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NEO-OTTOMANISM IN TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY: A POLISH PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The main objective of this article is to analyze the impact of Ankara's reference to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire on contemporary Turkish foreign policy and the attitude of Poland towards such a reversal in Turkish diplomacy. Turkey is now more aware that it has no chance of gaining European Union membership. In this situation, Ankara has begun to emphasize its Eurasian character and is trying to build its influence in the region, in particular among eastern and southern neighbors. To have a greater impact on its neighbors, Turkey refers to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The weakening of Ankara's political relations with the western world is particularly worrisome for Poland, which appreciates Turkey's geostrategic position and its role in the European security system. The greatest concern among Poles is caused by the political and economic rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow. What also disturbs Poles is the fact that Turkey, which had made pro-democratic efforts, is departing from the principles fundamental to Europeans.

Keywords: Neo-Ottomanism; Turkey; Poland; Foreign Policy



INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this article is to analyze the impact of Ankara's reference to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire on contemporary Turkish foreign policy and the attitude of Poland towards such a reversal in Turkish diplomacy. Under Erdoan's leadership, Ankara has been searching for its new role and the position of its State in the world. According to Turkish politicians, Turkey's former policy, which was mainly aimed at tightening relations with European countries and the US, has driven Turkey to a dead end. Turkey is now more aware that it has no chance of gaining European Union membership.

In this situation, Ankara has begun to emphasize its Eurasian character and is trying to build its influence in the region, in particular among eastern and southern neighbors. To have a greater impact on its neighbors, Turkey refers to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The weakening of Ankara's political relations with the western world is particularly worrisome for Poland, which appreciates Turkey's geostrategic position and its role in the European security system. The greatest concern among Poles is caused by the political and economic rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow. What also disturbs Poles is the fact that Turkey, which had made pro-democratic efforts, is departing from the principles fundamental to Europeans. What is more, the retreat from the principle of the secularity of the Turkish state to strengthen religious influences in Turkey constitutes another concern for Poles. It is difficult to accept the fact that Erdoan uses religious rhetoric addressed to Muslim societies residing in the European Union countries. This type of behavior evokes negative emotions and can contribute to the outbreak of social crises in European countries. Turkey's engagement in the problems of the Middle East is also alarming. Turkey, as a member of NATO, may thus involve the organization, which may put its unity and effectiveness to test. Such behavior is particularly dangerous for Poland, which bases its security guarantees on NATO.

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE FORMATION OF POLISH-TURKISH RELATIONS

The history of Polish-Turkish relations is extensive and dates back to the beginning of the fifteenth century, when in 1414 King of Poland Wadysaw Jagieo sent his envoys to the court of the Sultan Mehmed elebi. This event is considered the beginning of bilateral relations between those countries. However, further Polish-Turkish relations resemble a sinusoid - years of peaceful relations intertwined with decades of wars and mutual hostile approaches. In 1444, as a result of the expedition of the King of Poland and Hungary Wadysaw III who, incidentally, was to stop the Turkish expansion in the Balkans, the Battle of Varna broke out in which the Polish king was killed. The lost battle resulted in Poland's withdrawal from active politics in the Balkans. For the Turks, however, it presented an



opportunity to expand deeper into Europe. During the conquests carried out by the Turks in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, almost all of the Balkans was conquered and the powerful Ottoman Empire became a dangerous neighbor of Poland. At that time, the Polish Kingdom focused its attention on problematic relations with Russia and sought peaceful relations with Istanbul. Those efforts resulted in the signing of a peace treaty in 1533, which guaranteed relative peace on the Polish-Turkish border.

In the sixteenth century, trade relations with Ottoman Turkey flourished. Fabrics, carpets, spices, oil, coffee and cold steel were brought to Poland. Poland, on the other hand, exported grain, wood, leather and honey. In the seventeenth century, tensions at the Polish-Turkish border intensified due to, on one hand, mutual looting invasions of the Cossacks, who were Poland's subjects and, on the other hand, the Tartars, who were the vassals of Turkey. Polish-Turkish relations began to deteriorate. The Polish nobility began to highlight the role of Poland as the bulwark of Christianity defending Europe against Islam, while Turkey tried to take advantage of the internal crises in Poland and expand further into Europe. The most obvious ally for Poland in the fight against Turkey was Austria. In 1683, both countries signed an agreement on mutual assistance in the event of Turkish aggression. Various beneficial effects could be seen a few months later, when in the course of Kara Mustafa's expedition to Vienna, the King of Poland, Jan III Sobieski, came to Austria's aid and defeated the Turkish army outside Vienna. Poland became a part of the Holy League, together with Austria, Venice and the papacy, which waged war against Turkey in the seventeenth century. Until the end of that century, Poles considered Turkey their enemy and called themselves the defenders of Christianity. Military actions were ended in 1699 by the signing of a peace treaty in Karłowice. Following that, there were no conflicts between the two states and trade relations developed. The culture of the Orient became popular in Europe, which was particularly visible in Poland, where Polish nobility began to wear Turkish outfits. One can say that it was the beginning of the so-called soft power of Turkey in Europe (Polska i Turcja: 600 lat wspólnej historii 2014). Relations with Turkey improved over time with the growing threat from Tsarist Russia, which constituted a mutual challenge for the policies of Warsaw and Istanbul. When, in the second half of the XVIII century, Poland, as a result of the partitions, disappeared from the map of Europe, Turkey did not recognize the eradication of Polish sovereignty which Poles had never forgotten. In the next century, Turkey was perceived by Poles as an ally in their efforts to regain independence. Turkey also welcomed Polish refugees who, after unsuccessful uprisings for independence, had to seek refuge outside the borders of the partitioning states. In the mid-nineteenth century, one of the Polish groups of refugees settled near Istanbul and created Adampol - which in Turkish was called Polonezkoy, where Polish traditions, customs and language have been cultivated to this day (Poland – Turkey: A Love Story 2013). When, in 1918, Poland regained its independence, it restored its official relations with Turkey.



Since 1920, in Istanbul, there has been Polish representation in Turkey and after the end of the Turkish War of Independence, Poland was the second country in the world which recognized the Republic of Turkey in 1923 (Mierzwa 2015, 7) and established diplomatic relations with it. At that time, the Treaty of Friendship was signed between the states, declaring cooperation and peaceful intentions.

In 1932 Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the Head of Poland, made an official visit to Istanbul. Following the end of the Second World War, Polish-Turkish relations deteriorated due to the fact that they ended up in adverse political blocs. During the 'Cold War', Poland belonged to the circle of Soviet influence and became a member of the Warsaw Pact, while Turkey became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1952. Bilateral relations were revived after 1989. In 1993, both countries signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which referred to the treaty signed during the interwar period. The treaty envisaged cooperation in consolidating democracy, respecting human rights and territorial integrity as well as increasing security within the region. Subsequently, a number of agreements on economic and tourist cooperation were also concluded (Kapłońska 2013, 33-37). Despite the fact that both countries are located in mutually distant parts of Europe, as a result of the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the restoration of democracy in Poland in 1989 they found themselves in the same group of European states, which perceived NATO as their guarantee of security. Poland, following the eradication of Russian bases from its territory in 1993, began to seek full membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, and was supported, among others, by Ankara in achieving that goal. The efforts of the Polish government were finalized in 1999, when Poland became a NATO member and therefore an official ally of Turkey. Another challenge for Poland's foreign policy was membership in the European Union, to which Turkey also aspired. Poland, when it was still only a candidate, also officially supported Ankara's European efforts, and following Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, successive Polish governments consistently supported Ankara's integration aspirations.

What is also very characteristic is the fact that the support for Turkey's membership in the EU was not only declared by Polish politicians, but also by Polish society, which was evident in public opinion polls. Until 2015, relations between Poland and Turkey were basically exemplary, especially when taking into consideration the 600th anniversary of the Polish-Turkish relations in 2014, which was pompously celebrated and involved a number of political, economic and cultural events being organised in both countries. To commemorate that event, the then President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski paid Turkey a visit in March 2014, and in October of the same year Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu came to Poland (Relations between Turkey and Poland). In the entire history of the Polish-Turkish relations after 1990, the only problem was the resolution of the Polish Sejm adopted in 2005, condemning the Armenian Genocide. For obvious reasons, it was met with critical reaction from the government in Ankara. Once relations between the European Union and Turkey began to deteriorate, which particularly intensified after 2015, the Polish government



expressed some concern regarding the direction in which Turkey's foreign policy was heading as well as the perception of threats to European security. Particularly worrying for the Polish government was the deepening political cooperation between Ankara and Moscow. This concern was also shared by Polish society, which changed its attitude towards the Turks. This was particularly visible following the 2015 migration crisis (Dahl 2018, 38-39), which was generated by Turkey's policy to advertently trigger that crisis in order to put pressure on the European Union to speed up the accession. In Polish society the positive opinions of that friendly Turkey, which did not recognize the partitions of Poland in the 18th and 19th centuries are scarce nowadays; rather more pronounced are the opinions of a Turkey which violates democracy, human rights, sends illegal migrants and flirts with Russia and Iran.

NEO-OTTOMANISM IN TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY

When in 1923 Kemal Pasha Atatürk determined the political basis for the functioning of the Republic of Turkey, he strongly rejected the Islamic legacy of the Ottomans. The Turkish leader had ambitions to build the young republic as a strong, secular and modern nation-state. The Ottoman Empire was stigmatized as being a backward and despotic state, which was driven by principles contrary to the principles adopted by modern European countries and Atatürk's goal was to make Turkey a country based on European fundamentals. Those were revolutionary political and social changes which successfully affected Turkey's foreign policy until the end of the twentieth century. Turkey strengthened its relations with European countries and at the same time distanced itself from the Arab states. Ankara emphasized the will to move away from its Middle Eastern identity and become a European state. The European direction in Turkey's foreign policy was also a priority following the Second World War. During the Cold War Turkey clearly defined itself as a country that belonged to Western Europe and the so-called free world by joining the North Atlantic Pact.

The disintegration of the two-block system was a great challenge for Turkish politicians, who feared that a lack of the main threat that the Soviet Union posed would undermine Turkey's importance for Western countries. The unstable situation in the Balkans and the Middle East, however, quickly contributed to strengthening Turkey's role as a vital state and ally for European countries and the USA in the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, Turkish politicians began to notice that the changing international environment created new opportunities to shape Turkey's foreign policy.

As a result of the demise of the USSR, new states emerged whose societies had been under the influence of the Ottoman Empire in the past. Also in the Balkans, as a result of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, new countries emerged wherein Muslim societies played an important demographic role, and which were associated with the legacy of the Ottoman Empire in Ankara. That situation cast new light on the possibilities to shape Turkey's foreign policy.



Until then, Turkish politicians perceived their country as a peripheral and frontier country in the European system. In the new situation, Turkey was no longer on the periphery, but rather between the Balkans in the west and the Muslim post-Soviet republics in the east and the Arab states in the south. The common denominator was the past as well as religion. The societies of those countries were once part of the Ottoman Empire. In the rhetoric of Turkish politicians, the slogans describing Turkey as Eurasian state began to surface, and the importance of common cultural, religious and historical values that would enable broader cooperation in the region under the leadership of Turkey was emphasized. Unofficially, that direction in Turkey's foreign policy was described as neo-ottomanism, although this term was not used by politicians for fear of generating a negative response among neighbors who could treat it as Turkish neo-imperialism or revisionism. Turkish elites did not want to give the impression that Turkey had any expansionist intentions (Yanik 2016, 483).

The idea of building the state's position based on ottomanism appeared in the statements of the Turkish president, Turgut Özal, at the beginning of the 1990s. Referring to the legacy of ottomanism, and, in particular, to the common denominator - religion in the form of Islam, was supposed to be a remedy for the pacification of Kurdish separatism and for strengthening Ankara's influence among Muslim societies in the Balkans, the Caucasus and post-Soviet republics in Central Asia (Yanik 2016, 481-482). Zuleyman Demirel continued Özal's vision, and offered to help those countries to carry out their political transformation on the basis of the systemic solutions functioning in Turkey (Aydin 2014, 385). Such assistance, of course, also meant building and consolidating Turkey's influence in those countries, which translated into Demirel's slogan to create "*a Turkish world spreading from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China*" (Tuysuzoglu 2014, 90). That was the evidence that Turkey had the ambitions to be a leader for those countries.

The subsequent leader of the Turkish state, Prime Minister Recep Tayip Erdoğan, continued to strengthen Turkey's international position in the region. His Foreign Minister in the AKP government, Ahmet Davutoğlu, believed that Turkey should refer to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and take advantage of the geopolitical conditions. Turkish politicians began to envisage the role of Turkey as an important player not only in the region but also as a central state - located in the centre of Eurasia. Turkey's location on the globe predestines it to influence the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey had been self-limiting and underestimated its potential thanks to its location (Yesilyurt and Akdevelioğlu 2009, 40). Turkey allowed itself to be degraded to the role of a peripheral state and taken advantage of in the game between the powers. In the past, instead of promoting its own interests, Ankara was involved in a broader policy of Western States, whose goals were pursued with Turkey's engagement. Ankara should pursue its own interests and use its position to promote its own vision of shaping the international environment as a regional and global power (Grigoriadis 2014, 161).



The main element of Davutoğlu doctrine was the 'zero problems with neighbouring countries' principle, by implementation of which Turkey wanted to strengthen its image as a stable and predictable country, attractive to its neighbours and distant partners. To achieve that, Turkey intended to use its soft policy attributes, i.e. to use economic and cultural contacts to obtain the greatest influence in its environment.

The belief in its own strength and in the importance of its position in the international arena was emphasized by Turkish politicians, which coincided with the weakening of Turkey's relations with the USA and the European Union. The worse the relations between Turkey and the West were, the stronger Turkey's independence and the superpower role became. Discrepancies in Ankara's and Washington's policies regarding the situation in the Middle East created tension between them. Ankara's relations with Brussels were also not the best because the situation in Cyprus put a halt to the process of negotiations with the European Union (Szymański 2011, 15).

Turkish politicians significantly highlighted the Eurasianism of their country, indicating that a modern Turkey, with European values and oriental culture, is a bridge to building relations between Eastern and Western civilizations (Yanik 2011, 80). Davutoglu stressed that if Ankara wanted to be a meaningful player in the region, it must move away from the current policy focused only to the west. Turkey tightened its relations with the Arab countries, but at the same time its relations with Israel deteriorated. In that respect there was a dependence; the worse the relations between Turkey and Israel were, the better the relations with Arab countries and the stronger the position of Turkey in the Muslim world (Marcou 2013, 2). Erdoğan began to strongly defend the Palestinians and tried to take over the role of a leader of Islamic states by criticizing the Israeli policies in the region. Turkish politicians, astounded by their current economic and political successes, began to clearly aspire to define their state as an emerging power. Erdoğan presented ambitious goals for the Turkish society, the greatest of which was to obtain the status of a world power in the next few decades (Barrinha 2014, 166).

The credibility of Turkish politicians' declarations regarding Turkey's positioning on the international arena was checked quite quickly. The consequences of Ankara's involvement in the events of the Arab Spring and its involvement in disputes with a number of countries in the region depreciated the possibilities of Turkish diplomacy. It came to pass that Turkish foreign policy based on the principle of "zero problems with neighbouring countries" could not be implemented due to the unstable international environment in the Middle East. Turkish ambitions of building a powerful position collided with the resistance of other players in the region, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. What is more, the economic situation in Turkey deteriorated which also limited its chance to exert influence on direct neighbours and undermined the image of Turkey as an emerging power. However, the failure to implement the policy of 'zero problems with neighbouring countries' did not weaken the policy of referring to the Ottoman legacy.



Erdoğan clearly focused on shaping Turkey's independent policy in the region. He began to frequently refer to Islam as the element connecting the Turkish nation and the countries in the region. In 2014, Turkey refused to participate in a coalition built by NATO to combat the Islamic State (Park 2015, 581), which strained its relations with the alliance members. In the following year, as a result of the conscious policy of 'flooding' European countries with immigrants and refugees, Turkey deteriorated its relations with the European Union (Dahl 2017). The climax in the deterioration of Turkey's relations with European states and the US was an attempt to carry out a failed coup in Turkey in July 2016. Erdoğan then accused European leaders of lacking in solidarity, and the US of protecting Fethullah Gülen, whom he considered the ringleader of the putsch. Since Erdoğan still uses the coup to eradicate his internal political opponents, which has resulted in the violation of human rights and democratic principles, relations with the Western world are constantly deteriorating which for Turkey means searching for new allies. Since 2016, Turkey has been approaching Russia and Iran.

Those three countries have formed their own coalition regarding the cessation of the war in Syria, but also regarding the division of influence in that country. There is no surprise that Turkey began to collaborate with Russia and Iran, since European countries as well as the US expressed no interest in active participation to end the Syrian civil war. Turkey, which wanted to have influence on the situation in neighbouring Syria, had to engage with the countries that were directly involved there.

The rapprochement with Russia and also with the Arab countries was a result of Turkey's ambition to base its strong international position on the energy resources hub. Turkey admittedly has modest deposits of raw materials; however, they are located exactly between the producers of such resources and their recipients. On one hand, there is Russia, countries of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, and on the other hand, the European economies hungry for raw materials. Being a world hydrocarbon distribution power is also widely present in the statements of Turkish politicians, who want to promote the image of Turkey as an emerging power. Turkish foreign policy ambitions are increasingly distancing Turkey from Europe and democratic standards, thus anchoring it in the world of authoritarian states, associated mainly with Russia and the Arab states. Turkey is systematically destroying its image as a stable, credible and predictable partner in the eyes of Western countries. The depreciation of Turkey's image is also related to its eagerness to revise the Treaty of Lausanne from 1923, which shaped the borders of modern Turkey. Erdoğan believes that the treaty is not adjusted to the ambitions and position of Turkey in the world. Such statements are particularly dangerous as they undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries in the region.

A POLISH PERSPECTIVE ON NEO-OTTOMANISM IN TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY

Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, Poland joined the same bloc of Western countries as Turkey. Although both countries are located in distant geopolitical regions, they can be called NATO's front countries. In the case of Poland and Turkey, their external eastern borders are at the same time the external borders of the North Atlantic Treaty. As members of the alliance, both countries should support one other, solidarize and approach with an understanding of the problems arising from their individual international environments. Basically, until 2015, Poland tried to be loyal to Turkey, which was shown in the support of the Polish government for one of the main priorities of Turkey's foreign policy, namely gaining membership in the European Union. The effects of the cooperation were especially visible when, after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, Ankara, together with other alliance members, condemned Moscow for the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. What is more, by condemning Russia, President Erdoan defended the Muslim population of the Tatars living in the Crimea. The Turkish leader also encouraged more NATO activity in the Black Sea Basin, urging them to organise joint manoeuvres with Ukraine (Balcer 2016). Poland, for whom the greatest security threat was posed by Russia, has remained particularly sensitive to Moscow's aggressive policy. Russia's military interference in neighbouring Ukraine is treated as an act of aggression, which also threatens Polish interests (Stepniewski 2017a, 17-25). One has to remember that there has been a prevailing rule in Poland that there is no safe Poland without independent Ukraine. Ukraine acts as a buffer state between Poland and a powerful and dangerous Russia (Stepniewski 2017b, 171-177). That is why the joint opposition of all NATO members against Russia's military activity was also a signal confirming the unity of the alliance.

Since 2015, Turkey has been gradually demonstrating the separateness of its position due to the strained relations with European countries and the USA. The worse the relations were, the more Turkish politicians referred to ottomanism and emphasised the uniqueness of their state as a geostrategic power located in the centre of Eurasia. The emphasis of Turkey's Eurasian character was associated with the search for elements that would highlight Turkish relations with other countries in the region. That is why Turkey more frequently referred to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and emphasised its affiliation to the Muslim community. Highlighting the Eurasian character of the state, *de facto* means a reversal towards the eastern countries. This is particularly evident in Turkey's policy towards Russia. Since the unsuccessful putsch in 2016, Turkey's relations with the Western world have been dreadful, and isolated Turkey began to look for new partners behind its eastern border. The need to control the situation in Syria resulted in the Turkish-Russian rapprochement. Following the failed coup, Erdoan made his first international visit to Russia.



The rapprochement of a NATO member with the biggest rival of the alliance, which Russia is according to Poland, impinges not only on the interests of the alliance and undermines its unity, but also, especially for Poland, demonstrates a lack of solidarity. It is no surprise that Turkey has become an unpredictable and unreliable partner for Poland. In Poland, the Turkish-Russian love affair is observed with great concern. Until recently, it was thought that Turkey, as a Black Sea country, could constitute a counterbalance to the expansion of Russian influence in the Basin, which would mean support for Ukraine and its territorial integrity. But as it turned out, Turkey actually accepted Russian influence in the Black Sea and allowed for its unobstructed activity in the region so as not to hinder relations with Russia. Putin basically took advantage of Turkey's isolation by the West in order to establish closer cooperation. There is also no support for the Tatar population of Crimea in Erdogan's statements anymore. From a Polish foreign policy and security perspective, the Turkey's pro-Russian turn is like a stab in the back. Turkey's decisions to purchase the S-400 missile defence system from Russia cast doubt on Turkey's loyalty to NATO partners. Turkey, although officially still an ally of the West, has caused a number of problems for NATO Member States. One of the elements of Turkish neo-ottomanism is in reference to the religious factor and is the attempt to interfere in other countries' politics under the pretext of protecting the interests of Muslims.

This is particularly visible on the Balkan Peninsula, where Erdogan has repeatedly demonstrated support for Turks, Albanians and Bosnians. Interfering in the Balkans has always had tragic consequences not only for that region, but also for the rest of Europe. Referring to the religious factor on an international scale, which is often associated with Turkey's internal political campaign, has become extremely dangerous. It should be remembered that any Balkan crisis would also affect Poland. It is in the interests of the entirety of Europe to stabilize the situation there and not to exacerbate it. As a negative example of Turkish agitation, we can put forward the encouragement of the Muslim minority in Greek Thrace to organise an independence referendum.

Another element related to neo-ottomanism are the claims made by Turkish politicians, especially Erdogan, regarding the revision of the Treaty of Lausanne establishing Turkey's borders. In Turkish rhetoric there are considerably more arguments that the Treaty of Lausanne was unjust, disadvantageous for Turkey and limited the possibilities of Turkish expansion. Turkish demands for the return of Mosul, or the desire to occupy the northern territories of Syria are particularly worrisome for NATO allies, including Poland. Treaty revisionism and its domino effect have always ended tragically, which is shown by the genesis of the Second World War. The involvement of Western allies in conflicts with Turkey's neighbouring countries is particularly dangerous. Turkey also behaves aggressively towards Greece – not only a NATO ally, but also Poland's partner in the EU. The demands for the return of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea are also questionable. Until now, Poland has tried not to interfere in those issues and has avoided any conflict with both NATO allies, but the



more Turkey approaches Moscow, the greater the support of Poland as well as other members of the alliance may be for Greece. According to Poles, another negative element related to the emphasis of the Turkish position in the region is the treatment of immigrants and refugees residing in Turkey as a kind of demographic weapon used by Ankara in relations with European countries. It was the refugee crisis of 2015 and the 'forwarding' of about 1 million emigrants to Europe that contributed to the turmoil within the European Union, which, among other things, resulted in Brexit (Dahl and Skomorokhova 2017).

The migration crisis also changed the attitude of Poles towards Muslim communities (Katarzyna Górk-Sosnowska 2016), but also translated into a negative attitude towards Turks. Polish society, which, according to the opinion polls, supported Turkey's accession to the EU and showed sympathy for the Turkish people a few years ago, has definitely changed its approach. In recent polls, the negative attitude of Poles towards Turks prevails. The most staggering thing is that Poles dislike Turks more than Russians! Obviously, Polish-Turkish relations at an intergovernmental level remain cordial and correct. In November 2017, President Erdoğan made an official visit to Poland. This was the first visit of the Turkish leader to the European Union after the failed coup. The Polish government was one of the few in Europe that limited its criticism of Erdoğan's actions against his opposition and the violation of the rule of law and the principles of democracy.

Economic cooperation and tourist exchange are still developing. However, with regards to foreign policy and security, Poland finds it difficult to refrain from participating in the official criticism of the Turkish-Russian rapprochement.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, Turkish neo-ottomanism is growing in strength with the deterioration of Turkey's relations with European states and the US. Emphasising Turkey's Eurasianism, referring to the religious community of Islam, or revisionism of the Treaty of Lausanne as well as the territorial claims are more present in the rhetoric of Turkish politicians the more Ankara moves away from European standards. Europe, including Poland, realises how much it actually needs Turkey mainly for security reasons. Turkey has the second largest army in NATO and has an extremely important geostrategic position. It is a kind of buffer for Europe, which separates the Old Continent from the unstable states of the Middle East. For Ankara admittedly, NATO membership and good relations with European countries are also important, because they guarantee security against the unpredictable Arab states. They also provide Ankara with some reinforcement in its relations with Russia. Without such a political background and Western security guarantees, Turkey would certainly not be treated with such respect by Russia. However, Erdoğan's game to balance Turkey between the West and Russia is tremendously dangerous for the credibility, effectiveness and unity of the Alliance. Poland is particularly critical of that game, since NATO is the key guarantor of its security and



perceives Russia as its greatest threat. Polish politicians hope that the Turkish-Russian love affair is temporary and related to finding a solution to the Syrian conflict. Some experts claim that Turkey and Russia are too divided; they have different interests in the Caucasus, in the Armenian-Azeri conflict and in the Central Asian post-Soviet republics. However, further development of the situation is difficult to predict, as Turkey is moving further away from Europe, and, following the migration crisis which caused anti-Islamic sentiment in Europe, the European Union is definitely not interested in strengthening relations with Turkey. The crisis in those relations is compounded by Erdoan's violation of the principles of democracy and the rule of law. The key question remains as to whether Ankara will maintain its alliance with the West in the future knowing that there is no chance of attaining full membership in the European Union? Is it enough to be a buffer state, albeit with a privileged economic relationship with the EU? Will Ottoman resentment take over and push Turkey more to the East? Considering Poland's interests, the determinant in shaping relations with Turkey will be its policy towards Russia and the probable achievement of its position as an energy hub.



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