



U.S. must stop seeing Turkey as ally - analyst

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Turkey's flawed and limited democracy has been destroyed under the rule of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the United States must stop perceiving the autocratic country, with which it maintains divergent security interests, as an ally, wrote Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Cato Institute think tank.

NATO has always paid a high price for Turkey's inclusion in the alliance, Bandow said in an article he penned for the American Conservative website, stressing that Ankara became a regional guardian without ever having serious duties placed on it.

And more recently, Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has over the past 18 years in power, the analyst said, Turkey has sacrificed "the rule of law, individual liberties, and democratic procedures" to enhance regime power.

Meanwhile, Turkey is engaged in the wars in Syria and Libya. The country has launched repeated military operations targeting Kurdish forces in Iraq while pressing territorial claims in the Eastern Mediterranean in disputes with Greece and Cyprus.

Turkey has also thrown its full support behind Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Ankara is accused of providing Syrian mercenaries to the region.

All of these developments point to an increasingly hostile foreign policy, according to Bandow, who maintains Ankara is now more likely to form an alliance with Moscow than it is Brussels.

At the age of 66, Erdoğan could rule the country another decade or more, with his Islamism and nationalism enjoying strong support at home, and his antagonism toward the West, the United States in particular, going strong, Bandow wrote.

"Turkey is likely to remain estranged from America and the West," he said, calling for Washington to adopt a more realistic policy toward Ankara.

"The U.S. should collaborate with the latter when possible and confront it when necessary," the analysis said. "Most important, the next administration should stop pretending that Turkey is an ally, let alone a reliable one."