

power in Turkey, and Vladimir Putin had just positioned himself as the leader of Russia. At that time, during semi-closed consultations, an agreement was reached whereby Moscow and Ankara would not provide any help to the Kurdish and Chechen separatists correspondingly. In 2008, as a consequence of the war in South Ossetia, Russia and Turkey started to discuss a collective plan to create 'A platform of stability for the Caucasus', which was to resolve the conflicts through the involvement of regional actors (Moscow, Ankara, Teheran), without any involvement on the part of the West. So the countries tried to expand relations from the sphere of economic co-operation to that pertaining to security issues. However, it is fair to note that the US government has suffered a whiplash of fear, which was probably exactly what the authors of the treaty had been striving to achieve.

**The Turkish elite is obviously somewhat outpacing Russia in terms of its development along the lines of the European non-West.** To understand the Turkish model better, it should probably be seen as a variant of what we call 'sovereign democracy'. Both there and here, it is about creating a kind of modern state, which has absorbed the main social-political, economic and technological achievements of recent years, while also preserving the sovereignty and internal special nature of the country in the context of a globalising world.

A 'sovereign democracy' in different countries usually relies (or tries to rely) on the same wider social grouping (the masses). This is the middle class, not in the Western but in the local understanding of the term. In Russia, this group is represented as 'Putin's majority', while in the Muslim world, particularly in Turkey, it is the urban middle class and those who are usually called the black-coated proletariat. This group includes students, engineers, intellectual and professional elites, who are not satisfied with the present lines of revenue distribution within society.

Russian-Turkish relations also pose certain threats. While statements made by European leaders about the end of multiculturalism are harmful to relations between Turkey and the EU, as well as any plans for their mutual integration, Turkophobia in the Russian media and security services is also harmful in terms of our own relations with Turkey, especially in terms of their strategic prospects.

Turkey is offended by what is written in the Russian media about the PJD. Russian journalists can with ease call the Turkish national football team 'janizary'. The situation is even worse when it comes to Russian cultural figures. One example of this happening is the miserable representation of the Osmons in the recent TV series *Bayezet*. And also there is the absurd ban on books written by the marvellous Turkish theologian Said Nursi, the pride of Turkey and the most prominent intellectual of this country in the twentieth century. For the time being, while it is all being hidden behind the curtain of Oriental diplomatic courtesy, there can be no doubt that nothing will actually be forgotten. ■

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## NON-EUROPEAN WEST, NON-WESTERN EUROPE



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**R**ussia is European but not Western, while Turkey has been Western for a long time – with all qualifications – but not (fully) European. The leadership of both the West (the US and the EU) and Russia have missed a lot of opportunities to build common institutions and instil trust in this relationship.

For a long time, Turkey has been part of the West – thanks to its alignment with NATO during the Cold War and membership in institutions such as the Council of Europe and the OECD. Relations with Europe have been more problematic, however, as Turkey has, since the early 19th century, tried to emulate European models but has often been rebuffed by Europe as culturally different. We are now witnessing the latest episode in this lengthy history. Secondly, Turkey has significantly fallen short of European standards of democracy and human rights. It was only the promise of EU membership that served as a catalyst of political changes within the country after 1999. Sadly, since that time, much of that momentum has been lost.

Nowadays, Turkey has turned away from the West (although this cannot be said to be altogether

true given its continued and committed support for NATO) and this is happening due to the fact that it feels it has been betrayed by the EU. In the 1990s, Turkey was still considered to be in the Western fold thanks to its support for the West's efforts in Iraq (during the first Gulf war) and in the former Yugoslavia. It was only after 2008, when it came to the clash with Israel over Gaza and later on, with respect to support for Iran, that policymakers in Washington and the major European capitals started to question Turkey's decisions. That tendency encouraged Ankara to invest much more into deepening ties with its neighbours: the countries of the Middle East, Russia, the Caucasus states, and the Western Balkans. That is why Turkey's policy was ultimately called *zero-problems*.

Turkey's present policy is of a 'multi-vector' nature. Cooperation with Russia is key for Ankara but Turkey believes that one can simultaneously do business with Moscow, Washington and – with all qualifications – Brussels. Relations with Moscow will continue to deepen and expand since there are many areas of common interest; however, this will not result in any kind of union. ■