



United States and rest of NATO should stop catering to Turkey – analyst

July 15, 2022

NATO must have a serious conversation about what to do when a member like Turkey, which has become deeply repressive under the rule of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, can no longer be trusted, wrote Doug Bandow, senior fellow at the Cato Institute and former Special Assistant to U.S. President Ronald Reagan in American Conservative magazine.

Ankara over the past two decades has demonstrated time and time again that its allegiances are not with the West, according to Bandow, and if the country applied for NATO membership today, it would be firmly rejected.

“Long ago the U.S. should have turned the transatlantic alliance over to the Europeans, who have demonstrated their determination to continue to cheap ride on Americans even after proclaiming their shock and outrage at Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,” the analyst wrote. “As long as Washington relies on NATO, however, it is important that members remain committed to the Western alliance. And Turkey is not.”

The most recent debate over Turkey’s place in the alliance began in May, when Ankara said block the applications of Sweden and Finland unless it received satisfactory assurances that the Nordic countries were willing to address what it regards as support for terrorist organisations, namely the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), an armed group that has been at war in Turkey for Kurdish self-rule for 40 years.

Over the past 20 years or so, Erdogan, “broke the military’s power by means fair and foul. What little independence remained in the armed forces disappeared after the failed July 2016 coup,” Bandow said.

Erdoğan used the failed coup attempt like “Adolf Hitler used the 1933 Reichstag fire: as an opportunity to punish political opponents and critics. Tens of thousands of Turks have been fired, barred from traveling, or imprisoned, most for little more than holding a critical view of Erdogan or having a distant relationship” with cleric Fethullah Gülen’s religious movement,” he said.

The analyst highlighted that public opinion in Turkey does not favour cooperation with the United States, citing a PEW 2019 survey that revealed favourable sentiment toward the U.S. ran at just 20 percent.

Moreover, A March, a poll showed that almost half the country blamed the Russo-Turkish war on the U.S. or NATO, with almost 8 percent saying Ukraine, and only one-third pointing to Moscow.

“For years, Washington has accumulated military allies like people add Facebook friends. The former have proved about as useful as the latter. With Turkey, the U.S. should move in reverse direction,” according to Bandow.