkey is opting for caution and pragmatism**

**ARVAK Center comment, 24.07.2024<sup>1</sup>**

On 26.06.2024, according to Turkish media reports, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad announced his readiness for talks with Turkish leader Erdogan in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. The news about the preparations for the talks became known in June, but as it turned out, the Turkish and Syrian sides have been in intensive contacts for the past four years to create conditions for talks on the normalization of relations. The contacts were carried out at the level of the intelligence services of both countries. This was personally confirmed by the current Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the former head of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). The preparations for the summit were mediated by Russia and Iran. According to Turkish sources, the two sides discussed the details of the future talks several times and met in different places, including the Astana summits on Syria and Russia's Hmeimim airbase in Syria.

According to the Turkish media, Bashar al-Assad was not very enthusiastic about the idea of organizing negotiations and their possible success, but Ankara still managed to "force" Damascus to agree. This allegedly became possible after Hakan Fidan's meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow on June 11 on the sidelines of the BRICS summit. After the conversation with the Turkish foreign minister, the Russian president sent his special envoy Alexander Lavrentiev to Damascus, who convinced B. Assad to sit down at the negotiating table with Erdogan and normalize relations. Fidan himself had this to say about this "great success": "Our president, with his leadership vision, called for peace at the highest level. This is very valuable. The Turkish foreign minister is trying to present the process as a personal initiative of his country's president, very timely and important for establishing security in the region. However, it seems more convincing that it is Fidan who, through his previous service as head of the MIT and his current position, is aware of the problems Turkey will face if its enmity with Damascus continues.

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<sup>1</sup> The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 20.07.2024.