

S-400 crisis and the movement of Turkey from the West

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One can approach Turkey's S-400 saga from at least two angles: technical and strategic. Strategic angle includes these aspects:

Turkey's problematic relationship with the West, the fact that it does not feel itself as a real, full, permanent, founding member of the West, that its allies can easily do many "wrong" things to Ankara.

Ankara's search for diversification in its foreign partners

Turkey and Russia has centuries long competition, conflict and mutual distrust on the one hand, but on the other the two both feel themselves outside the West, different and feel mistreated by it.

Their economies are somewhat complementary.

Turkey, in contrast to its history, (rightly or wrongly) does not feel much direct military threat from Russia in the last 25-30 years, perhaps because the two do not share a land border anymore.

Both have authoritarian leaders and systems although there are differences of shades.

They refrain from criticising their systems and even imitate each other.

Russia was more understanding about Fetö (and to a lesser extent on PKK) than the West. This fundamental fact worth repeating: 1) There was a coup in Turkey 3 years ago and the US most probably (%95?) knew about it but did not inform Erdoğan about it. It may even have a hand somewhere in the coup. 2) The US seriously and openly supports the PKK for the last 4 years. It provides the PKK protection, legitimacy, arms, ammunition, intelligence, PR, encouragement, hope. We may not understand the distrust and concern on the Turkish side if we miss these two points. (But it does not necessarily mean supporting buying

S-400).

While the US drags its feet on an even limited issue like Menbic, Moscow was open to bargaining with Turkey and opening a space for it in the country however conditional, limited, temporary that is. Moscow also generally looks like committed to its promises. Certainly one should not forget that there are many differences and conflicts of interest between Turkey and Russia starting from Syria.

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There is a “school of thought” which claims that Moscow does not want Turkey leave the West but to prefer Ankara to remain there as a noisy, complaining, troublesome, unruly, “interesting” member. Also Moscow must have known that it cannot provide the economic, financial, trade resources and opportunities Turkey needs.

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Both the US and Turkey made many mistakes in their relationship but perhaps the US responsibility is bigger in the deterioration. One cannot and should not expect to be treated as an ally and friend if you 1) support the existential enemies of a state (PKK and Fetö), 2) threaten devastating sanctions, fines and tariffs, 3) while you use the bases of that country. None of the famous US experts on Turkey seem to recognize the irony and contradiction here and warn their government by saying something like “this is not the way to treat an ally, it cannot go on, one day it may explode, we should come to our senses.”

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Abstract:

Turkey is not a full and permanent member of the West and it flirts with the idea of being a

swinger state. Washington's policies regarding PKK and Fetö are far from friendly. But other options for Ankara are not satisfactory either. Changing camps or being a swinger is not easy,. It may have huge negative consequences.

Turkey is too dependent on the West. The West can harm Turkey in so many different ways. The article discusses the S-400-F-35 crisis in this context. What are the assumptions, calculations, risks, scenarios and options for Turkey and other actors?

Full text in Turkish: <http://qafsam.org/page/606/az>