

ERDOGAN AGAINST TURKEY: STALEMATE OF “PATRIOT-F-35-S-400” TRIANGLE

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Abstract

After the attempted military coup in 2016, Turkey began to show interest in the Russian S-400 systems, and initially there was an impression that Turkey was only bluffing, was simply using Russia in its relations with the United States (as it had previously done with China (CPMIEC) in the same matter) and was seeking to show the US that it had an alternative (S-400). However, Turkey showed its persistence, and was able to buy these systems quite quickly, despite the fact that the United States strongly opposed it. In this context, this study aims to clarify the main reasons for Turkey's persistence on this issue, taking into account the personal factor of Erdogan.

The article also analyzes the authoritarian strengthening of militarism and Erdogan's personal factor for buying the S-400, who was the beneficiary of buying the S-400 systems. This article shows that sometimes Erdogan's personal interests and Turkey's state interests should be separated from each other, that in some cases Erdogan's personal interests and Turkey's state interests may or may not coincide partially or completely. It is emphasized that in each case of conflict of interests, Erdogan's personal interests prevail, that the problems should be examined first of all from the perspective of Erdogan's personal interests and not from Turkey's state interests, otherwise many things remain unclear and unexplained.

Focusing on Turkey's purchase of the S-400 systems, this study also asks why NATO member Turkey even after the purchase has not given up those Russian systems and why it still continues to persist. The topic is also actual for Armenia, as it is related to the sphere of the Turkish Air Force and the defense capability of Turkey in general, its prospects. The article describes the brief history of Turkey's purchase of S-400 systems, analyzes the motives of that move from territorial, temporal, cause-and-effect, and other perspectives, and presents Turkey's attempts to get out of the existing situation. This study aims to identify the main trends underlying the conflict between Erdogan and the Turkish political elite over the purchase of the S-400.

Keywords: *Turkish Air Force, Russia, USA, NATO, authoritarianism, July 15 coup attempt, historical memory, symbolism.*

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Introduction

Authoritarianism based on charismatic leadership remains common in the Middle East and North Africa. When it comes to charismatic leadership, Western researchers traditionally turn to the work of Max Weber. Weber calls plebiscitary democracy, in which the leader is directly elected by the people, the most important type of leader's democracy (Magalhães 2022). The leader actually dominates by virtue of the loyalty and trust of political adherents to his personality as such. Initially, this is power over recruited supporters.

At the same time, the democracy of the leader is characterized by charismatic domination. It is based on the legitimacy of 'charismatic character', which is based on extraordinary manifestations of holiness or heroic strength, or exemplary personality and the order created by these manifestations. This legitimacy is maintained as long as the personal charisma of the leader is recognized and used by trusted people, students and followers. That is, we are talking about two types of legitimation - plebiscitary and charismatic (Klein 2016; Shaw 2008; Willner and Willner 1965).

The latter is of the greatest practical interest from the point of view of studying political regimes in the Middle East. A distinctive feature of charismatic domination is its revolutionary potential, and as you know, charismatic domination destroys the past in its field. In other words, a charismatic leader does not follow well-worn paths according to generally accepted rules. It breaks precedents and creates new ones, and in doing so it is revolutionary (Shcherbak 2021). Here, political phenomena are considered as special realities that have their own logic of development and, accordingly, their own history. Weber, in particular, believed that politics is determined not only by the division of labor or industrial relations, but equally by the influence of administrative structures. Weber's concepts of bureaucracy and plebiscitary leadership democracy were of great importance.

He also paid great attention to the figure of a parliamentary 'party leader' who grew up on the soil of a constitutional state. Weber connects the emergence of plebiscitary democracy with the emergence of 'party machines', when the leader (often over the head of parliament) becomes the one to whom the machine obeys. In other words, the creation of such machines means the advent of plebiscite democracy, writes Weber (Kilker 1989; Green 2008). As historical experience shows, during periods of social instability and social crises, the role of random factors that affect the entire social system increases significantly.

The sociologist describes the mechanism of the birth of a party leader as follows: the party elite expects that the demagogic effect of the leader's personality will provide the party with votes and mandates, therefore, adherence to the party is replaced by commitment to a specific person (not some abstract program of some party) and this is the charismatic element (Strom 1990; Harmel and Svåsand 1993; Cross and Blais 2012; Vicentini and Pritoni 2021).

Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as the founder of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), since the victory of his party on November 3, 2002 in the Parliamentary elections, has become the party of power has become the most influential political figure in modern Turkey. Another manifestation of this was his victory of Erdogan in the

presidential elections on August 10, 2014, thereby strengthening and spreading his influence. One of the evidence was the fact that Erdogan did everything to make the conservative agenda dominate domestic politics, initiating steps within the party to oust the people who stood at its origins. At the same time, there was a noticeable shift towards authoritarianism in Turkey, since the strengthening of the position of the AKP was accompanied by the persecution of its political opponents from among the secular and military elite. In the AKP, Erdogan has no potential competitors, and he himself has set a course for turning Turkey from a parliamentary republic into a presidential one. After the unsuccessful military coup of 2016 and the subsequent repressions against officers and intellectuals, Erdogan did not have any serious political opponents (Surkov 2020; Kaynar 2022).

I argue that during the 20 years of his rule, especially in the last years, Erdogan has repeatedly stood out with such steps, which not only did not come from the state interests of Turkey, but also significantly harmed him. Since the topic of the article is also from this series, we would like to present several such episodes in advance, to make it more convincing that in some cases Erdogan is guided by his own and not the state interests of Turkey. In this context Erdogan's symbolic strikes tactic is also very important, when he chooses specific dates for them, when historical memory as a tool influences the decisions made by him.

Methods of symbolic politics focused on the search for and strengthening of identity, mobilization of the masses, strengthening of power, etc., currently form an important part of scientific discourse. Rituals and myths contribute to the formation and consolidation of ideas about the special mission of a particular nation, the growth of its self-respect. The creation of new symbols or the return of old ones are becoming the most important tools in the current information age in the course of implementing domestic politics. Symbolism has also long become a fairly organic tool of foreign policy.

Historical memory plays a special role in the formation and implementation of foreign policy. In fact, this concept remains rather vague, since the past always appears in a mythologized version, and the further it is from us, the more vague and variable it seems. The tasks of the elites are centered on exploiting what might be called the politically 'usable' past. They are ready to use those historical facts, combined with myths and symbols, which should substantiate the models of foreign policy behavior, presenting the decisions made by the ruling elite as uncontested. The past, which testifies to past greatness, affects the current positioning of states on the world and regional arena.

The fact that modern Turkey is the symbolic successor of the great Ottoman Empire and Caliphate is reflected in its relations with the Arabs and to a large extent reinforces the "return" of the country to the East under Erdogan (Zvyagelskaya 2019).

Let's list a number of steps taken by Erdogan, which demonstrate his policy of 'being guided by his own interests' and 'symbolic strikes'. Both of these factors are also present in the main part of the research.

1) On November 24, 2015, the Turkish Air Force destroyed a Russian Su-24 bomber on the border with Syria, which, according to the Turkish side, violated Turkey's airspace for 17 seconds (The Turkish Air Force, the only NATO force to shoot down a Russian plane after the end of the Cold War). After the incident, the Turkish side

announced that it only shot down a border-violating plane, 'did not know' that the plane belonged to Russia, thought that the plane belonged to the Syrian aviation, emphasizing that the incident was registered on the Turkish-Syrian border and not on the Russian-Turkish border (despite that, days before the incident, the Russian ambassador to Ankara, Andrei Karlov¹ (Filipov, Fahim and Sly 2016), was summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry for border air violations in the same area). And although Turkey subsequently avoided a military strike by Russia thanks to its membership in NATO, it was unable to escape Russia's economic sanctions (tourism, agriculture, construction, logistics, visa, etc.) which affected hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Turkish citizens.

From my own point of view, it was not at all in Turkey's state interest to shoot down the Russian plane, taking into account that the plane violated Turkish airspace only for a few seconds, and horizontally (not vertically), i.e it could stay in Turkish airspace for a few seconds - it did not move towards deep in the territory of Turkey. Erdogan may have shot down the Russian plane, because the violations of Turkish airspace by the Russian aviation since the beginning of October filled his patience and negatively affected his rating (Erdogan was used to Turkish aviation violating the airspace of other countries (e.g., Greece)). As for the time factor, in our opinion, Erdogan did not accidentally choose a day to shoot down the Russian plane. On November 24, 2009, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu announced that Turkey is transitioning to the policy of neo-Ottomanism (on November 24, 1934, the Hagia Sophia Mosque was turned into a museum by order of Atatürk). Thus, Russia received an 'Ottoman slap' from Turkey.

2) Another similar case was registered less than 3 months after the 2016 military coup attempt. American pastor Andrew Brunson was arrested in Turkey, who was accused of having connections with the Gulen movement and the PKK. Erdogan was thus trying to exchange clerics with the US, hand over Brunson and get Fethullah Gülen instead, who, although he has been living in the US for a long time, has turned into Erdogans domestic number one enemy in recent years. After Turkish President Erdogan refused to release Brunson, on August 1, 2018, the U.S. Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on two senior Turkish government officials². Weeks later, Turkish-American relations began an economic struggle within the framework of international trade rules. As a result of Trump's decision, the Turkish lira was significantly devalued, the consequences of which were felt by millions, if not tens of millions, of Turkish citizens. Finally, on October 12, 2018, Brunson was convicted, sentencing him to serve time, nevertheless accusing him of aiding terrorism³.

3) One of the clear examples of being guided by one's own interests can be the implementation of the Istanbul Canal project, in which case Erdogan's entourage will not

¹ Filipov, David, Kareem Fahim, and Liz Sly. 2016. "Turkish police officer, invoking Aleppo, guns down Russian ambassador in Ankara." Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gunfire-wounds-russian-ambassador-in-turkey-reports-say/2016/12/19/ae32d1c8-c608-11e6-85b5-76616a33048d_story.html.

² U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2018. "Press Releases: Treasury Sanctions Turkish Officials with Leading Roles in Unjust Detention of U.S. Pastor Andrew Brunson." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm453>.

³ USCIRF. 2018. "Pastor Andrew Brunson." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/released-tpocs/pastor-andrew-brunson>.

only get the opportunity to get richer, but also, Erdogan will thereby increase his deep mark in the history of Turkey (Turks) and will perhaps become the implementer of the most expensive project in the history of Turkey (according to some data, the cost of the project may reach up to \$50 billion). In addition, Erdogan will implement the project dreamed by the most powerful Ottoman sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, and thereby surpass him to a certain extent. Obviously, there is no guarantee at the moment that foreign ships will prefer to forgo the free Bosphorus Strait and prefer to use the tolled Istanbul Canal. Besides, Erdogan has many options to ease the burden on the Black Sea straits, including the construction of 'Samsun-Ceyhan', so-called 'Turkish Stream' or 'Igneada-Sazlidere' (European part of Turkey) oil pipelines, etc (The Black Sea-Mediterranean high-speed highway and railway also contribute to the reduction of congestion in the Bosphorus). He could (has) made an agreement in advance with Putin, with whom he has warm relations, so that the Russian oil would not pass through the Black Sea straits, but through the land area of Turkey, through one of the pipelines mentioned by us (the construction of which is relatively cheap compared to the canal). In that case, he would have a guarantee before the start of the construction of the pipeline that it will be profitable for Turkey, while before the start of the construction of the Istanbul canal, he has no guarantee that it will be profitable.

4) The last episode that we would like to mention is the holding of the first prayer on July 24, 2020 in Hagia Sophia, which has already been converted into a mosque. In doing so, Erdogan thus became the 'Conqueror of Istanbul' and stood on the same level with the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II Fatih (the Conqueror), who captured Constantinople in 1453, and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, whose army entered Istanbul abandoned by the Entente on October 6, 1923 (Ataturk is considered is the second conqueror of Istanbul). Erdogan turned Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 2020, when tourism in Turkey was just starting to recover after the coronavirus pandemic. Hagia Sophia is the most visited tourist destination in Turkey, with 3.7 million people a year (after becoming a mosque, the entrance to Hagia Sophia became free).

Regarding the time factor (symbolism), Erdogan scheduled the first prayer on July 24 (for first time in 86 years), which although coincides with the date of the signing of the Lausanne Agreement (1923), however, in our opinion, it had of secondary importance. On that day in 1999, Erdogan was released from prison, and we believe that appointing the first prayer of Hagia Sophia on that day, Erdogan was hinting that his release from prison brought great good to Turkey, just as the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque brought the Ottoman Empire in 1453. It is also interesting to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 2020, because Erdogan could have done it in another year. Making Hagia Sophia a mosque in 2020 is perhaps related to the fact that July 24, 2020 was a Friday, which is convenient for the first Friday prayer. It is also interesting that Erdogan announced the date of first prayer (24 July) in Hagia Sophia on July 10 at 20:53. The latter symbolizes the year 2053, which Erdogan often speaks about in recent years as the 600th anniversary of the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans.

All this perhaps proves that Erdogan sometimes causes significant damage to Turkey with his unreasonable steps, guided by his own interests, goals and dreams. The research examines another similar episode, when Erdogan's actions simply weakened Turkey's defense capabilities and particularly its air force (Erdogan also did this as a result of

large-scale transformations and not reforms in the armed forces after the 2016 military coup attempt).

F-16 on the current agenda and the consequences of the purchase of S-400 systems

At the beginning of the 21st century, one of Turkey's weak points in the military sphere was the lack of long-range missile defense systems. In order to fill that gap, in the 2000s, the Turkish government gave the 'green light' to the T-LORAMIDS project (Long-range Air and Missile Defense System). T-LORAMIDS was designed to protect Turkey's strategically important infrastructures from medium-range ballistic missiles⁴ (Kibaroglu 2019; Guo 2017). It was emphasized that the project could also be useful for the local military industry. The promotion of the project was also connected with Iran's development of its own nuclear program and missile development.

The Turkish side justified this choice on different levels with 3 main criteria. The Chinese side agreed to the joint production of these systems (local production of the system in Turkey should be at least 50%), offered the cheapest price (\$3.44 billion, which is almost \$1 billion less than other options) and the most convenient time to hand over the systems to the Turkish side.

Thus, Turkey would become the first foreign buyer of HQ-9, but the US (also NATO) began to increase pressure on Turkey to reconsider the results of T-LORAMIDS. Turkey was forced to give way and canceled the results of T-LORAMIDS. In the fall of 2016, it became known that Turkey has decided to buy 4 divisions of S-400 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia, for which Turkey must pay Russia \$2.5 billion. Erdogan announced the signing of the corresponding agreement between the two countries on September 12, 2017. And on July 12, 2019, the Ministry of Defense of Turkey announced that the first batch of S-400 anti-aircraft missiles had already been received and showed the corresponding video. Thus, Turkey became the third country after Belarus and China to receive S-400 air defense systems. In fact, Turkey became the first NATO country to purchase S-400 air defense systems.

For the consequences of buying the S-400 systems from Turkey's point of view⁵, I have identified 4 main sectors, which have their own sub-sectors.

⁴ Darling, Dan. 2015. "Turkey's T-LORAMIDS Missile Defense System Edges Ever Further Away." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/wordpress/2015/09/16/turkeys-t-loramids-missile-defense-system-edges-ever-further-away/>.

⁵ Pamuk, Humeyra, and Andrea Shalal. 2022. "Biden supports F-16 sale to Turkey, is confident about congressional approval." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/biden-supports-f-16-sale-turkey-needs-congressional-approval-2022-06-30/>; Pamuk, Humeyra, and Mike Stone. 2021. "Turkey asks U.S. to buy 40 F-16 jets to upgrade Air Force sources." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-seeks-40-f-16-jets-upgrade-air-force-sources-2021-10-07/>; Zengerle, Patricia. 2022. "U.S. House backs measure that would restrict sale of F-16s to Turkey." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-house-backs-measure-that-would-restrict-sale-f-16s-turkey-2022-07-14/>; Daily Sabah. 2022a. "US 'should sell' F-16s to Turkey, Biden says in strongest backing yet." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/us-should-sell-f-16s-to-turkey-biden-says-in-strongest-backing-yet>; Hurriyetdailynews.com. 2022. "US sale of F-16s to Türkiye cannot be conditional: Defense minister." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/us-sale-of-f-16s-to-turkiye-cannot-be-conditional-defense-minister>

1. Failure to receive Patriot systems

By buying S-400 systems from Russia, Turkey deprived itself of American Patriot systems. Were the S-400 systems better than the Patriot systems, or more precisely, was the most correct option from Turkey's point of view to buy the S-400 systems? This question is precisely answered by Turkish experts. In January 2019, The Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) published a report "Strategic weapon systems in the Turkey-Russia-US triangle" (Kasapoğlu and Ülgen 2019). They emphasize that due to security concerns, the Patriot package is compatible for a NATO member country⁶. This means that only for non-NATO countries can Russian air defense systems be a good option, that is, if the country has a Soviet/Russian air defense and missile defense architecture, seeking to deploy Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) assets (Radomyski 2021; Kemp 2020). Overall, while the S-400 appears to be a more powerful air defense system with superior A2/AD performance, the Patriot system, especially when combined with the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence (NATO IAMD)⁷, offers more effective ballistic missile defense solutions (Kazan 2005; Dalsjö, Berglund and Jonsson 2019).

Ballistic missile defense (BMD) has great importance for Turkey and depends on a complex architecture⁸. S-400s cannot be integrated into Turkey's existing NATO-compatible command and control networks. This would greatly limit its BMD capability. The NATO-compatible Patriot systems will link Turkey's missile defense capabilities in a phase with the Allied architecture, enabling multi-layered interception. In the S-400 variant, this will not be possible. In autonomous mode, the Russian SAM will have only limited early warning, tracking and monitoring capabilities. Due to political, budgetary and technological constraints, Ankara cannot compensate for NATO's integrated air and missile defense architecture in the short to medium term. Therefore, the S-400 variant will be doomed to unrealized potential. Also, there is no reliable SAM configuration as there are no purchases that will operate at different layers with the S-400 (e.g., SA-17, SA-22 [Pantsir Family]). Without network-centric architecture and acceptable SAM configuration, a strategic weapon system such as the S-400 will not yield the desired results. Although the S-400 brings the experience of deployment under real conflict conditions, it has no combat record. Meanwhile, over the last three years, Patriot systems intercepted more than 100 ballistic missiles.

Turkish defense planners will be able to more easily manage their personnel needs for SAM systems compared to fighters. Theoretically, SAM systems have other advantages as well. In terms of defense economy, especially in a period when the transition from fourth generation to fifth generation aircraft is made, the operation of SAM systems can be less costly when compared to high technology aircraft. In operational terms, SAM systems have longer mission times than combat air patrols and

175470; Savunmasanayist.com. 2022a. "Başkan DEMİR'den 'İkinci Parti S-400' Açıklaması." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/baskan-demirden-ikinci-parti-s-400-aciklamasi/>.

⁶ NATO. 2022. "NATO Support to Türkiye." Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_92140.htm.

⁷ NATO. 2022. "NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence." Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8206.htm.

⁸ Erduramaz, Ali Serdar. 2017. "NATO Ballistic Missile Defence Systems and Turkey." Accessed August 1, 2022. https://foreignpolicy.org/tr/nato-ballistic-missile-defence-systems-and-turkey/#_ftn1.

offer a continuous capability. In addition, these systems are less cumbersome and do not require or require less complex infrastructures required for fighter squadrons.

On the other hand, it should be noted that SAM systems play in a much narrower field in terms of their task flexibility. Warplanes, especially 5th generation aircraft, offer very different solutions to political-military decision makers - deep impact, power projection, air-ground missions, electronic warfare, intelligence and target detection, missions for surface platforms, destruction of enemy ballistic missiles launchers. Also, SAM-oriented force planning is not possible for countries such as Turkey, which have a wide geography and problematic geographical conditions in terms of radar systems in many places. In the air defense planning of the states in the aforementioned category, SAM systems can only be complementary elements that will work together with warplanes (Kasapoğlu 2021; Kasapoğlu and Ülgen 2019).

In addition, tests show that data from F-35 sensors can be transferred to the Patriot air & missile defense system in real-time via Northrop Grumman's new production IBCS (integrated air and missile defense battle command system) command & control network (in the 2018 package proposed to Turkey, there was no IBCS configuration, which was still under development for that period). This will mean that the superior sensors of the F-35 will also be a part of the missile defense network, with the right network-centric architecture planning. As a matter of fact, the tests show that the AN/APG-81 AESA radar and AN/AAQ-37 DAS (Distributed Aperture System) systems, which are the most important sensors of the F-35, can detect ballistic missiles. It seems difficult for Turkey to prepare a force and make a defense planning based on SAM systems, and especially the S-400, which it has recently added to its inventory, similar to the A2/AD concepts. First of all, the S-400 strategic SAM system, which has just entered the inventory and is currently undergoing firing tests, is not currently dependent on a network-centric architecture. Also, there is no reliable SAM configuration as there are no purchases that will operate at different layers with the S-400. Without network-centric architecture and acceptable SAM configuration, a strategic weapon system such as the S-400 will not yield the desired results.

The S-400 strategic SAM system in the Turkish Armed Forces inventory will be deprived of the network-centered architecture mentioned above with the relevant references. For this reason, it will not be possible to receive information from different sensors (for example, Peace Eagle AWACS aircraft in the Turkish Air Force inventory and NATO-compatible radar infrastructure); as well as enemy SEAD (suppression of enemy air defenses) activity, especially anti-radiation and cruise missile threats. Besides, (as shows the example of the Greek Air Force), air threat perception is shifting from 4th generation platforms to 5th generation platforms. Existing military science literature indicates that modern Russian strategic SAM systems, such as the S-300V4, S-400, built on the late Soviet experience, are extremely competitive against the 4th and 4.5th generation platforms of NATO countries - for example, the F-16, F/A18 and other similar ones. On the other hand, the situation is different against 5th generation platforms (e.g., F-35, F-22) and stealth design philosophy (Kasapoğlu 2021).

I think that, the above makes it obvious that it would be much more profitable and useful for NATO member Turkey, to buy American Patriot systems than to buy S-400 systems from (Putin's) Russia.

2. Failure to get F-35 fighter jets

By purchasing S-400 systems from Russia, Turkey created new *realpolitik*, as it actually created difficulties and deprived itself of American F-35 fighters (Kasapoğlu and Ülgen 2019). Between modern air defense systems and 5th generation stealth platforms, a hunt & hunter game played in the electromagnetic spectrum, which can only be grasped with a good understanding of radar theory, continues, and the roles of prey and hunter in the mentioned game change depending on different inputs. First of all, it should be known that the radars of modern SAM systems can detect some 5th generation platforms with a certain ambiguity. On the other hand, the military significance of the said 'detection' will basically depend on two parameters.

First of all, at what distance was the 5th generation fighter jet in the scenario detected? Because, aircraft such as the F-35 can hit SAM systems with very long-range smart missiles without entering the distances that they would be detected by SAM systems, and they can even direct missiles to be launched from other 4th or 4.5 generation friendly platforms to their targets. Therefore, in the case of Turkey, it is very difficult for the S-400 system, which will not be integrated into any network-centric architecture, to detect F-35s belonging to the Greek Air Force or the United Arab Emirates Air Force at a 'significant range'.

Platforms with low visibility and high electronic warfare capabilities, such as the F-35, can approach SAM systems more than 4th and 4.5 generation warplanes. Within the framework of the network-centric operation, the F-35 and similar warplanes can not only aim at their targets themselves, but also attack together with friendly warplanes and direct intelligent air-ground cruise missiles to the target.

Theoretically, it would be possible for F-35s belonging to the Greek Air Force or, more remotely, the United Arab Emirates Air Force to approach Turkish air defense without entering the 'meaningful detection' network of the S-400s. In this case, the F-35s in the relevant scenario, for example, will be able to perform network-centric operations with Rafale 4.5 generation warplanes and direct the air-to-ground cruise missiles carried by these aircraft. In summary, the F-35 is an information superiority value.

The second fundamental issue is the set of sensors required by a system such as the S-400 to detect and shoot down a fighter aircraft such as the F-35 in a meaningful way. Stealth planes are not invisible. The definition that best sums up the stealth quality can be described as a low-visibility design in the electromagnetic spectrum, in a certain radar band range. Especially low-visibility attributes on aircraft in the tactical military aviation framework are generally geared towards the electromagnetic spectrum between the S-band and Ku-band. In this case, the radar detectability of said platforms will be much more pronounced, for example for the VHF band; however, detection does not necessarily mean transmitting target data to the SAM system, where it will engage the target with precision.

However, as we have seen in the example of the Russian Federation, high-level structures such as the NEBO M that combine search systems in very different bands and

frequency segments are required to detect low-visibility warplanes. As can be seen from the open-source publications and the images of the tests carried out so far, Turkey's S-400 acquisition does not include the NEBO M-like anti-stealth radar array. For this reason, it does not seem possible to detect 5th generation platforms such as the F-35 at significant distances and with military value, and to make the said detection before the F-35 is close enough to attack with the weapon systems it carries.

Turkey has a serious ballistic missile problem in its regional security environment. It is of great importance to respond to the ballistic missile problem with offensive deep-impact deterrence as well as defensive strategic weapon systems. In this context, the F-35 is considered to be a serious loss.

Finally, it should be noted that the F-35 JSF is a very effective electronic warfare platform. Therefore, the acquisition of such a capability by the Greek Air Force will also pose a problem for Turkey's SAM-centered air defense planning. In summary, it is difficult for Turkey to compensate for the 5th generation warplane and 4.5 generation intermediate solution problem with SAM systems.

Essentially, the Republic of Turkey planned to purchase 100 F-35A variants for the Turkish Air Force. On the other hand, there were indications that an F-35B variant (Yenisafak.com 2022) could be purchased with TCG Anadolu to be used in the naval aviation capacity of the Turkish Navy. That's why another complication of Turkey's exclusion from the F-35 project is the obstacles to the use of the TCG Anadolu Amphibious Assault Ship as a 'mini-aircraft carrier'. Currently, there is no option for TCG Anadolu other than the F-35B. Turkey's exclusion from the F-35 project has been a potential loss not only for the Turkish Air Force, but also for the Turkish Navy's naval aviation capability. As it is known, Ankara has planned to add the TCG Anadolu Amphibious Assault Ship to its inventory as a mini-aircraft carrier with the addition of a ski-jump and other modifications. The only suitable candidate in the international arms market for the aforementioned plans is the F-35B, STOVL variant. Eliminating the possibility of the F-35B will mean that TCG Anadolu's mission capacity as a mini-aircraft carrier cannot be built in the short and medium term. As a power projection and amphibious attack platform, TCG Anadolu will certainly preserve its military value and will constitute one of the most important capabilities of the Turkish Naval Forces. On the other hand, if TCG Anadolu was armed with F-35Bs, its functions would be completely different, for example, in Libya, in the Eastern Mediterranean energy geopolitics struggle or in the Aegean (Kasapoğlu 2021).

It should be noted that Turkey currently develops the Bayraktar TB3 UAV, which is designed to be deployed on TCG Anadolu. According to the Turkish side, 30-50 attack UAV will be placed on the 232-meter long TCG Anadolu, and TCG Anadolu will become the first aircraft carrier armed with attack UAV in the world (the Turkish side was forced to make certain changes in TCG Anadolu)⁹. In addition, Turkey plans to

⁹ Yenisafak.com. 2022. "Türkiye dünyada bir ilke hazırlıyor: Dev savaş gemisinden ilk uçuşunu yapacak." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.yenisafak.com/foto-galeri/ekonomi/turkiye-dunyada-bir-ilke-hazirlaniyor-bayraktar-tb3-siha-tcg-anadoludan-ilk-ucusunu-yapacak-2061337>.

deploy its Bayraktar Kızılelma (Red Apple) future unmanned fighter aircraft on Anadolu (according to Erdogan, no unmanned fighter aircraft exists in any country in the world)¹⁰.

In any case, it is obvious that both the Bayraktar TB3 UAV and the Kızııl Elma unmanned fighter aircraft are significantly inferior to the F-35B in their parameters, and there is no need to compare them. As a result, the scope and possibilities of TCG Anadolu's activities will be significantly limited. Turkish experts also emphasize this: "Many important experts today regard the Karabakh War as a historical turning point for robotic warfare and UAV systems. On the other hand, UAV's success will not yet mean that UAVs will prevail over manned platforms in air-air engagements and algorithms will leave the pilots completely out of the cockpit. Although there is a potential for change in artificial intelligence and algorithmic warfare in the coming years, air warfare parameters are still shaped around manned platforms. With current defense technologies, it is not possible for Turkey to fill the 5th generation air warfare gap with UAVs and light attack aircraft (Hürkuş-C)" (Kasapoğlu 2021).

Not getting F-35 fighter jets actually has quite a negative impact on the capabilities of both the Turkish Air Force and Navy, and the defense capability of the whole of Turkey in general. Turkey, which is considered a regional superpower, continues to have only fourth-generation fighter jets and thus gradually falls behind even the countries of the region, such as Israel, Greece, UAE, Qatar, Egypt.

The problem is especially acute in the case of Greece, with which Turkey's relations are regularly strained due to issues related to the Aegean Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus and a number of other issues. In recent years, Greece has begun to strengthen its air force, has begun to receive from France 24 Rafale fighter jets, including of the 4.5 generation, and plans to receive at least 20 F-35A from the United States in the current decade. The military strategic balance with Greece changes in favor of Athens in the air power segment.

Against the background of these steps of Greece, Turkey has difficulties in purchasing even 4.5 generation F-16 fighters and modernizing the F-16 fighters it has. As an intermediate solution, Turkey is also trying to buy Rafale fighter jets from France¹¹, or Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jets from United Kingdom¹². It is also possible that Turkey will try to buy Saab JAS 39 Gripen multirole fighters from Sweden (to achieve that goal, Turkey may create new obstacles regarding Sweden's NATO membership)¹³.

The experts of the SETA think tank, which is considered the brain of the ruling AKP party in Turkey, emphasize that in the armament program, Greece has emphasized the strengthening of its air force, because it considers that only thanks to the air force it is possible to quickly accumulate effective force in a certain area and thus overcome its

¹⁰ Ekonomi Haberleri. 2022. "KIZILELMA yeni bir dönem başlatacak! Sahadaki dengeler değişiyor." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://ekonomi.haber7.com/ekonomi/haber/3225322-kizilelma-yeni-bir-donem-baslatacak-sahadaki-dengeler-degisiyor>.

¹¹ Haber7.com. 2022. "Ta Nea: Türkiye Fransa'dan Rafale savaş uçaklarını istedi." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.haber7.com/dunya/haber/3242559-ta-nea-turkiye-fransadan-rafale-savas-ucaklarini-istedi>.

¹² CNN Türk. 2022. "Türkiye Eurofighter uçağı alacak mı?" Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/dunya/turkiye-eurofighter-ucagi-alacak-mi>.

¹³ Kurunç, Kamer. 2022. "Türkiye, İsveç'ten Gripen savaş uçağı alır mı?" Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://haber.gdh.digital/turkiye-isvecten-gripen-savas-ucagi-alir-mi/>.

own geographical vulnerability, which derives from the dispersion of its islands, their distance from the mainland, and their lack of territorial depth. Also, it is taken into account that only the Air Force is able to operate effectively both in the air, on land, and at sea and ensure qualitative excellence.

Greece believes that a possible military escalation with Turkey will initially be limited to the air/sea domain of the Aegean Sea, and this itself limits the overwhelming superiority of Turkish land power, allowing Greece to achieve a rough parity with Turkish military capabilities. For this reason, Greece has long perceived the achievement and maintenance of air superiority as a 'game-changing' factor against Turkey. Fighter jets play a particularly important role in achieving this goal.

SETA experts believe that Greece's ultimate goal is to achieve superiority over Turkey's armed forces and thereby change the status quo in the Aegean Sea, in the Eastern Mediterranean (to outplay Turkey in terms of energy reserves) and in Cyprus (to eliminate the Turkish military presence)¹⁴.

In their report titled 'The hardest ten years in Turkish airpower', EDAM experts note: "The Turkish Air Force and Turkey's air warfare capabilities are facing a serious test in the next 10 to 20 years. Although the title of the report includes the phrase 'the hardest decade', the 5th generation problem of the Turkish Air Force may continue in the 2030s. Given the regional trends in armament of the Turkish Air Force, which at this stage are overcoming complex geopolitical challenges, ahead of Turkey in combat aircraft.

Currently, many air forces around the world fly with 5th generation platforms (e.g., F-35) (e.g., UK, USA, Israel etc). Some other air forces are purchasing intermediate solutions that qualify as 4.5 or 4++ (e.g., Greece [Rafale], Egyptian Arab Air Force [Su-35]). Some countries that are manufacturers and operators of 4.5 generation platforms are also making 6th generation air power plans for the 2040s based on the mentioned intermediate solutions (e.g., France & Germany with their 6th generation projects and Sweden with the Tempest Project led by London).

While observing the trends outlined above in the world, the Turkish Air Force currently relies heavily on the 4th generation F-16s as fixed-wing combat platforms (though a smaller number of modernized F-4 2020s are nearing the end of their life in the inventory). Under normal conditions, while the 5th generation F-35 JSF would enter the inventory, it was not possible to acquire the said capability due to the purchase of the S-400 strategic SAM system from the Russian Federation. The entry of the National Combat Aircraft (MMU), another 5th generation project of Turkey, into the inventory and starting to create a meaningful deterrent force will find the window of 2030-2040 with various optimistic and pessimistic forecasts. In summary, if an intermediate solution is not found, Turkish air power will fall behind the trends in the world.

The roles of the 4th and 4.5 generation aircraft did not end with the entry of the 5th generation into the inventory. Modernization efforts, especially digital technological infrastructure developments, will continue to keep these platforms in inventory. Moreover, not every airspace may require 5th generation capabilities. The anti-DEAS coalition or air operations in Afghanistan are examples of this threat environment. On the other hand, it is clear that the 5th generation platforms will create a capability

¹⁴ Öncel, Rıfat. 2022. "Yunanistan'ın hava kuvvetleri modernizasyonu ve ittifak ilişkileri." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.setav.org/rapor-yunanistanin-hava-kuvvetleri-modernizasyonu-ve-ittifak-iliskileri/>.

multiplier effect for the 4th and 4.5 generation warplanes. To put it more clearly, great differences should be expected between the combat capacity of a force with only 4th generation inventory and the combat capacity of a force that has 4th and 5th generation aircraft together.

Air forces of many states within NATO have started to add fifth generation warplanes to their inventories. As in the case of France and Germany, some other countries also plan to move directly to sixth-generation capabilities, continuing to use 4.5-generation platforms as an interim solution. The Turkish Armed Forces does not have a separate air defense force. For this reason, as seen in the S-400 example, basic and strategic air defense missions are also gathered under the Turkish Air Force. Naval and land forces, on the other hand, have air defense capabilities commensurate with their mission portfolios and are being developed. Current defense economy trends and the situation in the international arms market make it difficult for Turkey to find an interim solution and make ready-made purchases for a 4.5 generation aircraft.

Various Turkish media sources stated that Ankara should follow an eclectic road map to compensate for the operational problems arising from its exit from the F-35 program. The aforementioned views focused on easing the burden on the F-16s, which constitute the deterrent center of the Turkish air power. For the aforementioned purpose, more intensive production/use of UAVs, delaying the retirement of the F-4 2020s and the use of light attack aircraft such as Hürkuş-C are listed. The F-35 is a 'deep strike' aircraft that will infiltrate enemy airspace and destroy high-value targets, especially when it carries intelligent air-to-ground cruise missiles with a range of hundreds of kilometers, such as the SOM-J. Neither the Hürkuş-C nor the 4th generation aircraft in the inventory will be capable of penetrating into sectors where the deep impact and intense enemy air defenses that the F-35 will bring along.

Scans from generally accepted military databases indicate that there are around 20 - 30 F-4 2020 variants and 230-260 F-16 variants in various blocks (Block 30, Block 50 and Block 50+) in the Turkish Air Force inventory. The Turkish Air Force's plan is (was) to gradually retire the said inventory (first the F-4 2020s and then the F-16s starting from Block 30) in the 2020s and 2030s, while at least 100 F-35A JSF and a large number of MMUs (National Combat Aircraft) were to create a force equipped with 5th generation platforms, numerically expressed in hundreds. In this context, Turkey is faced with a serious problem. Its withdrawal from the F-35 consortium greatly disrupted Ankara's defense planning. In addition, the domestic 5th generation fighter aircraft (TF-X - 'Turkish Fighter') project seems to begin to enter the inventory only in the 2030 - 2040 band. Various problems in MMU's project process, especially engine technology and its international cooperation portfolio in this context may extend the time to enter the inventory.

The risk that the Turkish Air Force will not be able to have as modern a capacity as the inventories of its competitors in the world and in the region in the next 10-20 years should be taken seriously. Fourth generation F-16s will continue to be the center of Turkey's air power in the coming period and will underline an unacceptable disadvantage for Turkey against countries that have switched to fifth generation technologies. Turkey's current defense economy and options in the international arms market also limit possible intermediate solutions.

In summary, as long as Ankara does not go to an urgent interim solution or there is no change in F-35 deliveries, we evaluate that the air power parity will change in favor of Athens in a period of 10 years with an optimistic forecast and up to 20 years in a pessimistic scenario. Although the MMU was shown as a substitute for the F-35, Turkey's main defense plan was to create a 5th generation air force based on MMU air superiority aircraft and F-35 multirole fighter jets. This fact should be kept in mind while planning defense. The 2020s and 2030s will bring a serious test for Turkish air power" (Kasapoğlu 2021).

The above proves that Turkey's failure to receive 120 units of F-35 (including the limitation of the capabilities of TCG Anadolu 'mini-aircraft carrier') is an extremely strong blow for both the country's air force and navy, and the defense ability of the whole of Turkey in general, its geopolitical role, and great foreign policy ambitions.

3. F-35 program withdrawal

The purchase of S-400 systems from Russia led to the fact that Turkey was excluded from the list of 9 countries involved in the production of the F-35. But this had a negative impact, as Turkish supplier companies, which contributed to the F-35 program by producing 937 types of parts, risk losing at least \$ 9 billion due to the exit¹⁵. By the way after Turkey's withdrawal from the F-35 program, Erdogan always announces that they will return the money spent within the framework of that program¹⁶. It is also bad news for Turkey that in July 2022 Greece has submitted a request letter to the United States to join its F-35 stealth fighter jet program and is lobbying for the bid in Washington while calling on officials to oppose Turkey's purchase of F-16s (Athens sent its official letter of request to buy 20 F-35As last month)¹⁷.

Thus, Turkey's withdrawal from the F-35 program is both a big blow to the production capacity of Turkish military-industrial companies, a financial blow to Turkey, and a big blow to Turkey's reputation, given the global importance of the F-35 project.

4. CAATSA

The decision of the Turkish political leadership to buy S-400 systems from Russia, however, Turkey came under US sanctions under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act)¹⁸.

CAATSA has listed various types of sanctions threats that can be given. There are at least twelve types of sanctions that can be imposed on Turkey based on CAATSA. Based on CAATSA's legal documents, the President of the United States is obligated to impose

¹⁵ Haber Türk. 2019. "F-35 kararı hangi Türk şirketleri etkileyecek?" Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.haberturk.com/f-35-karari-hangi-turk-sirketleri-etkileyecek-2505524-ekonomi>.

¹⁶ Al Arabiya Network. 2021. "Erdogan: Turkey will recoup \$1.4 bln paid to US for F-35 jets 'one way or another'." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2021/10/22/Erdogan-Turkey-will-recoup-1-4-bln-paid-to-US-for-F-35-jets-one-way-or-another->.

¹⁷ Ahvalnews.com. 2022. "Greece set to join F-35 programme as Turkey's F-16 purchase stalls." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://ahvalnews.com/greece-f35s/greece-set-join-f-35-programme-turkeys-f-16-purchase-stalls>.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State. 2020. "The United States Sanctions Turkey Under CAATSA 231: Press Statement Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-united-states-sanctions-turkey-under-caatsa-231/index.html>; Macias, Amanda. 2020. "U.S. sanctions Turkey over purchase of Russian S-400 missile system." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/14/us-sanctions-turkey-over-russian-s400.html>.

at least 5 kinds of sanctions out of a total of 12 possible sanctions. Senator Lindsey Graham stated that although Turkey continues to buy the S-400, none of the CAATSA sanctions should be imposed as long as the S-400 is not operationalized. Based on the timeline of Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 agreed in 2017, President Donald Trump did not immediately impose CAATSA sanctions. President Donald Trump and members of his cabinet seemed reluctant to impose sanctions on Turkey immediately. President Donald Trump and his cabinet's reluctance to immediately impose CAATSA sanctions and instead seem to protect Turkey can be seen on numerous occasions. Even after Turkey received the S-400 from Russia in mid-2019, President Trump's government has not imposed sanctions.

The bilateral meeting between President Trump and President Erdogan on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Osaka in 2019 is evidence of President Trump's reluctance to impose CAATSA sanctions immediately. When asked by journalists after the bilateral meeting, President Trump explicitly stated that he would seek other solutions to resolve the issue. Erdogan believed that his good personal relations with President Trump are one of the reasons why the imposition of CAATSA sanctions is not imaginable. While previously the United States government demanded Turkey to cancel the planned acquisition, before the arrival of the S-400 to Turkey, the United States later demanded that Turkey not operationalize it. At the time United States Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo stated that the United States wanted Turkey to not operationalize the S-400. However, this claim was again rejected by Turkey (Triantama et al. 2022).

Likely the most damaging sanction is a prohibition on granting specific U.S. export licenses and authorizations for any goods or technology. This may directly impact billions of dollars' worth of potential business, as the United States historically has been the largest exporter of weapons to Turkey. Turkey's defense industry relies on imported parts to manufacture high-quality products for export. If parts can't be imported from America, companies will find alternatives - perhaps not as good as their Western counterparts, but significantly cheaper. By using such substitutes, Turkey might produce lower quality products and damage its brand, but it might also make cheaper products and open new markets. Where Turkish industries lack capacity, sanctions will undermine readiness, obstruct planned upgrades to the Turkish Armed Forces, and hamper the export-driven growth of the Turkish defense industry. For example, engine building has been one of the weaker elements of Turkish industries, especially for defense, but also for general aviation, as was vividly displayed in the Altay tank project, now delayed for years for lack of appropriate engines and transmissions¹⁹.

Here I would like to mention separately to the deal with Pakistan on the T129 ATAK helicopter pointed out by the Turkish expert, because it should have become the largest export deal of Turkey's military industry²⁰. Although the deal for the sale of 30 units of T129 ATAK helicopters between the parties was signed in 2018, it has not been

¹⁹ Işık, Yörük. 2021. "CAATSA sanctions are hurting Turkey's military readiness at a time when NATO can't afford it." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/caatsa-sanctions-are-hurting-turkeys-military-readiness-time-when-nato-cant-afford-it>.

²⁰ *ibid.*

implemented due to US sanctions. Pakistan regularly extends the implementation of the deal for Turkey by 6 months²¹.

In January 2022, Turkish pro-government media reported that Pakistan, due to the US embargo, backed out of a \$1.5 billion deal to acquire 30 attack helicopters from Turkey²².

Erdogan's motives for buying the S-400 systems

The above in essence proves that it was beneficial for Turkey, a member of NATO, not to buy the S-400 systems, because it deprived Turkey of Patriot systems that integrate with NATO systems, 100 units of F-35A for its air force and 20 units of F-35B for its navy. Besides, Turkey was officially kicked out from the F-35 program and came under US sanctions (CAATSA) with various consequences. In this context, the question arises as to why Turkey finally preferred to buy S-400 Russian systems.

The Turkish side could not be unaware of the consequences in case of buying the Russian systems, because the USA has repeatedly warned it at various levels in advance that Turkey cannot have both the S-400 and the F-35 on its territory at the same time, that Turkey has to make a choice between them. And Turkey made that choice in the summer of 2019 in favor of the S-400.

In our opinion, at the root of all this lies the personal factor of Erdogan, who bought S-400 air defense systems and thus deliberately thwarted the appearance of F-35s in Turkey. The problem is related to the attempted military coup of 2016, in which the rebels' aviation (F-16) played a major role. It carried out a total of 13 airstrikes in the direction of 6 important buildings, including the presidential residence (not the building itself, but its territory) and the country's parliament, and also chased the presidential plane²³.

As a result, Erdogan, who is internally convinced that the US orchestrated the attempted military coup, decided not to buy US-made Patriot air defense systems and to buy S-400s, which recognize US F-16s (also F-35s) as 'foe', while the Patriot 'friend' (IFF, Identification, friend or foe). Erdogan, perhaps, realized that if he buys F-35s, during the next possible military coup (or simply in the case of internal airstrikes) he can be threatened not by F-16, but by F-35, and for him will be much more difficult to avoid an assassination attempt (Erdogan perhaps was also wary of deploying the Patriot system near Ankara and Istanbul fearing a possible missile strike).

²¹ Euronews. 2021. "Türkiye'nin Pakistan'a ATAK helikopter satışı ABD engelini aşamıyor: Ankara'ya 6 ay süre." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://tr.euronews.com/2021/03/16/turkiye-nin-pakistan-a-atak-helikopter-sat-s-abd-engelini-asam-yor-ankara-ya-6-ay-sure>.

²² Daily Sabah. 2022b. "Pakistan cancels Turkish chopper deal amid US license deadlock." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/pakistan-cancels-turkish-chopper-deal-amid-us-license-deadlock>; TRT World. 2022. "Pakistan denies cancellation of helicopter deal with Türkiye." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.trtworld.com/asia/pakistan-denies-cancellation-of-helicopter-deal-with-turkiye-53408>.

²³ Sabah.com.tr. 2016. "6 ayrı noktaya 13 bomba atılmış." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/08/21/6-ayri-noktaya-13-bomba-atilmis>.

In addition, Erdogan may have feared that Turkish pilots training on F-35s in the US could be recruited by the US (Gülenists) and used against him. Half a month after the purchase of the first batch of S-400s by Turkey, it became known that the Turkish pilots who appropriated the 4 F-35 given to Turkey in the US territory are returning to Turkey, and those 4 fighters remain in Arizona²⁴.

About a month before the delivery date of the S-400 defense system, the US administration ended the training of forty-two Turkish citizens who were trained in the use of F-35 aircraft. Students continuing their education at Luke Military Air Base in Arizona, USA, and Eglin Military Air Base in Florida, were asked to leave the country by July 31, 2019. Former Deputy Minister Shanahan sent the corresponding letter to his counterpart Hulusi Akar on 6 June 2019 (Yücel 2020).

It is nameable that Erdogan immediately deployed the purchased S-400s in Istanbul and Ankara (where he is usually based) and began testing these systems on F-16s flying at various altitudes (despite the fact that the US had called after the purchase not to use those systems)²⁵. In this context, we would like to quote the following words of Kibaroglu: “Due to the limited number of S-400 battalions and the extent of the area each one of them would cover, the system can only operate on “stand alone” mode, and therefore, only the strategic locations of major cities, selected military installations, and critical infrastructure and industrial sites would be protected” (Kibaroglu 2019).

In order to understand the whole problem, it is important to emphasize the importance of the time factor, as well as Erdogan’s ‘symbolic strikes’ tactics. In this context, I have identified four factors:

The fact that Turkey decided to buy 4 divisions of S-400 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia became known in November 2016²⁶, in other words, shortly after the attempted military coup.

Erdogan announced the signing of the agreement on the purchase of S-400 systems on September 12, 2017, in a conversation with journalists on the plane returning from Kazakhstan to Turkey. And it coincides with the day of the bloodiest military coup in the history of Turkey (1980), whose organizers (former Chief of the General Staff) Kenan Evren and Tahsin Shahinkaya (former commander of the Turkish Air Force) were sentenced to life imprisonment during the reign of Erdogan (in 2014). Erdogan thus tried to show that even such crimes committed more than 30 years ago cannot go unpunished. By the way, it is the first time in the history of Turkey that the former president of the country stands before the court (Evren became the president of Turkey after the military coup, and he is the only president who was not elected by the Turkish parliament or the people).

²⁴ Diken.com.tr. 2019. “Türk F-35 pilotları ABD’den dönüyor: Satın alınan dört F-35 Arizona’da kaldı.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.diken.com.tr/turk-f-35-pilotlari-abdden-donuyor-satin-alinan-dort-f-35-arizonada-kaldi/>.

²⁵ Bir Gün. 2020. “S-400 sistemlerinin Türkiye’de Amerikan savaş uçaklarına karşı test edildiği iddia edildi.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/s-400-sistemlerinin-turkiye-de-amerikan-savas-ucaklarina-karsi-test-edildi-iddia-edildi-307770>.

²⁶ Kısacık, Sina. 2017. “S-400 hava savunma sistemi: Türk-Rus ilişkilerinde yeni bir işbirliği sahası mı?” Accessed August 1, 2022. <http://politikaakademisi.org/2017/03/23/s-400-hava-savunma-sistemi-turk-rus-iliskilerinde-yeni-bir-isbirligi-sahasi-mi/>.

The first batch of S-400s was delivered to Turkey on July 12, 2019, and in our opinion, this is not a coincidence either. On July 12, 1947, the first agreement (on military aid) was signed between the USA and Turkey. Thus Erdogan hints at the anti-American direction of buying S-400s.

And finally, the history of T-LORAMIDS shows that in the past, Erdogan was not in a hurry to buy long-range anti-aircraft missile systems, but after the July 15 coup attempt, he suddenly began rushing and completed the whole deal in less than three years (autumn 2016 - summer 2019).

After the purchase of the first batch of S-400s, the purchase of the second batch of S-400s by Turkey also appeared on the agenda. The new military deal with Russia is extremely important for Turkey, because otherwise it will not get the technologies for the production of S-400s. In the past, the U.S. has refused to give Turkey production technology for the Patriot (as well as software codes for the F-35s), and Turkey has seen Russia as more willing to provide technology for the S-400. However, it turned out that Turkey, which bought the first batch of S-400s, will receive them only if it buys the second batch of S-400s. As a result, Erdogan was also deprived of a partial justification as to why he bought S-400s and began to falsify, claiming that the US refused to sell Patriot systems to Turkey. However, it is obvious that if Turkey buys the second batch of S-400s after all this, the sanctions will be significantly tightened.

Erdogan was trying to create the impression that due to the actions of the USA, he is also "forced" to buy Su-35 and Su-57 fighter jets from Russia²⁷. However, Turkish experts are sure that it is a bluff. They emphasize that equipping the fighter aviation of Turkey with Russian planes will mean changing the entire system, infrastructure, which was created in line with NATO standards in recent decades, and that process will take 30-40 years and cost hundreds of billions of dollars, meanwhile, Turkey has neither that much time nor that much money²⁸. In addition, it is obvious that in this case too, Turkey will come under new American sanctions.

Thus Erdogan's steps have put Turkey in a dead end situation, which cannot equip its air force with American planes (F-35) on the one hand, and Russian (perhaps also Chinese) planes (Su-35, Su-57) on the other (plus the complications involved in creating the TF-X). Buying S-400s and thereby weakening Turkey's defense capability is one of the clearest examples that Erdogan is primarily guided by his personal and not Turkey's state interests. In July 2017 Turkish, French and Italian companies signed the first agreement within the scope of the project to develop Turkey's own air and missile defense system and Minister of National Defense of Turkey Fikri Işık announced during that ceremony that the S-400 was purchased for Turkey's urgent needs: "The work we started with EUROSAM is the cooperation that Turkey will make in the

²⁷ DW.com. 2019a. "Erdoğan'dan Su-57 açıklaması." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/tr/erdoğandan-su-57-açıklaması-abd-tutumunu-sürdürürse-başımızın-çaresine-bakarız/a-50233789>.

²⁸ DW.com. 2019b. "Türkiye'yi zorlayan tercih: F-35 mi, Su-57 mi?" Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiyeyi-zorlayan-tercih-f-35-mi-su-57-mi/a-50241510>.

development of its own air and missile defense system.” he said²⁹. Işık’s words prove that the purchase of S-400s is intended to solve short-term, and cooperation with Eurosam - middle/long-term problems in the sector of air and missile defense system.

The state interest of Turkey, a member of NATO, demanded to buy Patriot air defense systems and thus also get F-35s, to stay in their production program, not to receive American sanctions and not to join the ranks of the US’s adversaries, not to get problems within the framework of NATO. However, Erdogan’s personal interest demanded the purchase of S-400s (including without the technology to manufacture them), and Erdogan went ahead with it without any hesitation. He did the same, when without any hesitation fired hundreds of ‘Gülen pilots’ from the air force after the July 15 coup attempt. As a result, the Turkish Air Force faced a serious pilot shortage following the July 15 coup attempt and was forced to rely on ‘Turkish Airlines’ (‘6 months in the Turkish Armed Forces, 6 months in Turkish Airlines’ model) and Pakistani pilots³⁰.

Conclusion and discussion

In the summer of 2019 President Erdogan said that Turkey’s preference for the S-400 air defense system was influenced not only by the ‘affordable prices’, but also by the opportunity to start joint production with Russia³¹. In another case, after the arrival of the S-400s, President Erdogan said, “We are not preparing for war. We guarantee peace and our national security. It was imperative to buy the S-400s”³². Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stressed that Turkey needs Russian S-400 missiles to strengthen its national security, since NATO protects only one third of Turkish airspace (Buhari Gulmez 2020).

In March 2019, Anadolu news agency published an article on Turkey’s reasons for buying S-400 systems and not choosing Patriot systems. “Why is Turkey buying the S-400 and not the Patriot? Due to the USA’s refusal to share the technical specifications of the Patriots with Turkey and the high cost of the system, Ankara started to work on the purchase of air defense systems from different countries. After Russia met Turkey’s expectations in terms of price, delivery, joint production and technology transfer, Ankara

²⁹ Yeniasya.com.tr. 2017. “Bakan Işık açıkladı: Hava ve füze savunma sistemi hakkında yeni gelişme.” Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.yeniasya.com.tr/gundem/bakan-isik-acikladi-hava-ve-fuze-savunma-sistemi-hakkinda-yeni-gelisme_437945.

³⁰ Airporthaber. 2017. “THY ve TSK pilot geçişleri için protokol imzaladı.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.airporthaber.com/thy-haberleri/thy-ve-tsk-pilot-gecisleri-icin-protokol-imzaladi.html>; Cumhuriyet.com.tr. 2017. “TSK’de pilot krizi büyüyor... Pakistan’dan eğitmen olarak üç F16 pilotu istendi.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/tskde-pilot-krizi-buyuyor-pakistandan-egitmen-olarak-uc-f16-pilotu-istendi-812841>; Haberturk.com. 2019. “Son dakika: Savaş pilotları için 6 ay TSK, 6 ay THY modeli.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-haberleri-savas-pilotlari-icin-6-ay-tsk-6-ay-thy-modeli-haberler-2525623>.

³¹ DW.com. 2019c. “Erdoğan: S-400 işi bitmiştir.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-s-400-i%C5%9F-bitmi%C5%9Ftir/a-49168113>.

³² Sozcu.com.tr. 2019. ““400’leri almak zorunluluktan” açıklamasını yaptı.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2019/gundem/son-dakika-erdogandan-s-400-aciklamasi-5229776/>.

approached the S-400 procurement studies positively, which can detect the threat from 600 kilometers away”³³.

Summarizing all this, the arguments officially presented by the Turkish side regarding the purchase of S-400s can be classified into 3 main parts: a) Provision of production technologies and possibility of joint production; b) Affordable prices; c) The claim/hint that the S-400 is a more powerful weapon.

Our counterarguments:

a) When Turkey received the first batch of S-400 systems, as it turned out, it did not receive the technologies for their production, and it will receive them only if it buys the second batch, and this is fraught with great dangers for Turkey.

b) We could not find figures on how much it would cost for Turkey to buy Patriot systems, but for a country like Turkey, half or one billion dollars could hardly have a serious role, considering also the financial consequences of buying S-400 systems for Turkey. According to Ellen Lord, Undersecretary of the US Department of Defense Turkey would lose \$9 billion by leaving F-35 program (Yücel 2020).

c) According to “Anadolu” agency, the S-400 is a much stronger weapon than the Patriot, but it has already been mentioned that, unlike the Patriot, the S-400 must operate alone in Turkey and cannot be integrated into NATO systems, as well as it is not a weapon tested in combat conditions.

The S-400 procurement process can be divided into four chronological stages:

a) November 2016 - September 2017 - during this period, the topic of S-400s came to Turkey's agenda for the first time, the parties held negotiations and a corresponding agreement was signed.

b) October 2017 - July 2019 - After the signing of that agreement, Turkey received the Russian systems in the summer of 2019.

c) August 2019 - October 2020 - After receiving the Russian systems, Turkey, despite all the warnings of the USA, began to test S-400's radar on American F-16 fighters first (in early July 2020 - before the 4th anniversary of the 2016 military coup attempt), then conducted the fire test of those systems in October 2020³⁴.

d) From November 2020 to now - When Erdogan continues to insist that it is impossible to backtrack on the issue of S-400s, that the topic was closed to them from the beginning, and the purchase of the second batch of S-400s is still on the agenda³⁵.

The main question raised by us is exactly this: why does Erdogan show such persistence and determination regarding the S-400 systems after all? In this context, the following sub-questions emerge more specifically:

³³ Demirci, Zuhâl. 2019. “10 soruda Türkiye neden S-400 alıyor.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/10-soruda-turkiye-neden-s-400-aliyor/1412408>.

³⁴ Ahaber.com.tr. 2020. “S-400 hava savunma sistemi füzesi Sinop'ta test edildi! İşte o görüntüler.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2020/10/16/s-400-hava-savunma-sistemi-fuzesi-sinopta-test-edildi-iste-o-goruntuler>.

³⁵ BBC.com. 2022. “Erdoğan: S-400 konusu bizim için kapanmıştır, ABD ile F-16'lara ilişkin olumlu süreç devam ediyor.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-60872588>; Savunmasanayist.com. 2022b. “Çavuşoğlu'ndan F-16 Cevabı: “Evet dememiz mümkün değil!” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/cavusoglundan-f-16-cevabi-evet-dememiz-mumkun-degil/>.

a) Why did Erdogan not content with just bluffing and blackmailing the US on the S-400 issue, as was the case with the CPMIEC, but instead insisted on his point of view and achieved the purchase of Russian systems?

b) Why did Erdogan continue to persist on the S-400s after purchasing those systems and the subsequent US countermeasures/sanctions, began testing them, and is still not abandoning those systems, jeopardizing the defense capability of Turkey in general and the combat capability of the Turkish Air Force in particular?

I argue that the answer is obvious, since the reason for such insistence is that the issue is related to Erdogan's personal security, and this is why Erdogan regularly refuses to back down on this issue. By the way in the Turkish press materials about the purchase of the first batch of S-400s, the phrase 'acil ihtiyaç' in Turkish (urgent need) is often found and it is emphasized that the Turkish side bought Russian systems for that reason. However, the Turkish press does not elaborate on what kind of 'acil ihtiyaç' it is talking about.

Due to this choice of Erdogan, Turkey, which is considered a regional superpower and has global ambitions, is currently faced with the danger of being left behind in the air force sector by regional countries that are inferior to it in a number of other aspects. Meanwhile, in December 2010 (during Erdogan's prime ministership), the head of the Turkish Air Force, Hasan Aksay announced the goal of having the strongest Air Force in the region by 2050, emphasizing that significant steps are planned for this purpose in the coming years, and in this context, he first mentioned the purchase of F-35 fighter jets³⁶. As a result, with his choice (and a number of other decisions), Erdogan caused great damage to Turkey's defense in general and the Air Force in particular, and the situation was 'Erdogan won, Turkey lost'.

Commenting on the opinion of EDAM experts that the next 10 and maybe 20 years will be the most difficult years for the Turkish Air Force, we believe that it will depend on the term of Erdogan's tenure in Turkey. If he loses the upcoming presidential elections, we believe that the new Turkish president will shortly abandon the S-400 systems, instead buy Patriot (or SAMP/T) systems, start receiving F-35 fighter jets, restore Turkey's place in the F-35 program (Turkey will again become a production partner), and the corresponding American sanctions will be removed from Turkey (and all this in the 2020s). In other words, for us, the problem in this matter is related to Erdogan himself.

Meanwhile, if Erdogan continues to rule Turkey and also buys the second batch of S-400 systems, then the American sanctions against Turkey will undoubtedly become more severe and Turkey's defense capability will suffer more. However, in our opinion, this is only one of the scenarios in case of continuation of Erdogan's rule. There is also another scenario, in which Erdogan himself may abandon the S-400 systems. Four factors can contribute to this:

a) Erdogan may consider the risk of a new military coup to be negligible because he has managed to carry out a 'major purge' of the Turkish armed forces (we consider all this unlikely, because Erdogan cannot 100% rule out the possibility of a new attempt at a military coup if he remains in power).

³⁶ Sabah.com.tr. 2010. "Bir hayal gerçek oluyor." Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2010/12/20/bir_hayal_gercek_oluyor.

b) In recent years, Turkey has developed/is developing various long-range air defense systems, the most promising of which is the Siper system³⁷. Erdogan may one day consider that he can already be reliably protected by the Siper system and as a result he may abandon the S-400 systems, which will have fulfilled their role in solving the intermediate problem (Erdogan's temporary security).

c) The current Russian-Ukrainian war perhaps proves that the Russian air defense systems, including the S-400 systems, do not live up to expectations (it has already been mentioned that Turkey bought S-400 systems that have not been tested in combat conditions). Erdogan may consider that their capabilities are exaggerated and cannot reliably ensure his security.

d) It has already been mentioned that Turkey is looking for an intermediate task (F-16 Block 70, Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon, Gripen and so on) in the context of the Air Force. If Turkey fails in this matter as well, it may force Erdogan to take a step back regarding the S-400 systems (the solution of this question can be contributed by the factor that the weakening of Turkey in the air force plan also means the weakening of NATO, its southeastern wing, although the US is trying to solve the problem by increasing its military presence in Greece). It can also be contributed to by the regional events, the rate of arming by the countries of the region in the sector of air force and other fields.

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³⁷ Savunmasanayist.com. 2022c. "SİPER Hava Savunma Sistemi ve Özellikleri." Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/siper-hava-savunma-sistemi-ozellikleri/>.

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