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PRAGMATIC FRIENDSHIP IN THE UK-TURKEY RELATIONS

Alexandra KONONOVA*

Alexander Alekseyevich KORNİLOV**

Abstract

The article deals with peculiarities of contemporary United Kingdom-Turkey relations. The authors consider strategic (conceptual) dimension of the bilateral relations, do research on the most important joint projects of the two states and pay a special attention to the EU accession of Turkey process influence on the relations between Britain under Prime Minister David Cameron and the Republic of Turkey under Prime Minister Recep Erdogan.

Keywords: Strategic partnership, bilateral relations, economic cooperation, trade pragmatism.

* Student of Region Studies of Foreign Countries, Faculty of International Relations (FIR), Nizhniy Novgorod State University (NNSU), Russia. She does research on the British Foreign Policy Formulation Process and writes B.A. (Region Studies) research on the subject, alexandra_k_a@mail.ru

** Professor (International Relations), Doctor of Sciences (World History). Head, Chair of Region Studies of Foreign Countries, FIR NNSU, Russia. His studies focus on international relations in the Middle East and Transcaucasia, kotva64@mail.ru

Özet

Türkiye İngiltere İlişkilerinde Pragmatik Dostluk

Bu makale günümüz İngiltere-Türkiye ilişkilerini ele almaktadır. Yazarlar ikili ilişkilerin stratejik (kavramsal) yönlerini incelemekte, iki ülkenin en önemli ortak projeleri üzerinde yoğunlaşmakta ve Türkiye'nin AB'ne katılım sürecinin Başbakan David Cameron yönetimindeki İngiltere ile Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan yönetimindeki Türkiye Cumhuriyeti arasındaki ilişkilere etkisine dikkat çekmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik ortaklık, ikili ilişkiler, ekonomik işbirliği, ticari faydacılık.

Резюме

В статье изучаются особенности современных отношений Соединенного Королевства и Турции. Авторы рассматривают концептуальные основы двусторонних отношений, исследуют наиболее важные совместные проекты двух государств и уделяют особое внимание влиянию процесса вступления Турции в ЕС на отношения Великобритании периода премьер-министра Дэвида Камерона и Турецкой Республики периода премьер-министра Реджепа Эрдогана.

Ключевые слова: стратегическое партнерство, двусторонние отношения, экономическое сотрудничество, торговый прагматизм.

UK-Turkish relations constitute a very interesting and dynamic phenomenon of the contemporary globalised world. While the international relations become more and more turbulent and are influenced by new emerging poles of power, partnership of Britain and Turkey remain a stable and remarkable factor of global and regional politics. No exaggeration to say that the bilateral relations appear to exert a considerable influence on European Union Common Foreign and Defence policy, NATO activities and regional affairs across the Balkans and the Middle East as well on the Russia and China international politics. Great Britain and Turkey share common vision of international issues and have a wish to settle conflicts by joint and coordinated action.

A historical outlook on the development of bilateral ties

The relations between Turkey and Great Britain date back in history to the XVIth century. Apparently, Great Britain was one of the first countries to establish official diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire¹. At that time (and it strikingly resembles the present situation) the British government was driven by the desire to open up new market outlets in the East, expand its economic influence and strengthen the fledgling Empire through the diversification of its foreign ties across the globe.

While taking a general look on the British and Turkish history we can't help but see a great likeliness of the "historical fates" of the two countries that both have lost an empire and thus experienced a sharp reevaluation of their external policy values systems. This resemblance can be seen in the evolution of their foreign policy approaches and roles, pragmatic vision of the international relations and economy-oriented foreign strategy.

Britain and Turkey are strongly intermingled through history. Of course over the centuries the nature of their relations have changed for several times: they have served for each other both as close allies (for instance in the Crimean War) and as belligerent parties (during the years of the World War I). One way or another, a real thaw in the bilateral relations could have been observed in the middle of the XXth century and it was connected with the Turkish accession to NATO in 1952 and the integration of Turkey into the "Western" political process. "Westernization" of Turkey inspired by Mustafa Kemal Pasha², now known as Atatürk, proved to be successful and the US warmly welcomed Turkey's membership in the Alliance. The specific transatlantic ties between Great Britain and the US also positively influenced the mutual perception between Turkey and the UK.

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- 1 Info Notes / The Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website // URL: <http://london.emb.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=180168> (Date of reading: 17 July 2013)
 - 2 The speech of Bob Walter, Member of Parliament for North Dorset, given on 4 July 2012 / Bob Walter's official website // URL: <http://www.bobwaltermp.com/news/uk-turkey-relations> (Date of reading: 17 July 2013)

We can highlight two vital points that fostered political rapprochement between Turkey and Great Britain and marked the prehistory of this new alliance. The first one is a feeling of solidarity and compassion that was shown by Great Britain towards Turkish accession to the EU whose own application for membership was vetoed by France for several times. The second one is, so to say, the phenomenon of the British ‘historical responsibility’. Here we imply the Cyprus issue. Over the years of this long-lasting conflict the UK have been trying to contribute as much as possible to the resolution process. Unfortunately the so-called “Annan plan” of 2004 – the last British initiative on the resolution of the conflict developed within the frameworks of the UN³ – have failed. But still this British attempt of political trusteeship was mainly pro-Turkish and it can be assessed as an indisputable evidence of mutual trust and respect the two sides have achieved by the year 2000.

Even though the “golden age” in relations was proclaimed by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan only in 2010⁴ it would be wrong to assume that there was no fertile ground prepared in advance. The frequency of bilateral high-level visits (even at the royal level) grew rapidly during Gordon Brown’s premiership⁵. What is more, Britain also actively mediated in reconciliation process with Armenia⁶. But the most significant move forward made by Gordon Brown and his Foreign Secretary Ed Milliband was the adoption of the Strategic Partnership Document in 2007, which was later only extended

3 The comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem / The Zypern Times official website // URL: <http://www.zypern.cc/extras/annan-plan-for-cyprus-2004.pdf> (Date of reading: 17 July 2013)

4 Turkey, UK relations at Golden Age: Erdogan / The World Bulletin website, 27 Jul. 2010 // URL: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=61872> (Date of reading: 15 July 2013)

5 Info Notes / The Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website // URL: <http://london.emb.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=180168> (Date of reading: 17 July 2013)

6 Sargasyan, Miliband hold Talks on Armenia / The Aysor news website, 11 Feb. 2010 // URL: <http://www.aysor.am/en/news/2010/02/11/sargasyan-miliband/> (Date of reading: 15 July 2013)

and renewed by David Cameron and which has laid the basic foundations for versatile bilateral relations and set out common goal to advance mutually beneficial cooperation⁷. Thus we can conclude that David Cameron now successfully continues his predecessor's undertakings that are predetermined by certain political and historical prerequisites and coincidences.

Concepts and ideas of current bilateral relations

Coming of David Cameron Cabinet to power in the UK in 2010 was followed by an obvious advancement of strategic ties of two states. The traditionally strong bilateral relations acquired new impetus and new breadth. Three years have already passed and today it seems important to analyze both perceptions and strategic priorities of the UK political elite has in relation to Turkey and major joint projects that are being implemented.

Prime Minister Cameron gave his answer to the questions of British-Turkish relations very soon after coming to power. In July 2010 Prime Minister delivered political speech in Ankara where he clarified strategic priorities of his country in relation to Turkey⁸. According to Prime Minister, he visited Turkey *“to establish a new partnership between Britain and Turkey”*. This is *“a vital strategic relationship”* for the United Kingdom. David Cameron developed his perception and said:

“Everyone is talking about the BRICs, the fast-growing emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Turkey is Europe's BRIC, and yet in Britain we export more to Ireland than we export to Brazil, Russia, India, China and Turkey all combined. With no disrespect to our partners and friends

7 Foreign Affairs Committee Twelfth Report. UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role. 20 March 2012 / The UK Parliament Website // URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmffaff/1567/156702.htm> (Date of reading: 09 March 2012)

8 A transcript of a speech given by Prime Minister David Cameron in Ankara, Turkey, on 27 July 2010/ The official site of the British Prime Minister's Office // URL: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-in-turkey/> (Date of reading 11 March 2013)

in Ireland, we have to change that. That is the first reason I am here today and it is why I have chosen to come to TOBB, right in the heart of the Turkish business community”.

In other words, the first British interest in cooperation with Turkey lies in the field of economy and Prime Minister Cameron intentionally stressed growing economic strength of the Republic of Turkey. Comparison of Turkey with the BRIC, to our mind, showed the place Britain would like to see for Turkey in the tedious and long process of the EU accession. The comparison also meant export ambition of Great Britain extremely interested in expansion of market for British goods, services and investments.

The second dimension of bilateral partnership has to do with security field. In particular, Prime Minister said that *“Turkey is a great NATO ally and Turkey shares our determination to fight terrorism in all its forms, whether from al-Qaeda or from the PKK”*. In addition, Turkey’s unique position at the meeting point of East and West gives this country *“an unrivalled influence in helping us to get to grips with some of the greatest threats to our collective security”*. *“Whether in Afghanistan or in the Middle East, Turkey has a credibility that others in the West just cannot hope to have,* Prime Minister went on to say. *So I have come here today to make the case for Turkey to use this credibility, to go further in enhancing our security and working for peace across our world”*. We think these words reflected British Premier and his team perception of Turkey as indispensable Eurasian link in the EU and NATO security policy circles.

We also discover a political motivation in the speech of Prime Minister Cameron. Turkey acquired great ability to intermediate in the most dangerous international conflicts, according to the British Premier. It played pivotal role in Afghanistan, in the Balkans. Prime Minister especially pointed at good relations of Turkey with conflicting parties in the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. It is on these reasons that Premier Cameron considered Turkey as a very suitable candidate to the long-expected full EU membership.

I am here to make the case for Turkey's membership of the European Union and to fight for it, he said. When I think about what Turkey has done to defend Europe as a NATO ally and what Turkey is doing today in Afghanistan alongside our European allies, it makes me angry that your progress towards EU membership can be frustrated in the way that it has been.

I will remain your strongest possible advocate for EU membership and for greater influence at the top table of European diplomacy.

The evolution of British perceptions on Turkey can also be traced in key speeches of Foreign Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. In particular, Secretary William Hague gave an explicit interview with The Observer in October 2011.

The interview is very interesting to international relations experts. Foreign Secretary recognizes that British foreign policy has to be less exclusively focused on Europe, the US and China: *"The world is not going into concentric blocs of power. It is actually going into a diffusion of power with more centres of decision-making than ever in human civilisation. That requires you to place yourself in far more hubs of power than ever before. You can't just say we're going to do it all in Brussels, Beijing and Washington."* Hague's mission is to *"build whole new alliances with the emerging powers"*. Secretary Hague mentions Turkey and says the country is *"a rapidly growing player and one of the countries that I work with the most"*. Hague *"very much"* wants to see Turkey become a member of the European Union, an ambition strongly opposed by some other member states⁹.

Secretary Hague devoted his special article to relations with Turkey in November 2011. In his conceptual discussion, Foreign Secretary stressed that Turkey is developing a new role and new links for itself, within and beyond

9 Andrew Rawnsley and Toby Helm. William Hague: 'We have to build new alliances with the emerging powers'/ The Observer. 1 October 2011// URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/oct/01/william-hague-foreign-policy-interview> (Date of reading: 11 March 2013)

Pragmatic Friendship in the UK-Turkey Relations

existing structures and alliances. That is why Britain strives to strengthen ties with this state.

Turkey is vital for our security, Foreign Secretary repeats the words of Prime Minister Cameron and adds: *we work together as NATO allies across the world. In Afghanistan, we share the same objectives. Turkish troops and diplomacy are making vital contributions towards the creation of a more secure future*. Two countries maintain successful cooperation in the Balkans, make joint effort in counter-terrorism policy and coordinate action against illegal immigration. Foreign Secretary appeals to the Western partners of Britain to understand the fact that EU members *will have to contend with rapid change and uncertainty in our neighborhood, across north Africa to central Asia, in the coming years*. Few countries are better placed to influence events in this vital region than Turkey¹⁰.

The Foreign Policy Centre founded by the late British Foreign Secretary Robin Hook and patronized by ex-Premier Tony Blair, published some time ago Briefing entitled “Turkey’s Pivotal Role in Energy Supply”. The Centre experts come to conclusion that *“Turkey holds a strategic role in regional energy supply, in particular for natural gas... Due to its geographical location, it stands as a key country in ensuring global energy security through the diversification of supply sources and routes and the degree to which it can serve as not only a natural gas importer but also natural gas transit state will be essential for the region’s energy security”*¹¹. The above-mentioned estimation shows how much important Turkey is considered by the influential think-tank of the United Kingdom.

10 Britain and Turkey: a new special relationship. By William Hague/ The Telegraph. 22 Nov. 2011// URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/8906161/Britain-and-Turkey-a-new-special-relationship.html> (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

11 Zeynep Dereci. FPC Briefing: Turkey’s Pivotal Role in Energy Supply/ the Foreign Policy Centre// URL: <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1533.pdf> (Date of reading 13 March 2013)

The same thing can be said of some other British think-tanks. They definitely foster doing inter-disciplinary and perspective research on Turkey foreign and domestic policies. The most outstanding example here is the famous Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs). The Institute had developed interesting and stimulating to decision-makers the Turkey Project. The Project is designed to enable policy-makers and decision-makers to gain a better understanding of Turkey as a country-in-transition. The Chatham House administration and researchers are convinced that *“Much of the academic and policy research on Turkey in the United States and Europe concentrates either on its geostrategic importance or more narrowly on the domestic challenges facing the country. Far less attention is focused on the intricate link between Turkey’s internal political, economic and social development and their implications for the role that Turkey will play in the long-term stability and development of surrounding regions. This project considers the implications of Turkey as a country in the midst of dynamic political and economic changes, and the repercussions of its interactions with Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region. The focus is not only on Turkey’s wider regional context, but also on a number of its vital bilateral relationships, including its European Union accession process and its delicate ties with Russia”*. The Chatham House assisted in launching Turkey-UK first and then international initiative called The Istanbul Roundtable. It is an annual high-level meeting that brings together an exclusive group of global leaders from the worlds of business, politics and civil society to discuss international issues of critical importance to global growth and security¹².

The visit Prime Minister Erdogan made to Great Britain in July 2012 also showed and confirmed strong ties of two countries. Speaking at the press conference Premier Cameron pointed at range of issues of mutual interest and discussion of both states. The relations are *“not just an economic relationship. There is also a very strong political relationship. We continue to support*

12 Turkey Project / Chatham House. Independent thinking on international affairs
//URL: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/research/europe/current-projects/turkey-project> (Date of reading 14 March 2013)

Turkey's membership of the European Union; we hope we can make good progress with that over the months and years to come"¹³.

Perceptions of the UK political elite define Turkey as a very important partner in foreign policy of the Kingdom. Strategic importance of Turkey does not confine to energy supplies and net economic calculations. This country is important by its geographic (Eurasian) location and serves as a reliable military and political neighbor of NATO and EU communities. Strong and long-term partnership of the UK and Turkey is not influenced by some differences of opinion and diversity of views of world events and trends in international sphere. Below we will see how difficult issues of regional and world politics are treated by the Turkey-UK cooperation.

Economic Relations between Turkey and Great Britain within the context of the British 'trade-led pragmatism'

As it was mentioned above, The British government gives the highest priority to the idea of strengthening all-around cooperation with Turkey and the British mass media regard these relations with no other characteristic apart a *"new special relationship"*¹⁴. At this point let us quote the words of the British Prime Minister. In his speech in Ankara on the 27th of July 2010, Mr. Cameron defined current relations between the two sides as a *"vital strategic tie"*¹⁵. *"Turkey is vital for our economy, vital for our security and vital for our*

13 The Prime Ministers discussed the strong trade and investment links between both countries and both welcomed the fact that they were well on track to meet the \$20bn trade target by 2015 / The official site of the British Prime Minister's Office// URL: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/turkish-prime-minister-receptayyip-erdogan/> (Date of reading 14 March 2013)

14 William Hague. Britain and Turkey: a new special relationship / The Telegraph // URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/8906161/Britain-and-Turkey-a-new-special-relationship.html> (Date of reading 9 March 2013)

15 A transcript of a speech given by Prime Minister David Cameron in Ankara, Turkey, on 27 July 2010 / The official site of the British Prime Minister's Office// URL: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-in-turkey/> (Date of reading 11 March 2013)

politics and our diplomacy”¹⁶ – that was the answer to the simple question of a journalist “Why?”

In this part of the article we suggest to examine the main standpoints that secure such a rigid position of Turkey on the British economic agenda within the context of its foreign policy’s major dimensions, with a focus on the existing joint institutions and practical steps aimed at deepening mutually beneficial partnership.

It is essential to understand that the guideline of the British strategy in the external affairs has always been the idea of the so-called trade-led pragmatism. This very notion is pivotal in understanding the fact that gaining economic advantages from any political move has always been aim number one for the British politicians. As a matter of fact, all the actions of Great Britain on the path to the “new special relationship” with Turkey are driven by the desire to overcome the harmful post-effects of the crisis in Europe through diversification of its economic ties across the globe: “... *the relative weight of economic activity around the world is shifting, from the developed economies of Europe ...towards the rising economies of Asia, Latin America, and the Gulf. The financial crisis has accelerated this shift <...> Emerging economies are recovering more quickly from the crisis than developed ones*”¹⁷. These attempts perfectly fit in with the main concept of the “*global involvement*” in the foreign affairs within the global multipolar world system stated in the National Security Strategy which represents the fundamental document endorsed by the coalition government.

16 Britain and Turkey: a new special relationship. By William Hague/ The Telegraph. 22 Nov. 2011 // URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/8906161/Britain-and-Turkey-a-new-special-relationship.html> (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

17 National Security Strategy / The Cabinet Office: Official website. // URL: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-security-strategy-strong-britain-age-uncertainty> (Date of reading: 20 December 2011)

Turkey's MIST – an alternative for BRIC?

Turkey, in particular, is obviously assessed by the British government as a promising “*emerging economic power of significant potential*”¹⁸ on the global arena. In this regard the phenomenon of the acronym “MIST” is worth mentioning. To a certain extent we can claim that David Cameron has recently launched a new trend in the global political rhetoric by calling Turkey a “*BRIC country of Europe*”¹⁹ in his message to the British-Turkish Business Forum in 2010. Since then this idea has been reorganized by Jim O’Neill, the Goldman Sachs economist, who came up with a new agglomeration of countries²⁰ – “MIST” or Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey – thus pulling together four world’s main emerging economies and continuing his ‘BRIC-tradition’.

What kind of economic potential makes Turkey tower above other states? In the prognosis made up by The Economist’s analysts in 2009, Turkey was identified as “*one of the next international emerging economies to watch*”²¹. And actual economic rates have almost lived up to all the expectations. Even though the internal economic situation in Turkey was sharply influenced by the global economic decline of the year 2009 the current figures are really impressive: “*the [Turkish] economy recorded the third-fastest rate of growth*

18 Foreign Affairs Committee Twelfth Report. UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey’s Regional Role. 20 March 2012 / The UK Parliament Website // URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfaff/1567/156702.htm> (Date of reading: 09 March 2012)

19 British PM considers Turkey ‘BRIC of Europe’ / World Bulletin website // URL: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=65121> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

20 Simon Roughneen. After BRIC comes MIST, the acronym Turkey would certainly welcome / The Guardian. 1 Feb. 2011 // URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/feb/01/emerging-economies-turkey-jim-oneill> (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

21 Global Economic Prospects, Vol.4, Jan. 2012 / The World Bank official website // URL: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1322593305595/8287139-1326374900917/GEP_January_2012a_FullReport_FINAL.pdf (Date of reading: 09 March 2012)

in the G20 last year [2010]. Not a single Turkish bank failed in the financial crisis. And inflation has been held down, partly thanks to a strong lira”²². Ironically, it was “the first time ... inflation was the same as in Britain”²³. The concluding 2012 rates look even more promising: the basic economic parameters, such as GDP, general government gross debt, inflation and unemployment rates continue to alter in a positive way.

Playing for bets

The roaring engine of the Turkish economy pledging great profits from financial and trade ties for a potential partner works as the best incentive for the government of the UK. Prime Minister Erdogan’s aspirations for Turkey to be included in the global economic top-10 by the year 2023²⁴ are far from being an empty boasting. There is quite abundant economic evidence behind these words and the acute economic data proves their validity. As a result, great economic potential of this country becomes a cornerstone of the argumentative leverage Britain uses to show its support in the Turkish ‘trench warfare’ for the EU-membership.

Great Britain has always been considered to be a ‘distant’ EU-member, reluctant to support basic EU initiatives and remaining an outsider in three significant areas of European integration: common foreign and security policy, economic and monetary union as well as constitutional reform. But in all matters regarding the issue of Turkey’s membership in the EU David Cameron and his political clique are completely enthusiastic. In September 2012 Director of the European and Global Issues Secretariat at the UK’s Cabinet Office, Angus Lapsey once again reiterated the British strong support for Turkey’s accession

22 Turkey’s economy is overheating / The Economist. 5 May 2011 // URL: <http://www.economist.com/node/18651739> (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

23 Ibid.

24 Johan Spanner. Turkey / The New York Times, 14 Dec. 2012 // URL: <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/turkey/index.html> (Date of reading: 08 March 2013)

to the EU “*from the very beginning*”²⁵. However, the methods of providing this support evolved noticeably. Starting with a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in environment chapter in Turkey’s European Union accession talks sealed in October, 2010²⁶ - quite an abstract initiative that was supposed to help Turkey to fulfill the requirements of the policy chapter on environment – Great Britain proceeded to the direct pressure and disguised blackmailing. In October, 2012 David Cameron officially indicated his readiness to conduct a referendum on the country’s relationship with the EU. As it can be seen from the context of his public speeches, the idea was to promote the concept “*less Europe, not more Europe*”²⁷. While laying special stress on the European disability to overcome the tremendous consequences of the debt crisis he gradually pushes forward the only effective solution – further enlargement at the expense of the European Neighborhood. This ‘radical’ resolution of the problem was directly announced by Foreign Secretary William Hague in October, 2012²⁸. “*In the broader European Neighborhood, the EU must still have a compelling offer for those who share our values and interests and continue with the mission of enlargement. It is profoundly in our collective strategic interest that Turkey continues on an EU track. <...> their future lies with Europe*”²⁹. In other words, the British officials threaten to enhance

25 UK supporting Turkey’s EU accession from Beginning / The Turkish Weekly. 14 Sept. 2012 // URL: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/141891/-uk-supporting-turkey-39-s-eu-accession-from-beginning.html>

26 Turkey, Britain sign MoU for cooperation in environment chapter in Turkey’s EU talks / Trend news website. 24 Oct. 2010 (Date of reading: 11 March 2013)

27 Cameron promises ‘to reshape Britain’s EU membership’ / EurActiv.com. 01 Oct. 2012 // URL: <http://www.euractiv.com/uk-europe/uk-referendum-eu-promised-news-515085> (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

28 A transcript of a speech given by Foreign Secretary William Hague on 23 Oct. 2012 / The official website of the British Government // URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/europe-at-a-crossroads-what-kind-of-europe-do-we-want> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

29 A transcript of a speech given by Foreign Secretary William Hague on 23 Oct. 2012 / The official website of the British Government // URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/europe-at-a-crossroads-what-kind-of-europe-do-we-want> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

centrifugal direction of their EU policy if other EU members won't be ready to concede on the Turkey's accession to the EU. Coming back to the economic connotation of the Britain – EU – Turkey triangle, the main British argument, apart shared democratic values and common political stances on the world's major controversial issues is that the Turkish boosting economic power can give a new lease of life to the volatile and unstable European economy. And we would like to emphasize once again that Turkey is really capable of such economic potential.

Political rapprochement between Turkey and Britain has transparent economic connotation. For Ankara promoting itself as a West-oriented country with ambitions of becoming an EU-member of full value Britain is the only supporter with a high political weigh on the European arena. What is more, economic advantages of trade relations' intensification with London can contribute to the Turkish efforts to enter the elite club of the world's greatest economic powers in the long run. Nevertheless, political stakes for Turkey in this alliance stay higher than economic ones. Great Britain, on the contrary, seeks economic profits first of all. British foreign policy roadmap based on the concept of "*global involvement*" reflects its unwillingness to be dependent on the common European polices in external affairs. Such political independency that Britain achieves through its soft power leverages implies significant financial investments and solid economic basement. Amusingly, the Turkish-British alliance is a kind of a political oxymoron as parties to this tandem have different vectors of political motion. Turkey needs these ties in order to enhance its achievements in pro-European direction, whereas Britain assesses bilateral cooperation as a way to deepen the distance from the EU. One way or another, the stakes for Britain and Turkey are high and the hopes the two parties anchor on the relations are even higher.

Declared targets and reality in the British-Turkish economic relations

The British economic interest in Turkey has been growing gradually alongside with the strengthening of the bilateral ties and the investment

indexes prove this very fact. Taking into consideration the most acute data we can see that even the World Crisis had little influence on the British companies' enthusiasm towards Turkish economic potential. The volume of the foreign direct investments from the U.K. companies to Turkey in the year 2003 was evaluated in \$141 million. In the year 2009 it has already comprised \$2.3 billion³⁰.

All in all, the development of the bilateral economic ties in the modern history can be evaluated as a 'beacon of stability'. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute³¹ since 2003 Britain is constantly included in the Turkish external trade 'Top-20' which consists of countries that prove to be leaders in the bilateral trade turnover volumes. The most remarkable trend that characterizes British position in this list is that the volumes of Turkish exports to Britain prevail over the imports (in average they are 1,5 times larger). Speaking about the UK as the destination of the Turkish exports, we can see that during the pre-crisis period (between 2003 and 2008) Britain has overpassed the US and took the second rigid position with approximately \$8,1 billion in 2008 (whereas in 2003 it was only \$3,6 billion). As importer in 2003 Britain has shown the index of \$3,5 billion and in 2008 it has increased to \$5,2 billion (being number 10 in the list).

The World Crisis has affected the general volumes of the bilateral turnover but not the import-export balance. Even though Britain has moved to the 4th position in the export rates the general increase factor of the export volumes (to \$8,6 billion) actually compensates this negative fall. Speaking about Turkish import indexes, Britain, by contrast has hardly managed to achieve the pre-crisis volumes (compare: \$5,5 billion in 2008 and \$5,6 billion in 2012) and thus it moved to the 11th position. Overall, the UK has tended to fall in the

30 Vanessa Raine, Turkey, Azerbaijan and the United Kingdom: A triumvirate of prosperity? / The business Network Magazine website, 10 Dec. 2012 // URL:

31 Foreign Trade by Countries / The Turkish Statistical Institute official website // URL: http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?alt_id=12 (Date of reading: 09.03.2013)

ranking of Turkey's import sources since 2000. This can be explained through the Turkey's growing energy demand that has boosted the position of Russia and Iran. In addition, such emerging economies as India managed to make an enroll into the Top-20 list. Actually, the UKTI describes today's competition between the exporters in the Turkish market as "*fierce*"³². The example of Italy in this context is especially demonstrative: the year 2009 was a turning point in the Turkish-Italian trade relations, when not only Turkish imports to Italy experienced a real 'boom'. But, what is more important, Italy managed to maintain a rigid 5th position of the export leader after the Crisis. Well, there's no surprise that the British official report of 2010-12 prepared by the House of Commons Foreign Committee entitled "UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role"³³ contains direct references to the Italian positive experience as a pattern for the British economic strategies.

Nevertheless, the official vision of the current level of bilateral economic cooperation seems to be extremely positive. In July, 2012 during the high-level official visit paid by Recep Tayyip Erdogan to London dedicated to the Olympic Games, David Cameron warmly welcomed his Turkish counterpart and once again reiterated his determination to achieve a common goal of \$20billion trade turnover between the two countries by 2015³⁴. What is more, he stressed the fact, that Turkey and Great Britain "*were well on track*" to meet this target. In our estimation, the proclaimed sum of money represents a kind of a daring aspiration, especially in the light of the following statistic data.

32 Doing Business in Turkey / The UK Trade & Investment official website, 04 Feb. 2013 // URL: <http://www.ukti.gov.uk/export/countries/europe/southerneurope/turkey/doingbusiness.html> (Date of reading: 13 July 2013)

33 Foreign Affairs Committee Twelfth Report. UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role. 20 March 2012 / The UK Parliament Website // URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfaff/1567/156702.htm> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

34 David Cameron welcomes Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan / The official site of the British Prime Minister's Office, 30 Jul. 2012 // URL: www.number10.gov.uk/news/turkish-prime-minister-recep-tayyip-erdogan/ (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

If we once again take a look on the foreign trade figures provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute and compare only European indexes, we can observe some positive moves. Among European exporters England holds the second position after quite an expected leader – Germany. The import rates are expectedly less life-asserting: in 2012 Britain acquires only fifth place among the European importers being overpassed by Germany, Italy, France and Spain.

Upon the whole, in the reverse perspective British-Turkish economic relations have experienced a boost and the dynamics of a growth in the trade volumes (export/import rates provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute perfectly illustrate this thesis). However, we can conclude that the target of doubling bilateral trade from 2009 to 2015 seems to be if not an unattainable one, but a distant goal for bilateral economic relations within the current scope of mutual relations. At least it's not in British tradition for high-ranking officials to make empty promises. We can conclude that not only a positive climate reigning in bilateral relations since the coalition government had swept to power serves as a basis for that kind of hopeful proclamations. Any idea has a certain background. Thus we are going to examine already made and just intended practical moves of the British government aimed at cementing economic ties with Turkey, alongside with the existing pitfalls and hurdles in commercial and trade cooperation in the next section of the current research.

Bilateral economic cooperation: problems, their solutions and common initiative in an institutional context

Let's turn to the analysis of the institutional component in bilateral economic relations and examine two interrelated British official documents: the House of Commons Foreign Committee report of session 2010-12 "UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role" published on the 20th of March, 2012 and the official Government Response to the report, issued in June, 2012³⁵. These two documents represent a source of great importance for more

35 Government Response to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Report of Session 2010-12: UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role / The official website of the British Government, June, 2012 // URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32945/2012-jun-uk-turkey-relations.pdf (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

comprehensive understanding of the existing level of cooperation between the two sides that provides us with invaluable information that reflects the British view of the prospects in economic collaboration between Turkey and the UK.

The very fact that the House of Commons Foreign Committee was preoccupied with Turkish studies and prepared a full-scaled document dedicated to Turkey speaks louder than any official statements. Turkey stays high on the political agenda and the intellectual potential of the main British political institutions is used in order to bring the existing ties to the new qualitative level.

The most important part of the Report for the current study is “Economic and commercial ties”, to be more precise the item “UK – Turkey economic relations”. Having recognized the importance of Turkey as an economic partner and proved this idea by the figures, the Committee’s specialists summarize existing initiatives of the British Government in this sector and quite impartially examine their efficiency. We can highlight the following initiatives in mutual economic cooperation recently initiated by the British Government.

- Changes in the UKTI Turkey Department: new appointment to the post of the director, extension of his functional scope and strengthening of the Department’s role within the organization³⁶. The UKTI Turkey represents a team of specialists based in Istanbul who work under the auspices of Regional Director for Trade & Investment for Turkey, Central Asia and the South Caucasus Leigh Turner³⁷ within the frameworks of UKTI Government Department and whose main Target is *“to ensure success of the UK-based businesses in international*

36 Foreign Affairs Committee Twelfth Report. UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey’s Regional Role. 20 March 2012 / The UK Parliament Website // URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfaff/1567/156702.htm> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

37 He was appointed to this post in 2012 and in his work pays special attention to the Turkish direction as it comes clear from his publications in personal blog / The UK Trade and Investment official website // URL: <http://blog.ukti.gov.uk/author/leigh-turner/> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

markets, and encourage the best overseas companies to look to the UK as their global partner of choice"³⁸. It is also worth mentioning that in the UKTI's five-year strategy for 2011-15 entitled "Britain open for business" where Turkey is identified as one of the agency's 20 priority markets with such potentially beneficial areas as information and communications technology, energy (including renewables), infrastructure (including public-private partnerships), education and skills³⁹.

- The British-Turkish CEO Forum, that was established by David Cameron and his Turkish counterpart in 2010 "*in order to develop economic and commercial relations and improve cooperation between Turkey and Britain*"⁴⁰, and that has been already held for two times.

Signing of the UK-Turkish 'Knowledge partnership' in 2011⁴¹, a special program aimed at intensification of mutual exchange in knowledge, technologies and human resources. As Trade and Investment Minister Lord Green mentioned, "*a Knowledge Partnership will help the UK and Turkey to learn from one another, and ensure we are both well equipped to face the technological developments of the twenty first century*"⁴².

38 UK in Turkey. Business / The British Embassy in Ankara website // URL: <http://ukinturkey.fco.gov.uk/en/business/> (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

39 Britain open for business. UKTI strategy for 2011-15 /The official website of UKTI // URL: http://www.intellectuk.org/%2Flibrary/%2Fdoc_download/%2F5536-britain-open-for-business&ei=oZs8UYa2EKcL4ASR2oCoBQ&usg=AFQjCNGsWIBr2ttxykxqRzBw_QdzBMAxg&bvm=bv.43287494,d.bGE&cad=rjt (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

40 The 2nd UK-Turkey CEO forum takes place in London / Business.Turkey.Today website, 25 Nov. 2012 // URL: <http://www.businessturkeytoday.com/the-2nd-uk-turkey-ceo-forum-takes-place-in-london.html>, (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

41 Huge opportunities for UK firms in Turkey / The official website of the British government, 26 Sept. 2011 // URL: <http://news.bis.gov.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=421357&NewsAreaID=2> (Date of reading: 10.03.2013)

42 Lord Green boosts UK-Turkey science and innovation links / The UKTI official website, 27 Apr. 2011 // URL: <http://www.ukti.gov.uk/uktihome/media/pressRelease/131372.html>, (Date of reading: 10 March 2013)

- The UK-Turkey Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) launched during the visit of Minister for Trade, Investment and Small Business, Lord Davies of Abersoch, to Turkey in June 2009 that serves as productive mechanism “*for encouraging greater cooperation across various sectors to increase trade and investment between the UK and Turkey*”⁴³ and meets annually at ministerial level.

This institutional leverage looks quite impressive. Nevertheless, the Committee’s specialists remain quite critical towards governmental steps. Apart such outer obstacles as bureaucracy, corruption and the grey economy as well as foreign firms’ discrimination experienced by some British businessmen that are left up to the Turkish party, there is Turkey’s low visibility within the UK business community to be eradicated⁴⁴. What is more, the whole target of doubling trade volumes is perceived with certain skepticism. The key source of concern is formulated in the report as “*arbitrariness*”⁴⁵. Fearing that the target announced was a sort of declarative one, the Committee warns that the “*galvanizing effect*”⁴⁶ of the British-Turkish cross-government cooperation which only facilitates trade opportunities for businessmen is not abundant in ‘competitive struggle’ for impressive profits from economic links with Turkey, especially in the long running perspective.

43 Ibid.

44 Foreign Affairs Committee Twelfth Report. UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey’s Regional Role. 20 March 2012 / The UK Parliament Website // URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfaff/1567/156702.htm> (Date of reading: 09 March 2012)

45 Ibid.

46 Foreign Affairs Committee Twelfth Report. UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey’s Regional Role. 20 March 2012 / The UK Parliament Website // URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfaff/1567/156702.htm> (Date of reading: 09 March 2012)

Pragmatic Friendship in the UK-Turkey Relations

In the official Government Response⁴⁷ to the Report the Committee's comments on the "\$20bn target" are acknowledged. Nevertheless, the answer seems to be pretty vague and distorted. The report contains only one recommendation ('Recommendation 15') where the main emphasis is laid on the activities within the scope of the UKTI Strategy for Turkey, the JETCO and the CEO Forum and the UK – Turkey Strategic Partnership Agreement that works as a political guarantee for cross-government cooperation. Such simple enumeration with certain clarifications looks like an attempt of the Government to exonerate itself: no new practical moves in the short-term perspective are proposed, except recently created network of "*Turkey champions across the UK to promote Turkey as an export destination*" and "*a new network of Business Honorary Consuls in Turkey, working exclusively on the Trade and Investment agenda, that will help bolster this initiative inside Turkey*"⁴⁸. The Foreign Secretary relies on the projects that have already been launched and promises fruitful results.

However, if we examine the whole document closer, an outline of a practical road-map towards British-Turkey consolidation will become transparent. The Response contains such initiatives as creation of a pilot strategy for visa-regime simplification, the promotion of the BBC World Service's work in Turkey, a set of cultural, scientific and linguistic programs, the exchange of experience in hosting the Olympics, etc.⁴⁹ The 'soft power' instruments of the British traditional diplomacy prevail as the refrain idea voiced both in the

47 Government Response to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Report of Session 2010-12: UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role / The official website of the British Government, June, 2012 // URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32945/2012-jun-uk-turkey-relations.pdf (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

48 Government Response to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Report of Session 2010-12: UK-Turkey Relations and Turkey's Regional Role / The official website of the British Government, June, 2012 // URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32945/2012-jun-uk-turkey-relations.pdf (Date of reading: 09 March 2013)

49 Ibid.

Committee's Report and in the Government Response is "*Turkey's relatively low visibility in the UK*"⁵⁰ that is logically also responsible for little enthusiasm of the British business to penetrate to the Turkish markets thus hampering further increase in trade volumes.

At the first sight, attributing such enormous attention to the 'Turkish image in the UK', both general and economic one, can be perceived as pretty misleading. The ambiguity of the British political priorities regarding Turkey can be interpreted doubly. On the one hand, it may seem that the British government simply confuses the issue and carelessly counts upon the 'domino effect' that cooperation in the 'soft power' matters will surely trigger economic rapprochement. On the other hand, the whole approach resembles a well-used British political 'soft power' scheme which workability has been proved by centuries of the British success in foreign affairs. And before deploying the 'soft power' leverage it urgently requires internal support of the population, otherwise the mechanisms will simply stumble. The Government's efforts aimed at promoting Turkish image directly contribute to the economic cooperation in future prospects as it is not only imposed vertically by the governmental officials but also fuelled on the human level. Within the frameworks of the modern multipolar world system the importance of transnational nongovernmental ties should not be underestimated and business evolves into transnational phenomenon in a higher degree. Therefore we can suggest that the Government in its best traditions wraps up its real interests in the 'soft power packing'.

Consciously moving figures on the world's chess board

Enlarging the compass of the research, we can finally state that the strategic partnership with Turkey is pivotal in the long run as building bridges with this regional actor may become a gateway for gradual strengthening of the British presence in the Middle East. That is a kind of a long-term prospective for Turkey as a regional player with a unique position between East and West,

50 Ibid.

where the whole multiple diversity of the British ‘soft power’ leverage could be deployed and applied.

William Hague during the press conference with Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu on the 8th of July, 2010 said: “*Turkey is a vital NATO ally, a strategic partner for the UK, and Europe’s largest emerging economy and we value Turkey’s unique character as a place where East and West meet together*”⁵¹. Cooperation with Turkey is vital due to the fact that this country may serve as a platform for Great Britain to enhance its economic presence in the Middle East and penetrate to the markets that are closed for the UK now as it has almost exhausted the geopolitical resources of the Persian Gulf States. At first economic, than political abilities of Great Britain to exert influence on the volatile and unstable situation in the Middle East and make great economic profits at the same time will be facilitated thus contributing to the implementation the Coalition Government foreign policy of “global involvement”. This is how the British ‘soft power’ works.

Conclusion

We come to conclusion that the UK-Turkey relations have strategic vision and promising policy perspective. Both countries face the same challenges and define common agenda to settle coming international political and economic disputes. Continued success of the strategic partnership does not depend on party or political orientation of the Prime Minister and Government in power in London. It means that the bilateral relations have experienced a period of maturity. Nevertheless, they can meet some problems in future if we take complex international issues of Europe and the Middle East as well as economic and financial crisis strikes in to account.

51 Dr. Hanan Chehata,” William Hague welcomes ‘new strategic partnership’ with Turkey”, **The Middle East Monitor website**, 08 Jul. 2010 // URL: <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/europe/1273-william-hague-welcomes-qnew-strategic-partnershipq-with-turkey>, (Date of reading: 10 March 2013).

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