



Valery Kulikov

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Washington shakes Turkey stronger than an earthquake



According to the Turkish authorities, the latest earthquake has become the largest natural disaster in the country since 1939. Even so, whereas back then 32,968 people died during the natural disaster in Erzincan and about 100,000 more were injured, today the death toll already exceeds 43.5 thousand people. And every day this sad statistics only increases...

The Turkish authorities, together with volunteer helpers from almost all over the world, are trying to rescue as many people as possible from the rubble and from the continuing tremors. There are already more than 114 thousand people rescued in the southeast of the country. According to the examination conducted by Turkish experts, in order to avoid the destruction of buildings that have been built in recent years without observing proper earthquake safety measures, more than 118 thousand buildings will be demolished, and those guilty of violations of construction standards and the catastrophic destruction of such constructed buildings that followed are arrested. The government has already allocated 100 billion lira (\$5.3 billion) for the initial response, but rescue efforts are hampered by harsh winter conditions in areas that are also home to millions of Syrian refugees.

Based on the analysis of the consequences of the İzmit earthquake of 1999, the Confederation of Entrepreneurs and Business Representatives of Turkey has prepared a report on the economic damage to the Turkish economy, estimating it at \$84.1 billion. At the same time, Turkey is well aware that this is only a preliminary estimate, and the final figure of economic losses will be more than \$ 100 billion.

At the same time, some positive forecasts are coming from Turkish analysts. In particular, with regard to the Russian project to create an international gas hub in Turkey, all the necessary infrastructure for which is located in the north-west of the country, not subjected to the latest devastating earthquake. Also, as reported, the main tourist areas were not affected by the earthquake. In this connection, Turkey's authorities hope that in the current difficult conditions tourism will greatly support the country's economy.

Nevertheless, JP Morgan analysts have already indicated that direct damage from earthquakes in Turkey could reach 25% of the country's GDP. And the World Bank's regional vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, Ferid Belhaj, bluntly stated in an interview with CNBC that many billions of dollars will be needed for the reconstruction of Turkey and Syria after the devastating earthquake.

Against this background, there is nothing surprising for the current Turkish authorities that the difficulties created by the natural disaster for the country will be actively used by their opponents. And, first of all, the United States, which, manipulating the opposition forces, are stepping up its pressure not only on the government, but also on the position of the Turkish population on the eve of the upcoming elections, and thus shaking Turkey perhaps more than the recent natural cataclysm.

So, through various fake news and information attacks, Washington is actively trying to convey to the population of the country the alleged desirability of postponing the date of the elections currently scheduled for May 14. It is obviously trying to gain additional time it needs to strengthen the protest movement against Erdoğan, an enemy of the US at this point. At the same time, US and British propaganda sources emphasize that the logistical problems of holding elections in the affected areas are huge. About 13 million people live in the earthquake-hit region, and hundreds of thousands need shelter after their buildings have been destroyed or become unsafe.

And so, apparently following a tip from Washington, a group of lawyers filed a lawsuit against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and senior government officials for their "irresponsibility" regarding the February 6 earthquakes in the southeast of the country. This statement consists of 11 charges of separate crimes, including "premeditated murder and wounding of more than one person," or "intentional negligence."

At the same time, Erdoğan's opponents, who had previously fled the country, became noticeably more active abroad (primarily in the United States). An example of this are, in particular, the statements of Turkish journalist Can Dündar, who lives abroad and was sentenced in absentia to 27 years in prison on charges of espionage and aiding the Gülenist terrorist group, that "Erdoğan came to power after the earthquake of 1999 and will be expelled by the current earthquake." It is no coincidence that these hot takes, clearly prepared by Anglo-Saxon propagandists to discredit Erdoğan, are completely repeated by the British publication *The Telegraph* in an article by journalist Mark Almond entitled "This earthquake may be the end of Erdoğan."

In these circumstances, one should not ignore the demonstratively unexpected closure of embassies of a number of Western countries and the United States at the same time just a few days before the earthquake, allegedly due to fears of terrorist attacks. Especially considering that similar actions were noted before the US attempt to use the Turkish military in 2016 to forcibly change power in the country. Such manipulations by the United States and the West clearly indicate that they are preparing mass riots or a coup even now.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the version of the artificial factor that caused the last earthquake in the region is becoming more and more entrenched in Turkish society. In particular, the head of the Turkish space agency Serdar Hüseyin Yıldırım discusses this topic in detail in his article in *Sözcü*, telling about weapons that are launched from space and can cause strong earthquakes of magnitude seven to eight. Moreover, no one can detect this attack or repel it.

In order to put pressure on the leadership of the republic, beneficial to the United States and NATO, after the catastrophic earthquake, Western emissaries started coming to Turkey to arrange undisguised bargaining and pressure on the possibility of providing Ankara with American fighters and material assistance in exchange for the admission of Finland and Sweden to NATO, as well as for refusing to cooperate with Russia. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who arrived in the earthquake-hit country on February 16, was the first in the caravan of these Washington emissaries, hoping to take advantage of the difficult situation and persuade the Turkish leadership to a decision desirable by Washington. Shortly before that, US aircraft carriers cruised off the coast of Turkey under the guise of "providing assistance," but in a clear attempt to demonstrate strength before the visit of the Secretary General of the alliance, and then the American Secretary of State, to have a "sobering" effect on Erdoğan and the ruling forces of the country, which, according to Washington, "went too far in defending their interests."

However, even in today's difficult conditions for Turkey, on February 20, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu openly complained about Washington's double standards, including in relations with Turkey, and refused to follow Washington's lead. Recognizing that the military relations between Turkey and the United States are an important aspect of the bilateral strategic partnership, the Turkish Foreign Minister stressed that Ankara has difficulties due to unilateral sanctions that Washington needs to lift as soon as possible. In particular, with regard to restrictions imposed in 2020 against the Turkish defense industry in connection with Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems.

Valery Kulikov, an expert political scientist, exclusively for the online magazine "New Eastern Outlook."