

<https://crossroadorg.info/en/pan-turkism-and-the-politics-of-culturocide/>

Recently, a number of publications have appeared aimed at forming in the Russian political public consciousness the attitude that the strategic priority for Russia is an alliance with Turkey. It is argued that the ideology and policy of pan-Turkism adopted by Erdogan's Turkey does not pose any danger to Russia, but, on the contrary, corresponds to the interests of Moscow, which should actively use it. It is also argued that pan-Turkism is a Russian invention, invented in the General Staff of the Tsarist army purely in the interests of Russia, and the Bolsheviks became the successors of this policy of promoting pan-Turkism. And today, as then, a strategic alliance with Turkey, with the inclusion of Azerbaijan, is just as productive.

The founder of the political direction of pan-Turkism is considered to be a native of Simbirsk Yusuf Akchura, who in 1904 published the work "Three Types of Politics", which became the manifesto of pan-Turkism. In it, he justifies the need to unite the Turks living in Asia and Eastern Europe to form a large and powerful political nation. He assigns this mission to the Ottoman state. The main obstacle to achieving this goal, in his opinion, is Russia, because "based on the need to protect its interests, only this state will try to prevent the unification of the Turks." He believed that some European countries would support the policy of pan-Turkism, because it harms the interests of Russia.

The Young Turks who came to power in 1908, who firmly took the position of pan-Turkism, sought to create the Great Turan, and it was for the implementation of this project by joining the peoples of Turkey, mainly living on Russian territories, that the Ottoman Empire was plunged into the First World War. The cause of pan-Turkism continued successfully in Kemalist Turkey. Now, taking into account the above, let's ask ourselves: what tasks were going to be solved by the officers of the tsarist General Staff, for which they could need the ideology of pan-Turkism? And if someone expected that pan-Turkism could be dangerous for the multinational Ottoman Empire, then it was no less dangerous for the equally multinational Russian Empire with a multi-million Turkic population. Prince Nikolai Trubetskoy warned that if we allow the spread of pan-Turkic ideas in Dagestan, and then in the Volga region, there will be an explosion of separatism among the Turkic youth, who can easily trust the Russophobic idea. And today this warning sounds relevant.

For many years, writes Artem Dankov, associate professor at Tomsk University, Turkey's efforts are aimed at forming a common educational and cultural space, which, through cooperation in the field of language and culture, will allow us to form a common ideology of the new Turkic-Islamic world. Important attention is paid to the creation of a common energy market and an alternative corridor for energy supplies to world markets, bypassing Russia. There is also an increasing process of expanding existing and creating new integration political instruments and institutions to unite political positions under the auspices of Turkey. Military and military-technical cooperation with the Central Asian countries is successfully developing, including joint production of certain types of military equipment, supply of weapons and mass training of military personnel in Turkey, where hundreds of officers from Central Asian countries have already been trained in military educational institutions.

Considering the question of Turkey's geopolitical aspirations, we should not forget that Turkey is not alone in this game, it should not be taken in isolation from the interests of NATO countries, primarily the United States and Great Britain. The contradictions, the pressure on Turkey from the West, as analysts note, are not of a strategic nature, but only aims to make Erdogan more obedient. Turkey is seen as a geopolitical battering ram not only against Iran and Russia. The West hopes that the Turkish presence in this region will allow it to have certain mechanisms of influence on Chinese initiatives of economic advancement towards Europe through Central Asia and the Caucasus, and will help to control transport routes and pipelines. In addition, the eastern orientation of the Turkish expansion is beneficial to the NATO countries and with the expectation that Turkey will reduce its activity in the Mediterranean basin, where it is in conflict with Greece, Cyprus, France, and Egypt, it will be less engaged in Libyan affairs. In turn, Turkey, trading with the West, very successfully plays both the Russian and Chinese cards.

The policy, which some call “Erdogan”, is based on a kind of hybrid of pan-Turkism, neo-Ottomanism and “offensive” Islamism, and it is aimed at actively involving different countries, primarily Turkic-speaking ones, in the sphere of Turkey’s ideological, cultural, military and economic influence. This is a serious challenge for Russia with a multi-million Turkic-speaking and Muslim population.

The ideas and policies of pan-Turkism, in one form or another, were in demand not only in Turkey. In Soviet Azerbaijan, the policy of Turkization was systematically and purposefully carried out at the state level, both through the forced assimilation of the indigenous non-Turkic peoples who profess Islam, and the displacement of the Christian, namely, the Armenian population. According to the USSR census of 1926, the national composition of the Azerbaijan SSR included 93 nations and nationalities, and if the “Turks” made up about 60% of the total population, then in 1989 – about 83% of them. And according to the population census of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2009. “Azerbaijanis” already make up about 92%. The data on the Nakhichevan Autonomous Region are quite indicative. At the time of its creation, Armenians made up about half of the population of the region, but in 1973 there were only 6 thousand of them, while Azerbaijanis – 190 thousand. And in the 80s, there were no Armenians left in the Nakhichevan region at all. The evidence of the material and spiritual culture of the Nakhichevan Armenians was barbarously destroyed, including the ancient Armenian cemetery near Julfa, the khachkars located there were smashed, and the church itself was destroyed and its territory has been turned into a shooting range. This policy continues with renewed vigor. The other day, the BBC’s Jonah Fischer discovered the disappearance of the Armenian church, which was intact and was in its place before the territory came under Azerbaijani control during the recent Karabakh war.

The destruction and appropriation of historical heritage, the so-called “Albanization” of it, is necessary in order to declare to the Armenians: “you were not here, there is nothing of yours here.” That is, despite the huge amount of historical evidence, to prove that before the 19th century there were no Armenians in the South Caucasus at all, they were resettled there by the Russians after the annexation of these lands to Russia.

Azerbaijan’s policy of falsifying the history and culture of Armenia and the Armenian people is aimed at destroying the material evidence of this culture and perverting its spiritual component. It is set at the state level in Azerbaijan, and also affects the history and cultural heritage of Georgia and the indigenous non-Turkic peoples living in the region. It is conducted very aggressively, in its arsenal of gross fraud and falsification of historical documents and evidence, the generation of various anti-scientific myths. It involves many state scientific and administrative institutions and departments, the mass media, uses diplomatic channels and international platforms, and allocates large financial resources, including for handouts to corrupt lobbyists, historians and journalists from a number of countries. The calculation is made on the fact that few people will really want to understand this, and then the principle of criminal Goebbels propaganda will work: “if you tell a big enough lie and repeat it, people will eventually believe it.” This policy is destructive, it is not aimed at peace, but at war. It is also harmful for the Azerbaijani people.

The idea of “one nation, two states”, which has long been promoted in Azerbaijan and Turkey, was successfully implemented by Turkey through a “latent anschluss” with Azerbaijan, adding the slogan “two states, one army”. Further on, the Volga region with a Muslim population, where active religious and ideological propaganda is carried out, is in the sights. In the wake of the successful use of its weapons in the Karabakh theater of operations, Turkey has established military-technical cooperation with Ukraine, expanding the geography of exports of its military industry products.

As already noted, Erdogan skillfully plays on the confrontation between the West and Russia, trying to create the idea that Turkey can be on the side of Russia in a confrontation with the West, be a very profitable economic and political partner, and the West blackmails by saying that if the contradictions increase, Turkey may be inclined to closer cooperation with Russia and China. In the first case, in addition to economic benefits, Turkey hopes that Russia will not greatly hinder its progress in the regions traditionally considered the sphere of influence of Russia. To a certain extent, she managed to achieve this. Azerbaijani experts today unanimously declare that the times when Russia was the dominant force are over. Turkey, in their opinion, began to take this position. In previous years, Turkey has already begun founding its military bases in Azerbaijan, and now it is deploying this work openly on an increasingly large scale.

But Turkey's far-reaching plans for an anschluss with Azerbaijan may pose the greatest threat to Armenia. Aliyev has repeatedly stated territorial claims to Armenia, covering almost half of its territory, including its capital. And he calls the southern region of the neighbor an artificially created barrier between two related countries, Turkey and Azerbaijan, hinting at the need to eliminate it. Involuntarily, there is an association with the words said 100 years ago by Yu. Akchura about the need to eliminate Armenia as a dam between the Turkic states. It is significant that Aliyev repeated these claims at a military parade in Baku, and Erdogan quoted an excerpt from a poem by the Azerbaijani poet Bakhtiar Vahabzadeh, which refers to the forcibly divided Azerbaijan between the two countries, referring to Northern Iran, populated mainly by ethnic Turks, which caused an angry reaction from the Iranian Foreign Ministry. Another clear confirmation that Erdogan's ambitions extend far beyond the borders of Karabakh and Armenia itself – one of the few obstacles to the unification of all the Turkic entities and states of Asia and Siberia in the Great Turan project.

The issue of cooperation between Russia and Turkey, of course, is not limited to the Caucasus region. Relations between these two rival partners in the geopolitical arena have to be built within the most complex and constantly changing geopolitical mosaic of the clash of interests of such players as the United States, China, the European Union, Arab countries, Iran, India, Pakistan and others. Both Russia and Western countries need to understand that third countries will receive dividends from the growing confrontation between them to the detriment of their own national interests. Therefore, it is necessary to look for and find ways to shift their mutual relations from confrontation to a positive model. As for Turkey, there is no doubt that Russia should cooperate with it, as well as with other countries in the region, both in the economic and political spheres, and should establish with them mutually beneficial relations.

But this should be done within the framework of a sober consideration of the similarities and conflicts of strategic interests, without being tempted by market benefits, no matter how attractive they may seem. Not forgetting that Turkey is a member of NATO with the second largest army of this military bloc, and Azerbaijan is its military ally. Russia's policy should be based on a deep and comprehensive analysis of the real challenges and risks that it faces today and that may occur in the future, and should predict and use all available opportunities to prevent and eliminate threats to its interests and national security in a timely manner. Russia should strive to strengthen its position in every possible way, and not play giveaway.