

On inclusion of Turkey and Azerbaijan into anti-Iranian conflict

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The analysis of the current situation in the Middle East suggests a direct connection between destabilization in Turkey and the plans of the United States and Israel to attack Iran. Over the past few years, there has been a prevailing opinion among experts that, starting in 2015, the policies of Washington and Tel Aviv in the region were aimed at creating conditions for involvement of Turkey and Azerbaijan in the conflict against Iran. Ankara opposed these plans in every possible way, rightly believing that such a course of events could have unpredictable consequences for it, while for Baku it can even turn into a disaster.

Turkish president Recep Erdogan has repeatedly stated the indispensability and reliability of Iran as a partner for Turkey, asserting that there is no interest in destroying the existing relations between the two countries. Highly likely this very position was partly responsible for the complications in Ankara's relations with the West, and, in particular, with the United States and its main ally in the Middle East, Israel. And it was precisely in order to contain the American-Israeli pressure that R. Erdogan initiated a search for support from Moscow, even in the face of rejection of the "Ukrainian policy" of the Russian Federation and contradictions with it on Syria, to find an opportunity to rely on its northern neighbor in the matter of de-escalating the situation around Iran. In particular, a notable illustration of this strategy was R. Erdogan's initiative to create a "3+3" platform, designed to exclude Western intervention in the South Caucasus region. This initiative was considered by the United States and its allies as a convenient springboard for potential military operations against Iran. We are talking, in particular, about Azerbaijan as the most valuable potential resource of the anti-Iranian coalition, both in terms of a strategic ground for attack, and taking into account the possibility of using the Azari ethnic factor to destabilize Iran from the inside.

Turkey's fundamental rejection of the plans of the American-Israeli tandem sheds light on the motives for Moscow's emphasized loyalty to R. Erdogan, which was most clearly manifested in the days of the so-called "*coup d'état*" attempts in Ankara in the summer of 2016. Despite the accumulated contradictions and preconditions for Russian-Turkish hostility, Moscow then warned Ankara about the impending conspiracy and supported R. Erdogan with political statements. By the way, against the backdrop of the recent events in Turkey, the Russian Federation again remains the only country that has officially expressed solidarity with the current Turkish authorities. It is likely that, among other circumstances, the Kremlin's support for the head of Turkey is also caused by R. Erdogan's position on Iran and his reluctance to become a tool in the anti-Iranian campaign.

In this light, the threats against Iran voiced on March 1, 2025 by the head of the Turkish foreign ministry, the former director of the Turkish intelligence service *MIT*, Hakan Fidan, contradict the position of R. Erdogan. This suggests that H. Fidan, who has "*strong ties*" with the NATO nomenklatura since the days of his studies and internships in the West (as evidenced by open sources), has been promoting his own position, which is different from

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 23.03.2025.

Erdogan's. In this regard, it is also worth noting that, according to some Turkish experts, the Turkish security forces deliberately provided the president with unrealistic forecasts when discussing with R. Erdogan the possible developments of the situation in connection with the planned arrest of Imamoglu. Erdogan was not ready for such large-scale protests, as he was assured that the arrest of the opposition leader would be accepted quite tolerantly by the society. Meanwhile, the course of the events showed that Imamoglu's arrest only increased the latter's authority, directly affecting the image of Erdogan himself. It turns out that certain forces within the Turkish government itself could have deliberately led the Turkish president to take a rash step. In general, taking into account the above, it can be assumed that R. Erdogan is facing the consequences of his refusal to participate in the anti-Iranian campaign, the preparation of which is currently in full swing.

In this context, there are also parallels with the events in Azerbaijan. It is obvious that Ilham Aliyev, who is constantly postponing the signing of the peace treaty with Armenia, was strongly recommended by the Western community to speed up the process and announce the acceptance of the points of the agreement. I. Aliyev, on the one hand, was forced to announce this, stating that the contradictions with Yerevan had been overcome. But, on the other hand, Azerbaijani officials continue to insist that the issue of signing cannot be resolved without satisfying some new demands of Baku. There is a strong impression that Azerbaijan is trying to resist the establishment of peace with the Republic of Armenia even on the most favorable terms for itself, because it fears that this "peace" will open the door to other, more difficult trials.

For decades, the unresolved Karabakh problem and the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation, in addition to direct negative consequences, have given Baku the opportunity to maneuver in the international arena and prevent itself from being drawn into existentially dangerous adventures. The main one of these adventures was the "Iranian case" of the Western "hawks" and the radical circles in the Israeli government. Aliyev gave them hopes of involving Baku in the anti-Iranian front in the future and, thus, used their support to strengthen his own power and, with their help, accumulated forces for a military solution of the Karabakh issue. It was this question, in fact, that he declared as the price for AzR's participation in the anti-Iranian campaign.

In 2020, and then in 2023, according to I. Aliyev himself, the Karabakh problem was "*finally resolved*", which prompted the anti-Iran coalition to begin demanding that the Azerbaijani leader fulfill his obligations. I. Aliyev delayed the negotiation process with the Armenians, based on the fact that stalling the formal conclusion of peace would allow him to evade responsibility for "paying off the debt". Now, with the return of D. Trump, the Western "hawks" are rushing Baku and demanding the *de jure* consolidation of the existing situation in the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation "on the ground" and the elimination of the last formality with the agreement.

Baku found itself in a difficult situation. It does not seem possible to rely on R. Erdogan, who is facing serious domestic political problems, presumably in connection with the same Iranian problem. Aliyev's other partner V. Putin, as D. Trump personally stated, has already

expressed his solidarity with the U.S. position on preventing Iran from arming nuclear missiles. Yerevan, in turn, does not react in any way to Baku's attempts to escalate the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and, thereby, relieve I. Aliyev from his obligations to provide his territory (and not only) to the anti-Iranian coalition. Baku is anxiously awaiting the day when the "*Abrahamic Accords*", already announced by Tel Aviv, will be signed, – an initiative that has been severely imposed on Azerbaijan in order to embitter Iran. Therefore, the initial optimism of the Azerbaijani media can be considered as an inappropriate reaction to this provocative initiative of Tel Aviv and Washington.

In conclusion, despite outward appearances of independence, Turkey and Azerbaijan are being coerced into a conflict with a powerful neighboring state. Refusal to engage in this conflict could lead to domestic political unrest and the potential overthrow of their current ruling governments.