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СТОЛІТНЯ МЕЖА:
ДОВГИЙ ШЛЯХ ДО УКРАЇНСЬКО-ТУРЕЦЬКОГО СТРАТЕГІЧНОГО АЛЬЯНСУ

Анотація. У статті йдеться про двосторонні відносини України й Туреччини в контексті нещодавно відзначеного сторіччя встановлення дипломатичних зв'язків.

Наголошено, що обидві країни пройшли довгий шлях у розвитку своєї взаємодії – від моменту відкриття перших дипломатичних місій у Стамбулі та Києві ще 1918 року до декларації про стратегічне партнерство (2011 р.) і подальшого створення українсько-турецького альянсу оборонної промисловості після російської окупації Криму (2014 р.).

Виокремлено суперечливі тенденції, властиві загальній динаміці двостороннього діалогу протягом цього періоду. З одного боку, контакти між Україною і Туреччиною переважно мали позитивний порядок денний, не обтяжений давніми конфліктами або історичними травмами. З іншого боку, офіційні відносини між Києвом і Анкарою роками перебували в тіні російського чинника та не мали власної унікальної цінності, їх здебільшого розглядали в турецько-українсько-російському трикутнику.

Утім такою ситуація була донедавна. З огляду на чималі позитивні зрушення, висвітлено особливості нового амбітного порядку денного, що постав перед обома державами. Деяких із цих цілей було успішно досягнуто: створено новий фреймворк регіональної співпраці, запущено додаткові формати двосторонніх політичних і військових консультацій, уведено безвізовий (а потім і паспортний) режим перетину кордону. Деяких інших планів, як-от підписання Угоди про вільну торгівлю чи активізування співпраці у високотехнологічних сферах космосу й авіації, ще не реалізовано.

Стаття містить короткий огляд історії двосторонніх відносин, усебічний аналіз поточної взаємодії між двома країнами й обговорення нових тенденцій в українсько-турецькому партнерстві, що їх спричинили нові умови регіональної та глобальної безпеки. Об'єктом дослідження є двосторонні відносини між Україною і Туреччиною. Предметом – нові тенденції в розвитку українсько-турецького партнерства.

Ключові слова: Україна, Туреччина, Чорноморський регіон, стратегічне партнерство.

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[1] Думки, висловлені в цій статті, належать авторці й не обов'язково відображають офіційну позицію Уряду України.

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CROSSING THE CENTENNIAL THRESHOLD: A LONG WAY TO THE UKRAINIAN-TURKISH STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

Abstract. While Ukraine and Turkey have recently celebrated the centennial since the establishment of diplomatic relations and currently continue to reinvent each other as strategic partners, it might be a good time to take stock of the bilateral relations over the past century and define a road map for the future.

This article aims to provide a brief overview of the past history of the bilateral relations and a comprehensive analysis of the current state of play between the two countries, whilst also discussing emergent trends in the Ukrainian-Turkish partnership, as it continues to evolve in a new regional and global security environment.

The object of the study is the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Turkey.

The subject of this research is the new trends in the development of Ukrainian-Turkish partnership

Keywords: Ukraine, Turkey, Black Sea region, strategic partnership, alliance

Making sense of common history

The Ukrainian-Turkish relations have a long history of bilateral official ties and people-to-people contacts. The two countries share centuries of common history, oftentimes fighting side by side against common enemies or trading goods and sometimes regarding each other as potential rivals in the quest for regional dominance. These hundreds of years of close coexistence in the Black Sea basin, regular political contacts, military interactions, and cultural intermingling have created a solid background for today's partnership between Kyiv and Ankara.

The early official contacts between the Ukrainian and Turkish states date back to as early as the mid-17th century, when in 1649 the first bilateral agreement was signed between Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV (of half-Ukrainian origin himself, born into the family of Sultan Ibrahim I and Hatice (Nadiia) Turhan from Ukraine) and Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, a legendary leader of the Zaporizhzhia Cossacks, who had started the Ukrainian National Liberation War a year earlier. As one Ukrainian historian put it, this agreement was a 'natural alliance', since both sides were interested in developing close relations, focused on the vibrant caravan trade and the necessity to patrol the territorial waters near Crimea against occasional pirates and hostile fleets of other countries in the Black Sea basin [1].

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[1] The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the government.

In the 20th century, the Turkish state was among the first countries to officially recognise Ukraine's independence, twice in its history: first, in 1918, from the Russian Empire, and later, in 1991, from the Soviet Union.

According to Professor Hakan Kırımlı, the Ottoman Empire became the first (and, up to 1918, the only) one of the Central States to declare the necessity to liberate Ukraine from Russian dominance. During the meeting with representatives of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (ULU, a Ukrainian nationalist organisation active in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century), Mehmet Talaat Pasha, then Minister of Interior in the so-called Young Turk triumvirate, promised to support Ukrainian efforts to establish an independent state during the peace conference, stressing that an independent Ukrainian state on the shores of the Black Sea would be in Turkey's best interests. In November 1914, this declaration was published in Istanbul newspapers and gain wide international attention. Quoting the original text of the declaration as published in *Le Jeune Turc*, Kırımlı mentions that 'Talat Bey wrote to the effect that the Porte, Berlin, and Vienna had recognised that Ukraine had to be removed from Russian domination, and that the Ottoman government promised the Ukrainian people to support the establishment of an independent state in the event of Russia's defeat'. This was, in fact, 'the first public commitment on the part of one of the Central Powers to the independence of Ukraine if the war ended in victory' [2, p. 191].

Ukrainian Turkologist Yaroslav Dashkevych stresses that, at that time, spreading Ukrainian nationalist propaganda in Istanbul was quite easy, given a positive attitude towards the young Ukrainian nation in the Ottoman society and a deep-rooted perception of Russia as a threat among the political elites. Thus, the Turkish press of the time (e.g., *Tercüman-i Hakikat, Tasfir-i-Efkiar, Tanın, Le Jeune Turc*, and others) often published materials covering Ukrainian problems, including ULU's calls 'to renew historically friendly Ukrainian-Turkish ties starting from the times of Hetmans Doroshenko, Orlk and Zadunayska Sich' [3, p. 64].

The first Ukrainian diplomatic mission was opened in Istanbul soon after the newly-born Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) was declared. In February 1918, the independent UPR participated in the negotiations on the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, which resulted in the signing by the Central Powers (including the Ottoman Empire) of two separate peace treaties – first with the UPR, and then with the Soviet Russia delegations. In fact, the Ukrainian Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was the first diplomatic recognition of independent Ukraine in modern times. As seen from the press archives of the period, *Tanin*, the unofficial mouthpiece of the ruling Union and Progress Committee (Ittifak ve Terakki), applauded this first peace treaty, since it would put pressure on Russia. Ukraine was thus seen as a potential ally of the Ottoman Empire and a bulwark against the Bolshevik menace: '*Tanin*'s editorial assessed the new geopolitical situation particularly in the context of the issues of the Black Sea and the Straits. Having referred to the long-standing ambi-

tions of Tsarist Russia over the Straits, the editorial pointed out the historical irony that it was due to the successful defence of the Straits by the Turks that the Russian Empire had collapsed and the new Ukraine had been born' [4, p. 204].

The Ottoman diplomatic mission to Ukraine and the Ukrainian mission to the Ottoman Empire were established soon after the ratification of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Hetman Skoropadskyi welcomed the arrival of the Ottoman Ambassador to Kyiv, stressing the significance of the Ottoman-Ukrainian friendship. Though these partnership was not meant to last long, in 1918–1921, the relations between the young Ukrainian state and the emerging Turkish Republic were actively developing in spite of the unfavourable geopolitical conditions, which complicated these contacts [5].

The Treaty on Friendship and Brotherhood between Ukraine and Turkish Republic was signed in January 1922 with the personal participation of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. This Treaty underlined Turkey's recognition of Ukraine as 'an independent and sovereign State, which was created in the territory of the former Russian Empire … with regard to the principles of the brotherhood of nations and right of the peoples to self-determination'. In turn, Ukraine confirmed that 'the final elaboration of the international status of the Black Sea and the Straits should be passed to a special conference of delegates of the coastal countries…', resolving the issue in a way that would respect Turkey's sovereignty [6, p. 245]. In fact, this treaty was much more than a simple 'statement of good intentions' aimed at developing economic, commercial, and cultural cooperation, as stated in the preamble. Historians agree that, it also 'signified the creation of a new political alliance between the two neighbouring Black Sea countries' [7] in the situation when international support was crucial for both young republics to prove the legitimacy of the new elites and strengthen their stance vis-à-vis other regional actors.

This idea found its further justification in one of the speeches of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Addressing the members of the Ukrainian governmental delegation who came to Ankara in 1922, he said: 'We are very touched by the fact that the decision of your arrival to our governmental centre has been conveyed to us at the moment when enemies already considered us completely defeated and wanted to convince the whole world of it. This is another proof of friendly feelings which Ukraine demonstrates with respect to us' [7].

This Ukrainian-Turkish diplomatic track, quite active in 1918–1921, ceased to exist in 1922 with the emergence of the Soviet Union, of which Ukraine became party. With the consolidation of power in the hands of the Politbureau of the Communist Party, the foreign policy-making process was declared an exclusive privilege of the 'centre'. Thus, the 'union republics' were deprived of the right to maintain any external contacts bypassing Moscow. This regulation ruled out any possibility to conduct direct dialogue between Kyiv and Ankara, and made Moscow an indispensable element of the Ukrainian-Turkish relations for many years to come.

That said, it is important to mention that however limited the early diplomatic ties between Kyiv and Ankara might have been, they have never been complicated by any considerable problems of a *bilateral* character. Though dependent on third parties or taking different sides in the geopolitical confrontation of the Cold War, Ukraine and Turkey still have never been involved in a direct conflict. This lack of a historical burden and mainly positive record of the long-term peaceful coexistence have made the reestablishment of diplomatic ties much easier in the aftermath of Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 and helped to restore high-level bilateral contacts shortly after.

Political dialogue: finding a way through the regional turmoil

The 1990s witnessed the re-establishment of the diplomatic relations between Ankara and Kyiv. In May 1992, the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement was signed. Embassies were opened in both capitals and a number of high-level visits followed soon afterwards. However, despite the ongoing diplomatic traffic and economic cooperation, until recently, Turkey rarely dominated Ukraine's foreign policy agenda, whereas Ukraine was hardly regarded as a truly strategic partner by Turkey. Some analysts claimed this was due to the fact that official Kyiv stayed entrapped in the bipolar East-or-West dilemma, leaving out the southern vector of its foreign policy without proper attention [8]. Others pointed out at the 'Russian constant' in the Turkish-Ukrainian equation, which significantly altered the results [9].

Unlike the sporadic visits of the 1990s, the high-level political dialogue between Ukraine and Turkey acquired a more sustainable character in 2011, when the relations received a status of a strategic partnership. The mechanism of the High-Level Strategic Council (HLSC) was established in the same year. Annual presidential meetings held within this framework gave a chance to discuss the issues of bilateral and regional agenda on a regular basis. The Strategic Planning Group co-chaired by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs was set up to prepare meetings of the Strategic Council, while more than a dozen of joint commissions and working groups were established to provide a steady platform for expert discussions covering all the major spheres of Ukrainian-Turkish relations from trade and tourism to scientific research and defence industry. The legal framework of this cooperation was also widely expanded during these years to keep pace with the increased dynamics of a bilateral dialogue. Whereas in 2010 the number of agreements signed between the two countries was approaching 80, by June 2021, it already reached 150 [10].

The year of 2014 became an important turning point in the bilateral relations. With the start of Russian military aggression in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea, the security situation in the Black Sea basin rapidly deteriorated, and both countries found themselves amidst multiple challenges with similar threat perceptions in the region.

This regional turmoil has brought Ukraine and Turkey closer together. Turkey's strong support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Ankara's non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of Crimea have played a crucial role both for developing close bilateral relations and maintaining stability in the region.

In turn, Ukrainian leadership has been unambiguous in its assessments of the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, demonstrating solidarity with the Turkish people. Ukrainian President Poroshenko was one of the first world leaders to call President Erdoğan on the day of the coup to reaffirm Ukraine's strong support to the legitimately elected government of Turkey. This message has become an important part of official rhetoric ever since, and a mutual agreement to respect each other's 'red lines' in the matters of domestic politics has helped sustain good relations.

On the other sensitive question, unlike in Turkey's relations with both Russia and the US, the Kurdish issue (PKK/PYD/YPG) has never featured as a problem on the Ukrainian-Turkish agenda. Kyiv has always been regarded as Ankara's ally in its fight on terror and has been quite vocal in condemning 'terrorism in all forms and manifestations', since the Ukrainian government has been waging its own war on terror against the (pro-)Russian paramilitary groups in eastern Ukraine. Similarly, the problem of internally displaced persons, humanitarian assistance to the local population, and reconstruction of the devastated areas appeared to be another field where both countries could cooperate. Since 2015, Turkey has accepted several hundreds of family members of the Ukrainian military for a rehabilitation course along with some heavily wounded Ukrainian soldiers needing transplantation and medical treatment. Summer camps for Ukrainian children from the war-afflicted zones have been held annually in Antalya, under the personal patronage of Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

Last but not least, the evolving state of the post-liberal world order, Russian growing military build-up, which has changed the long-term status-quo in the regional balance of power, mounting problems in Ankara's dialogue with the EU and the US, and its complicated relations with Russia have made both countries seek for more autonomy in international affairs and diversify their alliances. In this regard, Turkey has facilitated a much-needed geopolitical alteration in Ukraine's traditional dichotomy – Russia vs. Europe – also giving Kyiv a chance to open up to the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. On the other hand, for Ankara, closer relations with Kyiv have created more opportunities to counterbalance assertive Russia while avoiding NATO's increased military presence in the Black Sea, something that Turkey regarded as a direct threat to its national security [11].

This new situation has paved the way for a certain 'breakthrough' in the Ukrainian-Turkish relations. The list of high-level official visits held on a mutual basis between the two countries during the recent five years includes presidents, prime ministers, chairmen of the parliament, secretaries of the national security and defence councils, chiefs of the general staffs, ministers for foreign affairs, fi-

nance, economic development and trade, agriculture, infrastructure, energy, education and science, tourism, etc. Some of these were not only reciprocal official and working visits but also important symbolic moves, like the so-called 'visits of solidarity' in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, President Poroshenko's participation in the TANAP opening ceremony in Eskisehir or Prime Minister Hroisman's presence at Erdoğan's presidential inauguration in July 2018.

In 2016, a new Declaration on the Deepening of Strategic Partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Turkey was signed, envisaging mutual resolution to work together for countering security threats in the Black Sea region. At the same time, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the National Security Council of Turkey signed a Cooperation Protocol aimed at intensifying collaboration in the field of security and defense [12].

The strategic character of the bilateral relations was also reflected in Ukraine's new National Security Strategy approved by the president in September 2020, which identified Turkey as one of the five 'strategic partners' (alongside Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, and Poland) [13].

On the level of strategic documents, this was followed by the Joint Declarations of the 8th and 9th HLSC meetings (signed in 2020 and 2021, respectively), which defined new cooperation priorities. They stressed the importance of maintaining Ankara's political support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and de-occupation of Crimea, completing the FTA negotiations, deepening cooperation in the military-technical field, and stepping up joint efforts in ensuring maritime security [14].

Besides, a new Quadriga format of cooperation (two MFAs + two MoDs) was introduced in order to combine political, diplomatic, and military efforts to strengthen peace and security along the borders of both states. In practice, this framework envisions regular meetings of Ukrainian and Turkish political and military leadership to discuss a wide range of regional security issues and coordinate positions of Kyiv and Ankara's in the key areas of bilateral interest. A particular emphasis is put on deepening military cooperation (including joint exercises, military education programs for Ukrainian officers and cadets in Turkey, development of cooperation within NATO etc.).

The Joint Statement of the first Quadriga meeting, held in Kyiv in December 2020, says that the parties 'decided to explore new avenues for cooperation between the naval forces of the two states in education and training, conducting multinational exercises and activities in support of safety of navigation in the Black Sea', 'reiterated support for Ukraine's reform process and integration with European and Transatlantic structures, including the EU and NATO', and 'underscored Turkey's support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol', which remains a top priority on the bilateral agenda [15].

Crimean connection: historical past, geopolitical present

Crimea and Crimean Tatars have historically remained one of the central pillars of the Ukrainian-Turkish relations. With the geostrategic position in the Black Sea – the Mediterranean basin, close proximity to the Straits and the Middle East, and about 10 to 15 percent of kin Tatar population – the importance of Crimea for Turkey can hardly be overestimated.

As leading scholar on Crimea Hakan Kırımlı argues, 'Until the end of the First World War, the Crimean issue was to remain central to the Ottoman Turkish public in assessing the relations with Ukraine'. In his words, it is at least since then that 'the first indications that the Crimean factor would be a cardinal issue in determining Turko-Ukrainian relations' became evident [4, p. 205]. With the lapse of time and especially after the illegal annexation of the peninsula by Russia, the role of Crimea has only increased, both for the bilateral relations and the political-military balance in the region.

The historical record of Russia often using Crimea as a naval base to launch offensives on the Ottoman territories as well as the bitter memories of the 1944 deportation of Crimean Tatars by the Soviet regime, had predetermined Turkey's stance on the status of Crimea in 2014. From the first days of the occupation, the Turkish government has unambiguously supported Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ankara has demonstrated a firm stance on Crimea by not only refusing to recognise the illegal annexation of the peninsula and denouncing the so-called Russian 'referendum' as 'unlawful', 'illegal', and 'illegitimate' [16; 17; 18] but also by promising Ukraine its support to consolidate international efforts on the issue, as mentioned by then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu during his Kyiv visit [19].

Turkey has co-sponsored a number of UN resolutions initiated by Ukraine, including the 2014 resolution 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine' and the annual resolutions 'Situation of the human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine' and 'Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov', which have become a new element of the mounting international legal pressure on Russia.

In line with the non-recognition policy, Ankara has denounced as illegitimate subsequent Russian actions on the occupied peninsula. For instance, it has not recognised the results of the elections to the Russian State Duma in Crimea [20] and has strongly reacted to the ban of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people (MCTP) by the Russian occupying authorities, calling for the restoration of its legitimacy [21].

Obviously, the main focus of Turkish attention has been placed on protecting human rights of the Crimean Tatars who have found themselves under the growing pressure of the Russian de-facto authorities after the occupation. In

this regard, the Report of the Unofficial Turkish Delegation entitled 'The Situation of the Crimean Tatars since the Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation', published on 15 June 2015 [22], gave a profound overview of the massive human rights violations against the Crimean Tatars, at a time when the international community was still trying to figure out what was happening on the occupied peninsula.

Turkey has also greatly contributed to the Ukrainian efforts to ease the woes of the Crimean Tatars, who had to leave Crimea and flee to mainland Ukraine, by providing humanitarian assistance within the projects of the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) [23].

Most recently, during President Zelenskyy's visit to Ankara in 2021, an intergovernmental agreement was signed between the two countries, creating a legal framework for the Turkish state-run housing agency TOKI to build 500 apartments for Crimean Tatars in Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Kyiv [24].

Another 'success story' in the Ukrainian-Turkish cooperation on Crimea was the release of Kremlin's two political prisoners of Crimean Tatar origin – Ahtem Chiygoz and Ilmi Umerov, after the negotiations held between Erdoğan and Putin. This channel of communication still remains an important track in Ukraine's humanitarian efforts to release political prisoners held in Crimea and Russia.

Multilateral diplomacy: cooperation within international frameworks

This being said, one should not forget that, apart from the massive human rights and international law violations, the illegal occupation of Crimea has paved the way to the increased militarisation of the peninsula threatening the whole region. According to various sources, during the Crimean military build-up, Russia has deployed tens of thousands of troops, hundreds of battle tanks, armoured vehicles, combat aircrafts and helicopters, dozens of coastal missile systems and, allegedly, tactical nuclear weapons on the occupied peninsula [25].

Military experts underline that 'the seizure of Crimea has allowed Russia to integrate the Northern and the Southern parts of its "bubbles of insecurity" (A2/AD) architecture, lessening the strategic depth of NATO and other countries' in the region, and that it has since 'demonstrate[ed] a significant increase in the intensity of its offensive combat training activities' [26]. Given Moscow's long-term struggle for access to the 'warm seas' and Turkey's interdependence with Russia in regional conflicts, Ankara's desire to develop cooperation with Kyiv can be regarded as a natural security reflex in order to deter Russian military dominance in the region.

In this regard, **NATO** remains one of the most important multilateral platforms for increased military and naval cooperation between Ukraine and Turkey. Turkey has been a key member and the second biggest army in the Alliance since 1952 and today remains one of the biggest contributors to its operations.

At the same time, though not a NATO member, Ukraine has been actively involved in the transatlantic cooperation contributing to naval exercises, joint trainings, maritime patrol and humanitarian operations that have been carried out in the Black Sea within the NATO framework. As a strategic partner of Turkey and a littoral state that is not a subject to the restrictions of the 1936 Montreux Convention, Ukraine has got wide opportunities to play active role in these initiatives without threatening Ankara's all-time sensitivities on the presence of the foreign military fleet in the Black Sea basin.

In fact, Ukraine and Turkey have been working within the framework of the multilateral mechanisms designed to strengthen security measures and contribute to stability in the Black Sea region since mid-1990s. Over the years, both countries have been jointly participating in multilateral military and naval cooperation programmes, like Black Sea Harmony, Sea Breeze, Sea Shield, BLACKSEAFOR, and PASSEX, to name just a few. However, with Ukraine's withdrawal from the Operation Black Sea Harmony due to the obvious impossibility of sharing intelligence and operational data with the Russian HQ, Ankara and Kyiv have focused more on intensifying their bilateral naval cooperation in the Black Sea basin, deepening cooperation of the fleets, and practicing joint tactical maneuvering. Against the backdrop of the continuing Russian aggression, both sides regard these drills as 'a step in the deepening of cooperation of the fleets of the two countries, which aims to strengthen stability and security in the region' [27].

The General Staffs of the Ukrainian and Turkish Armed Forces have also signed a 'road map' on military cooperation that sets forth the direction and scope of military cooperation between the two countries. Among other things, it focuses on strategic planning, military education and training of troops, consultative and advisory assistance, cooperation between the respective branches of the Armed Forces, information sharing, etc. In fact, this document is a detailed implementation plan of practical measures on military cooperation, aimed both at strengthening bilateral ties and enlisting Turkish support to train the Ukrainian army in accordance with NATO standards [28]. Turkey also remains an important donor of humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian army through NATO funds.

In the diplomatic realm, Ankara has been actively involved in monitoring the implementation of the cease-fire agreement in the eastern regions of Ukraine, most evidently through the efforts of the seasoned Turkish diplomats – Ambassadors Ertuğrul Apakan and Yaşar Halit Çevik, who have headed the **OSCE** Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Though less vocal in condemning Russian aggression in the east of Ukraine compared to Ankara's strong stance on Crimea, the Turkish government, however, has been consistent in its unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, condemnation of the use of force against civilians, and calls for a peaceful conflict resolution in full compliance with the Minsk Agreements by all the parties.

In addition to the **UN** resolutions, Turkey has also made significant efforts to keep the Crimean question high on the agendas of the multilateral platforms and international organisations, where Ukraine is not represented (**OIC, Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States**, etc.). In this regard, Turkey's participation in the **Crimean Platform** (a multilateral coordination mechanism initiated by Ukraine) is seen in Kyiv as having a significant added value for the consolidation of the international de-occupation efforts with Ankara's facilitation [29].

Smaller, narrowly focused, and result-oriented **regional formats** of interaction (Turkey-Ukraine-Romania; Turkey-Ukraine-Georgia-Azerbaijan) have also been on the rise. Analysts note that the deterioration of security situation in the region has largely contributed to the deepening defence and military technical cooperation of Turkey with Azerbaijan, Georgia and, especially, Ukraine – something unseen before in the region that was traditionally considered a domain of the Turkish-Russian strategic interaction [30].

Cooperation in defence industry: from joint efforts to joint projects

In fact, cooperation between Ukraine and Turkey in the defence sphere is not something new. However, following the 2014 Russian occupation of Crimea and the 2015 jet-crisis between Ankara and Moscow, these endeavours have been complemented by the efforts to build a strategic industrial alliance that would include cooperation across a variety of military and defence programmes [31].

Dimitar Bechev from the Atlantic Council rightfully mentions that this sort of cooperation is especially important to Ankara, which is now trying to develop its own indigenous defense industry, thereby minimising its dependence on the West. In this sense, Turkish officials view Ukraine as a potential supplier of technology and equipment that could largely substitute Western contractors. On the other hand, in Ukraine, Turkey is seen as a welcome partner to substitute severed links with Russia's military-industrial complex and compensate for market losses [32].

Taking into account the technological and intellectual resources as well as the long and successful story of Ukrainian space and defence industry enterprises, Ukraine does have a potential to become one of the most important partners of Turkey in aerospace and defence. Both countries regard scientific and technical cooperation in the high-tech spheres as crucial for the further development of their strategic partnership, with the prospects to enter the global market with a joint full-cycle production and a variety of related services in the space rocket industry and the military-industrial complex.

While the initial memorandums of understanding were inked more than ten years ago, the first tangible results followed with the signing of several wide-ranging procurement deals in 2017. In March, the Turkish Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM) and its Ukrainian counterpart, the State

Concern Ukroboronprom, signed a memorandum of understanding, outlining the general framework of cooperation for the future. In April and May, the SSM and the Turkish company Havelsan inked separate memorandums with Ukroboronprom for the development and production of aircraft and radar systems, while Turkish and Ukrainian defense ministers signed another defence cooperation protocol during President Erdogan's visit to Kyiv in October 2017. During this visit, a $43.6-million deal was inked with Turkey's leading defense company Aselsan for supplies of communication systems to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which became the first major trade contract between the two states in the recent period [33].

In the meantime, Ukraine has become a frequent guest at defence industry events in Turkey, such as annual IDEF exhibitions in Istanbul (International Defence Industry Fair) [34] and Eurasia Airshows, presenting its world-famous producer of passenger and military transport aircraft, Antonov State Enterprise [35]. In 2018–2019, Ukraine implemented a project on the modernisation of Mi-17 helicopters. During the same period, Turkey carried out a contract on the supply of its Bayraktar TB-2 combat UAVs to Ukraine, while the new generation of Turkish Akıncı drones were equipped with Ukrainian engines produced by Motor Sich JSC. Needless to say, the supplies of combat drones to a country at war with Russia was not merely a commercial deal but rather a political decision.

With significant progress made so far, the next stage of cooperation would be shifting emphasis from the short-term commercial to the long-term strategic vision, including a structural leap from trader-customer relations to the creation of joint ventures. The first joint venture, Black Sea Shield, was announced between Ukroboronprom and the leading Turkish UAV producer Baykar Makina in 2019. According to a statement from the Ukrainian National Defence and Security Council, 'the main task of the venture is to combine the capabilities of both countries' defense complexes for large-scale production of new models of modern weapons for their armies. This will allow moving away from classic arms purchase contracts to an entirely new level of cooperation – the synergy of defense technologies and the combination of advanced developments from Turkey and Ukraine' [36]. Some of the projects under discussion included procurement/production of engines for aircraft and armoured vehicles, radars, military communication and navigation systems, joint production of phased space rockets and cooperation on An-178 passenger/transport aircraft project with unique operational characteristics and low requirements for runway length.

Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic and a natural shift of focus to the 'soft' health security issues, the relations between Kyiv and Ankara have continued to actively develop in the military-technical sphere. In 2020, several documents were signed to facilitate the implementation of agreements in the defence industry. In particular, during the 8th HLSC meeting, the parties signed a framework

agreement on military-financial cooperation, which provided for the allocation of military assistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the amount of about $36 million. During President Zelenskyy's working visit to Turkey in October, the governments of Ukraine and Turkey signed a military agreement establishing the legal basis for expanding bilateral cooperation in 21 different areas. Besides, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and the State Agency for Defence Industry of Turkey (former SSM) also inked a memorandum of understanding. This allowed the Ukrainian MoD to conclude direct defense contracts with Turkish companies, considerably facilitating the whole process [37, p. 144].

According to the official data, the Ukrainian-Turkish partnership in aerospace and defence industries currently includes more than 30 ongoing projects. The most promising areas are the establishment of joint ventures for the production of Ukrainian engines in Turkey and Turkish drones in Ukraine; production of aircraft power units based on the Ivchenko-Progress design; joint engine construction for armoured vehicles; cooperation in peaceful space exploration and construction of a series of corvette-class ships for the Ukrainian Navy.

What next? Re-adjusting strategic partnership to new realities

In spite of the reinforced cooperation between Kyiv and Ankara, Ukraine has nevertheless remained unable to prevent the implementation of a number of joint Turkish-Russian projects, which directly or indirectly threaten its national interests (e.g., procurement of Russian S-400 systems, construction of the Turkish Stream, the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, etc.) and raise serious concerns in the Ukrainian capital. Apparently, when it is of mutual interest, a shared vision of the Black Sea as a Turkish-Russian condominium can make Ankara and Moscow tactical allies. Historically, however, the two countries have been vying for naval dominance in the Black Sea and, at the current stage, take opposite sides in a number of ongoing regional conflicts (Syria, Libya, Ukraine, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh). With the illegal occupation of Crimea and the growing Russian military build-up in the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East, the balance of power in the region has dramatically shifted, spelling the end of the relative naval superiority that Turkey established after the Cold War. As analyst Vladimir Socor put it, 'Turkey does not, and cannot on its own any longer, counterbalance Russia's threatening power, but neither does it work proactively with its NATO riparian and non-riparian allies to deal with this mounting challenge' [38]. The growing awareness of this 'defunct status-quo' has prompted Ankara to revise its current regional policies.

In the mid-term perspective, Turkey's strategic interests in the region are likely to remain unchanged. Çelikpala and Erşen [39] identify four main goals for Ankara in this regard: 1) maintaining the status-quo established by the Montreux Convention; 2) protecting its interests vis-à-vis Russia's strengthened military

presence in the Black Sea; 3) dealing with the significant security implications of the three Russian A2/AD spheres built around Turkish territories; 4) accommodating the diverse Black Sea policies of its NATO allies without alienating Russia. Given these core interests, it is highly likely that if the negative trends in relations with both Moscow and Brussels/Washington sustain, Turkish leadership will seek to pursue a more assertive and independent policy in the region. This might include several aspects, which could open new windows of opportunity for cooperation with Ukraine.

The first such aspect is Ankara's attempts to develop a national self-sufficient defence industry, military and naval capabilities in line with its regional and global ambitions for more strategic autonomy and political clout [40]. The second is avoiding the all-time dichotomy of Russia vs. the West by developing closer cooperation with other regional countries. New formats of multilateral cooperation, like the recently introduced 3+2 consultations (Turkey, Poland, Romania + Ukraine, Georgia), have been highly praised in Ankara as an effective de-escalation mechanism to mitigate rising tensions in the Black Sea [41].

In a broader geopolitical context, Turkey's policies in the Black Sea will largely depend on developments in other regional theatres: military escalation in Ukraine and rising threats from the nuclearisation of Crimea; Russian blockade of the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov; trends in other regional conflicts (Syria, Libya, East Med, Cyprus, etc.) as well as the overall atmosphere in Turkey's relations with global actors. However, regardless of the situation, it is highly likely that Ankara will continue to develop what Tol & Işık [42] call 'a multi-pronged strategy to counter Russian influence in the Black Sea': by strengthening its own navy, expanding national defence industry capabilities and stepping up military cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

As Aslı Aydıntaşbaş put it, 'Turkey can now credibly promote the idea that it is an indispensable NATO ally pushing back against Russia across the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Through Ukraine, Turkey can remind the world that it is still part of the West – that it is a NATO ally' [43]. There are also hopes in Ankara that 'Turkey's strategic relations with Ukraine could also provide an avenue of cooperation with the United States, alongside keeping open channels of dialogue between Russia and NATO members to reduce the heightened level of tension in Turkey's immediate vicinity' [44]. In the long-term perspective, such cooperation with Ukraine and on Ukraine would not only reinforce Kyiv's defence capabilities and Euro-Atlantic aspirations but also consolidate Turkey's own Western identity.

Conclusions

The centuries of common history and decades of dynamic cooperation have proved that strategic alliance between Ukraine and Turkey has not been a question of a political choice but rather a historical determinant and a geopolitical

imperative. As Ataturk once put it, Ukraine and Turkey 'are doomed to cooperate', and today this is the case more than ever before. The new geopolitical realities offer a unique opportunity to maintain constructive and pragmatic cooperation in multiple spheres based on mutual interests and shared threats. If played wisely, this newly emerging defence alliance between Ukraine and Turkey will not only strengthen both countries' resilience against malign external influences but also play a major role in restoring security and stability in a wider Black Sea region.

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