SETA SECURITY RADAR

TURKEY'S GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN 2022

Strategic Resilience amidst Regional Realignment and Global Ambivalence

Edited by
Murat Yeşiltaş
Gloria Shkurti Özdemir

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FOREWORD

Burhanettin Duran
SETA General Coordinator

The year 2021 continued much like 2020, under the shadow of the pandemic, with the world's nations still seeking to adjust to this modern paradigm shift. Mutations of the coronavirus, diminishing state and global capacity to tackle pandemic-related matters, and the disproportionate allocation of vaccines among richer and poorer nations have ensured that the pandemic is here to stay. While the pandemic politically calls to mind the post-World War II period, it can also be compared with the 2008 crisis due to its economic effects, such as unemployment and the disruption of global supply chains. A debate immediately began for a new international system; however, it seems that the current international system will be affected but will not experience a radical transformation. In an atmosphere of global instability in which debates on the U.S.-led international system have gone on for years, in the post-pandemic period, states will invest to improve their capacity and redefine their strategic priorities, especially concerning the issues of health security, climate change, natural resources, and for high-tech infrastructure to be strategically resilient.

While the pandemic has been the main point of contention throughout the year, the debate concerning the question of how COVID-19 impacted international politics has now shifted. The emergence of vaccines has signaled an end to the pandemic, yet this is coming slowly. Almost exclusively, only developed nations have had access to vaccines, with many less economically developed countries, especially those in Africa, having little or no access. In this regard, the international community has once again failed to work together to ensure the sustenance of all human-

ity. While the vaccines became one of the main strategic determinant factors to combat the pandemic, the increasing nationalism across the globe began to undermine the global governance mechanism's ability to produce an effective solution to the most important crisis of the new century.

In addition to the lack of effective global governance on the protection of human lives from COVID-19, several significant political and geopolitical developments have also taken place. Most significant is the new government in the United States – under Joe Biden – which has reasserted the power of the Democratic Party following Trump's departure. Even though the Biden Administration has been trying to transform the strategic discourse of the U.S. vis-à-vis global and regional issues, nothing significantly changed by the end of the year. Biden's strategic vision concerning the restoration of the liberal international order, recalibrating the U.S. global leadership, reforming the international institutions, and maintaining Western strategic dominance has been questioned throughout the year and could not produce significant stability in the international system. Biden's decision of withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan brought the Taliban regime back and paved the way for another round of strategic competition in the region. His decision concerning the containment of China in the Asia Pacific region underlined that the Cold War strategic deterrence as the new type of power competition returned to the stage of international politics again, which ultimately undermined the very nature of the international order.

The European continent has also undergone a significant transformation under the shadow of COVID-19. While the UK is redefining its international role under the strategy of "Global Britain" in the post-Brexit era, the European Union is struggling to develop its model for a grand strategy to gain continental strategic autonomy in the changing international system. President Biden's strategic attempt to deter China in the Indo-Pacific region without any meaningful consultation with the EU's influential actors in the context of AUKUS reiterated the fact that the trans-Atlantic strategic ties are facing historical challenges. France's response against AUKUS was particularly important as an indication of how Europe perceived the U.S.' unilateral China move. In Germany, Angela Merkel's rule has also come to an end, signifying the end of an era for Europe and a renewed bid for leadership in the EU.

Changing governments in the West signify a new era of geopolitics at the continental level and indicate a new political approach for domestic politics of different countries across Europe. Biden hopes to reinstate the American role in global affairs and has announced the novel engagement on the grounds of

human rights, democracy, and multilateralism. This, however, is not expected to move beyond talk and propaganda. Biden's attempt to recover the global image of the U.S. manifested itself in the recent Summit for Democracy in December 2021. Many things can be said about that claim. The first point is that the U.S. will never get to define democratic legitimacy. At the same time, the so-called summit for democracy rests firmly on geopolitical calculations at the expense of values. The summit's chief geopolitical purpose was to form a global coalition of democratic states against the rise of China and Russia's expansion. Yet, the idea of democracies opposing authoritarian regimes is doomed to fail. The U.S. cannot engage in the promotion of democracy globally, and great power competition makes such polarization impossible. Concurrently, Biden is putting in efforts to achieve the pivot to Asia, a policy started during the Obama Administration but not completed. While pursuing a containment policy toward China and Russia, Biden has proceeded with his policy to end the "forever wars" of the U.S.

In the Middle East, which was one of the important strategic regions in international politics, inter-state conflicts, regional normalization, and realignment have been taking place simultaneously since the first month of 2021. There have been flareups between Israel and Gaza as well as strife in the West Bank. The conflict between Israel and Iran is also deepening, with Iran's proxies engaged against Israel. Saudi Arabia's difficult military mission in Yemen was another intense conflict where Iran was also fighting alongside Houthi forces with its shadow army. These are happening under the guise of the Abraham Accords, which continued to be a significant development in 2021 to introduce political normalization between Israel and some Arab countries. In the Middle East, the governments of Iran, Israel, and Iraq have also changed with new political forces leading to significant policy changes and outlooks.

In Israel, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won an early election on March 23; yet, Naftali Bennett managed to form a coalition government with eight parties. Consequently, the incumbent's 12-year reign ended on June 14. In Iran, the presidential election, in which moderates and reformists were prevented from contesting, took place on June 18, resulting in a victory for Ebrahim Raisi – a conservative figure.

Turkey sits at the nexus of all these developments and will continue to do so in 2022. Turkey is an actor who is feeling the fundamental shift in the global order – moving from unipolar to multilateral. As the post-American world comes into existence, Turkey is exerting its new strategic doctrine. This has been true for 2021 when Turkey has continued to engage on various regional matters of glob-

al significance. The situation of the Eastern Mediterranean, Libya, Syria, irregular migration, ensuring stability in Afghanistan, and bilaterally resetting relations with former adversaries have all been part of Turkey's agenda. One of the main drivers behind the normalization process in the regions is the changes in the U.S. policy toward the Gulf region under the Biden Administration that compelled all players to revise their strategic calculations, resulting in winds of normalization blowing through the region. The normalization will be one of the significant issues not only in Turkey's foreign policy agenda but also in other countries' portfolios in 2022.

The single prospect that is definite for Turkey's foreign and security policy in 2022 is continued proactive engagement at all levels. This is especially true for bilateral engagements as Turkey is expected to step up its agenda to reset relations with many countries, especially those in the Middle East. This will create new venues for multilateral and bilateral cooperation, which is sure to define the trajectory of Turkey in 2022.

In this manner, *SETA Security Radar 2022* aims to offer a framework assessment of the major hot spots of Turkey's foreign policy initiatives. These hot spots are likely to affect Turkey's national security and by analyzing their roots and effects, the study provides some predictions for the future paths and approaches to Turkey's security and foreign policies. By providing a policy-relevant analysis, *SETA Security Radar 2022* intends to promote an understanding and awareness among the decision-making circles and those who are interested in Turkey's major security and foreign policy agendas. I would like to end by thanking the entire team that contributed to this study.

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INTRODUCTION: STRATEGIC RESILIENCE AMIDST REGIONAL REALIGNMENT AND GLOBAL AMBIVALENCE

Murat Yeşiltaş Gloria Shkurti Özdemir

01

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. The existing global ambivalence –mainly as a result of the lack of global leadership, problems in global governance, and power rivalry– coupled with the regional developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East have had a profound impact on Turkey's geopolitical landscape, making strategic resilience a necessity for 2022.

2. The "new wave of normalization" going on in the Middle East will have a profound impact on Turkey's policies in 2022 as the latter is expected to strengthen its relations with its regional neighbors, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel.

3. The strategic competition going on in the Eastern Mediterranean region will continue to be a determinant factor in Turkey's geopolitical landscape for 2022.

4. Turkey's security landscape in 2022 will be dominated by economic security, which reflects Turkey's decision to move away from the understanding of security mainly through a military perspective toward a more holistic approach.

5. In 2022, Turkey will continue its fight against terrorism with determination to prevent any threat close to its borders.

6. The developments in Turkey's defense industry sector can be considered successful, and it is expected that Turkey will remain a leading manufacturer and exporter of UAVs in 2022.

7. Considering the global and regional developments, Turkey is expected to mantain its assertive policy in 2022.

As states try to recover from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, not much has changed in global affairs. The downward trend in the U.S. primacy has not changed despite Biden's arrival in the White House. As a result, the lack of global leadership and problems in global governance are still persistently leaving more room for the rise of the "Rest," including China and Russia. In this context, the ongoing transformation in the international system and the return of great power politics have produced *global ambivalence*, compelling many states, including Turkey, to reconsider their foreign policies and readjust their position in the international arena.[1]

If we were to consider the main global geopolitical trends in 2021 it can be said that first and foremost the great power competition, or the new cold war as it is called by many,[2] has dominated global politics and its impact is likely to intensify in 2022. Biden has made it clear since his arrival that China, followed by Russia, would be the main target of his administration. In several cases, he has pledged an intense competition with China and the need for the U.S. to counter "the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy."[3]

Unlike Obama who pursued a policy of engagement with China, Biden seems to continue with the policy of containment, which was initiated by

1 Murat Yeşiltaş and Ferhat Pirinççi, "Turkey's Strategic Conduct under the Changing International System," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Fall 2021), pp. 119-146.

2 Hal Brands and John Lewis, "The New Cold War: America, China, and the Echoes of History," *Foreign Affairs*, (November/December 2021), retrieved December 18, 2021, from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-10-19/new-cold-war.

3 "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World," *The White House*, (February 4, 2021), retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/.

Trump.[4] Furthermore, such a stance has bipartisan support in Congress as well, considering that the latter has labeled China "the greatest geopolitical and geo-economic challenge for United States foreign policy."[5] Nevertheless, one difference between Trump and Biden is related to the strategy that they intend to follow for China's containment. While Trump was focused on the direct competition between the U.S. and China, Biden's strategy mainly revolves around containing China by using strategic alliances and increasing the U.S. strategic deterrence in the Asia-Pacific region. The trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS), the Quad Leaders' Summit, and the U.S. policies on Taiwan need to be considered within this framework.

The ongoing transformation in the international system and the return of great power politics have produced global ambivalence, compelling many states, including Turkey, to reconsider their foreign policies and readjust their position in the international arena.

AUKUS, announced in mid-September 2021, is a security pact that aims to strengthen the military capabilities against China in the Pacific as it will allow the sharing of defense capabilities between the three parties. Despite many areas of cooperation that were mentioned in the pact, providing Australia with U.S.-made nuclear submarines has become the highlight of the deal. While China was not directly targeted during the announcement, it was clear for everyone that this was a step to contain and counter China's rise in the region. For this reason, it is also considered a "classic illustration of balance-of-power/balance-of-threat politics."[6] It also symbolizes a return of Cold War-type strategic deterrence in global geopolitical competition. China responded to the agreement by calling it "extremely irresponsible" and considered it a step that "seriously undermines regional peace and stability and intensifies the arms race."[7] Writing on the same issue, the editorial board of the *Global Times* –a Chinese state tabloid– used a harsher tone against Aus-

4 John J. Mearsheimer, "The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, (November/December 2021), retrieved December 18, 2021, from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-10-19/inevitable-rivalry-cold-war.

5 "United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021," *U.S. Congress*, (August 6, 2021), retrieved November 23, 2021, from https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1260/text.

6 Stephen M. Walt, "The AUKUS Dominoes Are Just Starting to Fall," *Foreign Policy*, (September 18, 2021) retrieved November 24, 2021, from https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/18/aukus-australia-united-states-submarines-china-really-means/#.

7 "Aukus: UK, US, and Australia Launch Pact to Counter China," *BBC*, (September 16, 2021), retrieved November 24, 2021, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58564837.

tralia, stating that "by pursuing a one-sided policy tilting toward the U.S. in the China-U.S. strategic game, Australia has turned itself into an adversary of China … no matter how Australia arms itself, it is still a running dog of the U.S. … If Australia dares to provoke China … China will certainly punish it with no mercy."[8]

While AUKUS is concentrated on defense cooperation, the Quads Leaders' Summit was more about the U.S.' engagement and presence in the region. For the first time, in September 2021, the leaders of the U.S., Australia, India, and Japan met in person reaffirming their unflinching cooperation on issues such as COVID-19, the climate crisis, cybersecurity, technology, education, and regional security.[9] By tackling such a broad range of issues, it can be said that the Quad is indeed an "effort to present a superior model of development to China's Belt and Road Initiative."[10] From the Chinese perspective though, the Quad was labeled as "the Asian version of NATO,"[11] meaning that it is perceived as an attempt of the U.S. to contain China's rise as a global power.

The effectiveness of these policies though is questioned when it comes to the Taiwan factor. For the first time in decades, experts and U.S. officials are contemplating the possibility that China may take military steps for reunification with Taiwan. The Taiwan factor is indeed considered to be a determinant dynamic in the U.S.-China rivalry, with Biden stating in several cases that the U.S. will defend Taiwan against a possible attack by China.[12] At the same time, the U.S. has followed several policies –such as cooperation on 5G security and launching a new bilateral economic dialogue– that directly point to the U.S. commitment regarding its cooperation with Taiwan. China, on the other hand, has reiterated the fact that "Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. The Taiwan issue is purely an internal affair of China that

8 "AUKUS to Bring 'Nuclear-Powered Submarine Fever' across Globe: Global Times Editorial," *Global Times*, (September 16, 2021) retrieved November 24, 2021, from https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202109/1234459.shtml.

9 "Joint Statement from Quad Leaders," *The White House*, (September 24, 2021), retrieved November 23, 2021, from https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/joint-statement-from-quad-leaders/.

10 Hoang Vu and Thuc D. Pham, "The Shift in China-US Competition," *The Diplomat*, (October 13, 2021), retrieved November 24, 2021, from https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/the-shift-in-china-us-competition/.

11 Zaheena Rasheed, "What Is the Quad and Can It Counter China's Rise?" *Al Jazeera*, (November 25, 2020), retrieved November 28, 2021, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/25/what-is-the-quad-can-us-india-japan-and-australia-deter-china.

12 "Biden Says US Will Defend Taiwan if China Attacks," *BBC*, (October 22, 2021), retrieved November 24, 2021, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59005300.

allows no foreign intervention."[13] At the same time, considering the declining hegemonic power of the U.S., Beijing does not believe that the U.S. has the military power to stop China from taking Taiwan.[14] In these circumstances, the stake for miscalculations between the two parties is very high. While it is not expected to happen in 2022, a clash over Taiwan is seen as very possible both in Washington and Beijing. The probability of such a clash rises in tandem with the increasing great power competition in the region, which at the same time amplifies the existing global ambiguity.

The U.S.-China rivalry is only one dimension of the ongoing great power competition. Russia's assertive policies, which mainly play out as a crisis between the West and Russia, constitute the second dimension of the great international power rivalry. The potential for a conflict between the West and Russia is very high as the current developments in the Black Sea region are moving closer toward a conventional military conflict with a hybrid nature. Specifically, Russia has continued its slow but steady military buildup on its border with Ukraine by sending more than 100,000 troops,[15] and such actions have brought to the fore the possibility of a second military assault in Ukraine in seven years. Nevertheless, despite these developments, the West, including in the U.S. and NATO, is ruminating on a possible response to Russia, but no clear strategy has been defined yet. NATO, on one hand, has declared its concern for Russia's actions and has stated that it is ready for dialogue with Moscow.[16] The U.S., on the other hand, has stated that it will not send troops to Ukraine, but it will impose heavy economic sanctions on Russia, provide additional defensive material to Ukraine, and would fortify its NATO allies.[17] What is currently going on in Europe's eastern front is better understood if considered from the perspective of the struggle for spheres of influence. In this framework, the failure to respond properly to Russia's actions would be translated into security challenges for the Black

13 "China Says 'No Room' for Concessions over Taiwan after Biden Commits to Defending Island," *France 24*, (November 22, 2021), retrieved November 24, 2021, from https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20211022-biden-says-yes-us-would-defend-taiwan-against-china.

14 Oriana Skyler Mastro, "The Taiwan Temptation: Why Beijing Might Resort to Force," *Foreign Affairs*, (July/August 2021), retrieved November 26, 2021, from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-06-03/china-taiwan-war-temptation.

15 Seth G. Jones, Michelle Macander, and Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., "Moscow's Continuing Ukrainian Buildup," *CSIS*, (November 17, 2021), retrieved November 25, 2021, from https://www.csis.org/analysis/moscows-continuing-ukrainian-buildup.

16 "Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the Situation in and around Ukraine," *NATO*, (December 21, 2021), retrieved December 22, 2021, from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190373.htm.

17 "Biden-Putin Talks Remain Inconclusive on Escalating Crisis in Ukraine," *Daily Sabah*, (December 8, 2021), retrieved December 10, 2021, from https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/biden-putin-talks-remain-inconclusive-on-escalating-crisis-in-ukraine.

Sea region, which could lead to repercussions not only at the regional level but also on a global scale.

As mentioned before, the West has been unable to take concrete steps against Russia's actions in Ukraine, and one of the main reasons behind that is the lack of the capability to do so. While the U.S. is focused mostly on its great power competition with China, NATO does not have enough troops in Ukraine to respond to direct military action. The situation is more worrying when taking into consideration that the European states do not have sufficient high-end military capabilities if a war with Russia was to occur.[18] However, Turkey, on the other hand, has been one of the greatest supporters of Ukraine lately, increasing cooperation, especially in the defense sector.

> Turkey's geopolitical portfolio is influenced by global and regional developments at the macro-level and restrained by particular states and non-state actors in the mezzo-levels, it should be clearly understood that the security threats in Turkey's near strategic environment are interconnected and geopolitical risks that Turkey is facing today are multidimensional, including here in the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

Focusing on a regional level, important changes have been going on in the Middle East giving impetus to the discussions for a possible *regional reshuffle and realignment*. Specifically, starting at the beginning of 2021, regional countries initiated a normalization process that resulted in less tension and more cooperation between them. The Al-Ula Summit and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's (MBZ) visit to Turkey should be considered within this framework. The reasons behind this regional realignment are mainly connected to Biden's arrival in the White House, considering that he made it clear that he would not follow the same policies as Trump when it comes to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Iran.[19]

18 Seth G. Jones and Rachel Ellehuus "Europe's High-End Military Challenges," *CSIS*, (November 2021), retrieved December 18, from https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/211110_Jones_Europe_HighEndMilitaryChallenges.pdf?YX3akrgwk4toK5d8Q5qDnEzRS97mipHA.

19 Muhittin Ataman, "MBZ's Turkey Visit Indicates a Reshuffle in Middle East," *Daily Sabah*, (December 1, 2021), retrieved December 20, 2021, from https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/mbzs-turkey-visit-indicates-a-reshuffle-in-middle-east.

The Iran case indeed deserves special attention as the possibility for a bigger crisis in the Iran-U.S.-Israel triangle looms large, having a great impact on the region. Specifically, Biden, who does not want to be overly involved in the regional affairs, wants to rejoin a strengthened nuclear agreement with Iran; however, no agreement has been achieved with the hardliner İbrahim Raisi. Israel has been displeased with Biden's stance toward Iran, indicating a possible rift between the U.S. and Israel. At the same time, the Bennett Administration has stated the possibility of unilateral action to prevent a nuclear Iran.[20] This turn of events will have a profound impact on the ongoing regional realignment. This resulted in Israel and the Gulf states becoming closer,[21] marking a turning point for the regional affairs as a rapprochement between Turkey and Israel is expected as well. It is necessary to point out that how the U.S. approaches Iran will be a litmus test for its Middle East policies.

Within this framework, Turkey's geopolitical landscape in 2021 has been shaped eminently by the global ambivalence and the regional realignment in the MENA region. This brings to the fore the necessity for Turkey to focus on improving its strategic resilience during 2022. In this context, Turkey needs to contemplate how to use its resources so it can consolidate its strategy while avoiding possible distractions that may occur along the way. Furthermore, it is important to state that under the changing geopolitical dynamics in regional and international politics, Turkey cannot maintain its strategic stability and resilience by prioritizing one particular security region. Since Turkey's geopolitical portfolio is influenced by global and regional developments at the macro-level and restrained by particular states and non-state actors in the mezzo-levels, it should be clearly understood that the security threats in Turkey's near strategic environment are interconnected and geopolitical risks that Turkey is facing today are multidimensional, including here in the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

For a better understanding of Turkey's geopolitical landscape in 2021 and what we can expect in 2022, *SETA Security Radar* is built upon two pillars. First, in the next chapters, experts in the field have conducted a thorough analysis of Turkey's relations with the U.S., Russia, and European states,

20 Thomas O Falk, "Israel's 'Alarmist Claims' Raise the Stakes against Iran," *Al Jazeera*, (September 5, 2021), retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/5/israels-alarmist-claims-raise-the-stakes-against-iran.

21 Aaron David Miller, "Israel and the Gulf States Are Becoming Closer. But It Won't Make Biden's Life Much Easier," *Politico*, (December 16, 2021), retrieved December 22, 2021, from https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/12/16/israel-emirati-rapprochement-biden-middle-east-problem-524851.

followed by a detailed evaluation of Turkey's policies in regions such as the Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa, or crises such as those seen in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, the report touches upon Turkey's counterterrorism policies and its defense industry activism, both very important topics considering Turkey's successes and achievements in this area.

Second, to provide a wider perspective on Turkey's geopolitical landscape for 2022, we have surveyed security and foreign policy experts.[22] Below we will discuss in detail the findings of the survey and how they apply to Turkey's foreign policy.

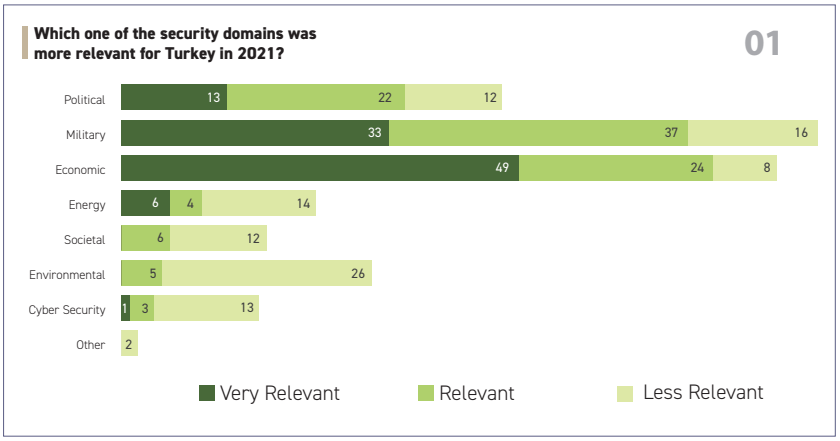
The results of the survey show us that while in 2021 the military domain was more relevant for Turkey, in 2022, economic security is expected to dominate (Figure 1 and 2). Specifically, 66 of our respondents labeled the economy as "very relevant" for 2022, an important increase when considering that for 2021, 49 responders believed that economic security was "very relevant." It is also important to mention that while the relevancy of the military domain is expected to fall, a small increase is seen in other security domains such as energy, societal, environmental, and cyber security.

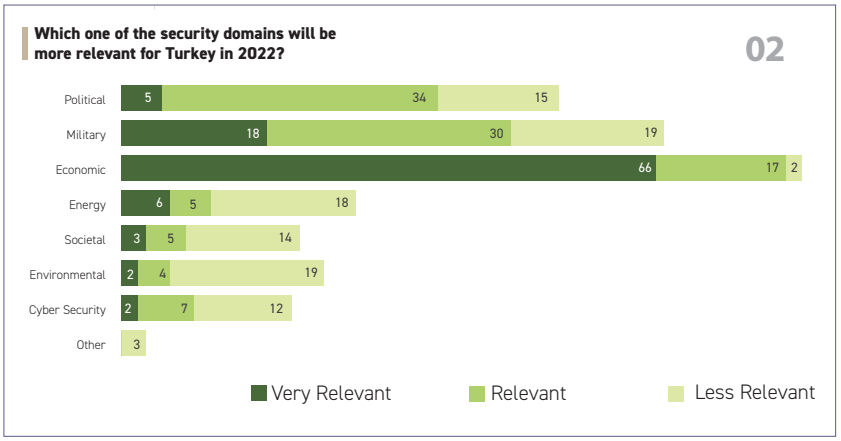
These results, indeed, show us that Turkey is moving away from the understanding of security through a military perspective toward a more holistic approach, where issues such as economic, societal, and environmental security will dominate its policies in the near future. Furthermore, the decline of the relevance of military security is related to the fact that the threats that require military intervention, especially in Syria and Iraq, have been minimized. The increased relevance for economic security is first and foremost a result of what Turkey calls its "economic war of independence." As Turkey is laying out a new economic model, all the attention is focused on the path it will follow as it may be a determinant factor for Turkey's strategy. Here one needs to emphasize the fact that for the first time, Turkey's National Security Council included economic security in its statement.[23]

The responders were also asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 the likelihood and from 1 to 4 the severity of the impact that several issues had on Turkey's poli-

22 For the *SETA Security Radar 2022 Survey,* a total of 102 responders participated to the online survey in the period between November 19 - December 2, 2021. The responders were mainly Turkish and foreign academicians and experts. At the same time journalist, diplomats, and security community also participated in the survey.

23 National Securtiy Council stated that "Challenges and threats that Turkey has faced and may face in the process of implementing investment, production, employment, and export-oriented economic policies in line with its objectives on the solid infrastructure it has built, have been evaluated." See, "25 Kasım 2021 Tarihli Toplantı," *MGK*, (November 25, 2021), retrieved December 1, 2021, from https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/25-kasim-2021-tarihli-toplanti.



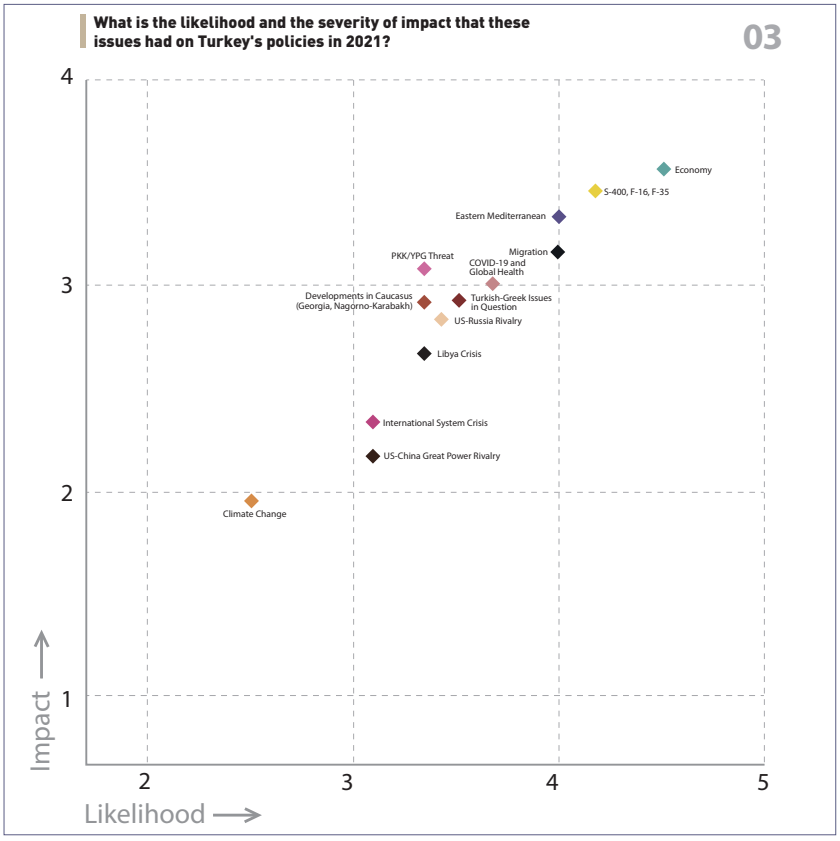


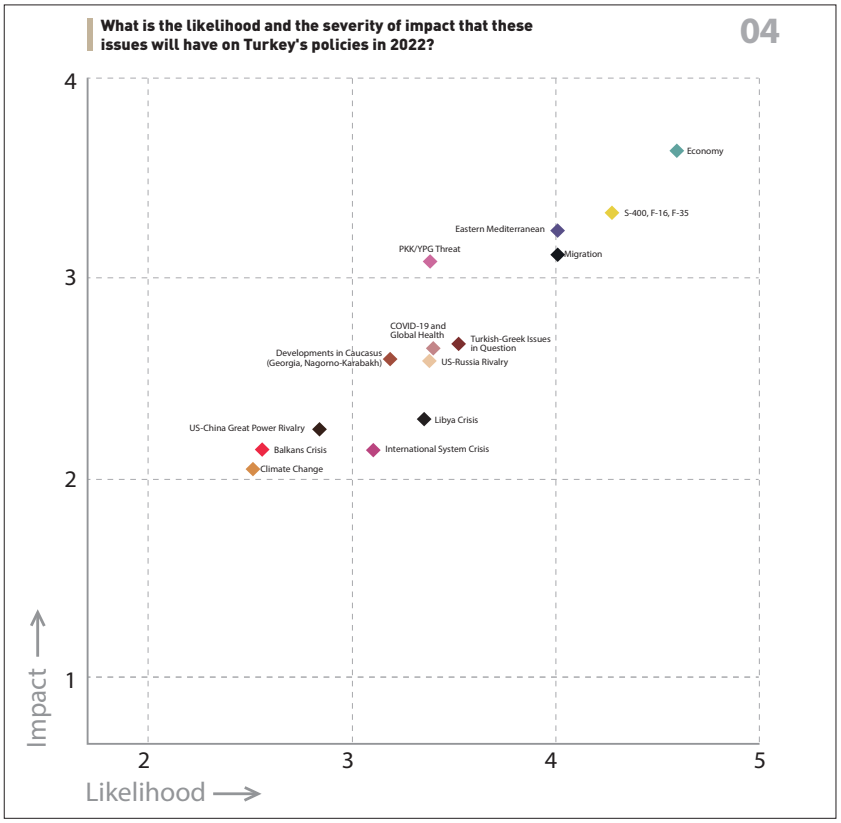
cies in 2021 and will have in 2022. As mentioned before, Turkey's geopolitical portfolio is influenced by global and regional developments on the macro level and restrained by particular states and non-state actors at the mezzo level. For this reason, issues such as the U.S.-China great power rivalry, the U.S.-Russia rivalry, the international system crisis, climate change, the Libya crisis, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Syrian conflict (PKK/YPG threat), Turkish defense procurement projects (S-400, F-16, F-35), and the economy, among others factors were taken into consideration. As it can be seen from figures 3 and 4, not much is expected to change in 2022. The economy and defense procurement projects such as the S-400s, F-16s, and the F-35 issue seem to be the most influential for Turkey's policies. These are followed by the PKK/YPG threat and the migration issue, which show us that the developments in Syria and Iraq, even though minimized when compared to previous years, are still a threat to Turkey's national interest.

According to the survey, the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region are among the issues that have had the highest impact on Turkey's foreign

policy in 2021 and that is not expected to change in 2022. The region is witnessing a strategic competition where both regional actors, such as Turkey and Greece, and global powers, such as Russia and the U.S., are included. However, as a more moderated atmosphere is expected in 2022, this is reflected in the decline of impact on Turkey's policies for issues such as Turkish-Greek relations and the Libya crisis.

Lastly, COVID-19 and climate change are two issues for which severity of impact and likelihood of impact on Turkey's policies are expected to change the most. Regarding COVID-19 and the challenges it poses, it seems it will not be a determinant in Turkey's foreign policy in 2022. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, COVID-19 and its impact on the world, even though still persistent, is declining. Second, Turkey has been successful in fighting COVID-19, and a radical change of policies is not expected in this regard. On the other hand, the impact of climate change on Turkey's policies is expected to increase in 2022, as was pointed out in the previous question as well. The upward trend of climate change inclusion in states' policies is reflected in Turkey, and a more active stance may be expected from Turkey in this context in 2022.

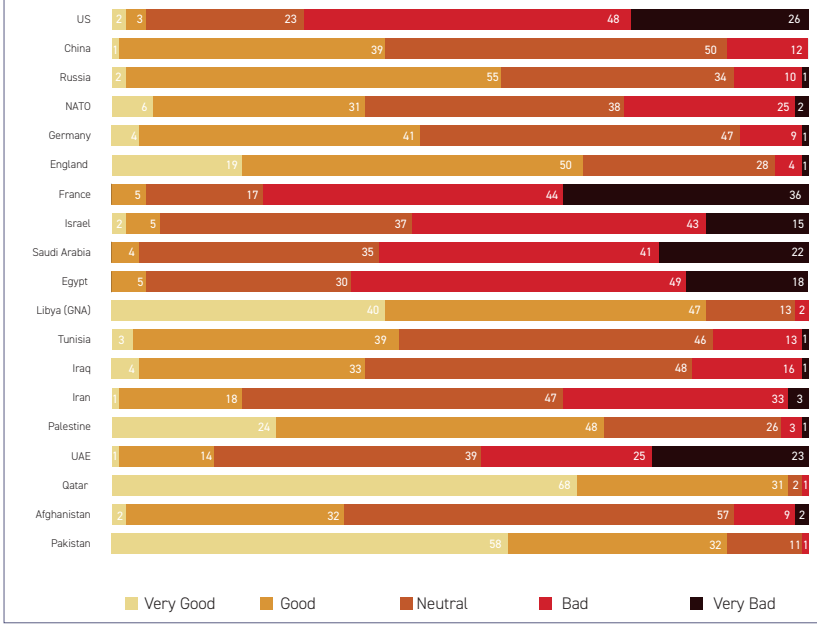




Concerning Turkey's bilateral relations, for 2021, Turkey's relations with France and the U.S. seemed to be the most problematic. For the U.S., 26 of our responders considered the bilateral relations "very bad," while 48 of them considered the relations as "bad." In terms of bilateral relations with France, 36 and 44 thought that the relations with France were "very bad" and "bad," respectively (Figure 5). These responses are not surprising considering the standoff between Turkey and the U.S. that has been going on for years. At the same time, Turkey and France have come head-to-head in the Eastern Mediterranean, resulting in a deterioration of relations in recent years. Relations with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE (the survey was conducted before and during MBZ's visit to Turkey) are perceived as "bad" also, yet not at the levels of the U.S. and France. On the other side of the spectrum, Qatar is the state with which Turkey has the best bilateral relations, followed by Libya's GNA, Pakistan, and Palestine. It should also be mentioned that Turkey's relations with the U.K., Germany, China, Russia, and NATO are mostly on good terms, which is also a reflection of Turkey's reflexive policies followed in 2021.

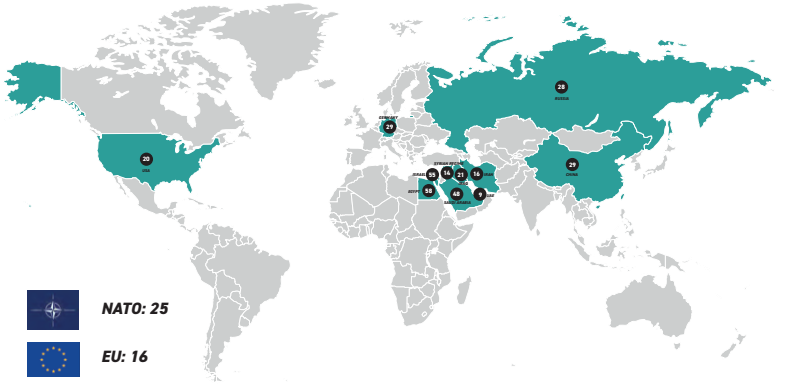
To provide perspective on how Turkey's bilateral relations will look in 2022, we asked the participants to select the states/organization that Turkey may improve its relations with next year (Figure 6). When taking into consideration the states

Taking into consideration the events in 2021, how can you describe Turkey's relations with the following states/organizations? 05



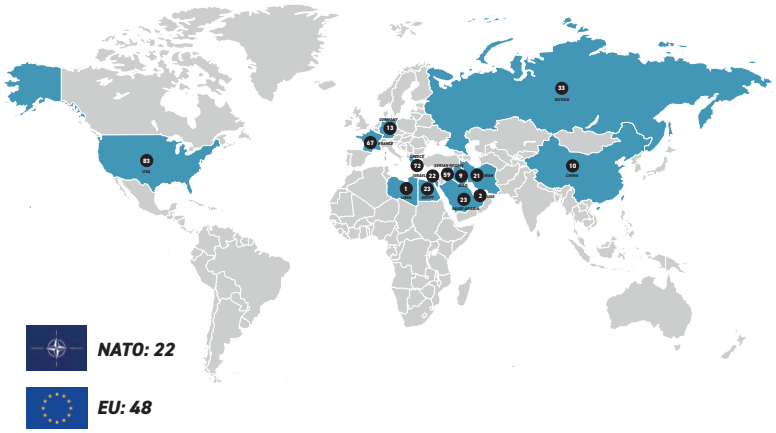
we mentioned above, except for France, the survey results said the possibility of Turkey improving its relations with the U.S., Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt is very high. It is important, however, to state that the number of those who believe that Turkey-U.S. relations will improve is relatively low compared to the number of those who believe that Turkey will become closer with its regional neighbors. Indeed, this shows us that the current regional reshuffling and re-alignment in the Middle East is expected to continue in 2022 as well.

Taking into consideration the developments in 2021 and the future prospects for 2022, with which of the states/organizations below may Turkey improve its relations/get closer to next year? 06



From the regional perspective, approximately 20 percent of the responders believed that Turkey may have political problems with its neighbors such as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. It is indeed a low percentage when put in perspective with the other states such as France, Greece, or the U.S. However, approximately 60 percent of the responders believe that Turkey will have political problems with the Syrian regime, marking the low probability for the two parties to start bilateral discussions.

In 2022, with which of the following countries/organizations is Turkey likely to have political problems? 07

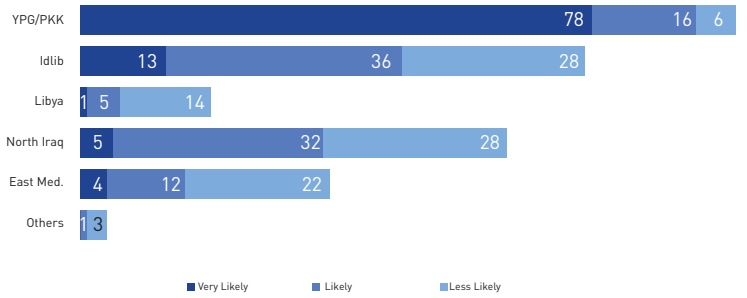


Though the military domain may lose some ground when compared to economic security, it is still an important determinant of Turkey's foreign policy. According to the survey's results, if Turkey were to undertake military intervention in 2022, most likely it would be against the YPG/PKK, followed by operations in Idlib and northern Iraq. These responses indeed direct us to the fact that Syria and terrorism will continue to be Turkey's focal point and issues that Turkey does not intend to tolerate if its national security is threatened.

The Turkish defense industry has been undergoing a very important evolution as it shifts "from a procurement model largely dependent on foreign imports to a far more self-reliant model with a strong research and development foundation and a growing number of exports."[24] Based on this policy, Turkey's

24 İsmail Demir, "Transformation of the Turkish Defense Industry: The Story and Rationale of the Great Rise," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 22, No. 3, (Summer 2020), pp. 17-40.

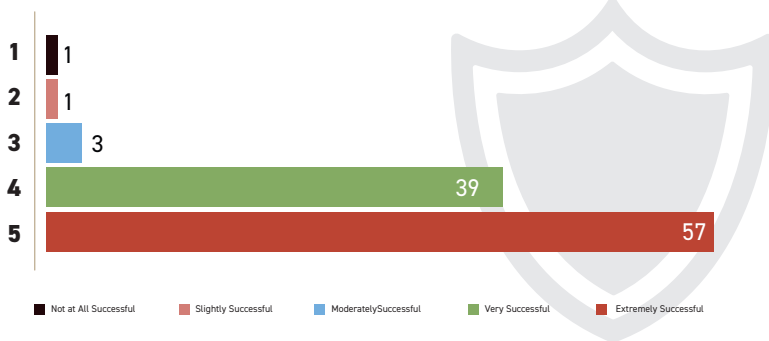
If Turkey was to undertake military intervention in 2022, against whom or where could the intervention take place? 08



defense industry has designed and produced several sophisticated weapon systems that have made Turkey the center of attention and in some cases have made it a target of criticism from some states. Considering the importance of the defense industry in Turkey's policies, the *SETA Security Radar Survey* designated several questions to this issue.

When asked how they perceived the latest developments in Turkey's defense sector, 94 percent of the responders considered the developments successful. Specifically, 56 percent asserted that the developments were "extremely successful," while 38 percent identified them as "very successful" (Figure 9).

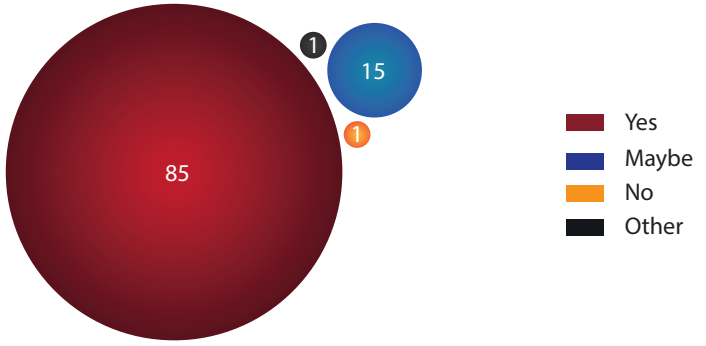
On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you assess Turkey's latest developments in the defense sector? 09



Turkish armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) are indeed the greatest indicator of the success of Turkey's defense industry. In several crises, such as Libya, Syria, or Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkish drones such as Bayraktar TB2, ANKA, or Kargu have not only changed the balance of power but have changed warfare itself. Furthermore, Turkey is on its way to becoming a premier exporter

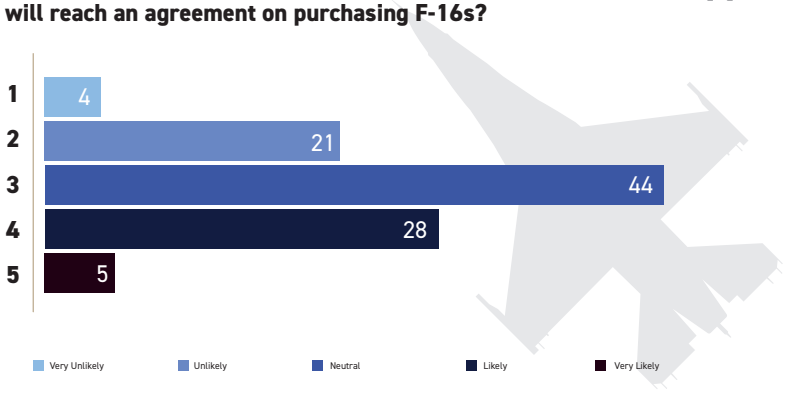
of UAVs. Currently, Turkey competes with states such as the U.S., Israel, and China, which have been leading manufactures and exporters of UAVs for many years. Asked whether Turkey will continue to stay in the same position for 2022, 85 out of 102 were affirmative, while only one of the participants did not think that Turkey would continue to be a leading manufacturer and exporter (Figure 10).

Is Turkey going to continue being a leading drone manufacturer and exporter in 2022? 10

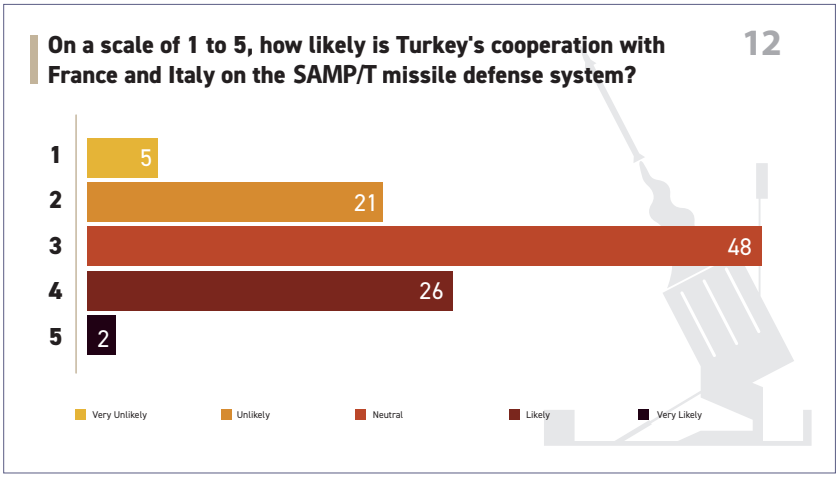


Remaining with the Turkey-U.S. relations, the survey's result brought to the fore an uncertainty for a possible agreement between Turkey and the U.S. concerning the purchase of F-16s. Approximately 43 percent of the responders were neutral about this issue, which indeed may be seen as a reflection of the ambiguity that has encircled the future Turkey-U.S. relations. It can be also added that 32 percent of responders saw a possible agreement on F-16s during 2022 as "unlikely" or "very unlikely," while only 24 percent argued it would be "likely" or "very likely" (Figure 11).

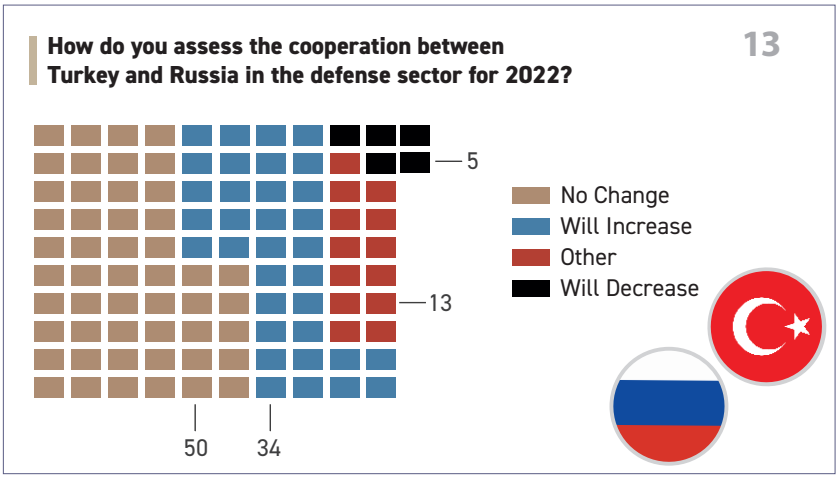
On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely is that Turkey and the US will reach an agreement on purchasing F-16s? 11



Discussions on a possible agreement with France and Italy on the SAMP/T missile defense system emerged at the G20 summit in November 2021. Similar to the case of the F-16 agreement, most of the responders were neutral regarding concern over a possible agreement on the SAMP/T. Furthermore, the share of those who did not see the agreement as possible (27 percent) was higher than the share of those who thought that the possibilities to achieve an agreement are high (25 percent) (Figure 12).



The defense cooperation between Turkey and Russia has gained momentum in the last few years, especially after Turkey's purchase of the S-400. Yet, this cooperation has been highly criticized by the U.S. and has been seen as a shift in Turkey's policies toward Russia. Asked how they assessed the defense cooperation between Turkey and Russia for 2022, approximately half of the responders argued that there will be no change, while 34 of them stated that there was a possibility that it may increase (Figure 13). Taking into consider-

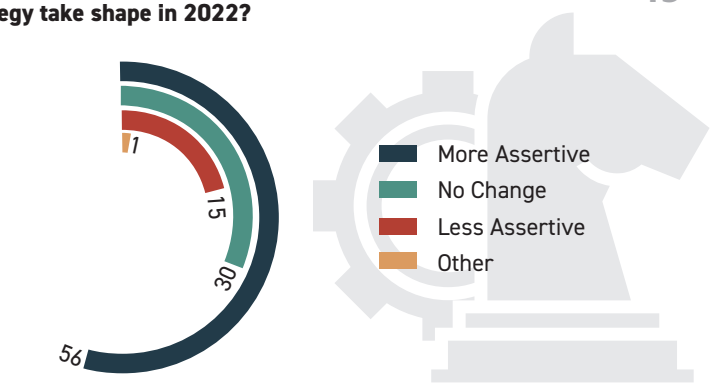


ation the other responses, it can be argued that whether Turkey and the U.S. reach an agreement on the F-16 issue and how the developments in Ukraine play out in the following months will be determining factors in the defense cooperation between Turkey and Russia.

Last, as it can be seen in figure 14 and 15, we asked our responders to assess in general Turkey's defense and security strategy for 2022, how it *will* take shape, and how it *should* take shape. Fifty-six of the participants believed that Turkey would follow a more assertive policy; however, 62 of the responders thought that Turkey should follow a more assertive policy. Only 13 out of the 102 responders believe that Turkey should follow a less assertive policy. These statistics show us that considering the geopolitical landscape, the foreign policy issues the country faces can be resolved only through an assertive policy. In this context, Turkey's policies in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, or even in Ukraine, which are seen as examples of Turkey's assertive policies, can be considered successful.

According to you, how should Turkey's defense and security strategy take shape in 2022? 14

According to you, how will Turkey's defense and security strategy take shape in 2022? 15



SIMMERING TENSIONS IN THE TURKEY-U.S. STANDOFF: IS THERE ANY SILVER LINING FOR 2022?

Gloria Shkurti Özdemir

02

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. As Biden arrived in the White House, Turkey-U.S. relations remained relatively strained through the year with a few ebbs and flows on the way. None of the previous flashpoints could be resolved, minor crises of secondary importance occurred, and new positive agendas were discussed.

2. Erdoğan and Biden met twice in 2021 (June and October). Both meetings were conducted in positive tones, where both leaders emphasized the possibility for further cooperation.

3. On September 30, 2021, Turkey requested from the U.S. to buy 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighter jets and nearly 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes. The stance of the Biden Administration and Congress, however, has not been in cohesion.

4. The U.S. continued its support for the YPG/PKK both militarily and financially. The Biden Administration in its Fiscal Year 2022 has allocated $177 million to the YPG.

5. Turkey and the U.S. worked together, alongside Qatar, on a possible solution for the running of the Kabul Airport, after the withdrawal of the U.S.

INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, Turkey-U.S. relations have been strained and while the diverging points kept intensifying, the common ground between Turkish and American foreign policies kept dwindling. The arrival of Biden in the White House was generally expected to harm the bilateral relations; however, in 2021, no major event occurred in the sense that would lead to a further deterioration of the relations. Furthermore, the two meetings held between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Biden seem to have brought some positive elements to the table as both sides have emphasized interest in a constructive relationship and agreed on the creation of a joint mechanism to strengthen bilateral ties.

To better understand the current fluctuation in the Turkey-U.S. relations and project the track that it will follow in 2022, one needs to look back at the main reasons behind the prevalent standoff. Specifically, the main reason behind the Turkey-U.S. standoff relies on the threat perception of both states and the way they perceive the current international system. Accordingly, both states determine their national interests and goals, which most of the time have been incompatible and conflicting. While on the one hand, we have the U.S. focusing its foreign policy mainly on the great power competition with China and to some extent with Russia, on the other hand, Turkey is trying to adjust itself in the international system by being an independent actor as a regional leader with a global impact. To achieve this goal Turkey's main strategy relies on securing its borders by not allowing any great powers' militaries in its immediate neighborhood and by establishing a "neighborly core in which no neighbor poses a significant military threat."[1]

1 Şener Aktürk, "Turkey's Grand Strategy and the Great Powers," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (2021).

At this point, keeping in mind that China and Asia are the main priority of the Biden Administration and the threat coming from the PKK/YPG is the main priority of Turkey, it can be said that both states lack a common threat. In several cases, this has resulted in diverging perceptions that have been manifested in crises, such as in Syria. The lack of a common threat, however, is not enough to explain the current standoff in bilateral relations.

> The main reason behind the Turkey-U.S. standoff relies on the threat perception of both states and the way they perceive the current international system.

Another reason behind several U.S. policies that have damaged bilateral relations is related to the rising antagonism toward Turkey in the U.S. Congress. This can explain the U.S. policies and official statements concerning the Eastern Mediterranean, the Libya crisis, or even Biden describing the killings of Ottoman Armenians during World War I as "genocide."

All these developments have led the U.S. not to fear losing Turkey as an ally. However, by the end of 2021 several developments in Europe's Eastern front once again brought the Russian threat to the West's doors. In this case, the U.S. needs to be very careful in handling the situation as failure to do so may increase the existing perception that American power and hegemony are diminishing. From this standpoint, Turkey's role in impeding the Russian threat may bring to the table new zones of cooperation.

The next sections of this chapter will focus on the main dynamics of the Turkey-U.S. relations for 2021 and the general projection of how these dynamics may evolve in 2022 will be addressed. For a better understanding, the main issues that dominate the bilateral relations will be depicted in two different variables: (i) the extent of divergence versus convergence and (ii) the level of importance.

DYNAMICS OF TURKEY-U.S. RELATIONS

In the previous *SETA Security Radar 2021*, it was stated that "the nature of the Turkey-U.S. relations is not clear and requires redefinition."[2] Not much has changed since then and the ambiguity regarding the nature of the relationship continues nowadays. In contrast to the previous year, however, is the fact that with Biden's arrival the inconsistency in rhetoric and policy between the White House and Congress, which existed during the Trump Administration,

2 Murat Yeşiltaş (ed.), *SETA Security Radar: Turkey's Security Landscape in 2021*, (Ankara: SETA İstanbul, 2021), p. 19.

has been generally eliminated. This, as will be explained further in this chapter, has opened the path for Congress to intensify its backlash against Turkey, which to a certain degree negatively impacts bilateral relations.

If we were to focus on the issues that dominate the dynamics of Turkey-U.S. relations, not much has changed. The purchase of the S-400 air and missile system from Russia and the U.S.' support for PKK/YPG remain the most eminent issues. These are followed later by the extradition of FETÖ members, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Libya crisis, etc.

Defense: Decoupling or Cooperation?

In 2021, the agenda between Turkey and the U.S. has changed a little with new issues coming to the fore, such as Afghanistan. In this regard, the share of importance for the S-400 air and missile system has decreased slightly, but it remains a thorn in the relations between both states. The S-400 remains one of the greatest diverging points between Turkey and the U.S.

Due to the S-400 deal, in 2020, the U.S. decided to suspend the partnership of Turkey in the F-35 program and at the same time, the Trump Administration sanctioned Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries, along with key individuals involved in the purchase. The Biden Administration continued with the same stance as both decisions were made official in April 2021.[3] In the face of the U.S.' hostile stance, President Erdoğan stated that Turkey may continue talks with Russia on a possible purchase of the second batch of S-400s.[4] Furthermore, İsmail Demir, President of Defense Industries, stated that Turkey may consider the option of buying SU-35s or SU-57s from Russia.[5]

However, the tensions started to cool slowly in the second half of 2021. On September 30, 2021, Turkey requested from the U.S. to buy 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighter jets and nearly 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes.[6] During the meeting of both leaders in the G20 Summit, Biden had a positive approach about the purchase of F-16s as he pledged to

3 "Notice of Department of State Sanctions Actions," *U.S. Department of State*, (April 7, 2021), retrieved from https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2021-07048.pdf; "US Formally Removes Turkey from F-35 Programme," *TRT World*, (April 22, 2021), retrieved from https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/us-formally-removes-turkey-from-f-35-programme-46112.

4 "Turkey to Continue Talks with Russia on 2nd Batch of S-400s as Planned: Erdoğan," *Hürriyet Daily News*, (January 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-continue-talks-with-russia-on-2nd-batch-of-s-400s-as-planned-erdogan-161664.

5 "İsmail Demir: F-16'lar Olmazsa SU-35 Alırız," *Youtube*, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdDY2ORwnRc.

6 "Turkey Asks US to Buy 40 Lockheed Martin F-16 Jets: Sources," *Daily Sabah*, (October 8, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/turkey-asks-us-to-buy-40-lockheed-martin-f-16-jets-sources.

"do his best" in terms of the authorization of the sale.[7] At the same time, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Karen Donfried, during her visit to Turkey stated that the U.S. welcomes Turkey's request.[8] In this regard, the Turkish and American delegations have held important meetings to discuss a possible agreement, and the meetings are expected to continue in 2022 as well. Here it is important to state also that Congress may block the deal between the two states considering that 10 U.S. lawmakers in a letter to Biden and Blinken stated their "profound sense of concern."[9]

U.S.' Gambit with YPG: The Most Exigent Divergence

While the S-400 issue has lost, on a small scale, its importance regarding the impact on Turkey-U.S. relations, the U.S. support for the YPG has not. Indeed, this issue remains a top priority for Turkey as the YPG/PKK poses a vicious threat to its national security. Not much has changed in 2021 regarding the policies of both states, meaning that the U.S.' support for the YPG/PKK remains the main dividing topic.

As soon as Biden came to the White House, it was announced that Brett McGurk was appointed as the coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa. McGurk used to be the U.S.' special envoy to counter ISIS during the Obama Administration and is seen as the architect of the U.S.-YPG cooperation.[10] Placing McGurk in this position reflects that Biden will continue Obama's policies in Syria and will advance with the support for the YPG. Without any doubt, this is not good news for bilateral relations.

Another step undertaken by the U.S. that harmed the bilateral relations with Turkey came on October 7, 2021, when President Biden extended the state of emergency decree issued in 2019 for another year. In the statement, it was claimed that "in particular the actions by the Government of Turkey to conduct a military offensive into northeast Syria, undermines the campaign to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS … and continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United

7 "US Positive on Turkey's Bid to Purchase 40 F-16s: Erdoğan," *Hürriyet Daily News*, (November 1, 2021), retrieved from https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/biden-showed-positive-attitude-regarding-f-16-jets-erdogan-169031.

8 "US Committed to Deepening Cooperation with Turkey: Official," *Anadolu Agency*, (November 19, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-committed-to-deepening-cooperation-with-turkey-official/2425218.

9 Patricia Zengerle, "U.S. Lawmakers Express Concern over Reports of Potential Turkey F-16 Purchase," *Reuters*, (October 27, 2021), retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-lawmakers-express-concern-over-reports-potential-turkey-f-16-purchase-2021-10-26/.

10 "Brett McGurk: The Epitome of the Democrats' Middle East Policy," *Politics Today*, (April 16, 2021), retrieved from https://politicstoday.org/brett-mcgurk-the-epitome-of-the-democrats-middle-east-policy/.

States."[11] Prolonging the state of emergency means more support for the YPG as has been openly stated by several U.S. officials and leaders of the YPG terrorist group.[12]

This approach of the U.S. administration has been manifested in the financial and military support of the U.S. toward the YPG. Specifically, for its Fiscal Year 2022, the Biden Administration has allocated $778 billion to the defense budget, out of which $177 million will be allocated to the YPG, which is referred to as "Vetted Syrian Groups and Individuals."[13] At the same time, the U.S. has continued to provide military training and truckloads of military support to the terrorist group.[14]

The U.S.' gambit with the YPG is a red line for Turkey and this stance of the U.S. can be considered as the most toxic issue in the bilateral relations, positioning the issue at the limits of the divergence axis. Keeping "great powers' militaries out of its immediate neighbors and to establish a 'neighborly core' in which no neighbor poses a significant military threat" is the main aim of Turkey's grand strategy.[15] With that said, it is obvious that Turkey will not accept any compromise regarding the U.S. support for the YPG.

Other Flashpoints in the Bilateral Relations

The extradition of the July 15, 2016 coup plotters from the U.S. to Turkey has been one of the main diverging points between Turkey and the U.S. There has been no change in 2021 on Washington's stance despite Ankara's multiple

11 "Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to the Situation in and in Relation to Syria," *The White House*, (October 7, 2021), retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/07/notice-on-the-continuation-of-the-national-emergency-with-respect-to-the-situation-in-and-in-relation-to-syria/.

12 "US Reaffirms Stance on Turkey's S-400, Support for Syria's Kurds," *Al-Monitor*, (July 22, 2021), retrieved from https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/07/us-reaffirms-stance-turkeys-s-400-support-syrias-kurds; "CENTCOM Head Reiterates US Support for YPG Terrorists in Syria," *Daily Sabah*, (September 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/centcom-head-reiterates-us-support-for-ypg-terrorists-in-syria; "US Made YPG Clear Promise to Stay in Syria: Terrorist Ringleader," *Daily Sabah*, (October 7, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/us-made-ypg-clear-promise-to-stay-in-syria-terrorist-ringleader; "Acting Assistant Secretary Joey Hood Travels to Northeast Syria," *U.S. Department of State*, (May 17, 2021), retrieved from https://www.state.gov/acting-assistant-secretary-joey-hood-travels-to-northeast-syria/.

13 "Budget of the U.S. Government: Fiscal Year 2022," *The White House*, (2021), retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/budget_fy22.pdf, p. 39; "Overview – FY 2022 Defense Budget," *U.S. Department of Defense*, (May 2021), retrieved from https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2022/FY2022_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf, pp. 7-8.

14 "US Sends Military Assistance to YPG/PKK Terrorists in Syria from Iraq," *Daily Sabah*, (February 14, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/us-sends-military-assistance-to-ypgpkk-terrorists-in-syria-from-iraq.

15 Aktürk, "Turkey's Grand Strategy and the Great Powers."

> "We have turned a new page in Turkish-U.S. relations at the NATO summit. Our relations with other countries are not an alternative to our ties to the U.S. … The U.S. and Turkey have agreed that our close partnership benefits both nations."
>
> **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**
> President of Turkey

requests for extradition. The extradition of FETÖ members is a top priority for Turkey; however, in 2021 we can say that it became a collateral issue in the bilateral relations, while the divergence continues at the same level.

The Biden Administration does not have a clear Mediterranean policy. The priority of the new administration is on the rise of China, and Russia to some extent, within the framework of the great power competition. This has left the Eastern Mediterranean region outside Biden's interest for 2021. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the U.S. has been indifferent to the regional developments. On the contrary, the U.S. has shown that it will continue to support Greece as opposed to Turkey. On October 14, 2021, the U.S. and Greece renewed and expanded the Mutual Defense and Cooperation Agreement. As a result, the U.S. military presence in Greece is expected to increase.[16] Such a policy places Turkey and the U.S.' foreign policies at odds, further increasing the divergence between them. However, it can be said that, at this point, the Eastern Mediterranean policies of both states are of secondary importance to impact the bilateral relations.

Libya was considered a potential bright spot in the Turkey-U.S. relations since both states supported the U.N.-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) against the Russia-backed warlord Haftar. However, as Libya is expected to hold elections in December 2021, the U.S. policy has become ambiguous. Specifically, the U.S. has not declared its support for any of the candidates and at the same time, it calls for the withdrawal of foreign forces

16 "A New Deal and a Major Operation Show How the US Military Is Bulking up in a Tense Corner of Europe," *Insider*, (November 23, 2021), retrieved from https://www.businessinsider.com/us-greece-expand-defense-cooperation-amid-tension-with-turkey-russia-2021-11.

from Libya, including Turkey.[17] Furthermore, in September 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill on which foreign actors supporting rival factions in Libya could be sanctioned, meaning that these sanctions may include Turkey.[18] It remains to be seen how the election in Libya will play out; however, if the U.S. pursues a policy that would go in opposition with the Turkish national interest, there is a high probability that the Libya issue will move closer to the divergence zone.

While the White House has been mostly silent, Congress has not; and in several cases, it has pursued policies that would not only negatively impact the U.S.-Turkey policies but at the same time adversely impact the American national interests.

As in the case of Libya, one would expect the U.S. and Turkey to be on the same page in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict considering that Turkey supports Azerbaijan against Armenia, which is strongly supported by Russia. However, this is not the case, especially when it comes to U.S. lawmakers. In 2021, U.S. Senator Bob Menendez called for measures against Turkey's drone program considering their role in Azerbaijan's fall 2020 liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh. Mendez contended that, "Turkey's drone sales are dangerous, destabilizing and a threat to peace and human rights."[19] Furthermore, in July 2021, the House of Representatives voted in favor of an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2022 Foreign Aid Bill to limit foreign military financing and training assistance to Azerbaijan.[20] Lastly, Biden on April 24, 2021, in his statement accepted the so-called "Armenian genocide," which is considered something unacceptable for Turkey.[21] Such a statement was a break from the stance of the previous American presidents; however, one may argue that this is a strategic step taken by the Biden Administration, which is trying indirectly to give Turkey the stick. Indeed,

17 "Libya and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, (September 2, 2021), retrived from, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11556, p. 2.

18 "US Passes Bill Enabling Sanctions on Foreign Actors in Libya," *Al Jazeera*, (September 29, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/29/us-passes-bill-enabling-sanctions-on-foreign-actors-in-libya.

19 "US Senator Moves to Ban Turkish Drone Exports, Azerbaijan Aid," *Daily Sabah*, (November 5, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/us-senator-moves-to-ban-turkish-drone-exports-azerbaijan-aid.

20 "House Adopts Pallone Amendment to Protect Global Human Rights, Reign in Billion Dollar Defense Program," *Congressman Frank Pallone Jr.*, (July 20, 2021), retrieved from https://pallone.house.gov/media/press-releases/house-adopts-pallone-amendment-protect-global-human-rights-reign-billion-dollar.

21 "Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day," *The White House*, (April 24, 2021), retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/24/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-armenian-remembrance-day/.

when all of these issues are considered together, it is puzzling how the U.S. has taken steps that indirectly support and increase Russia's role in the region. It has been noticed though that while the White House has been mostly silent, Congress has not; and in several cases, it has pursued policies that would not only negatively impact the U.S.-Turkey policies but at the same time adversely impact the American national interests.

Lastly, Turkey-U.S. relations seemed to be shaken once more during the so-called ambassador crisis. On October 18, 2021, the ambassadors of the 10 countries (the U.S., Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, Norway, and New Zealand) issued a joint statement asking Turkey to comply with the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on jailed Turkish businessperson Osman Kavala, who is accused of involvement in and coordination of anti-government escalation during the Gezi incidents in the 2013 and the July 15 coup attempt. In response, President Erdoğan stated that such a statement is interference in Turkey's internal affairs and as a result raised the possibility of declaring the relevant ambassadors as *persona non grata*. The crisis got under control as the embassies took a step back by reiterating their commitment to Article 41 of the Vienna Convention. Had the crisis continued, it may have aggravated the existing tense relations between Turkey and the U.S.

PROJECTIONS FOR 2022: POTENTIAL FLASHPOINTS AND SILVER LININGS

The relation between Turkey and the U.S. continued to be very strained for most of 2021. The tensions rose off and on (as in the case of the acceptance of the so-called "Armenian genocide" by Biden, the ambassadors' crisis, or the increased U.S. support for the YPG) but there have been positive signals as well, especially during the meetings of Biden and Erdoğan in Brussels and Rome. Both leaders have reiterated their intentions to resolve the current standoff. Both of the states are now working at the institutional level to achieve possible solutions for several issues such as the S-400 and F-16s and at the same time to increase their cooperation on other issues such as Afghanistan.

With Biden finalizing his first year in the White House, it is possible to see what is going to happen in 2022. However, it should be noted that the rising opposition in the U.S. Congress against Turkey could to a large extent impede the positive steps undertaken by the governments of both states.

Before going into detail on the dynamics of the Turkey-U.S. relationship and how they will play out in 2022, it is necessary to look at the situation from a broader perspective: the current grand strategies of both states that are highly

shaped by the threat perception of both states. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Turkey and the U.S.' threat perceptions have been diverging in recent years. While Turkey is mainly focused on the threat coming from the PKK/YPG and the regional instability, the U.S. is mainly focused on the threat coming from China and Russia. However, at the same time, Turkey has focused its strategy on increasing its role in regional and global affairs. In this context, Turkey has been an important actor in the Syrian, Libyan, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Afghanistan crises, it has strengthened its relations with Ukraine, and it has increased its presence in Africa and Central Asia, among others. All these policies, directly or not, balance Russian and Chinese policies in the respective regions. Seen from such a perspective, it can be said that there are areas of cooperation for both states, and they may even increase during 2022 considering that Turkey in many cases can be a very important partner for the U.S. to maintain the balance against the U.S.' main threats, China and Russia.

Potential Flashpoints: S-400 and YPG

Reaching an agreement on the purchase of F-16s in 2022 is seen by many as a litmus test for Turkey-U.S. relations. If an agreement is not reached, it would not only mean a decoupling between the U.S. and Turkey in defense. It may also lead to a stalemate in the bilateral relations with no chance of recovery. In this case, Turkey would be left with no choice but to start negotiations with Russia for a new batch of S-400s and as mentioned before, may proceed in buying Su-35s or Su-57s from Russia, as well. However, here it is important to mention the fact that this scenario would not be beneficial for the U.S. as it means pushing Turkey, an important NATO ally, away at a time when the threat from Russia is rising considerably. Turkey, indeed, is one of the main regional actors that may help the U.S. and Europe deter Russian influence. While the "fear of losing Turkey" is considered obsolete by some experts it is enough to see what Russia is doing on its border with Europe to understand that "the fear of losing Turkey" should be reconsidered.

In contrast, reaching an agreement would propel Turkey-U.S. relations to a new level as it would open the path for more cooperation and maybe bring the status of "strategic partner" back to the table. As a result, the S-400 may cease being a thorn in the relations, allowing both Turkey and the U.S. to have more common ground to focus on.

In 2022, little may change in this regard, unless the U.S. starts acknowledging the threat that the YPG poses for Turkey's security and stops its support for the YPG. This, however, does not seem possible for the near future considering that in 2021 the U.S. has taken steps that reinforce its support for the YPG, even though Biden is aiming to end America's "forever wars" as he did

with Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it can be said that if an agreement is reached between the U.S. and Turkey about F-16s and/or if the U.S. threat perception for Russia increases, the U.S. may reconsider its foreign policy in Syria.

Latent Silver Linings: Ukraine and Afghanistan

In the past few months, attention has been directed to the developments on the Russia-Ukraine border. As a military buildup is occurring on both sides, fears of a possible Russian offensive have intensified. A second offensive in Ukraine would be another fiasco for the Western order and especially the Biden Administration. At the same time, that would pose a threat to Turkey's national interest.

It can be said that if an agreement is reached between the U.S. and Turkey about F-16s and/or if the U.S. threat perception for Russia increases, the U.S. may reconsider its foreign policy in Syria.

Turkey is one of the leading countries that has taken salient steps to show its support for Ukraine, among others, by increasing the military cooperation between both states and by selling the Bayraktar TB2 combat drones to Ukraine. Furthermore, Turkey accepted the request from the U.S. for the deployment of two warships in the Black Sea (even though the U.S. canceled the plans later).[22] As a result, Ukraine is where the interests of Turkey and the U.S. converge, and the importance of the issue will increase in 2022, providing a possible area of cooperation for the U.S. and Turkey.

Afghanistan is another topic that may bring both states closer. The U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan on August 31, 2021, leaving the country in the hands of the Taliban. While the situation in Afghanistan is very fragile and problematic, discussions have started on who will take control of Afghanistan's Kabul Hamid Karzai International Airport. Turkey, which has been present in Afghanistan for two decades, has offered its help in running Kabul Airport. Indeed, this was one of the topics discussed in the last Erdoğan-Biden meeting. Furthermore, other meetings between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu have taken place in this regard, pointing to a bright spot in the bilateral relations for 2022 if a final decision is made.

To summarize, Figure 1 charts the main dynamics of the Turkey-U.S. relations and how they may change from 2021 to 2022. On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 denoting conver-

22 "U.S. Cancels Deployment of Warships to Black Sea, Turkey Says," *Bloomberg*, (April 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-15/u-s-cancels-deployment-of-two-warships-to-black-sea.

gence and 4 denoting divergence,[23] it can be seen that most of the issues will remain in the disagreement/divergence zone including the YPG/PKK, S-400s, FETÖ, the Eastern Mediterranean, Libya, and Russia. In comparison to 2021, it can be said that the divergence level between the two states may increase in the Libya crisis, while the divergence may decline slightly in terms of Russia. As mentioned, while both Turkey and the U.S. supported the GNA, in the last months the U.S. has been opposing Turkey's military presence in Libya. Also considering the upcoming elections, Turkey's and U.S.' policies may diverge further. Turkey's relations with Russia, on the other hand, have always been criticized by the U.S., placing this issue in the diverging zone in 2021. However, as Turkey may take balancing actions against Russia in Ukraine and the Black Sea, in 2022 we may see that Turkey and the U.S.' policies move from a total divergence zone to the disagreement zone.

Crimea, Afghanistan, Iran, the F-16s, and Nagorno-Karabakh, which are mainly based in the convergence and agreement zones, are several issues that may introduce some positive agendas for the bilateral relations in 2022. In comparison to 2021, Iran may move from the disagreement to the agreement zone considering that the Biden Administration has started talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal. In this regard, negotiations with Iran may provide a positive area of cooperation for both the U.S. and Turkey.

At the same time, to better understand the scale of impact of these dynamics in the bilateral relations, these issues are placed on a scale of 1-5 in terms of the level of importance, 1 denoting not at all important to 5 denoting very important.[24] Seen from this perspective, the YPG/PKK, Russia, and the F-16s are the most important issues dominating Turkey-U.S. relations. In comparison

Figure 1: Charting Turkey-U.S. Relations for 2022

Source: Compiled by the author

23 1- Convergence, 2- Agreement, 3- Disagreement, 4- Divergence.

24 1-Not at all important, 2- Slightly important, 3- Important, 4- Fairly important, 5- Very important.

to 2021, it can be said that FETÖ and the S-400 issue, while remaining the main diverging points, may lose a little bit of importance as the focus of the bilateral relations will shift towards the F-16s and Russia's assertive policies, especially in Europe's eastern front.

With this being said, in 2022, if both sides are willing, setting a new tone based on a positive agenda would be easier than in the previous years. However, as long as the anti-Turkey perception dominates American policymaking, it is possible for the U.S. to underestimate Turkey's role and take further steps that can contradict Turkey's interests. The U.S. should reconsider "the fear of losing" Turkey at a time when the U.S. itself is fearing the loss of its hegemony.

PROSPECTS OF TURKEY-U.S. RELATIONS			
ISSUE	**U.S.**	**TURKEY**	**POTENTIAL OUTCOME**
S-400	Requests from Turkey to do away with S-400	Turkey aims to continue keeping S-400 systems within its territory	The S-400 will remain a diverging point unless both states reach an agreement on F-16s purchase.
YPG/PKK	The U.S. continues to support the YPG	The YPG will continue to be Turkey's primary threat to its national security	Both Turkey and the U.S. will continue to be opposite extremes, becoming also one of the biggest diverging points between both states.
Eastern Mediterranean	The U.S. will continue to maintain a distance in regional developments	Turkey will follow a more assertive policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in terms of energy exploration	The U.S. will stay outside of the equation as long as there is no major development. However, were Turkey to find energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean, this would result in regional turmoil, especially when considering Greece's reaction. In this case, there is a possibility that the U.S. will undertake policies that oppose Turkey's national interests.
Ukraine	The U.S. condemns Russia's policies toward Ukraine, as any possible attack on Ukraine would be a direct attack on American hegemony	Turkey supports Ukraine's territorial integrity	A Russian attack in Ukraine may be possible in 2022. This would place the U.S. and Turkey on the same page, considering that Turkey is among the few Western states that can balance Russian influence in the region.
Afghanistan	The U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, leaving the country in a state of chaos	Turkey has been open to any possible cooperation in operating Kabul Airport	An agreement will be reached between the U.S., Turkey and Qatar in terms of the operation of Kabul Airport. This development would bring the relations between Turkey and the U.S. a little closer.

TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS: DEEPENING TIES WITH DIVERSIFIED DIVERGENCIES

Mehmet Çağatay Güler

03

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. Ukraine and the related agenda have come to the fore in the 2021 Turkey-Russia relations. Earlier this year, Russia reinforced its military presence in both the Crimea and Donbas regions as well as its positions in Belarus. The possibility of military conflict raised serious concerns in NATO and its southern flank, Turkey.

2. Turkey's concern over the status of Crimea and the Tatars living within caused further tensions between Turkey and Russia. Turkey's sale of unmanned aerial vehicles to Kyiv and Ukraine's use of those drones in the field of Donbas against Russian-backed separatists complicated the bilateral relations of Turkey and Russia.

3. Russia has targeted the areas of Afrin and Idlib, which are under the Turkish-backed SNA's control. Despite bombings near the positions of the TAF, they did not cause any damage or crisis in Turkey-Russia relations.

4. A joint observation center was established in Agdam, where Turkey and Russia began monitoring the Karabakh truce. Yet, besides joint efforts, Russia, which asserted itself as the peacekeeper in Karabakh, has not been fulfilling its duties.

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the most prominent issues in Turkey-Russia relations revolve around Ukraine, Syria, Karabakh, and the Turkic world. This year, unlike the previous ones, Ukraine and the Turkic world received more attention. Concurrently, the bilateral meetings between the leaders drastically decreased. As such, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin had only one face-to-face meeting.[1] Yet, generalizations and larger takeaways about the decreasing number of meetings are misleading.[2] Vladimir Putin was and still is the person with whom President Erdoğan talked with the most over the phone. Besides, looking at the economic relations, Russia preserved its place in Turkey's top three trading partners. Overall, there has not been a change in the parameters determining the relations between the two countries. This year, the dialogue between Ankara and Moscow continued at a very high level despite the number and nature of the disputed areas. As such, the two countries managed to cooperate in certain sectors, like the defense industry and energy; therewith, ceasefire agreements, joint patrols, and diplomatic mechanisms persisted regardless of the spill-over of the disputed subjects and the confrontations in certain fields.

This year, apart from the other subjects, Ukraine has come to the fore in Turkey-Russia relations. Several factors put Ukraine at the center of the 2021 relations: The U.S. attention paid to the disputed areas of Ukraine; NATO mobility and military exercises in the Black Sea; Unusual Russian military

1 "Встреча с Президентом Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом," *Официальные сетевые ресурсы Президента России*, (September 29, 2021), retrieved November 19, 2021 from http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66800.

2 Despite the direct field confrontation in Idlib in 2020 and 34 martyrs as a result of the attacks by the Russia-backed regime forces (more than 50 martyrs in February), there was no decline in bilateral relations.

mobilizations in the Ukraine borderline; Support that is given to Kyiv by Turkey; Turkey's drone sale to Ukraine and its utilization in Donbas against Russia-backed separatists; Crimean Tatars and the growing attention attributed to them in Turkey's discourse. In addition to all these, the regional alliances, e.g. the Georgia-Ukraine-Moldova alliance,[3] and the deepening cooperation between NATO and Ukraine triggered Russia's red lines in the post-Soviet geography. Russia has responded with a military buildup in Donbas,[4] in Crimea, and along the Belarus-Ukraine border. It increased its military exercises in the Black Sea. The union state agreement between Belarus and Russia pushed harder.[5] At the same time, Belarus was allegedly encouraged to weaponize migration against Poland and the European Union as a whole.[6]

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Russia has taken coercive and preventive steps in response to NATO's actions in the Black Sea and post-Soviet space. These steps need to be carefully considered in Turkey-Russia relations not only because of Turkey's NATO member status and both countries being part of the Black Sea geography but also based on Turkey's Ukrainian policy and discourse. Regardless of the name or the magnitude of the country, third parties' foreign interferences in issues like Crimea and Donbas are interpreted as a national security threat by the Kremlin, including Turkey's actions and discourse on Ukraine. In this context, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has stated that if this discourse continues, then Moscow would pay attention to similar issues in Turkey.[7] Similar concerns were raised when Ukraine used Turkish drones in Donbas against Russia-backed separatists.[8]

3 In Russian called: Ассоциированное трио. Check out for more information, "Украина, Грузия и Молдова создали новый формат сотрудничества для совместного движения в ЕС," *Европейская правда*, (May 17, 2021), retrieved November 19, 2021, from https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2021/05/17/7123240/.

4 Mehmet Çağatay Güler, "Ukrayna-Rusya Cephe Hattında Artan Tansiyon," *Sabah*, (April 3, 2021).

5 "Лукашэнка падпісаў інтэграцыйны дэкрэт, Пуцін назіраў па відэасувязі з Севастопаля," *Радыё Свабода*, (November 4, 2021), retrieved November 19, 2021.

6 See, Lukas Kotkamp, "Russia Slams EU over Poland-Belarus Border Crisis," *Politico*, (November 10, 2021), retrieved November 19, 2021, from https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-eu-poland-belarus-border-crisis/.

7 "Брифинг официального представителя МИД России М.В.Захаровой, Москва, 21 мая 2021 года."

8 Виктория Полякова, "Зеленский объяснил удар дрона в ДНР фразой «не наступаем, а отвечаем»," *РБК*, (October 29, 2021), retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://www.rbc.ru/politics/29/10/2021/617c1a139a79470b2d41ff50.

Likewise, Turkey's fellow Turkic states and the Turkestan region received strong messages from Russia. The causal relations are almost the same. Russia, ever since the Soviet dissolution, considers the post-Soviet region its privileged sphere of influence and does not wish to see any foreign actor gain influence over it. In this context, during the Second Karabakh War and the post-war status quo, Turkey acquired a certain amount of influence over the South Caucasus and brought the Turkic world closer. Even though it was Russia who mediated the ceasefire and obtained peacekeeping missions in the field, Turkey penetrated the post-war equation, which directly clashes with Russia's national security strategy. After the Karabakh war, the Turkic world was further integrated, which was followed by the transformation of the Turkic Council into the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Turkey's active role in this integration and its growing influence from the Caucasus to Turkestan raise serious concerns in Moscow.

HISTORICAL CONTINUITY RATHER THAN ANOMALY

Without making huge generalizations and conceptualizations, it would be proper to describe the nature of Turkey-Russia relations as follows: The two countries have a history of both conflicts and cooperation. From the imperial era to the Soviet years, we see that there are patterns similar to today's geopolitical conflicts and cooperation in various aspects. Scholars often recall the nature of bilateral relations as a strategic rivalry and focus on the contemporary geopolitical clashes between the two sides. The cooperative part is often ignored and understudied. However, having geopolitical clashes or an imperial history of conflicts does not necessarily make them rivals nor does the history of cooperation make them allies. Considering the early Soviet years and even afterward, we have witnessed a long pattern of cooperation in various sectors, specifically the heavy industry. Today, this pattern, though less obvious, continues in sectors like the energy and defense industries. In this context, we see common examples like TurkStream, the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, S-400 missile defense systems, and so forth. Furthermore, the amount of bilateral trade exceeding $20 billion is worth mentioning when we talk about cooperation.

On the other hand, as in the past, the two countries are engaged in geopolitical conflicts in multiple geographies. They have been at odds in Syria, Libya, Karabakh, and Ukraine. Their interests, policies, and the supported parties are particularly clashing in all those regions; nevertheless, we see continuing cooperation in previously mentioned areas. Also, while having conflictual positions, they somehow managed to get on the same page in all

> "As for military cooperation, we have discussed it at a bilateral meeting. This is a very important issue … As far as security matters in our region are concerned, I believe that it takes joint efforts [between Turkey and Russia] to end bloodshed in Syria."
>
> **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**
> President of Turkey

those regions, except Ukraine. As such, several ceasefire agreements, joint patrols, and diplomatic mechanisms specifically established to pursue the dialogue can be regarded as indicators. A careful assessment of the Turkey-Russia relationship reveals a century-long pattern of cooperation and conflict. Certainly, there seems to be a pattern of dependency and fundamental impact from past legacies on the current course of foreign policy actions. In other words, today's relations are a reflection of historical continuity rather than an anomaly.

Even though the two countries are fighting in opposing camps in almost every region, they can meet on common ground and reach an agreement and cooperate in one way or another. The cooperation in question does not always take place on the axis of overlapping threat perception and/or common national interests; likewise, the existence of conflicts is not always dependent on conflicts of interest. Relatedly, systemic factors and the dynamics affecting the domestic politics of the two countries also play a decisive role.

PROJECTING THE FUTURE: DIVERSIFICATION OF DISPUTES WHILE STRENGTHENING THE COOPERATION

Evaluating the evolution of the current dynamics in 2022, it would be fair to argue that the disagreements and geopolitical divergencies will be diversified over the issues of Ukraine, Karabakh, and the Turkic states while preserving room for cooperation. Events in 2021 indicate that Turkey's fellow Turkic states and the Turkestan region will continue to face further disputes with Russia since Moscow considers post-Soviet geography its privileged sphere of influence. Furthermore, Turkey's rhetoric on Crimean Tatars and the stance taken against Russia on the status of Crimea, as well as its support and drone

sale to Ukraine, will most probably increase the tension between Ankara and Moscow. In addition, the deepening NATO-Russia power struggle signals that the Black Sea could top the agenda as one of the fundamental subjects the two sides may be competing over.

Moreover, Syria, specifically the Idlib region, is a ticking bomb that could detonate at any time. In the forthcoming period –short or medium term– Russia will turn up its pressure on Turkey to gain concessions either in the Syrian field or in other spheres of interaction. To this end, Russia may pressure Turkey's positions through air and ground attacks, which in the end fuel the instability, thereby causing further refugee influx toward Turkey.

> Evaluating the evolution of the current dynamics in 2022, it would be fair to argue that the disagreements and geopolitical divergencies will be diversified over the issues of Ukraine, Karabakh, and the Turkic states while preserving room for cooperation.

In the Caucasus, there seems to be neither stability nor a ceasefire in Karabakh. Despite the diplomatic efforts to achieve fait accompli, they have seen unfruitful outcomes. Armenia has already violated the truce. It shows no intentions to accept the new status quo and its loss in the war. The Armenian side has violated the ceasefire in the regions where Russians supposedly preserve peace and stability. Both Russians and Armenians instrumentalize small-scale conflicts going on at the Karabakh borderline. This brings about post-war conditions that are far from being peaceful but rather composed of obscurity, inquietude, and uncertainty. The new status-quo in Karabakh seems very fragile and may be broken down in the upcoming period, which may cause another confrontation between Turkey and Russia.

Nevertheless, considering the nature of the bilateral relations that is essentially inherited, it is fair to expect that the cooperation in the energy and defense sectors will persevere, if not deepen, despite all current and potential conflicts. The increase of the natural gas supply, the second batch of the S-400s, the interest in various Russian-made defense industry products, and so on point to such collaborations. Likewise, the bilateral trade volume, expected to increase in the upcoming years, is of crucial importance. Besides, mechanisms and efforts expended for cooperation in battlefields like Syria and Karabakh shall be upheld in the upcoming period despite the possibility of simultaneous confrontation and potential friction.

PROSPECTS OF TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN 2021			
ISSUE	**RUSSIA**	**TURKEY**	**POTENTIAL OUTCOME**
Turkic States	Power consolidation	Upholding Pivoting Strategy	Frictions
Ukraine	Red Line	Preserving Support	Reciprocal Retaliations
Idlib	A Renewed Attack	Resistance	Confrontation
Karabakh	Fortification of Power and Influence	Consolidation of its Influential Position	Frictions
Bilateral Trade	Strengthening	Strengthening	Deepening Interdependence

TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST: POST-AMERICAN REALIGNMENT

Murat Yeşiltaş

Batu Coşkun

04

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. In Al-Ula, Gulf countries agreed to "normalize" relations with the Saudi-Emirati-led embargo on Doha coming to an end.
2. The proxy conflict between Israel and Iran has intensified, and both sides have engaged in aggressive attacks.
3. Violence in Gaza and the West Bank erupted as part of increased settling activities by Israel.
4. New governments have come to power in Israel and Iran with the potential for more change in the region to follow.
5. Lebanon continues to muddle through an economic and political crisis with no end in sight.
6. President Erdoğan and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Muhammed bin Zayed met for a landmark summit in November 2021 in Ankara, which marked an end to the strained relationship between Turkey and the UAE.

INTRODUCTION

2021 continued under the guise of the new paradigm in the region: the Abraham Accords. The landmark agreement between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel to normalize relations (now including Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco) has been an important discursive element in the region's political sphere. This has been coupled with other processes of "normalization" such as the one agreed to in Al-Ula between Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. As a result of these said processes, a flurry of diplomatic activity has taken hold in the region, especially within the Gulf and between the Gulf and Israel.

These normalization processes are being closely monitored by Iran under its new government with the subsequent increase of Iranian hostilities in the region. This has also been coupled with violence in Gaza and the Palestinian territories as a result of Israel's settler agenda. The U.S., on the other hand, remains largely uninterested in the region and its conflicts, only preaching calm and restraint to allies such as Israel all the while engaging in methods to contain Iranian ambitions. The Biden Administration on whole has not prioritized the Middle East, as expected, and hence has hastened the post-American reality on the ground.

Turkey once again sits at the nexus of these developments and is developing unique foreign and security policies accordingly. Increasingly decision making in Ankara is dominated by pragmatism, consensus-seeking, and becoming friends of former adversaries. While Turkey has not abandoned security and strategic-oriented thinking, it has diversified its options.

DYNAMICS SHAPING TURKEY'S MIDDLE EAST AGENDA

Cycle of Elections

Three major elections have taken place in the region, ushering in new political forces that have caused a significant shift in domestic and regional political realities. The first of these changes took place in Israel, with Netanyahu's more than decade-long rule coming to an end. In lieu of Netanyahu's Likud, a large consensus coalition governs in Israel. This coalition is comprised of religious Zionists, former Netanyahu allies in the Israeli right, liberals, left-wing Zionists, and even representatives of Israel's Arab citizens. The current incarnation of the government is led by Israel's first religious Zionist Prime Minister to date, Naftali Bennett, who is in a power-sharing agreement with the centrist Yair Lapid.[1]

> The U.S. remains largely uninterested in the region and its conflicts, only preaching calm and restraint to allies such as Israel all the while engaging in methods to contain Iranian ambitions.

The Israeli elections have been significant for Turkey as they have created an opportunity for the Turkish government to engage with a new political force in Israel. Turkey's relationship with Netanyahu was difficult, with both sides unable to trust one another given grave mishaps in the past. Hence, the new government in Israel has provided a fresh opportunity for the possible hastening of the normalization process between the two countries. President Erdoğan and Naftali Bennett have spoken on the phone, marking a first in 13 years.

The next election was the victory of Iran's conservatives led by İbrahim Raisi. Raisi marks an end for Iran's so-called "moderate" forces –such as the likes of Rouhani– who have now been all but discarded politically. Raisi's election is being closely scrutinized in the West as well as in Turkey due to his political nature. As a "hardliner" Raisi is seen as upping the ante in Iran's regional game, emboldening Tehran's proxies and engaging in sectarian political processes.

While Raisi could become a challenge for Turkey given certain uncompromising political traits, thus far this has not been the case. President Erdoğan and President Raisi have met, and both sides have remained committed to good neighborly relations as well as cooperation on files of mutual interest, such

1 Batu Coşkun, "Israel's Precarious Post-Netanyahu Order," *Anadolu Agency*, (July 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-israel-s-precarious-post-netanyahu- order/2274623.

as counterterrorism. In this regard, it is significant that Raisi has indicated a renewed will of Tehran to combat the PKK.

The most recent elections in the region that caused a change in momentum were the parliamentary elections in Iraq. Several pundits have framed the Iraqi election result as a blow to Iranian ambitions; yet, the picture that has emerged in Baghdad is quite nuanced and exhibits several layers of change in the political levers of power. While indeed many Shia-aligned parties lost seats, the party of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Sadr Movement –both of which are seen as close to Tehran– made gains. Moreover, the election results are challenged by several political forces in the opposition thus creating an environment of tension and insecurity.

In the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, election results are also significant. The KDP emerged as the victor of the elections while the PUK –which is also close with Iran– and has been engaged with the terrorist PKK as well contests the election results. The multiplicity and contentions involved in the Iraqi elections provide a potential security risk for Turkey and hence have been followed by a heightened security understanding. The possibility of ISIS resurgence in Iraq is among these potential risks.

The fluctuation of political power in Israel, Iran, and Iraq is a key dynamic shaping Turkey's engagement with the region. Changes allow for opportunities but also open the way to crises. In this sense, 2021 has mostly provided an opportunity for engagement as far as Ankara is concerned. However, considering developments in Turkey's immediate vicinity –such as the situation in Iraq– this cycle of elections could add to the region's political turmoil.

Regional Normalization

Normalization continues to top the agenda for Turkey's engagement with the Middle East and North Africa region and beyond. This "wind of normalization" so to speak is not only emanating from Turkey but is a phenomenon that all political forces in the region have been adhering to. In this sense 2021 has seen extremely crucial steps being taken in this regard. The most recent of these steps was the rapprochement between the UAE and Turkey. After a series of telephone conversations and a visit to Ankara by the UAE's National Security Adviser, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed and President Erdoğan met for a landmark summit.

The UAE and Turkey have agreed to set aside their political differences and instead focus on economic cooperation and areas of mutual interest bound by a spirit of compromise. Indeed, the UAE was perhaps the last country that pundits expected would "normalize" relations with Turkey, yet it has come as

> "Our foreign minister and intelligence units will play an active role regarding relations with Abu Dhabi. A similar process could happen with Israel too, why not? We are in favor of living in peace and establishing regional peace .... I'd had talks with Israel in the past but Israel needs to act more sensitively regarding its regional policies on Palestine."
>
> **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**
> President of Turkey

the first. While this in part is due to Emirati pragmatism, it also shows how leaders can come to swift decisions at the top when incentivized to do so. The Erdoğan-Zayed summit in November has steered the normalization agenda of both countries with such force that the misgivings of the previous years have not become a hindrance. President Erdoğan has remarked that Turkey views all peoples of the Gulf as brothers and sisters.[2]

Similar processes continue with other countries in the region such as Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Cairo and Ankara have been involved in several mid-level political consultations and are seeking a way to salvage the relationship. Regarding Israel, the new government as mentioned above provides a new opportunity for renewed Turkish-Israeli engagement. President Erdoğan has once again expressed a desire to normalize relations with both Israel and Egypt similar to the relations with the UAE.

To that end, the detainment and subsequent release of an Israeli couple in Turkey showed the first signs of a rapprochement between Israel and Turkey. With Naftali Bennet calling Erdoğan to thank him for the cooperation of Turkish authorities, the event gave way to a new momentum in the bilateral relationship. This has signaled that Turkish and Israeli authorities are once again conversing at the highest levels with a breakthrough in relations rumored to be imminent.

While Turkey has its normalization agenda, so do other countries in the region. In this regard, several countries –headed by the UAE– have been involved in a pro-

2 Burhanettin Duran, "How Is the New Era for Turkey and UAE?" *Daily Sabah*, (November 27, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/how-is-the-new-era-for-turkey-and-uae.

cess of normalizing relations with the regime of Bashar al-Assad. This is a process that Turkey is not a party to and will not endorse. The Assad regime, viewed from Ankara, is thoroughly illegitimate, complicit in grave war crimes, and simply cannot be engaged with diplomatically as it has forfeited any claim to representing the Syrian people, a view shared by many countries in the West as well.

The New Cold War

Iran and Israel appear to be engaged in a novel cold war in the region. Both countries have engaged in destructive attacks against one another. Notably, Israel targeted key Iranian nuclear infrastructure in Natanz, and Iran in turn has retaliated by attacking an Israeli-linked vessel in the Persian Gulf. In addition, violence has erupted several times on the Israel-Lebanon border as Hezbollah operatives under the auspices of the Iranian regime have engaged in cross-border fire against the Israelis.[3]

While Turkey has no direct interest in engaging with this conflict– unlike actors like the Gulf– Ankara nevertheless remains vigilant. Turkey's position on Iran is not hostile, yet Ankara is aware and concerned about Iran's regional expansionism. Likewise, Turkey is also unlikely to be sympathetic to Israeli attempts to sabotage Iranian systems, as Ankara has opposed singling out Tehran and has instead pursued dialogue.

The confrontation between Israel and Iran, however, does force other powers in the region –such as Turkey– to engage in proactive defensive measures in an environment of heightened security. Turkey is against unilateral military interventions against Iran and continues to press for diplomacy and dialogue instead of confrontation.

PROSPECTS FOR 2022

Turkey's prospects for Middle East engagement in 2022 appear to be quite promising. First, it is clear that the process of normalization is no longer as conditional as it was in the past, rather it is becoming a pillar of Turkish foreign and security policy. This should be understood in the context of bilateral normalizations, which will undoubtedly continue to bear results in 2022. Egypt and Israel are the two most significant cases in this regard, closely followed by Saudi Arabia. Emanating from this process is the greater prospect for less crisis in 2022, with Turkish foreign policy expected to deal less with

3 Batu Coşkun, "What Is behind the Recent Clashes between Israel and Hezbollah?," *Anadolu Agency*, (August 12, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-what-is-behind-the-recent-clashes-between-israel-and-hezbollah/2332721.

bilateral problems and focus more on cooperation. It is also possible to note that new defense agreements will come to light as part of these developments as the UAE has already shown interest in procuring Turkish drones.

Ideological fatigue can be observed in the region, which has prompted this wave of normalization that Turkey is a constituent element. This can also be observed in the results of *SETA Security Radar Survey*, according to which the Middle Eastern countries are not seen as a threat by most of the responders, signifying that normalization is here to stay.

A second significant prospect for 2022 is the case of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is increasingly becoming part of the Middle East agenda. There are a series of multilateral agenda-setting events taking place in Afghanistan within the Middle Eastern framework that will undoubtedly transcend into 2022. Turkey sits at the nexus of these developments –alongside Qatar and the UAE– and hence will be part of this process in the coming year. Turkey alongside these Gulf countries will be involved in the Afghan situation via security arrangements and diplomatic endeavors.[4]

The post-American reality of the Middle East will continue to grow in 2022 as well. Biden's interactions are expected to be limited in scale and will only be regarding U.S. security rationale and campaign promises that were agreed to. In this sense, the realignment of the region will continue alongside a broader multilateral positioning by involved actors –including Turkey. These actors, such as France and the UK, both of which have taken an active interest in the region, are projecting novel foreign policy ideals into the Middle East. Turkey too is engaged in such a process, which is also coupled with the winds of normalization and compromise that are constructing this very unique mode of realignment.

PROSPECTS FOR TURKEY'S MIDDLE EAST ENGAGEMENT IN 2022

ISSUE	TURKEY	POTENTIAL OUTCOME
Cycle of Elections	Ambiguous	Continued engagement with new governments that have emerged in Iran, Israel and Iraq.
Regional Normalization	Positive	Continued drive for normalization that is no longer conditional but rather a pillar of Turkish foreign policy.
The New Cold War	Ambiguous	Continued attempts to limit the impact on Turkish interests and limited direct support to either side of the conflict.

4 Murat Yeşiltaş, "Türkiye'nin Afganistan Siyaseti Nasıl Olmalı?," *Sabah*, (August 14, 2021), retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/murat-yesiltas/2021/08/14/turkiyenin-afganistan-siyaseti-nasil-olmali.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: CHANGING PRIORITIES AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT ROUND

Ferhat Pirinççi

05

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. The tensions and rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean eased when compared to the developments in 2020.

2. Although diplomatic talks continue, no significant progress has been made in solving the issues that posed problems in the region in 2020.

3. It has been observed that the actors switched to a standby position in 2021, without changing their claims.

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Mediterranean continued to be a dominant strategic narrative and foreign policy issue in Turkey's strategic landscape in 2021. Even though the conflictual discourse was relatively diminished compared to the previous year, Turkey prioritizes the Eastern Mediterranean as its main foreign policy issue. The developments in 2021 can be categorized into four interrelated domains: the regional power struggle, the Cyprus issue, energy-related developments, and the implications of Turkey-Greece relations. Each domain cannot be evaluated without factoring in the others since the actors of each domain are almost the same and the consequences of one directly affect the others.

REGIONAL POWER STRUGGLE: A SHORT BREAK

The fundamental characteristic of the power struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean can be defined as multiple actors' visions to take part in power politics with different purposes. Although a significant number of these actors do not have a desire to be a dominant power in the Eastern Mediterranean, they have the aim of preventing another power from becoming dominant or balancing the threat they perceive from other powers. For this reason, the region witnessed a wide range of power policies, tensions, and various alliances in 2020.

Nonetheless, 2021 hosted a more moderate atmosphere in contrast to the previous year. However, the main reason for this is not that the actors have given up on their aims or claims. Instead, the factors that led to a more moderate environment in 2021 and a short break in the regional power struggle can be summarized via three main elements.

First, tensions that have the potential for escalation have become more and more costly both for Turkey and the actors competing with Turkey. Despite

these costs, the lack of the potential of a clear winner in the short term led the parties to either remove the issue from the main agenda or allow it to cool down rather than invest more energy.

The second factor is that Turkey and the actors related to its interests do not want to hold their relations hostage due to an issue based on tension. The tension on a particular issue stands as a serious obstacle to potential areas of cooperation and thus, the problems become more complex and remain far from being resolved.

> The fundamental characteristic of the power struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean can be defined as multiple actors' visions to take part in power politics with different purposes.

The third factor is related to the emergence of more urgent agendas that need to be addressed both in terms of Turkey and the actors with which it has relations. While this agenda change is equally embraced by both parties in some areas, it is possible to observe differences in approach between the parties on some issues. Yet, the possibility of new vital agendas emerging has caused the previous tensions to be set aside.

With the contribution of these factors, the consultative talks between Turkey and Greece, which have been suspended since 2016, have resumed and in 2021 three rounds of talks took place, namely, the 61st round of talks was held in January in İstanbul, the 62nd round was held in March in Athens and lastly, the 63rd round held in October in Ankara.[1]

On the other hand, in terms of relations between Turkey and Egypt, important developments were experienced in 2021. Political relations, which have been turbulent since 2013, were initially carried out behind the scenes; and later on, relations gained a diplomatic and political character through the meetings held with the participation of the deputy ministers of foreign affairs. In this context, the parties held a two-day meeting in Cairo in May 2021 and held the second round of the negotiations in Ankara in September 2021.

Additionally, meetings with France, who is an outsider to the power struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean, were also held at the presidential level at the NATO Summit in June and at the G20 in October 2021. In the conclusive statements of the two meetings, positive agendas were brought to the fore and the parties refrained from issuing accusatory statements to each other.

1 "Turkey Says Next Round of Talks with Greece to Be in Ankara on Oct. 6," *Reuters*, (October 1, 2021), retrieved October 7, 2021, from https://www.reuters.com/article/turkey-greece-idUSA4N-2LM01E.

CYPRUS ISSUE

The Cyprus problem continued to be one of the fundamental issues of Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy in 2021. The negotiations, which took place in Crans-Montana in 2017, did not lead to any progress for the Cyprus problem. The discussions for the solution, which were interrupted for four years, were held this time in Geneva on April 27-29, 2021, to find a common ground for a solution.[2]

Under the leadership of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the guarantor states of Cyprus, namely Turkey, Greece and the UK, as well as the Greek and Turkish Cypriots participated in the talks. However, the parties were unable to find a common ground for a solution.

Yet, it is important that Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) strongly voiced the two-state solution proposal for the solution of the Cyprus problem, which demonstrates that the two have a new perspective on the problem. Yet, this proposal was not accepted by Greece or the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus.

ENERGY

The developments that took place in the energy sector in 2021 were reflected in three dimensions. The first of these is the attempt by Southern Cyprus to conduct new drilling activities through energy companies in the so-called exclusive economic zone declared by Southern Cyprus in the south of the island.[3]

Related to this, the second one is that the area and other areas in question overlap with the continental shelf areas claimed by Turkey and/or the TRNC. In other words, it is the dispute over the borders of the economic exclusive zones or continental shelves.[4]

The third is more comprehensive and includes the planning of the sharing and, in particular, the transferring of hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean. This situation is closely related to the regional power strug-

2 Peter Kenny, "Turkish, Greek Cypriot Leaders, Guarantors Meet in UN-led Talks," *Anadolu Agency*, (April 28, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2021, from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkish-greek-cypriot-leaders-guarantors-meet-in-un-led-talks/2223317.

3 "Cyprus Says Will Continue East Med Gas Exploration, Rebuffs Turkey," *Reuters*, (December 3, 2021), retrieved December 5, 2021, from https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/cyprus-says-will-continue-east-med-gas-exploration-rebuffs-turkey-2021-12-03/.

4 "Nautical Geo in Block 1 of Cyprus EEZ," *Ekathimerini*, (October 22, 2021), retrieved October 25, 2021, from https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1170343/nautical-geo-in-block-1-of-cyprus-eez/.

> "We are not hesitating to protect our interests. What we are against is the double standard that is imposed on us by the use of international law as an excuse. Aren't we going to protect our rights in the Eastern Mediterranean? Are we going to accept fabricated maps?"
>
> **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**
> President of Turkey

gle and is capable of affecting the power balance in the region not only in 2021 but also in the upcoming period. The EastMed Pipeline project signed between Israel, Greece, and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus has been a subject of hot debate over its feasibility and cost and foresees the delivery of the gas to be extracted from the sea to Europe via the island of Cyprus and Greece.[5]

Despite the discussions over the realization of the project, Greece and Southern Cyprus published a NAVTEX in 2021 and sent a research vessel to the EastMed's projected route.[6] Since this route is located in the continental shelf area declared by Turkey, the ship was prevented from conducting unauthorized research on the Turkish continental shelf.

TURKEY-GREECE RELATIONS

According to the *SETA Security Radar Survey*, Greece is considered the sixth largest threat for Turkey in 2021 and is expected to become fifth for 2022. However, compared to the tensions experienced in 2020, the Eastern Mediterranean dimension of Turkey-Greece relations saw a relatively moderate period in 2021. The reason for the change in atmosphere is largely related to the revision in Greece's tactical moves.

5 See, Elena Sanchez Nicolas, "Controversial EastMed Pipeline Not Necessary, Report Warns," (November 3, 2020), retrieved March 11, 2021, from https://euobserver.com/green-deal/149929. The distribution of the gas through Greece bypassing the island of Cyprus is also discussed in the project. "Athens and Cairo Mull Changing the Route of EastMed Pipeline," *Euractiv*, (March 4, 2021), retrieved November 25, 2021, from https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/athens-and-cairo-mull-changing-the-route-of-eastmed-pipeline/.

6 "Cyprus Sends Vessel for Exploration in Eastern Mediterranean," *Greek City Times*, retrieved November 20, 2021, from https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/11/23/cyprus-sends-vessel-drilling-eastern-medditerian/.

Specifically, Greece aggressively put the Eastern Mediterranean dimension of bilateral relations on the agenda in 2020, but despite all the moves it made, it could not gain an advantageous position against Turkey. As a result, Greece continued consultative talks with Turkey in 2021 but at the same time took steps to be more prepared for the future in the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2021, Greece made two important moves that also concerned the Eastern Mediterranean.

The first was the defense pact signed with France in September. In the context of the pact, France signed a deal consisting of the sale of three warships worth about €3 billion and an additional six Rafale fighter jets. This deal will inevitably have an impact on the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean when considered alongside Greece's previous Rafale fighter jet purchases from France.

Greece aggressively put the Eastern Mediterranean dimension of bilateral relations on the agenda in 2020, but despite all the moves it made, it could not gain an advantageous position against Turkey. As a result, Greece continued consultative talks with Turkey in 2021 but at the same time took steps to be more prepared for the future in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On the other hand, apart from the statements and arms sales, the most prominent point in the Greece-France pact was the second article, which states: "If the territory of one of the two states is occupied, the other will provide all kinds of military support, including sending military forces."[7] However, it is disputable that the *casus foederis* situation that crowns the deterrence of the military alliances is achievable and will have an impact in real life, and also whether it will cover the Greek claims in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The second move was the extension of the U.S.-Greece Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement on October 14, 2021.[8] The agreement was originally signed in 1990 and was extended periodically thereafter. However, by 2021, it was extended indefinitely, which lends symbolic support to Greece's stance in its defense policy. In 2020, after the setback of Greece during the confrontation with Turkey, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece sought to intensify its alliance with the United States. As a result, the U.S. commenced

7 Anna Wichmann, "The Entire France-Greece Defense and Security Agreement," *Greek Reporter*, (September 28, 2021), retrieved September 30, 2021, from https://greekreporter.com/2021/09/28/the-entire-france-greece-defense-and-security-agreement/.

8 "Greece, US to Sign Extension of Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement," *Ekathimerini*, (October 14, 2021), retrieved October 24, 2021, from https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1169786/greece-us-to-sign-extension-of-mutual-defense-cooperation-agreement/.

a military buildup in 2021 in line with its bilateral agreements with Greece as never before, and this situation, indeed, disturbed Turkey.

NO CHANGE IN TURKEY'S OBJECTIVES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

In 2021, Turkey has not given up on its goals expressed in the previous period in the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet, due to the influence of the factors mentioned above, it has increased the channels of communication and dialogue in its relations with Greece and other actors. With the similar attitude demonstrated by the others, 2021 has been relatively moderate in the region. In this context, while the consultative talks with Greece were ongoing, Turkey strongly called on the parties to agree on the two-state proposal for the solution of the Cyprus problem and held meetings with actors such as France, Egypt, Israel, and the UAE that included positive agendas in different fields.

On the other hand, Turkey's tactical and strategic goals in the Eastern Mediterranean and the tools it uses to achieve these goals proceed in the same way. On the tactical level, Turkey's aim is the rejection of the maritime limitation envisaged by Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration, and ensuring that all the involved parties recognize a sea border suitable for the declared Turkish continental shelf. Whereas on the strategic level, Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy aims to prevent any attempt by any country, whether it is a regional or global power, to restrict Turkey's increasing influence in the region, narrow its maneuverability, and besiege or contain the country within its Anatolian shores.[9]

HOW WILL THE DYNAMICS EVOLVE IN 2022?

The relatively low-density tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2021 are expected to increase their impact in 2022. It is thought that the areas where tensions are likely to increase will largely originate from Southern Cyprus and Greece. Possible tensions are likely to occur on the borders of economic exclusive zones or in energy fields.

While Athens continues its diplomatic talks with Ankara, it is also preparing for a new confrontation with Turkey either in the Aegean Sea or the Eastern Mediterranean. In this phase, Greece may test Turkey's limits and reactions

9 Ferhat Pirinççi, *Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Policy: A Geopolitical Assessment,* (İstanbul: SETA Publications, 2021), pp. 25-33.

from time to time in 2022. Moreover, when Greece feels prepared to take steps, it is expected Athens will coordinate with Southern Cyprus on more decisive actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. While embodying these attempts, it will try to benefit from the actors with which it cooperates and the EU.

Therewith, the emergence of a broad anti-Turkey block will be unlikely, contrary to the situation two years ago, because the talks Turkey pursues with the influential actors on the opposite front, including the agendas extending beyond the Eastern Mediterranean, will inevitably contribute to Turkey's power struggle in the region. In addition, due to the possible high cost of no reaction or inactivity, Turkey will likely react to possible tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

PROSPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

ISSUE	GREECE AND SOUTHERN CYPRUS	TURKEY	POTENTIAL OUTCOME
Regional Power Struggle	Efforts to prompt an anti-Turkey bloc	Assertive policy	Less comprehensive and influential bloc than 2020
EEZ and Continental Shelf	Issuing new licenses and attempts for seismic research and drilling	Deterring the attempts and sending vessels to Turkish and TRNC EEZ	Rise in the tensions and escalation
Cyprus Issue	Exclusion of TRNC and abolishing Turkey's guarantee	Insisting on a two-state solution	Maintenance of status quo
Energy	Intensifying efforts for the realization of the EastMed project	Calls for cooperation with other parties and convince to re-formulate the route	Low level of escalation

KARABAKH

FROM CONFLICT TO RESOLUTION

EDITORS
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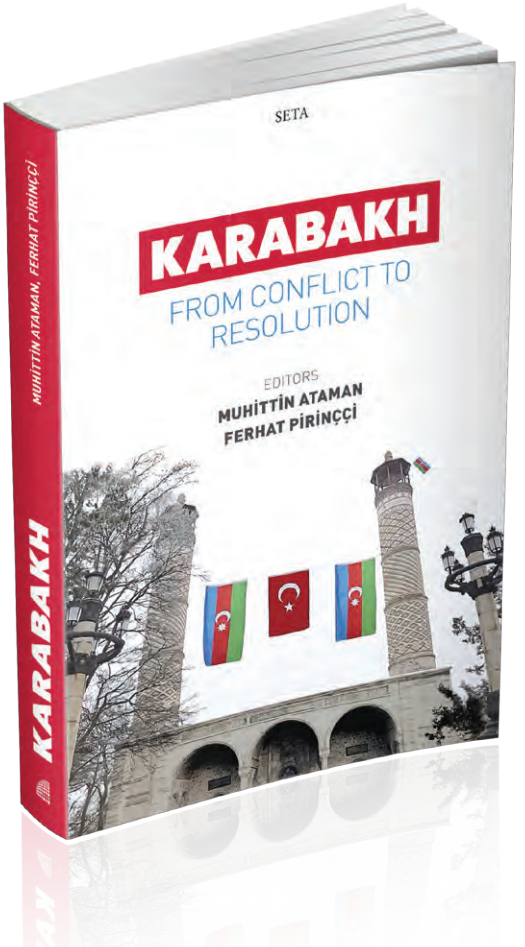

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SETA

SYRIA:
WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2022?

Ömer Özkızılcık

06

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. Despite the ceasefire agreement that was signed between Turkey and Russia, regime forces and Russia intensified their bombardments on Idlib.

2. The YPG's terrorist attacks continued in Syria's north with car bomb attacks, artillery shelling, and clashes. The response of Turkey and the Syrian Interim Government mainly involved the elimination of the threat and taking security measures

3. Normalization efforts with the Assad regime saw progress in the region.

INTRODUCTION[1]

The year 2021, regarding Syria, can be divided into two phases. The first one includes the first half of the year, which coincides with the period until the presidential elections in Syria, and the second phase starts after the presidential elections. During the first phase, the fate of regions such as Idlib and Hama was on the agenda while during the second phase international mobility was more prevalent and the legitimacy of the Assad regime was on the agenda. However, the two topics compromised the whole year. While the first issue was the Syrian economic situation that was getting even worse every month, the second issue was the normalization efforts with the Assad regime,[2] the U.S. policies in Syria,[3] the YPG car bomb attacks,[4] and the possibility of a new Turkish-Syrian military operation against the YPG.[5]

In terms of military escalation and ground dynamics, the situation in Syria in the first three months of 2021 mirrored 2020. The Idlib front, where the regime and the Russian forces were against the Turkish forces, was tense. Despite the ceasefire agreement that was signed between Turkey and Russia, the

1 The author would like to thank Lüceyn Alravi for his contribution to the chapter.

2 Servet Gunerigok, "US Senator Slams Countries Normalizing Ties with Syria's Assad," *Anadolu Agency*, (November 11, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-senator-slams-countries-normalizing-ties-with-syrias-assad/2416465.

3 Ömer Özkızılcık, "What Does CENTCOM Gain by Helping Russia in Syria?" *TRT World*, (November 3, 2021), retrieved from https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/what-does-centcom-gain-by-helping-russia-in-syria-51302.

4 Behlül Çetinkaya and Muhammet Tarhan, "YPG/PKK Terror Group Aims to Create Chaos, Disorder in Syria with Car Bomb Attacks: Report," *Anadolu Agency*, (October 28, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ypg-pkk-terror-group-aims-to-create-chaos-disorder-in-syria-with-car-bomb-attacks-report/2406129.

5 "Syrian Opposition Forces Prepare for Possible Turkish Op in Syria," *Daily Sabah*, (November 4, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/syrian-opposition-forces-prepare-for-possible-turkish-op-in-syria.

regime forces and Russia intensified their bombardments on Idlib.[6] The Assad regime was able to take Idlib under its control with the help of Russia at the beginning of 2020.[7] As a result, the liberated areas of the Idlib Governorate remained hot spots of confrontation in Syria and the only front open to all kinds of possibilities. In return, the Turkish Ministry of National Defense sent commandos to the city of Ras Al-Ayn in the Governorate of Haseka and established two military points in the strategically located town of Qastoun in Hama.[8]

> In terms of military escalation and ground dynamics, the situation in Syria in the first three months of 2021 mirrored 2020.

During the second phase, the regime and the Russian forces turned their attention to the Deraa Governorate, where the Syrian civil war started.[9] Due to the escalating situation, Jordan postponed the opening of its borders.[10] After the regime "resolved" the situation in Deraa, the regime and Russia turned to the north and engaged in active military escalation. Russia increased its number of airstrikes. However, the Putin-Erdoğan summit in September halted the escalation.[11] Another important aspect of the second phase of the year was the insistence of Russia on vetoing the decision to allow the entry of cross-border humanitarian aid into the liberated areas of Syria without the consent of the Assad regime. Only after immense diplomatic negotiations and explicit conditions did Russia agree to extend the cross-border aid program.[12]

6 Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Russia Escalates Strikes in Northwest Syria, Turkey Sends Reinforcements Ahead of Summit," *Reuters*, (September 26, 2021), retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/russia-escalates-strikes-northwest-syria-turkey-sends-reinforcements-ahead-2021-09-26/.

7 Ahmet Karaahmet and Burak Karacaoğlu, "Syrian Regime, Allies Kill 66 Civilians in Past 45 Days," *Anadolu Agency*, (July 26, 2020), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syrian-regime-allies-kill-66-civilians-in-past-45-days/2314473.

8 "تقرير الوضع السوري: كانون الثاني\يناير 2021," *Idrak Report*, (2021).

9 "Syria Regime and Russian Flags Fly in Destroyed Daraa after Truce Deal," *Euronews*, (September 12, 2021), retrieved from https://www.euronews.com/2021/09/12/syria-regime-and-russian-flags-fly-in-destroyed-daraa-after-truce-deal.

10 "Concern in Jordan over Presece of Iran Militias near Northern Border," *The Arab Weekly*, (August 18, 2021), retrieved from https://thearabweekly.com/concern-jordan-over-presence-iran-militias-near-northern-borders.

11 Anton Mardasov, "Putin, Erdogan Hold Closed-Door Summit in Sochi," *Al-Monitor*, (September 29, 2021), retrieved from https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/09/putin-erdogan-hold-closed-door-summit-sochi.

12 Mehmet Burak Karacaoğlu and Ahmet Karaahmet, "NGO's in Syria Oppose Russia's Attempt to Block Aid," *Anadolu Agency*, (June 24, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ngos-in-syria-oppose-russias-attempt-to-block-aid/2283628.

DYNAMICS IMPACTING TURKEY'S SYRIA STRATEGY

Normalization Efforts with the Assad Regime

The uncertainty of the Biden Administration's Syria policy and its opposition to diplomatic engagement with the Assad regime will continue to be a strong dynamic of the entire Syrian file and normalization efforts with the Assad regime. While the U.S. Senate formulated the CAATSA law and other forms of sanctions against the Assad regime, the Biden Administration seems to be willing to provide waivers and exempt states from them. Most importantly, the discussions around the waiver from the Biden Administration for the Arab Natural Gas Project were seen as an American green light to the normalization efforts.[13] The weaker position of the Biden Administration in relation to the previous American administration appears to be a facilitating factor for states to increase their engagement with the Assad regime. The decision of Interpol to allow the Assad regime to rejoin its network,[14] the United Arab Emirates's (UAE) diplomatic outreach and economic deals with the Assad regime,[15] as well as Jordan's increasing normalization[16] were key drivers of the ongoing efforts to normalize the Assad regime.

Turkish-Russian Negotiations and the Russian Protection of the YPG

One of the most important dynamics that shape Turkey's policy in Syria is the military activities of Russia against the opposition groups in Idlib and its engagement with the YPG, which ultimately undermine the Turkish-Russian "understanding" regarding Syria. Russia seemingly used its air superiority in Idlib as leverage against Turkey by targeting Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps and creating a new mass migration wave toward Turkey.[17] Moreover,

13 Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Lebanon to Get Egyptian Gas via Syria in Plan to Ease Crisis," *Reuters*, (September 8, 2021), retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/egypt-says-it-hopes-export-gas-supply-lebanon-with-power-soon-2021-09-08/.

14 Bethan McKernan, "Interpol Faces Criticism for Allowing Syria to Rejoin Its Network," *The Guardian*, (October 5, 2021), retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/05/interpol-faces-criticism-allowing-syria-rejoin-network.

15 "Emirati Normalization with the Syrian Regime: Motives and Implications," *The Doha Institute*, (November 16, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/UAE-Normalisation-with-the-Assad-Regime-in-Syria.aspx.

16 Victoria Silva Sánchez, "Normalization with Syria 'a Breakthrough' for Jordan's Regional Role," *Amwaj*, (November 10, 2021), retrieved from https://amwaj.media/article/normalisation-with-assad-how-it-impacts-jordan-s-ties-with-ksa-and-the-uae.

17 "Turkey Fears Another Syrian Refugee Crisis as Damascus Ramps up Attacks Against Idlib," *RFI*, (October 27, 2021), retrieved from https://www.rfi.fr/en/podcasts/international-report/20211027-turkey-fears-another-syrian-refugee-crisis-as-damascus-ramps-up-attacks-against-idlib.

> "As Turkey, we take our part in the agreements [made with the United States and Russia regarding northern Syria] seriously and implement them carefully. We fulfill our responsibilities there. Likewise, we do what we have to do within the framework of international law, in good neighborly relations in the Aegean, Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus. We are committed to peace and dialogue. We are in favor of talking and meeting. On the other hand, we said that we will not allow any fait accompli, and we continue to say it. We are determined and capable of this."
>
> **Hulusi Akar**
> Minister of National Defense of Turkey

Russia increased its air activity in response to Ankara's drone sale to Poland, which was seen as an export of the Turkish model in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh on how to limit Russia without the aid of the U.S.[18] Russia also increased its airstrikes against the areas of the Syrian Interim Government and targeted the Syrian National Army as well as oil markets, oil refineries and infrastructure.[19] The renewed escalation calmed after a summit between Erdoğan and Putin. However, Russia has not fulfilled its obligations regarding the YPG presence in Tal Rifaat, Manbij, and the 30-kilometer-deep strip east of the Euphrates. On the contrary, Russia increased its military protection and aid to the YPG.[20] The YPG conducted 48 car bomb attacks in the first 10 months of 2021 and engaged in attacks against Turkish soldiers; thus, the Turkish Foreign Minister accused the U.S. and Russia alike of their support of the YPG.[21]

18 Thomas Newdick, "Russian Su-35 Fighters Appear for the First Time at Northeastern Syria Airbase: Reports," *The Drive*, (October 28, 2021), retrieved from https://www.thedrive.com/the-warzone/42916/russian-su-35-fighters-appear-for-the-first-time-at-northeastern-syria-airbase-reports.

19 Seth J. Frantzman, "Ballistic Missiles Target North Syria Oil Facilities in Rare Attack," *The Jerusalem Post*, (March 6, 2021), retrieved from https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/in-rare-attack-ballistic-missiles-target-oil-facilities-in-n-syria-661130.

20 "US, Russia Did Not Keep Promises on YPG Withdrawal: FM Çavuşoğlu," *Daily Sabah*, (October 28, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/us-russia-did-not-keep-promises-on-ypg-withdrawal-fm-cavusoglu.

21 "US, Russia Bear Responsibility in Recent YPG Attacks: FM Çavuşoğlu," *Daily Sabah*, (October 13, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/us-russia-bear-responsibility-in-recent-ypg-attacks-fm-cavusoglu.

CENTCOM's Aid to Russia

Another major dynamic in Syria is the behavior of CENTCOM officials vis-à-vis Russia within the context of limiting Turkey and the Syrian Interim Government. In 2019, CENTCOM handed over an American base to Russia to prevent the further incursion of the Turkish Armed Forces and the Syrian National Army. In 2021, after the increasing rhetoric and preparations by Turkey and the Syrian Interim Government, CENTCOM opened the airspace for Russia. For the first time since the American-Russian partition of air-control, Russian fighter jets entered east Syria and conducted military exercises to prevent a new Syrian-Turkish military operation against the YPG. This move by CENTCOM strengthened the Russian power projection capacity in Syria and provided Russia with leverage in the Turkish-Russian negotiations. In contrast to the past, Turkey has to calculate a Russian air presence east of the Euphrates where the Russian S-400 air defense systems' range is limited.

In contrast to the past, Turkey has to calculate a Russian air presence east of the Euphrates where the Russian S-400 air defense systems' range is limited.

HOW WILL THE CURRENT DYNAMICS EVOLVE IN 2022?

Continued Normalization of the Assad Regime

If the UAE is followed by other Arab states and if the Arab Union invites the Assad regime back as the representative of Syria, the prospects for a political solution in Syria will be even direr. Therefore, the Turkish efforts within the Astana process and the constitutional committee to help Syria onto a path of a political resolution in line with UN Resolution 2254 will be hindered by an even more unwilling Assad regime. Furthermore, these new normalization efforts might affect the readiness of the Assad regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, to enforce a military solution for the conflict. Even though Turkey is highly skeptical about the prospects and motivations of the normalization efforts with the Assad regime, the Turkish possible course of action in such a scenario might be to wait and see how the developments unravel. If it evolves in the above-said direction, Turkey might use diplomacy to prevent the normalization of the Assad regime and military might to prevent a military solution to the conflict.

Turkish-Russian Deal

In the face of the new Turkish-Russian relations, the dynamics regarding Syria are more complicated than ever before. Moscow may continue to use Syria as leverage against Turkey to prevent Turkey from further increasing ties with the states in the post-Soviet area. The strategic shift of the U.S. toward the Indo-Pacific region may be seen as a window of opportunity by Russia to increase its pressure on Turkey, especially on Idlib and the presence of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Russia may try to push for Turkish political concessions in its role as the guarantor power of the Syrian opposition. The huge population density in Idlib, in particular, might be exploited by Russia to start a migration wave toward Turkey. On the other side, one may expect Turkey to pressure Russia on the YPG situation in Syria and its ongoing terrorist activities targeting the Syrian people as well as its attacks against Turkish forces. Therefore, it could be expected that this duality in Syria will result in a deal, but the overall aspects of the Turkish-Russian relations and possible new developments in Ukraine and the Turkic world can change the prospects in Syria. A change in the broader relations would require both nations to re-calculate the balance in their complex relations. Syria will likely not be the trendsetter in the relations, but its fate will depend on them.

YPG's Ongoing Attacks against Syrians to Require a Military Response

Based on the Russian military protection and the American support of the YPG, it is expected that the YPG will continue to engage in terrorist activities in the form of car bomb attacks. The primary target of the YPG's bomb attacks are civilians and its main goal is to create chaos and disorder.[22] Therefore, the Syrian Interim Government and the Turkish government can't ignore these attacks. It's likely that Turkey will continue with its precise drone strikes against PKK/YPG leaders in Syria and Iraq.[23] Moreover, military actions in the form of targeting the YPG positions outside of the front line in Syria will remain on the table. Alongside this option, depending on the Turkish-Russian relations and the possible deal elaborated above, the Syrian National Army and the Turkish Armed Forces might be forced to conduct a new military operation.[24]

22 Ömer Özkızılcık and Kutluhan Görücü, *The Logic of YPG Car Bomb Attacks in Syria: A Strategy of Chaos and Disorder*, (Ankara: SETA Publications, 2021).

23 Sirwan Kajjo, "Reported Turkish Drone Attacks over Syria Raise Kurdish Concerns," *Voice of America*, (August 24, 2021), retrieved from https://www.voanews.com/a/europe_reported-turkish-drone-attacks-over-syria-raise-kurdish-concerns/6209939.html.

24 Ömer Özkızılcık, "A New Turkish-Syrian Operation Is Inevitable," *TRT World*, (October 19, 2021), retrieved from https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/a-new-turkish-syrian-operation-is-inevitable-50876.

American Policies in Syria

The current status quo in Syria is maintained between Turkey, Russia, and the U.S. A possible change in the U.S. policies or the continuation of the current U.S. policies may change the balance of power and thus break the stalemate. American policies in Syria have a strong discrepancy between the political cadres and CENTCOM. The political elite does not have much interest in Syria at all or does not have a formulated policy except to preserve the status quo and their miss-fixation on sanctions as the central policy rather than a supporting tool within a formulated policy. CENTCOM, on the other hand, has impersonated their client, the YPG, and either act in the interest of their client rather than the U.S. or act based on their personal career goals. If the current situation continues wherein CENTCOM provides Russia with incentives just to protect the YPG, Russia will not only strengthen its position in Syria but also may take significant steps toward a Russian-American agreement that foresees the re-normalization of the Assad regime. However, if the U.S. policymakers formulate a Syria policy to ensure a political transition in line with UN Resolution 2254, abandons the YPG to work with Turkey and the legitimate Syrian opposition, and incorporates the Roj Peshmerga, the U.S. can still become kingmaker in Syria without abandoning the Syrian Kurds.

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PROSPECT FOR 2022			
ISSUE	**DYNAMIC**	**LIKELIHOOD**	**POTENTIAL OUTCOME**
Normalization Efforts with the Assad Regime	UAE-led efforts to normalize the Assad regime and U.S. reluctance	Uncertain, dependent variable	Depending on American policies; end of the constitutional committee and the political process in line with U.N. resolution 2254 as well as encouragement for a military solution in Syria
Turkish-Russian Deal	Turkish-Russian relations in Syria are affected by international developments and other theaters of Turkish-Russian engagement	Likely, dependent variable	Depending on developments in Ukraine and elsewhere and American policies in Syria, a new Turkish-Russian deal might address the duality regarding the presence of the HTS in Idlib and the YPG in northeast Syria.
New Military Operation against the YPG	YPG terrorist attacks create chaos and disorder coupled with the Russian military protection and the U.S. support	Likely, dependent variable	Depending on the presence and attacks of the YPG as well as the Turkish-Russian deal, a new military operation by the Syrian National Army and the Turkish Armed Forces might occur.
American Policies in Syria	Autonomous policies by CENTCOM facilitating Russia amid disinterest in political elites in formulating a Syrian policy	Uncertain, independent variable	If the status quo in American policies continues, Russia will gain further influence and a military solution in Syria will become more likely. If the U.S. changes its policy to cooperate with Turkey and abandons the YPG without abandoning the Kurds, the U.S. can still become kingmaker in Syria.

LIBYA: A NEW GEOPOLITICAL FRONT FOR TURKEY

Bilgehan Öztürk

07

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. On April 12, Prime Minister Dbeibah visited Ankara with 14 ministers in his cabinet within the framework of the Turkish-Libyan High-level Strategic Cooperation Council and signed five agreements with Turkey.

2. On June 13, a High-level Turkish delegation involving Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu, Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar, Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu, Communications Director Fahrettin Altun, and Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın visited Tripoli and met with Libyan officials.

3. Prime Minister Dbeibah visited Turkey and met with President Erdoğan at least three times in both official and unannounced visits, apart from those that involved delegations.

INTRODUCTION

Libya was elevated from being simply a North African country to the center of a fierce geopolitical struggle in 2019. So much so that Libya topped the foreign policy and national security agendas of many regional and global actors, such as Russia, France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in 2021. The UN-led process fell short of eradicating the existing fault lines and structural problems facing Libya, which gave way to a series of spoiling and sabotaging for both Libyan and external actors. The dynamics that are driving the crisis in Libya have yet to be addressed, which makes it an ongoing source of concern for Libyans, the international community, and actors that have a stake in the country.

It is not possible to discuss any development or dynamic in Libya since late 2019 without referencing Turkey. Ankara ramped up its tangible support to the then-legitimate government in Tripoli, the Government of National Accord (GNA), based on its security and maritime agreements with the GNA in the face of Khalifa Haftar's attack on Tripoli. Turkey's active support for the GNA was what ensured the balance of military power on the ground, which forced Haftar into a ceasefire first and paved the way for a UN-led international effort to launch a political process to solve the crisis.

MAIN DYNAMICS

Several intertwined dynamics have determined the trajectory of Libya as a country and its relations with Turkey. The de facto division of Libya roughly between two competing power centers is one of the main dynamics of the ongoing power struggle and crisis. The fact that Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity (GNU), was

prevented by Khalifa Haftar first from visiting Benghazi[1] in the east and then Ghat[2] in the southwest demonstrates the extent of division and entrenchment among different power centers in the country. Because of Haftar's military rule in the Barqa region in the east and dominance in the Fezzan region in the south, the GNU has not been able to extend its authority beyond the Tripolitania region, located in northwest Libya, despite its international recognition and legitimacy. This geographic and political division also applies to highly significant sectors such as the military, security, and economy. Haftar does not recognize Dbeibah's acting Minister of Defense title or the Presidential Council's (PC) authority over the Libyan Armed Forces, and his armed groups both in Barqa and Fezzan dominate the security domain as the elements of his self-styled "Libyan National Army" (LNA). Likewise, the fact that the Libyan Central Bank's (CBL) eastern branch in al-Bayda has been operating as a parallel and autonomous institution from the CBL in Tripoli epitomizes the deeply divided nature of the Libyan economy.

> The dynamics that are driving the crisis in Libya have yet to be addressed, which makes it an ongoing source of concern for Libyans, the international community, and actors that have a stake in the country.

Libya's division is also a source of concern for Turkey as it consistently recognizes and sides only with the legitimate authorities in Tripoli, which have been prevented from extending their authority to Barqa and Fezzan. The limited nature of Tripoli becomes a soft spot in cases such as the oil blockade imposed by Haftar in 2019-2020, which deprived Libya of oil revenues as the main lifeline of the country.[3] Since the bulk of oil terminals are in Barqa, Tripoli was not capable of forcibly lifting the oil blockade on its own, which makes it susceptible to future arbitrary oil blockades as a destabilizing force.

This dynamic poses the risk of keeping Tripoli in a precarious situation with regards to not only oil revenues but also wider political capacity. As Libya is a rentier state, which almost solely depends on oil revenues, oil is more than an economic good, it determines the state capacity, too. This, in return, threatens the health of ties between Tripoli and its international partners, as the former

1 "Libya PM Calls off Benghazi Visit after Security Turned Back," *AP News*, (April 26, 2021), from https://apnews.com/article/business-africa-middle-east-libya-khalifa-hifter-0e7eb1d3d4c2db59ffe4a-81da02c1f4e.

2 "Haftar's Forces Block PM Dbeibah's Visit to Libya's Ghat," *Daily Sabah*, (October 13, 2021), from https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/haftars-forces-block-pm-dbeibahs-visit-to-libyas-ghat.

3 "Haftar Announces Conditional Lifting of Libya Oil Blockade," *Al Jazeera*, (September 18, 2020), from https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2020/9/18/haftar-announces-conditional-lifting-of-libya-oil-blockade.

–for the time being– lacks the quality of a fully dependable state capacity and is highly susceptible to destabilizing forces from Barqa and might fail to pay for foreign investments. Turkey already experienced a loss of $16 billion in contracts due to the eruption of the civil war in 2014.[4]

The division is also both a reason and a result of another fundamental dynamic in Libya: large-scale external interference that mirrors the "chicken and egg problem." The constant power struggle among Libyan actors across roughly the east-west divide as well as intra-camp struggles compounded by regional and international sponsorship are entrenching every actor's position within Libya. This makes compromise and convergence among Libyan actors highly difficult. The state of competition, rivalry, and even animosity requires and invites further foreign support for each actor to beat their rivals or foes within Libya, which inflames the ongoing power struggles. This dynamic also works in the opposite direction: any rapprochement or alignment among Libyan actors usually occurs with the blessing of the foreign patrons of each actor. However, this does not necessarily mean that Libyan actors are mere proxies of their foreign patrons since they court multiple foreign actors simultaneously for their own clout and agency. Still, this makes external actors and their agendas an indispensable variable in determining the behavior of Libyan actors. Furthermore, there is another dimension to external interference in the sense that major international actors, both individual states and international organizations, enjoy a vast area of maneuvering in dominating Libya's political and diplomatic agenda and orientation. The contemporary framework for the solution of the Libyan crisis, the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) emerged as an UN-tailored initiative supported by major Western powers. The LPDF is not a grassroots or a bottom-up Libyan creation; however, it bred both the PC and the GNU, and it was even assigned the task of creating the constitutional basis for the elections.[5]

This fact also puts pressure on Turkey in its dealings with Libya. Although Dbeibah emphasized once he became PM that agreements with Turkey would be protected and they are also in the interest of Libya,[6] Tripoli actors have been

4 "Ankara Looks to Sign Deal with Tripoli to Recuperate Contracting Losses," *Daily Sabah*, (January 10, 2020), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2020/01/10/ankara-looks-to-sign-deal-with-tripoli-to-recuperate-contracting-losses.

5 "LPDF Bridging Proposals Committee Concludes Its Deliberations on a Proposal of the Constitutional Basis for the Elections," *UNSMIL*, (August 3, 2021), retrieved from https://unsmil.unmissions.org/lpdf-bridging-proposals-committee-concludes-its-deliberations-proposal-constitutional-basis.

6 Muhammad Artimah, "Agreement with Turkey in Interest of Libya: Dbeibah," *Anadolu Agency*, (March 9, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/agreement-with-turkey-in-interest-of-libya-dbeibah/2170232.

> "Turkey's intervention changed the (negative) course of events and brought a balance to the conflict ... We want to see a united Libyan army. As Turkey, we are always ready to help towards this goal ... We are there as part of an agreement with the Libyan government to ensure security and create a united army."
>
> **İbrahim Kalın**
> Turkey's Presidential Spokesperson

under heavy pressure from major Western powers to take a position against the Turkish military presence and eventually ask Turkey to leave Libya. This is evident in the change of wording in every single press statement involving the UN, U.S., the UK, France, Germany, Italy, etc. on the necessity of the withdrawal of "mercenaries and foreign fighters" to "foreign forces"[7] with a clear reference to the Turkish military presence in Libya.

The question of authority in Libya is at the core of the ongoing crisis. The state does not exist in the form of comparable cases in North Africa such as Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, or even Egypt. This is due to both the state's –whatever state that was– collapse during and after the 2011 revolution and the Gadhafi legacy of "de-institutionalization" of the state. The proliferation of armed formations and operations rooms first to fight Gadhafi then ISIS and Ansar al-Sharia granted huge clout to armed groups in the form of weapons, funds, and foreign relations of their own. The role and importance of certain armed groups to stem the flow of irregular migrants to Europe gained them generous support from European countries and most of the time the European Union (EU), which in return empowered them further. Certain portions of some armed groups enjoy official mandate thanks to previous attempts of security sector reform in Libya, which resulted in a very mixed structure. Armed groups enjoy resources thanks to officeholders and in return, officeholders or political contenders are bolstered by those armed groups in their political struggle or agenda in a symbiotic relationship. Likewise, certain armed groups are directly funded by foreign coun-

7 "UN Security Council Calls for Withdrawal of Foreign Troops, Mercenaries," *France 24*, (March 13, 2021), retrieved from https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210313-un-security-council-calls-for-withdrawal-of-foreign-troops-mercenaries-from-libya.

tries to pursue their foreign patrons' agenda in Libya. Even the sole example from the security sector of the state indicates how far Libya is from having a proper state.

As an actor who believes and invests in the building of a proper professional Libyan army, the primacy of armed groups poses a challenge to Turkey's efforts, since entrenched armed groups are not willing to give up their sway and privileges for the sake of creating a proper national army.

The lack of adequate or substantial legitimacy of existing actors and institutions undermines the prospects of sustainable peace and solution. Haftar is a self-styled coup plotter who rules a considerable part of Libya under a security apparatus. Aguila Saleh enjoys the office of speaker of the Libyan Parliament, the House of Representatives (HoR) thanks to a funny number of votes he received from his tiny hometown, al-Qubah, in 2014. Even the members of the HoR are not regarded as true representatives of the people. On the other hand, neither the PC nor the GNU is elected, but interim authorities. The LPDF is not better in terms of its popular legitimacy as it was handpicked by the UNSMIL rather than the Libyan people.

> Since the dynamics of division and external intervention are likely to also be around in 2022, their negative impact on the question of authority will endure. Neither the atmosphere of conflict nor a prolonged period of brinkmanship will allow for ameliorating problems around the authority since the latter feeds on the former.

HOW WILL THE MAIN DYNAMICS EVOLVE IN 2022?

The main dynamics defining Libya as it is now will continue to define it in 2022 to a great extent. First, the division in Libya will not be overcome with the existing LPDF framework as it lacks the capacity and mandate to address the Haftar problem. The whole framework has come down to betting on holding elections; however, elections, whether they are held on December 24, 2021, or later, won't eliminate the division as they have become a highly divisive and contentious issue. Unless there is a mechanism or measure to ensure the election security in the Barqa and Fezzan regions that are under Haftar's control, the elections in those regions will result in an overwhelming victory for Haftar since they will be rigged in his favor. Rigged results cannot be accepted by either political actors or ordinary citizens in Tripolitania, which would trigger protests there and could spiral into even a renewed civil war. On the other hand, if any actor wins the election in Tripolitania, where elections

will be somewhat free, fair, and monitored by international observers, Haftar would not accept the result and submit to the civilian authority. The whole process is doomed to create further division.

The ongoing power struggle, as well as regional and international meddling, will not be any better in 2022. In the case of a renewed conflict, regional and international proxy war dynamics will swiftly return and prevail, and foreign patrons will be further bolstered. If a renewed conflict can be avoided, a prolonged period of negotiations and posturing will again be dominated by external actors. In any case, the international community, i.e., major powers and international organizations, will be influential in determining the trajectory of the process.

Since the dynamics of division and external intervention are likely to also be around in 2022, their negative impact on the question of authority will endure, too. Neither the atmosphere of conflict nor a prolonged period of brinkmanship will allow for ameliorating problems around the authority since the latter feeds on the former.

Lastly, tied to all other dynamics, the issue of legitimacy will not be addressed since a truly free and fair election in Libya based on proper legal and constitutional guidelines –the only way out– is a very remote possibility under the current circumstances and framework.

In the case of a renewed conflict, which will be most likely launched by Haftar, Turkey will again side with Tripoli and support it. Since the elections did not take place on December 24, Turkey will stand with the legitimate authority in Tripoli, which is for the time being the GNU and Dbeibah, until a new election date is set and elections are actually held accordingly. If the legitimacy shifts from the GNU to a newly elected body through elections, then Turkey will cooperate with and support it. In 2022, Turkey will try to safeguard its interests through its rapport with the GNU or in the case of an election, a newly elected government, namely the preservation of maritime and security agreements between Turkey and the GNA.

TURKEY AND EUROPE: A STRUGGLING RELATIONSHIP

Hacı Mehmet Boyraz

08

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. Poland signed a deal to purchase 24 landmark Bayraktar TB2 armed unmanned aerial vehicles from Turkey.

2. Greece allowed the U.S. to deploy its troops in the Alexandroupoli port, a border town 40 km from Turkey.

3. After the G20 summit in Rome, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that Turkey would take positive steps with France and Italy regarding the SAMP/T missile defense system.

4. The Council of the European Union prolonged the sanctions regime by one year over Turkey's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Europe in general have been struggling to maintain their multidimensional partnership in political and economic areas. Due to a large scale of divergence areas, both parties insist on keeping the inevitable partnership. The struggling partnership between Turkey and Europe still survives despite some formidable structural crises. Similarly, fundamental changes are not expected in 2022 regarding the position of Europe in Turkey's security landscape. In other words, it is estimated that the current situation will be preserved in Turkey's bilateral relations with every European country as well as the European Union (EU), for which Turkey remains a candidate country.

In this regard, speaking at a meeting with the ambassadors of the EU member states in Ankara in January, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey is ready to set a positive agenda with the EU and member states and supports turning a new page in relations.[1] However, if we were to focus on the issues that dominate the dynamics of Turkey-Europe (and the EU) bilateral and multilateral relations not much changed in 2021. The chronic security issues such as the Cyprus issue, high tension in the Eastern Mediterranean, different priorities on the Libyan and Syrian issues, or the presence of the FETÖ and PKK/PYD terrorist organizations in the European countries remain as the most eminent issues. On the other hand, Turkey's hot contact with Eastern European countries in the defense industry is likely to create a positive agenda in the coming years. Nevertheless, it is important to note that since Turkey is in a volatile region, its security projections can easily be affected by unexpected events and game-changing decisions.

1 "Turkey, EU Need Concrete Steps for Positive Atmosphere," *Anadolu Agency*, (January 21, 2021), retrieved December 12, 2021, from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/-turkey-eu-need-concrete-steps-for-positive-atmosphere-/2118217.

DEFENSE COOPERATION

Unlike the high political tensions with the major European countries, Turkey's relations with some Eastern European countries do have a different landscape. For instance, deep-rooted and positive relations between Turkey and Poland led to defense cooperation in 2021. In May, Poland signed a deal to purchase 24 landmark Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Turkey. Then, it became the first NATO and EU country to be equipped with Turkish UAVs. This development has some important aspects for the future prospects.

> It is estimated that the current situation will be preserved in Turkey's bilateral relations with every European country as well as the European Union.

First, as a prestigious development Turkish UAVs will soon be seen in the skies over Europe after they are added to the inventory of the Polish army. Based on that, this development might play an important role in encouraging other European countries to purchase Turkish-made UAVs. Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, and Serbia have all signaled interest in acquiring made-in-Turkey combat drones.[2] If these countries purchase UAVs from Turkey in the next few years, this will strengthen the defense pillar of Turkey-Europe relations. Taking into consideration the developments in 2021, it seems that Turkey will work hard to build closer relations with (Eastern) European countries in the field of defense cooperation in 2022.

In another important development, after the G20 summit in Rome, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a statement that Turkey is enthusiastic about cooperation with its NATO allies France and Italy on the ASTER 30 SAMP/T (Surface-to-Air Missile Platform/Terrain) missile defense system developed by the EUROSAM consortium of French MBDA and Italian Thales firms. The tripartite cooperation plan between France, Italy, and Turkey in the defense cooperation dates back to 2017[3] when Turkey signed a declaration of intent with both countries for the joint production of air and missile defense systems. However, the process was halted because of the political stance of France and Italy toward Turkey in the light of developments in Libya, Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

2 Ayşe Betül Bal, "Turkey Hopes to Shape Own Future with UAV-Supported Air Force," *Daily Sabah*, (July 9, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/turkey-hopes-to-shape-own-future-with-uav-supported-air-force.

3 "Turkey, France and Italy to Strengthen Cooperation on Missile Defense: Sources," *Reuters*, (November 8, 2017) retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-defence-idUSKBN1D829I.

In the negative shadow of the ongoing Russian S-400 missile defense system issue, the tripartite defense cooperation would re-strengthen Turkey's political relations with the major European countries. Since, on one hand, Turkey is keen to enhance its missile defense system; on the other hand, with France and Italy signaling interest in developing relations with Turkey in the defense sector, the possible tripartite cooperation seems to be a good opportunity for the parties to normalize and even further the relations.

Regarding the tripartite cooperation, it is noteworthy that as a part of this report, we asked 102 Turkish foreign policy and security experts to comment on how likely they perceive Turkey's cooperation with France and Italy on the SAMP/T missile defense system. According to the results, experts are not optimistic about the joint project, with only two responders perceiving it as "very likely" and 26 responder saying "likely" on the trilateral cooperation. Nevertheless, it seems that cooperation with France and Italy on the SAMP/T missile defense system will be a part of Turkey's defense agenda in 2022.

FETÖ AND PKK/PYD DYNAMICS

The presence and activities of the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) and the PKK/PYD in the European countries remain on the agenda of Turkey. Although Turkey recognizes FETÖ and the PKK/PYD as terrorist organizations, a couple of European countries (namely Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, and the UK) host FETÖ and PKK/PYD militants and allow their activities within their borders. What is more, Turkey is still demanding that European countries extradite FETÖ and PKK/PYD criminals. European countries, most of which are Turkey's NATO allies, however, are reluctant to cooperate with Ankara due to differences in their criminal codes. This complicated case damages Turkey's bilateral relations with European countries. For instance, the German government has already accepted 74 percent of the asylum applications submitted by FETÖ-linked individuals.[4] Turkish media channels claim that around 14,000 PKK sympathizers and militants live in Germany.[5] Therefore, Turkey accuses Germany (and some other European countries) of turning a blind eye to FETÖ and the PKK/PYD, both of which pose a direct threat to Turkey's national security.

4 "Germany Accepts 74% of Asylum Applications by FETÖ Members, Report Says," *Daily Sabah*, (January 12, 2020), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2020/01/12/germany-accepts-74-of-asylum-applications-by-feto-members-report-says.

5 Ali Topchi, "Is Germany Starting to Understand Turkish Criticisms over PKK and FETÖ?" *TRT World*, (September 20, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2021, from https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/is-germany-starting-to-understand-turkish-criticisms-over-pkk-and-feto--10689.

> "It's very important to create a positive atmosphere but in order for that agenda to be sustainable we need concrete steps by both sides… Both sides have expressed will, in order to create a positive atmosphere for the developments of ties… We are going to talk about the migration deal that Turkey has already proposed for the renewal. We are also going to talk about the details of a multilateral conference on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean."
>
> **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu**
> Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey

Similarly, the presence and activities of the PKK/PYD in European countries remain a top priority for Turkey as they have posed a vicious threat to Turkey's national security for years. Conversely, European countries still host and support PKK/PYD militants in their territories by giving them financial support and asylum rights. In this regard, nothing has changed in European countries' perceptions of the PKK/PYD in 2021. Unlike previous years, in 2021 Turkey had more problems with the Swedish government regarding the PKK/PYD. For instance, in April, Turkey protested the meeting between two Swedish ministers and members of the Syrian Democratic Forces, which Turkey considers an extension of the outlawed PKK.[6] Likewise, in December Turkey protested the meeting of the Swedish minister of foreign affairs with members of the PKK/PYD on the situation in northeastern Syria.[7] European countries' attitudes in the case of Sweden raise never-ending questions in Turkey regarding the fight against terrorism. Actually, the lack of a common approach to dealing with the PKK/PYD is enough to explain most of the diverging points between Turkey and European countries.

As a result, it is expected that FETÖ and the PKK/PYD issues are going to be on the agenda of Turkey's bilateral relations with European countries in the coming years. However, contrary to Turkey prioritizing the extraditions

6 "İsveç ile YPG Krizi," *DW*, (April 20, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dw.com/tr/isve%C3%A7-ile-ypg-krizi/a-57268522.

7Ann Linde, *Twittter*, 9:13 PM, (December 10, 2021), retrieved December 12, 2021, from https://shorturl.at/inCGRd.

of FETÖ and PKK/PYD militants from the European countries to Turkey, it does not seem possible soon since such processes take a long time due to differences in criminal laws and due to different perceptions on FETÖ and the PKK/PYD. Despite this, the Turkish authorities will keep this issue in their security agenda with their European counterparts.

GRECO-AMERICAN DEFENSE COOPERATION

Before evaluating the issue of enhancement of American bases in Greece, it should be noted that Greece revisited its Defense and Cooperation Treaty with the U.S. in 2019 similar to its recent deal with France. Since then, the Greco-American defense cooperation has been strengthened. As a part of the revisited protocol, last year Greece allocated a naval base to the American Army in the port of Alexandroupoli, a town near the border with Turkey. Following this, during 2021, the U.S. deployed military personnel and armored vehicles in its bases in Alexandroupoli. Even though the deployment was officially made for the military exercises held in June and November, it seems that the U.S. has long-term intentions to further the security cooperation with Greece.

The new coalition government in Germany established by the SPD, Greens, and the FDP in December 2021 might shift Germany's as well as the EU's perceptions on Turkey.

The ongoing deployment to the Alexandroupoli naval base is seen as a part of the American grand strategy to strengthen the U.S. presence in the region. Moreover, the presence of the American Army in Alexandroupoli seems to send a direct message regarding surrounding and suppressing Russia from the south. What is more, this development happening 40 km from the Turkish border is likely an intent to suppress Turkey as well. Here it is very logical, on one side, that Greece as the gatekeeper of Europe on the eastern part minimize possible threats from Turkey by placing itself under American protection. On the other side, by increasing its military presence in the region, the U.S. protects its geopolitical interests against Russia in Europe and puts pressure on Turkey. As a future prospect, the growing military cooperation of Greece with the U.S. will likely be enhanced in 2022 and later years.

OTHER FLASHPOINTS AND PROSPECTS FOR 2022

Besides the issues discussed so far, it is also expected that other divergent areas between Turkey and European countries will be on the agenda in the

coming year. Particularly, the Cyprus issue is still a challenge for Turkey's security landscape. On the one hand, Turkey, as one of the three guarantor states for the island, supports the two-state solution for a while. On the other hand, all of the European countries and the EU are still in favor of the federation model. Since both parties insist on their stances, it is the case that Turkey and Europe will continue to be opposite extremes, becoming one of the biggest diverging points. In this regard, it seems that Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA) as the most offensive European parties against Ankara's Cyprus policy will try to pressure the EU and member states to act against Turkey.

Furthermore, because of the high-level conflicts of interest, no one expects a rapprochement over the escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean region between Turkey and the relevant European countries, including Greece, the GCA, France, and Italy, that discover and drill oil and gas in the region. Likewise, the EU will keep supporting its member states' activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, the fact that in November 2021 the Council of the EU prolonged the sanctions regime by one year over Turkey's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean indicates that the EU will maintain its pressure on Turkey to force Ankara to take a step back.[8]

In addition, Libya and Syria will continue to be areas where Turkey and European countries differ in their approach to security in 2022. Almost all European countries, especially France, are uncomfortable with Turkey's active military presence in Libya and Syria as it harms their interests in the region. In parallel, Turkey is quite uncomfortable with the support of European countries to the PKK/PYD in Syria and the support of actors other than the legitimate government of Libya. Therefore, Turkey and the European countries will keep struggling to protect their interests, first in Libya and Syria.

Last but not least, it should be noted that the new coalition government in Germany established by the SPD, Greens, and the FDP in December 2021 might shift Germany's as well as the EU's perceptions on Turkey. Statements have said: "Democracy, human, women's and minority rights are heavily restricted in Turkey. For this reason, new chapters will not be opened and those opened will not be closed in Turkey's EU membership process."[9] The joint program of the tripartite coalition reveals that the new German government

8 "Unauthorized Drilling Activities in the Eastern Mediterranean: Council Prolongs the Sanctions Regime by One Year," *Council of the EU*, (November 11, 2021), retrieved December 9, 2021, from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/11/unauthorised-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-council-prolongs-the-sanctions-regime-by-one-year/.

9 "Koalitionsvertrag," *SPD*, retrieved December 9, 2021, from https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf.

does not have a positive approach toward Turkey. In this regard, it seems that the new government's strong anti-membership stance on Turkey will be a part of the bilateral agenda in the post-Merkel era.

PROSPECTS OF TURKEY-EUROPE RELATIONS			
ISSUE	**TURKEY**	**EUROPE**	**POTENTIAL OUTCOME**
Defense Cooperation	Turkey is eager to develop cooperation in this field with European countries.	Major European countries are not quite eager to develop cooperation in this field with Turkey.	Turkey will try to strengthen its cooperation in the defense area with Eastern European countries like Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, or Serbia.
FETÖ and PKK/ PYD	FETÖ and the PKK/ PYD will continue to be Turkey's primary threats to its national security.	There will be no change in the perceptions of European countries toward FETÖ and PKK/ PYD.	The presence of FETÖ and PKK/PYD militants in Europe, and the European countries' welcomes to both terrorist organizations will be the most toxic issue in the relations.
Cyprus Issue	Turkey will continue to support the two-state solution.	European countries will continue to support the federation model.	The Cyprus issue will be parts of diverging points.
Eastern Mediterranean	Turkey will follow a more assertive policy in the Eastern Mediterranean to protect its national interests.	Relevant countries namely France, Greece, GCA, and Italy will continue their discovery and drilling activities in the region. And, the EU will support its member states' policies in the region.	Parties will continue to be opposite extremes, becoming also one of the biggest diverging points.
Libya and Syria	Turkey will maintain its military presence in Libya and Syria to guarantee its national security and protect its national interests.	European countries will be uncomfortable with Turkey's active military presence in Libya and Syria.	Since the parties have different priorities in Libya and Syria, they will continue to diverge.

Greece's Unlikely Compellence | Air Force Modernization & Diplomatic Assertiveness

Rıfat Öncel

Due to the current uncertain trajectory of Greek military modernization, this paper discusses the strategic logic that guides its armament and diplomatic activism rather than a measurement of the emerging balance of power. In line with its compellence strategy, Greece wants to command the Aegean Sea and to deny the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to Turkey.

Read Online

Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Policy A Geopolitical Assessment

Ferhat Pirinççi

This study analyzes Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy and tries to define the priorities and dimensions of the geopolitical struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean as a response to recent approaches to reduce the definition and frame of Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy. Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy cannot be confined exclusively to the Greece-Turkey relations, Cyprus, the concept of "Blue Homeland", or the hydrocarbon reserves. The study opposes such a reduction of it and asserts that the Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy should be addressed from a broader perspective which includes all of the above, but is not limited to them.

Read Online

TURKEY'S AFRICA POLICY: FROM OPENING TO PRO-ACTIVE PARTNERSHIP

Tunç Demirtaş

09

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Angola, Togo, and Nigeria during his four-day tour of Africa.
2. After his visit to Africa, President Erdoğan held a summit on diplomacy with the presidents of Togo, Liberia, and Burkina Faso.
3. The Turkey-Africa III. Economic and Business Forum was held in İstanbul in October.
4. The III. Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit was held in İstanbul in December.

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Africa stood out as one of the most mentioned geographies in the global system. The future of relations has gained more importance in the process that has evolved from opening to "pro-active partnership." Turkey's economic, political, diplomatic, and social presence in Africa deepens with the inclusion of the security dimension in the process. Turkey started its activities with soft power tools for the first time in Africa. Establishing partnerships in Africa with smart power tools, Turkey aims to deepen these partnerships and raise the relations to a strategic level. Concrete steps toward a "strengthened partnership for prosperity" and "common security/defense" policies in Turkey-Africa relations are among the future expectations.

DYNAMICS OF TURKEY'S AFRICA POLICY

Turkey's Africa policy has three basic dynamics: humanitarian, equal partnership, and anti-colonialism. These dynamics are oriented toward the stability, security, and development of the continent's countries for achieving mutual interests within the framework of a win-win policy.[1]

Turkey's human-centered approach and development-based policies in Africa make a significant contribution to the development of the continent. Turkey continues its humanitarian aid projects with the TİKA, the AFAD, the Yunus Emre Institute, the *Maarif* Foundation, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, Anadolu Agency (AA), Turkish Airlines (THY), and various nongovernmental organizations. Turkey, which implements a win-win

1 "Turkey-Africa Relations," *Ministry of Foreign Affaris*, retrieved November 8, 2021, from https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa.

policy on economic, political, and security grounds within the framework of equal partnership, opposes the hierarchical-based approach created by the colonial order. Turkey, opposing the colonial order and its lingering effects on the continent, strives to make Africa's voice heard more in the global system with a reformist approach.[2]

Each dimension of Turkey's Africa policy, namely bilateral, regional, continental, and global dimensions, includes cultural, economic, political, and humanitarian pillars. In the context of bilateral relations, the indicator of Turkey's diplomatic network is its increasing diplomatic presence on the continent. The number of embassies in Turkey, which was 12 in 2002, increased to 43 in 2021.[3] Also, Turkey, which does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries in the bilateral relations it has established, aims to increase its cooperation to support political and economic stability. Cooperation in the economic field contributes both to the stability of the political environment and to the increase of trade. In addition, with the increase in political stability and economic welfare in countries experiencing terrorism, social confidence increases, and terrorism cannot be accommodated within the country. On the regional level, different sub-regional systems on the continent diversify Turkey's policies. The different dynamics, geopolitical position, and threat perceptions of each region affect Turkey's approach. Additionally, Turkey's foreign trade volume, which was $4.3 billion in 2002 across the African continent, increased to $25 billion in 2021.[4] Turkey, which has been flying to 61 destinations in Africa through THY, reaches 128 different countries, 40 of which are African countries, and serves as a crossroads for African peoples to the world.[5]

Turkey, which implements a win-win policy on economic, political, and security grounds within the framework of equal partnership, opposes the hierarchical-based approach created by the colonial order.

2 "Turkey-Africa Relations."

3 "Bakan Çavuşoğlu: Türkiye'nin Afrika'daki Büyükelçilik Sayısı 44 olacak," *TRT Haber*, (November 8, 2021), retrieved from, https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bakan-cavusoglu-turkiyenin-afrikadaki-buyukelcilik-sayisi-44-olacak-612984.html.

4 Can Altan, "Afrika Ülkeleriyle Ticari İlişkilerimiz," *Ekonomik Sorunlar Dergisi*, No. 13, retrieved November 8, 2021, from https://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/Kutuphane/yayinlar/EkonomikSorunlarDergisi/Sayi13/AfrikaileiliskilerII.pdf.

5 Enver Alas, "THY'nin Afrika'daki 61'inci Uçuş Noktası Luanda oldu," *DHA*, (October 13, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dha.com.tr/ekonomi/thynin-afrikadaki-61inci-ucus-noktasi-luanda-oldu/haber-1853819; Gökhan Kavak and Tufan Aktaş,"Türkiye'nin Afrika'da Etkisi Artıyor," *Anadolu Agency*, (October 21, 2021), retrieved November 8, 2021, from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/turkiyenin-afrikada-etkisi-artiyor/2398371.

PROSPECTS FOR 2022

Turkey's influence is expected to increase thanks to its increasing institutional capacity and experience in economic, diplomatic, political, and security issues. When Turkey's economic and commercial relations with Africa are examined, it can be said that the general trend is constantly on the rise, except for the exceptional situation caused by the global economic crisis. Therefore, it is seen that Turkey has reached a trade volume of $186.5 billion with Africa in the last 10 years.[6]

Figure 1: Trade Volume between Turkey and Africa (2000-2021)

Years	Trade Volume with Africa (billion $)	Rate of Change in the Table Compared to the Previous Period	Total Foreign Trade Volume of Turkey (billion $)	Africa's Share in Turkey's Total External Trade (%)
2021 (first 10 months)	23.4	27.2 % increase	354.2	5.8
2020	25.3	12.9 % increase	389.1	6.5
2019	22.4	1.3 % decrease	391.1	5.7
2018	22.7	16.9 % increase	408.2	5.7
2013	21.4	43.5 % increase	422.2	4.7
2008	14.6	170 % increase	339.9	4.2
2003	5.4	25.8 % increase	116.5	4.6
2002	4.3	7.5 % increase	87.6	4.9
2000	4	-	82.2	4.8

Source: *TÜİK*[*]

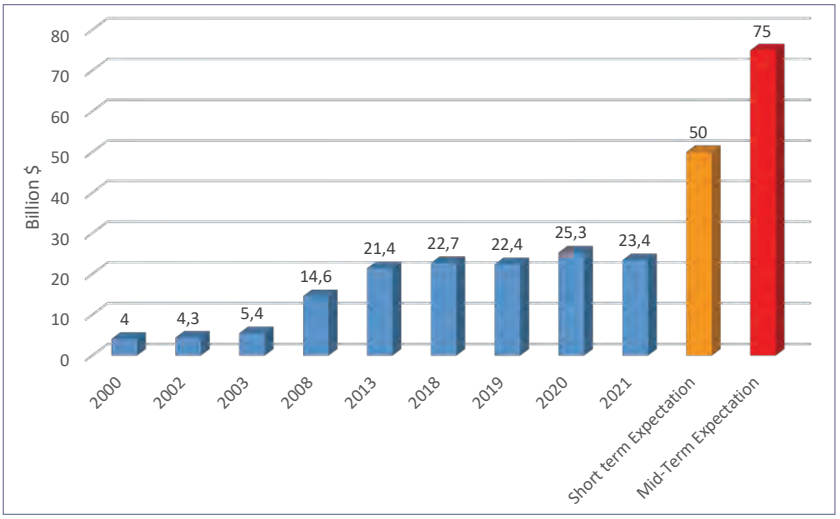
[*] *TÜİK*, retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://iz.tuik.gov.tr/#/showcase/SC-2851FY777F34D2R/db-5jlb1c29xcw0899?filters=18792%3D2020%2618792%3D2021%2618792%3D2018%2618792%3D2013&token=8d79727fff862a891ce574d27220bfebbf66fecd.

Turkey's increase of nearly 80 percent in the last 10 years across the African continent also raises the expectations for the future. With the positive developments experienced in this context, Turkey's short-term target for the trade volume is $50 billion per year; to bring it to the level of $75 billion per year in the medium term.[7] Expectations for an increase in the trade volume also create an expectation for the abolition of customs duties.

6 Muhammet Emin Horuz, "Afrika ile 10 Yılda 186,5 Milyar Dolarlık Ticaret," *Anadolu Agency*, (February 5, 2020), retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/afrika-ile-10-yilda-186-5-milyar-dolarlik-ticaret/1724713.

7 "Afrika İle Ticarette Hedef 75 Milyar Dolar," *DEİK*, retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.deik.org.tr/basin-aciklamalari-afrika-ile-ticarette-hedef-75-milyar-dolar.

Figure 2: Trade Volume Data of Turkey on Africa and Trade Expectations



Source: *TÜİK**

**TÜİK*, retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://iz.tuik.gov.tr/#/showcase/SC-2851FY777F34D2R/db-5jlb1c29xcw0899?filters=18792%3D2020%2618792%3D2021%2618792%3D2018%2618792%3D2013&token=8d79727fff862a891ce574d27220bfebbf66fecd.

African countries didn't remain indifferent to the interests of Turkey, and the number of African Embassies in Ankara increased from ten in 2008 to 37 in 2021.[8] However, this initiative of Erdoğan, who has made 46 visits to 30 African countries and is the state leader who visits Africa the most from outside Africa, has a significant impact on Turkey's policies on the continent.[9]

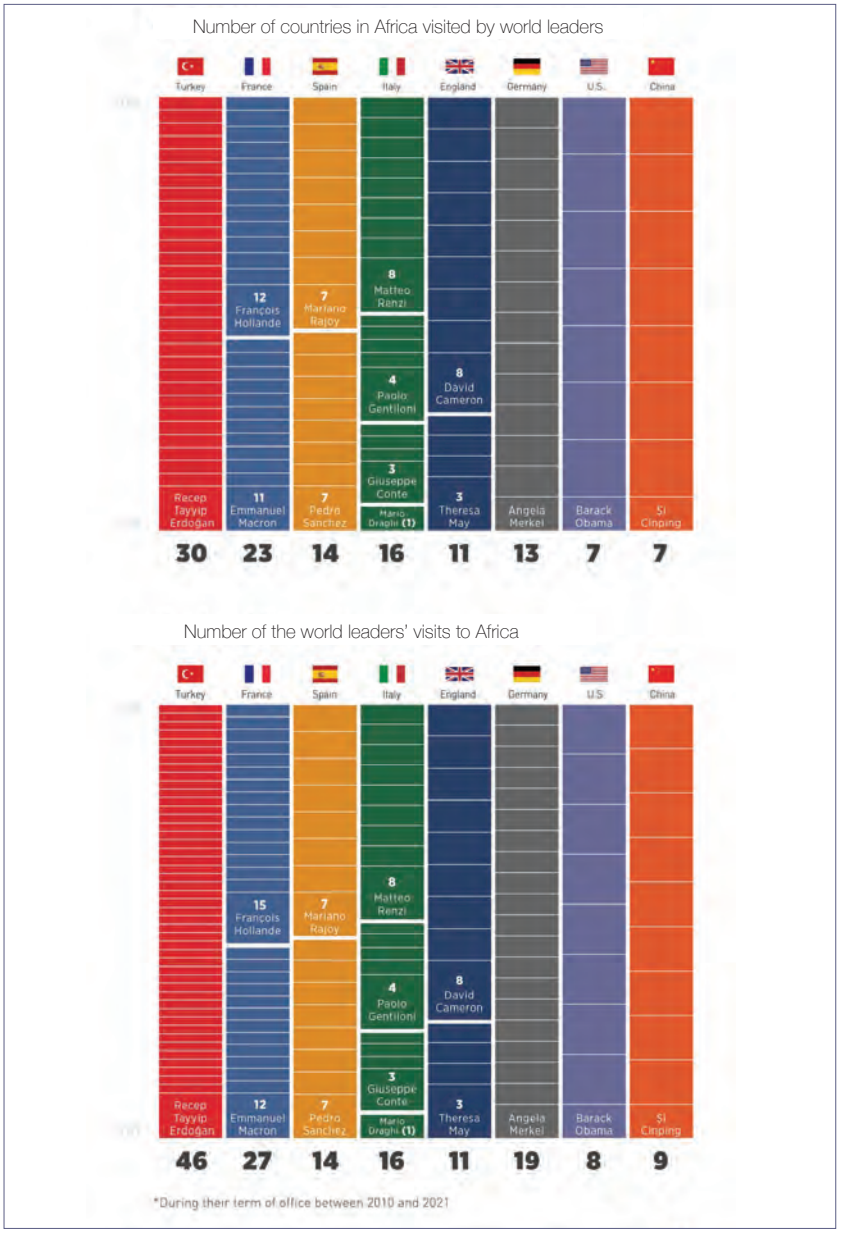
Another expectation is that the developments in diplomacy and economy will have an impact on the products of the Turkish defense industry, which has made great progress, especially in the last period. As a matter of fact, though Turkish defense industry exports decreased by 16.8 percent in 2020 compared to the previous year, they saw a 9.2 percent growth in African countries.[10] In the last five years, the interest of various countries of the continent in Turkish defense industries has increased.

8 "Afrika Kıtasıyla Yakın İş Birliğimize Büyük Önem ve Anlam Atfediyoruz," *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130986/-afrika-kitasiyla-yakin-is-birligimize-buyuk-onem-ve-anlam-atfediyoruz-.

9 Burhanettin Duran, "Batı Sonrası Dünyada Türkiye'yi Anlamlandırmak," *Kriter*, retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://kriterdergi.com/cerceve/bati-sonrasi-dunyada-turkiyeyi-anlamlandirmak.

10 İbrahim Sünnetçi, "Türk Savunma ve Havacılık Sanayi'nin 2020 Yılı İhracat Performansı," *Defence Turkey*, (January 30, 2021), retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.defenceturkey.com/tr/icerik/turk-savunma-ve-havacilik-sanayi-nin-2020-yili-ihracat-performansi-4367.

Figure 3: Number of Countries Visited by Leaders, and Number of Visits by Leaders to Countries in Africa



Source: *Anadolu Agency*

Turkey's transfer of experience to African countries, struggling with the problems of terrorism, coups and civil wars in the post-colonial period, will create stronger ties with the continent. The success of UAVs, which are actively used in Libya, is followed with interest by various countries on the continent. The interest of African countries in Turkish UAVs is expected to increase further

> "We are proud to be hosting 16 heads of state from African nations for the 3rd Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit. Our approach to Africa is shaped by our President Erdoğan's strong commitment to strengthening our ties with the continent and investing in our common future … Turkey under the leadership of our President Erdoğan will continue to deepen our already robust relations with African nations. Our economic investments, educational ties, and cultural exchanges are a testament to our conviction in the promise of the continent."
>
> **Fahrettin Altun**
> Turkey's Presidential Communications Director

due to the heavy conditions put forward by global actors such as the U.S., France, England, China, and Russia, which are the biggest arms suppliers of the continent.[11] It is estimated that Turkey will become more advantageous in the geopolitical struggle and competitive environment in Africa when the success of Turkish UAVs on the battlefield and the increasing interest of African countries in Turkish weapons are combined.

The Horn of Africa and the Red Sea have become central in the global trade and geopolitics of the Middle East. Although France sees Turkey's engagement in the region as a threat and puts pressure on the countries in the region, it is possible for Turkey to increase its bilateral relations with the countries of the region and for the regional countries to act independently despite France in West and Central Africa. In the context of North Africa, the increasing influence of Turkey in Tunisia and Morocco, and especially in Libya, worries global and regional actors.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the 21st century, serious changes are taking place in the global system, and African countries have been most affected by the changes. Africa is seen as the geography that has made the most of its name amid the changes in the global

11 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Yeni Türkiye Vizyonu: Dünya 5'ten Büyüktür," *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Yayınları*, retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://mk.gov.tr/GalleryFiles/227/D5B-9b8912df-4a6b-4bf7-aa66-bfe267f937bd.pdf.

system. The military and economic assets of global and regional powers on the continent bring about the use of the continent as an area of power struggles. In Turkey, some segments in domestic politics ask "What does Turkey do in Africa?"[12] However, keeping up with the change in the global system, protecting the investments made, and taking on a playmaker role with the governments in Africa should exist as a state policy.

Turkey has progressed from opening to partnership in its African policy, and now it is in the process of increasing its influence. Turkey implements an ambitious vision for Africa, generating new collaborations in the fields of diplomacy, trade, investment, energy, culture, aid, defense, and counterterrorism. The humanitarian policy implemented by Turkey throughout the continent and the good relations it has established will steer the perspective of African countries toward cooperation in the post-colonial era. In addition to the positive developments, some issues involve risks and need attention throughout Africa. Turkey should pay attention to implementing policies for African countries on issues with which it has more experience.

It is necessary to benefit from the academics who are committed to Africa studies in universities. Private companies in Turkey that are interested in Africa for commercial purposes should be encouraged to keep their African assets for the long term rather than conducting a one-time trade. Especially in regional problems, Turkey needs to maintain a balance between the parties involved in the problems while taking steps to facilitate mediation or problem-solving. Turkey's breakthroughs in the defense industry have brought with them the interest of the continent's countries in various weapons, especially UAVs.[13] However, the fact that the products sold by Turkey's defense industry have seen effective results in the field may inspire criticism of Turkey in two ways. First, criticism could arise from other arms supplier countries, which do not want to lose the arms market. Second, it could be criticized by actors who want to realize their own interests in the field and cannot achieve the desired result due to the transfer of Turkey's defense industry products.

The model created by Turkey, which is far from the pursuit of purely economic and political interests in Africa, is a new answer to the uncertainty of the international system. The message of "A Fairer World Possible" delivered at the four-way summit with Togo, Liberia, and Burkina Faso at the end of Erdogan's trip to Africa in October was included in an international statement

12 Selami Kökçam, "Yükselen Kıta Afrika'da Güç Mücadelesi: Türkiye," *TRT Haber*, (October 17, 2021), retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/yukselen-kita-afrikada-guc-mucadelesi-turkiye-617602.html.

13 Tuğrul Oğuzhan Yılmaz, "Türkiye-Afrika İlişkilerinin Güvenlik Boyutu: Türk Savunma Sanayii ve Afrika," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları,* (2018).

for the first time.[14] Turkey's vision for Africa includes the creation of equal representation and fairer institutional structures in the global system for both African countries and emerging powers. It is expected that more concrete steps will be taken in the context of a "strengthened partnership for prosperity" and "common security/defense" policies in Turkey-Africa relations in the future.

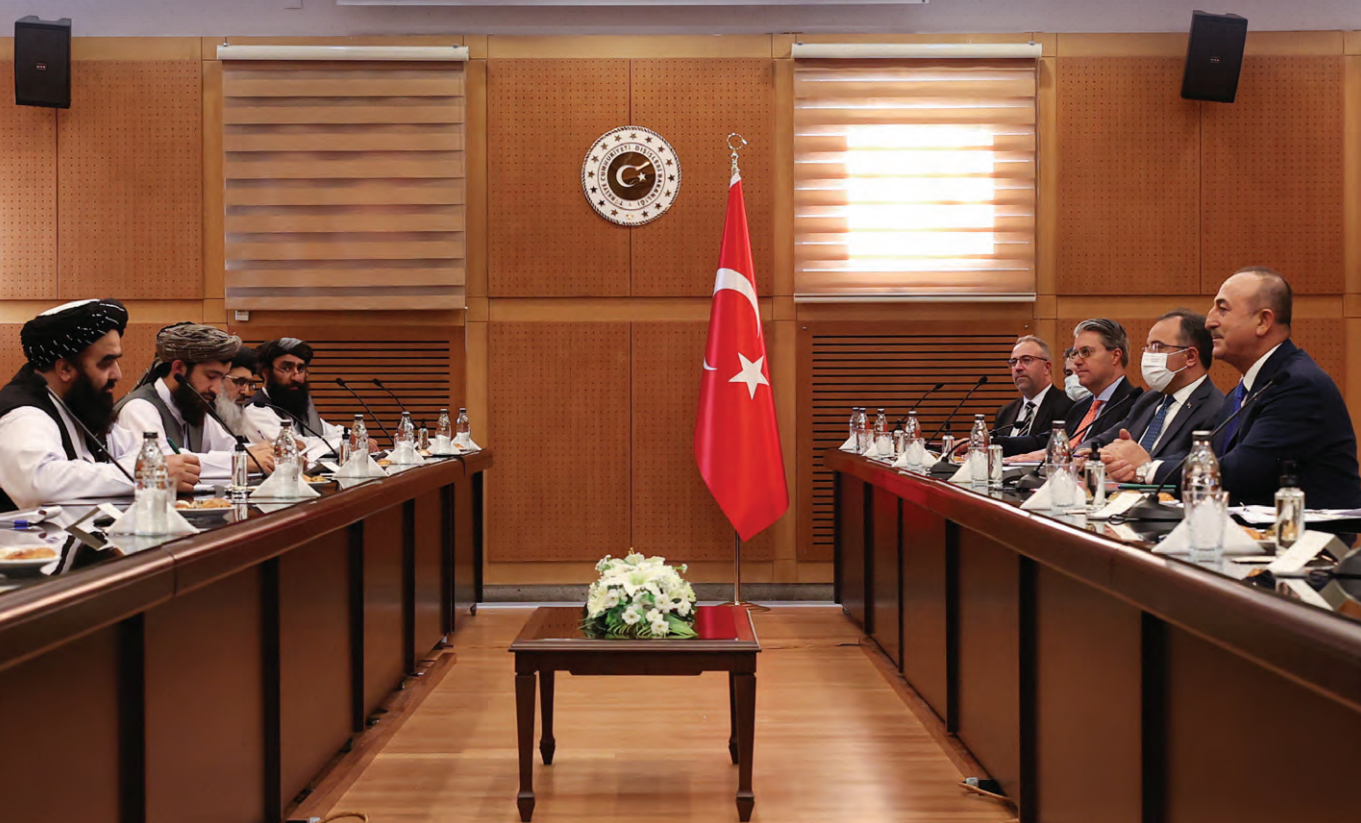
POTENTIAL RISK	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TURKEY
Regional and Global Competition in Africa	- Militarization of the continent - Increasing instability	Establish global, continental, and regional cooperation mechanisms.
Coups	- Coups destabilize countries, regions, and the continent - Forces behind the coup create illegitimate administrations - Increased social protests - Strengthening of terrorist organizations	- Continue to stand with legitimate governments against coups - If the legitimate government is committing or likely to commit human rights violations, necessary warnings should be issued.
Colonialism and Neo-colonialism	- Continuity of hegemony of colonial powers over countries - Failure to achieve social unity - Rise of revanchism - Inability of countries to act independently -Exposure to heavy economic debts	- To encourage Turkish companies to maintain long-term bilateral trade on the continent - Continuing to support continental countries for development and production - Ensuring technological cooperation and strengthening infrastructures - Strengthening and institutionalizing state institutions - Promoting the creation of inclusive policies
Spread of National Fragmentation/ Disintegration Risks on the Continent	- Increased risk of ethnic fragmentation and demands for independence on the continent - Total destabilization of the continent - Losing the recent gains of continental countries - Stopping investments and affecting global trade	- Making calls for the protection of territorial integrity - Cooperating with regional mechanisms for reconciliation between the parties, if necessary
The Escalation of Domestic Problems and the Issues Spreading to the Region	- Internal problems resulting in the loss of territorial integrity - Risk of regional conflicts - Stopping investments and affecting global trade	- Adhering to the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of countries - Encouraging the parties to act with restraint in problematic matters - Continuing to make conciliatory and pacifying policy recommendations

14 "Afrika'daki Dörtlü Zirve Sonrası Bildiri: Terörle Mücadele Vurgusu," *TRT Haber,* retrieved November 11, 2021, from https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/afrikadaki-dortlu-zirveden-bildiri-618517.html.

TURKEY'S GRADUAL ENGAGEMENT WITH AFGHANISTAN

Murat Aslan

10



SUMMARY OF 2021

1. The U.S. military presence and NATO's foothold have concluded after 20 years of military intervention in Afghanistan.

2. The Taliban assumed the governance authority of Afghanistan with the promise of a new image, though the Afghan public and international community have been cautious of the Taliban's actual intentions.

3. The ISIS threat has challenged the Taliban's triumph from the very early days, making it a convenient target.

4. Turkey has pursued a gradual and cautious approach toward the Taliban by initially observing their practices and by providing humanitarian assistance that is not dependent on the Taliban's attitude.

SECURITY AND MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

In accordance with the signed memorandum of the U.S. and the Taliban dated February 29, 2020, the U.S. Army and NATO troops started the withdrawal process from Afghanistan, though with a delay due to the presidential elections in the U.S.[1] The signed memorandum required a withdrawal of the foreign troops, the essential demand of the Taliban.[2] The Biden Administration chose the end of August, at the latest, for the complete withdrawal; however, the quick planning and fast implementation generated chaos that devastated the Afghan public. The not-well-informed Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA)[3] and Afghan security forces were presented as the capable Afghan state institutions that could balance the Taliban and, at minimum, resist their rapid expansion to urban areas –but it did not happen as expected.

Afghan security forces –composed of the Afghan National Army (ANA), varying sorts of police departments (ANP), and the National Directorate of Security (responsible for intelligence – NDS)– initially collapsed in rural Afghanistan.[4] The basic factors of the quick debacle were two-fold. The first was the mispositioning of the security forces. The three branches of the Afghan

1 "US and NATO Start to Formally Withdraw Troops from Afghanistan," *BBC*, (May 1, 2021), retrieved November 13, 2021, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56955702.

2 "Afghanistan: US-Taliban Deal Hastened Afghan Collapse, Defence Officials Say," *BBC*, (September 29, 2021), retrieved November 13, 2021, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58738953.

3 Rant Farr, "The Afghan Peace Agreement and Its Problems," *E-International Relations*, (April 6, 2020), retrieved November 13, 2021, from https://www.e-ir.info/2020/04/06/the-afghan-peace-agreement-and-its-problems/.

4 Jonathan Schroden, "Lessons from the Collapse of Afghanistan's Security Forces", *CTCSETINEL*, Vol. 14, No. 8 (2021), retrieved November 14, 2021, from https://ctc.usma.edu/lessons-from-the-collapse-of-afghanistans-security-forces/.

security forces were deployed to isolated fortified bases across the districts, which the Taliban were later able to lay siege to; hence, the Taliban were free to move and plant their flag with zero or very limited resistance from the security forces. The second factor was directly related to the Taliban's strategy that involved persuading the security forces to set aside their weapons in trade for the freedom to safely travel to their hometown with a small payment.[5] The inadequate "order of battle" tactic and "smart" strategy of the Taliban opened the route toward the border passes with the neighboring countries and the populated urban areas, mainly Kabul.

The inadequate "order of battle" tactic and "smart" strategy of the Taliban opened the route toward the border passes with the neighboring countries and the populated urban areas, mainly Kabul.

The Taliban leadership was careful to honor the signed memorandum with the U.S. since the already implemented withdrawal plan promised victory after 20 years of continuous escalation. In this sense, the Taliban mobilized their units away from the potential conflicts and mission lines that could provoke the U.S. forces since the smooth implementation of the agreement benefited the Taliban's goal of assuming authority. The Taliban shifted their armed units away from the foreign military presence out of respect for the strict deadline of the withdrawal planned for August 31, 2021, at the latest. But the American withdrawal plan was only designed to manage the communal reaction of Afghans and the foreign assets' mass evacuation from the country. Hence, for all actors except Turkey, the withdrawal of the foreign forces was organized to facilitate a safe exit for their military forces rather than an integrated approach to manage the civilian demands after the unexpected collapse of the Afghan government.

The Taliban, which in fact is a generalized term equating to different groups of opposing factions, quickly transformed themselves into a regular force with uniformed soldiers marching before the public. The purpose of the shift could be argued as an effort to confirm the continuity of the state system that could provide the order of the new era. Though the U.S. Army destroyed the majority of its weapons, equipment, and ammunition before withdrawing, the Taliban still inherited $85 billion in equipment. The U.S. gear included aerial assets, which allowed Taliban members to fly a UH-60 in Kandahar.[6] The

5 Interview with a former Afghan officer, (September 12, 2021).

6 "Taliban Has Access to $85 Billion US Weapons, Republican Congressman Warns," *Independent*, retrieved November 14, 2021, from https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/taliban-has-access-to-85-billion-us-weapons-v93e11819.

armored vehicles and variety of weapons were displayed by the Taliban along the streets and operated by Taliban members. The biggest question now is if the Taliban will repair the damage and build up human capital to create a strong army capable of challenging the regional dynamics. In this context, the Taliban's call to the pilots of the ANA clearly indicates their will to utilize the remaining weapons, equipment, and vehicles left by the U.S. forces.[7] The Taliban is still in its earliest stages of restructuring and reforming the security sector in Afghanistan.

The strengthening Taliban, in terms of capacity, have faced challenges inside Afghanistan regarding their new responsibility of ensuring security. The initial threat was the suicide attack at the gate of the Kabul Hamid Karzai International Airport by ISIS. The terrorist group has proven that it is an imminent threat to the Taliban.[8] The once insurgent Taliban have become a target for opposing organizations. The bulk of the attacks mostly aimed to dominate the Shia Hazaras and their shrines for the radical organizations. Despite having implemented harsh policies against the Shia community during their previous reign before Operation Enduring Freedom, the Taliban have backed their responsibility to protect the Shia community. The second threat faced by the Taliban has been the National Resistance Front, organized by the son of Ahmad Masood in Panjshir Valley, an area heavily populated by Tajiks.[9] The Taliban claimed victory in this area, though the status of the area's security still remains unclear. The other Mujaheddins are not organized and have mostly left the country. It is still not clear if they could organize for an offensive if they receive support from the other states.

The final threat to the Taliban is the civil turbulence, mainly stemming from women.[10] Afghans have traditionally banded together and protested the governments in the streets. The Taliban's transition process and actual practices may ignite the Afghan public to protest the worsening living conditions and depleted security. The Taliban are not used to encountering civil street protests, and these may transform into wide-scale social unrest. On the other

7 Rahim Faiez, "Taliban Urge Ex-Afghan Military Pilots to Stay, Serve Nation," *AP News*, (November 10, 2021), retrieved November 14, 2021, from https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-taliban-islamic-state-group-zabihullah-mujahid-tajikistan-7706909db19c59f15a845a8282ff2a4c.

8 Sayed Ziarmal Hashemi, Rahim Faiez, Lolita C. Baldor, and Joseph Krauss, "Kabul Airport Attack Kills 60 Afghans, 13 US Troops," *AP News,* (August 27, 2021), retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://apnews.com/article/europe-france-evacuations-kabul-9e457201e5bbe75a4eb1901fedeee7a1.

9 Ali Latifi, "Growing Concerns for Panjshir Residents as Taliban Claims Victory," *Al Jazeera*, (September 6, 2021), retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/6/dire-situation-for-130000-residents-trapped-in-panjshir.

10 Zeba Siddiqui and Parniyan Zemaryalai, "Protests Get Harder for Afghan Women amid Risks and Red Tape," *Reuters*, (October 4, 2021), retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/protests-get-harder-afghan-women-amid-risks-red-tape-2021-10-04/.

> "We are keeping up dialogue with all sides, including the Taliban. We view positively the messages that the Taliban has given so far, whether to foreigners, to diplomatic individuals or its own people. We hope to see these in action as well."
>
> **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu**
> Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey

hand, social cohesion in Afghanistan is usually a questioned phenomenon due to its multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian social structure. The Taliban have been portrayed as a Pashtun-dominated movement, yet this argument does not reflect the facts because the Taliban include different ethnicities in their cadre and the continuity of this pattern should be expected.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Ashraf Ghani's abandonment of Afghanistan has been the main cause of the administrative collapse.[11] The Afghan state lost its "head" who could have synchronized the existing and contradicting ethnic and sectarian competition. Secondly, a president is expected to symbolize the unity and strength of the country. He left behind a collapsing state structure and a hopeless community. Hence, Ghani's sudden decision to leave the country created a shock wave that allowed the Taliban to prevail in the country much earlier than expected. After all, political developments in Afghanistan can be reviewed within a three-tiered approach: internal, regional, and global.

Internal politics, as the first segment, were based on the good promises of the Taliban to build a positive atmosphere inside the country. In this sense, the Taliban delineated the "change" in their thinking. Smart "propaganda-inspired words" during the press conferences and social media coverage of the Taliban leadership promised an inclusive administration based on Sharia

11 "Kabul Falls to the Taliban as the Afghan Government Collapses and the President Flees," *The New York Times*, (August 15, 2021), retrieved November 16, 2021, from https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/world/asia/afghanistan-talibal-jalalabad-falls.html.

Law rather than the human-made Constitution of 2004.[12] In this sense, the Taliban consulted with Hamed Karzai, a previous head of state, and Abdallah Abdallah, the once executive manager of the country.[13] But the consultations were a mere show full of positive messages since the new interim government reflected the internal power dynamics of the Taliban.

The Taliban's main goal in September and October 2021 was to prove its eligibility in leading the state and earning the recognition of the new regime both in the eyes of the Afghan public and the international community.[14] In this sense, the devastated Afghan economy has been the priority for the Taliban interim government with quick regulations to organize markets. The ruined banking system due to high-level cash demand was difficult to manage though, and the main theme was to circulate the word "trust." The health sector, which was dependent on foreign support, has crumbled. Even more crucial was the lack of human capital since once GIRoA technical experts in all sectors had gone into hiding for fear of their lives or were attempting to leave the country. As a result, the Taliban called on clerks to return to their duties by promising continuity as if they work for the GIRoA.

> Turkish engagement with Afghanistan after 9/11 was two-fold: observation of the global politics/structure toward the developments in Afghan and helping to mediate between Afghans and the globe.

The other concern for the Taliban has been gaining the international community's recognition of their legitimacy. The memorandum with the U.S. does not recognize the Taliban as a government but went as far as pledging an indirect recognition. On the other hand, China invited a Taliban delegation to Beijing, and a photo of acceptance circulated in the media, offering hope to the Taliban.[15] Parallel with the Chinese efforts, Pakistan has become a mediating actor augmenting the recognition quest of the Taliban. However, the rest of the international community, except for Russia, has conditioned its support for the Taliban according to how the group respects

12 Emerson T. Brooking, "Before the Taliban Took Afghanistan, It Took the Internet," *Atlantic Council*, (August 26, 2021), retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/before-the-taliban-took-afghanistan-it-took-the-internet/.

13 "Karzai, Abdullah Meet Taliban Political Office Members in Kabul," *TOLO News*, (August 22, 2021), retrieved November 16, 2021, from https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-174343.

14 Hasib Danisk Kozai, "Exclusive Interview: Karzai Says Taliban's International Recognition Requires Internal Legitimacy," *VOA*, (October 17, 2021), retrieved November 16, 2021, from https://www.voanews.com/a/exclusive-interview-karzai-says-taliban-s-international-recognition-requires-internal-legitimacy/6274709.html.

15 John Calabrese, "China's Taliban Conundrum," *East Institute*, (September 21, 2021), retrieved November 16, 2021, from https://www.mei.edu/publications/chinas-taliban-conundrum.

human rights –women in particular– and requires evidence of ethical practices rather than promises. The Taliban's other option to build a bridge with the international community was to approach Turkey as a catalyst for its internal and external recognition.

DYNAMICS OF TURKEY'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY

Turkey has been in Afghanistan for the last century, though Turkish-Afghan relations date further back. Both communities share a common culture symbolized by, for instance, Mawlana Celaladdin of Turkey who had immigrated to Anatolia from the Balkh city of Afghanistan in the 1200s. Similarly, *Nasruddin Hoca*, well known for his witty anecdotes and jokes, was born in Turkey's Sivas city, though his stories are well-circulated even in modern Afghanistan. Such cultural interactions have built the foundation for Turkish and Afghan communities to share a cultural base and promote a hearty pledge in case either community is in trouble.

Turkish engagement with Afghanistan after 9/11 was two-fold: observation of the global politics/structure toward the developments in Afghan and helping to mediate between Afghans and the globe. In this context, Turkey never assumed a combat role in Afghanistan even though Turkey led the ISAF twice in 2002 and 2005, and it has realized more than 1,000 projects through provincial reconstruction teams.[16] As a result, Turkey was involved in peaceful civil-military affairs related to health, agricultural, educational, and security supporting missions.

The U.S.' decision to withdraw and NATO's "Resolute Support Mission" increased the expectation of both the U.S. and NATO regarding Turkey's continued presence in Afghanistan.[17] In this context, Kabul International Airport has become an essential concern since it is the only gate in Afghanistan's capital to the globe that embassies, international organizations, civil society organizations, foreign companies, and nationals have to continue their activities. After a long process of coordination, Turkey was ready to keep operating the airport, though the collapse of the GIRoA challenged the overall agreements. The Taliban were insistent on the withdrawal of foreign forces, including the Turkish military, despite its flexibility for the civilian experts. Nevertheless,

16 Merve Aydoğan, "Turkey's Long Involvement in NATO Mission in Afghanistan," *Anadolu Agency*, (June 19, 2021), retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkey-s-long-involvement-in-nato-mission-in-afghanistan/2279062#.

17 Ragıp Soylu and Levent Kemal, "Exclusive: Turkey and Taliban Close to Deal on Kabul Airport," *Middle East Eye*, (August 28, 2021), retrieved November 16, 2021, from https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/afghanistan-turkey-taliban-close-deal-kabul-airport.

Turkey was not interested in keeping a civilian body of experts in the country due to security concerns amid the ambiguity of what type of (de)securitization would be observed.

Turkish foreign policy considered the Afghan issue a priority in 2021 and conducted a gradual and calculated engagement. In this context, Turkey hosted a Taliban delegation in Ankara headed by acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi.[18] Muttaqi's statement focused on the technical support of Turkey for the development of Afghanistan and humanitarian assistance before the winter arrived. Turkey, on the other hand, has been firm on its intention of providing humanitarian help, which managed to inaugurate schools for Afghan girls.[19] Consequently, Turkey has pursued a balanced policy on Afghanistan in accordance with the ambiguity while encouraging the Taliban to comply with the demands of Afghans and the international community.

HOW WILL CURRENT DYNAMICS EVOLVE IN 2022?

Given the developments of 2021, Afghanistan remains a point of concern for the coming year. The dominating dynamics that need to be considered are security, economy, services, and the rights of the citizens. While analyzing these factors, there could be limited room for predictions. If these factors are to be assessed, the following arguments may be weighed for 2022.

The security situation is fragile and will continue to be in the coming term. The ISIS threat and once reigning and currently opposing factions will first pose a low-profile risk. For the factions, the passive defense will be the main effort until they have accumulated enough power to challenge the Taliban. But this process would take at least two years, as the Taliban did after the U.S.-led intervention. On the other hand, poppy cultivation and drug trafficking will be the essential referent object to predict a security assessment in Afghanistan. Once disrupted by the Taliban, security will be worsened. Turkey can play a mediating role between the opposing factions and the Taliban while providing support to the administration, which could be agreed on by all Afghans, to fight against ISIS.

18 "Ankara Ziyareti Sonrası Taliban'dan Açıklama," *NTV*, (October 16, 2021), retrieved August 15, 2021, from https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/ankara-ziyareti-sonrasi-talibandan-aciklama,fv4hbCHY-40WstTJISbx9Dw.

19 Selma Kasap, "Türkiye Maarif Vakfının Afganistan'daki Okullarında Kız Öğrenciler Eğitime Başladı," (November 9, 2021), retrieved November 16, 2021, from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/turkiye-maarif-vakfinin-afganistandaki-okullarinda-kiz-ogrenciler-kabil-ve-kandahar-disinda-egitime-devam-ediyor/2416012.

The economy is aid-dependent in Afghanistan, while drug cultivation and trafficking have been the essential GDP source. The very local production pushes Afghanistan to be dependent on imports from the neighboring countries. This pattern will not change in the coming year, while foreign currency could be the essential barrier for importing the basic needs of the Afghan public. Turkey could build a mechanism to coordinate the aid of international society and distribute it in Afghanistan.

The Taliban fall short in providing services to the Afghan public due to inadequate infrastructure, lacking human capital, and financial resources. Hence state-led services will be very limited, and the Afghan public will likely mobilize against the inadequacy of the Taliban. Turkey, alongside other contributing states, could start a state-support program to institutionalize the services and assist Afghans to help provide them with basic services.

> Turkey can play a mediating role between the opposing factions and the Taliban while providing support to the administration, which could be agreed on by all Afghans, to fight against ISIS.

Political factors could be assessed via the two-fold approach of internal and external politics. Internal politics may be tied to the Shura system of Taliban, which means the public would not be reflected in the preferences of the Taliban leadership. External politics may be in the form of the regional competition in which the Afghan public will not be the priority but instead the interests of the external actors. Turkey may tend to observe the internal political developments and recommend the Taliban comply with universal values. External politics, on the other hand, should be in the hands of a government that the Afghan public approves of and supports its legitimacy.

The rights of citizens will be vulnerable to the interpretations of differing Taliban groups since they are not a solid body but composed of moderate and radical groups. Such a fact will promote inconsistent practices across the country in terms of respect or violation of the rights of citizens. In this sense, the basic rights of citizens will be a point of concern in 2022 in the context of insurance of life, equal and just treatment in judicial institutions, economic opportunities, or reaching the required services. Turkey may recommend the Taliban respect human rights, which is already consistent with Islam.

PROJECTING THE FUTURE

The coming term will be a trial period to monitor the consistency of the Taliban administration. In this sense, the words and deeds of the Taliban will be

observed for more courageous steps. On the other hand, Turkey will maintain its stance on the humanitarian prerequisites of the country and will continue to provide humanitarian and technical assistance in coordination with the international society and by taking into consideration the requests of the Taliban Administration. Ankara should be expected to gradually engage Afghanistan with cautiousness within Turkey's capacity limits.

PROSPECTS OF TURKEY-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

ISSUE	AFGHANISTAN	TURKEY	POTENTIAL OUTCOME
Technical Assistance	The Taliban request assistance for public services and running state mechanisms. China and India may be alternative actors to replace Turkish engagement.	Turkey provides technical assistance in coordination with Qatar.	Technical assistance may push the Taliban to comply with the expectations of the international society.
Humanitarian Aid	Afghan daily life will be worsened due to the economy and lacking goods and services. Winter conditions and floods in the spring season will devastate the south of Afghanistan. The Afghanistan administration may facilitate the humanitarian outreach with limited control over the distribution of the aid.	Turkey may build a mechanism with partners to facilitate humanitarian aid through the Turkish Red Crescent, the AFAD, and the TİKA agencies.	Humanitarian aid can be organized to repel the imminent humanitarian risks.
Recognition	The Afghan administration may push the international community, mainly Turkey, to recognize the Taliban-led government.	Turkey follows a gradual strategy to cross-check the words and deeds of the new administration.	A balanced approach may de-escalate the situation and Turkey may contribute the peace and reconciliation as long as the Taliban prefer dialogue and fair treatment for the marginalized.

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POLITICS TODAY

TURKEY'S INCREASING ROLE IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

Muhittin Ataman

11

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. According to some reports, Azerbaijani soldiers crossed into Armenian territory on May 12 in two areas along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

2. Armenian and Azerbaijani forces clashed between July 7 and 15 at different border points.

3. On November 8, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan celebrated the liberalization of Azerbaijani territories from the Armenian occupation.

4. In clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the border on November 14, seven Azerbaijani soldiers were killed and ten were wounded. In return, Azerbaijani forces have killed one soldier, six servicemen and captured 12 soldiers from the Armenian side.

INTRODUCTION

After the Second Karabakh War, which lasted for 44 days between September 28 and November 8, 2020, Azerbaijan won a decisive victory and liberated most of its territories from the Armenian occupation. More than 6,000 people from both sides lost their lives during the conflict. According to the peace deal, signed by the two sides at the end of the war and brokered by Russia, Armenia has withdrawn from a large part of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas and, Azerbaijan has reclaimed control over the area.

Furthermore, Armenia has agreed to open the Zangezur Corridor, a transport and communication line between the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and mainland Azerbaijan that will allow the unrestricted movement of citizens, vehicles, and goods in both directions and a direct connection between Turkey and mainland Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics through the Caspian Sea.[1]

The ongoing border crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia has continued in 2021. After the first border conflict on May 12, 2021, several other border conflicts erupted between the two countries throughout the year. The main source of the border tension is the non-demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border due to Armenia's non-recognition of its borders with both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

There are two main reasons for the violation of the ceasefire by the Armenian officials. Armenian officials have been trying to internationalize the issue by asking for military support from Russia and political and diplomatic support from the West. Most Western countries such as the U.S., France, Germany,

1 Muhittin Ataman, "Azerbaijan's Victory in Karabakh," *Daily Sabah*, (November 11, 2020), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/azerbaijans-victory-in-karabakh.

and Greece have declared their support for the Armenian state and blamed Azerbaijan for the tension and the use of violence. Here it is important to state that although Armenia has been asking Russia for military support, the latter has not given a positive answer to Armenia and instead has intervened in these crises and acted as a mediator and consultant between the conflicting sides. Second, they have been using the situation for domestic political purposes. Therefore, they often violate the ceasefire and open fire on Azerbaijani troops on the border.

After its effective intervention in the main regional crisis, Turkey has dramatically increased its role in the South Caucasus and has begun to contribute to the efforts towards security and stability in the region.

After liberating most of its territories, Azerbaijan has been trying to meet several main objectives. First, it wants to establish a corridor to Nakhchivan. Second, it demands imposition of a peace treaty through recognition of its territorial integrity. Third, it wants to pressure Armenia to hand over minefield maps.

Azerbaijan has liberated its territories from the Armenian occupation in Nagorno-Karabakh thanks to the military support and expertise of Turkey. After its effective intervention in the main regional crisis, Turkey has dramatically increased its role in the South Caucasus and has begun to contribute to the efforts towards security and stability in the region.

DYNAMICS OF TURKEY'S POLICY TOWARDS KARABAKH

Consolidation of Turkey-Azerbaijan Alliance

Turkey's unconditional support of Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War, also known as the "independence war" by the Azerbaijanis, is a significant step in consolidating the Turkish-Azerbaijani strategic partnership. As the only real supporter of Azerbaijan throughout the war, Turkey provided decisive strategic and modern weapons to Baku along with support that contributed greatly to Azerbaijan's self-confidence and its fighting power on the ground. The effective use of the Turkish domestic and national weapon systems, the unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) in particular, has greatly contributed to Azerbaijan's victory in the war and the liberation of Azerbaijan's

occupied territories.[2] This support was recorded as a concrete indication of the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance and the increasing deterrent military power of Turkey.

Turkey's full support for Azerbaijan since the beginning of the war was political, military, diplomatic, psychological, social, and public diplomacy. As mentioned by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey has stood by "its friend and brother Azerbaijan with all its means and with all its heart."[3] This was a watershed in bilateral relations demonstrating the realization of the "one nation, two states" political discourse. In other words, the alliance between the two countries has passed the test.

After establishing the Russian ceasefire observation mission and a joint coordination center and sending a joint peacekeeping mission consisting of Russian and Turkish armed forces to the region to patrol the front lines, Turkey consolidated its military presence in the South Caucasus and became a real game-changer in the region. Turkish soldiers carry out many activities such as overseeing the ceasefire and seeking/clearing mines. Turkey continues to provide unconditional support to Azerbaijan in maintaining stability and conducting diplomatic processes, as it did during the war. Turkey strongly reacts to any anti-Azerbaijan statements or policies of third countries, such as France. Therefore, whenever Armenian officials target Azerbaijan, they blame Turkey as well. For instance, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that "Azerbaijan and the forces that support it are targeting Armenia's statehood, sovereignty, and independence,"[4] referring to Turkey, which supported Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War. Turkey's deepening and diversifying relations with Azerbaijan and its increasing influence in the South Caucasus have become more evident in the wake of the "independence war."

REACHING REGIONAL STABILITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Turkey has increased its influence in the South Caucasus vis-à-vis other regional countries such as Russia and Iran. On the one hand, Russia has aimed to contain Turkey's regional influence by determining the terms of the peace

2 Muhittin Ataman and Ferhat Pirinççi, "The Karabakh Conflict: From a Frozen Artificiality to an Inevitable Solution," in Muhittin Ataman and Ferhat Pirinççi (eds.), *Karabakh: From Conflict to Resolution*, (Ankara: SETA Publications), 2020, pp. 17-38.

3 Bora Bayraktar, "Turkey's Karabakh Policy," in Ataman and Pirinççi (eds.), *Karabakh.*

4 Mariam Harutyunyan and Emil Guliyev, "Armenia Announces Russia-Mediated Truce with Azerbaijan," *The Moscow Times*, (November 16, 2021), retrieved from https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/11/16/armenia-announces-russia-mediated-truce-with-azerbaijan-a755.

> "The stability is not only necessary for Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia will also gain security and welfare if Armenia cooperates with Azerbaijan and Turkey … In this regard, we have a broad vision. We all know that very important steps can be taken for the security and welfare of the entire Caucasus by even holding six-party talks if necessary … We will continue to stand by our Azerbaijani brothers in their just cause, as we have done so far."
>
> **Hulusi Akar**
> Minister of National Defense of Turkey

deal between the two warring countries and trying to exclude Turkey from the peacekeeping and monitoring mission. On the other hand, Iran began to threaten Azerbaijan to not take further steps together with Turkey. However, the new realities require both Russia and Iran to accept the vital role of Turkey in the region.

Turkey has shown that it will act with Baku not only during the war but also during the reconstruction of the liberated regions as well as in the building of regional stability. Turkey and Azerbaijan have repeatedly called for the establishment of an inclusive regional initiative in order to reach regional stability. They have called on three regional middle powers, namely Turkey, Russia, and Iran, and three regional smaller states, namely Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, to become part of this regional platform.

HOW WILL CURRENT DYNAMICS EVOLVE IN 2022

The Future of the Nagorno-Karabakh Issue

If Armenia accepts the new realities on the ground, which reflect the legal and legitimate claims of Azerbaijan, normalization and rapprochement can start between Armenia and its two neighbors, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. Turkey has repeatedly warned Armenia not to listen to provocative calls of the Western countries to destabilize the region. Turkey has shown its determination that it will continue to support Azerbaijan in any future conflicts. Thus, it has been calling on Armenia to accept the new regional realities.

It seems that Western countries will continue to encourage Armenia not to accept the new status quo. None of the Western states mentions the Nagorno-Karabakh region that lies within Azerbaijan but under the occupation of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia. However, Western countries harshly criticized Turkey's military and political support of Azerbaijan and accused it of increasing the tension in the region.

The Extension of Turkey's Military Presence in Azerbaijan

Turkey's increased military and political presence and influence in the South Caucasus "ushers in a new balance of power."[5] Therefore, other actors, including Russia, have to take Turkey into consideration in all regional projections. Turkey's recognition as a game-changer in the region will necessitate some new developments. First of all, if Armenia wants to normalize its relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, it has to abandon its hawkish rhetoric, accept the new status quo, and join the multilateral regional platform proposed by Turkey. Armenia has to take Turkey into consideration in its relations with Baku as well.

If Armenia wants to normalize its relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, it has to abandon its hawkish rhetoric, accept the new status quo, and join the multilateral regional platform proposed by Turkey.

Second, Turkey's increased presence in the region indicates the beginning of a new period in its relations with regional actors not only in the Caucasus but also in Central Asia. Turkey's key role in the Second Karabakh War will provide an additional opportunity for Turkey to improve its cooperation with other Turkish states. In addition, the planned opening of the Zangezur Corridor, which will connect the Nakhichevan Autonomous Region with mainland Azerbaijan and thus Turkey to Azerbaijan, will allow Turkey to have a new and direct connection with the Central Asian countries.

Third, the new regional balance of power will allow Turkey to extend its influence beyond the Caucasus since Turkey's increased weight will facilitate redesigning its relations with global powers. On other hand, Iran has declared its uneasiness towards the Corridor, which will ensure many advantages for Turkey in its rivalry with Iran. Ankara and Baku point out that the Corridor will contribute to regional peace and stability. Therefore, the

5 Burhanettin Duran, "Turkish Presence in Caucasus Ushers in New Balance of Power," *Daily Sabah*, (December 14, 2020), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/turkish-presence-in-caucasus-ushers-in-new-balance-of-power.

new geopolitical balances will force Iran to collaborate with Turkey in the mid-term.

Turkish-Russian Cooperation in the South Caucasus

Although Turkey and Russia faced each other in the Second Karabakh War, during which Turkey supported Baku with military advisers and strategic weapons such as Bayraktar TB2 UCAVs, whereas Russia supplied Yerevan with mercenaries and weapons, the two countries have agreed on the liberalization of the occupied Azerbaijani territories from the Armenian occupation.

Compared with Russia, Iran has more uneasy relations with Azerbaijan. It seems that it is less likely for Turkey and Azerbaijan to cooperate with Iran regarding the regional developments. Almost all Western powers have been strongly supporting the Armenian position. Therefore, Russia remains the only viable option for Turkey and Azerbaijan to work with.

PROSPECTS OF 2022			
ISSUE	AZERBAIJAN'S EXPECTATIONS	TURKEY'S EXPECTATIONS	POTENTIAL OUTCOME
Nagorno-Karabakh	New border conflicts	Consolidation of monitoring position	Minor clashes, no border change
Relations with Armenia	Possible normalization	Support for the process	Limited improvement
Russian Involvement	Maintaining the new status quo	Balancing the Russian influence	Maintaining Russian dominance in the region
Western Intervention	Blaming and forcing concessions	Providing diplomatic support	No meaningful Western influence

TURKEY'S COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY: SUPPRESSING AND ANNIHILATING THE PKK

Sibel Düz

12

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. Turkish security forces focused on neutralizing the imminent perils emanating from the PKK not only on Turkey's territorial boundaries but also within the territories of Iraq and Syria.

2. Turkey's consistent efforts to neutralize the leadership cadre of the PKK have disrupted its organizational structure, freedom of maneuver, and mobilization across Syria and northern Iraq.

3. Turkish UAVs have been instrumentalized as a decisive counter-terrorism tool by virtue of their enhanced ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance) and offensive strike capabilities.

4. From the outset of 2021, 2,619 terrorists have been neutralized, according to the Turkish Ministry of Defense.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, the application of a drone-based, area-dominant, and leadership-targeting counterterrorism strategy has rendered the PKK ineffective. While Operation Claw-1,[1] launched in Hakurk on May 27, 2019, was expanded to the northeast with Operation Claw-2[2] on July 12, 2019, to further increase the area dominance achieved, on August 23, 2019, Operation Claw-3,[3] and on June 16, 2019, Operation Claw-Tiger[4] were also carried out in Haftanin.

In addition, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) have proven the capabilities of the Special Forces Command in unique operations by introducing its deep operation tenet that facilitated the destruction, suppression, and disbandment of the terrorist elements throughout the depth of northern Iraqi territory. Operation Claw-Eagle 2 was carried out in Gara on February 10-14, 2021, to prevent the terrorist organization from settling and restructuring in Gara, an area the terrorists aimed to use to escape the pressure they faced in other regions. The operation also aimed to confirm the intelligence about abducted Turkish citizens. The pressure on the terrorist organization was further increased with Operation Claw-Thunderbolt and Operation Claw-Lightning, launched simultaneously on April 23, 2021, in the Avasin-Basyan and Metina

1 "Turkish Operations in Northern Iraq Explained," *TRT World*, (May 29, 2019), retrieved from https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkish-operations-in-northern-iraq-explained-27103.

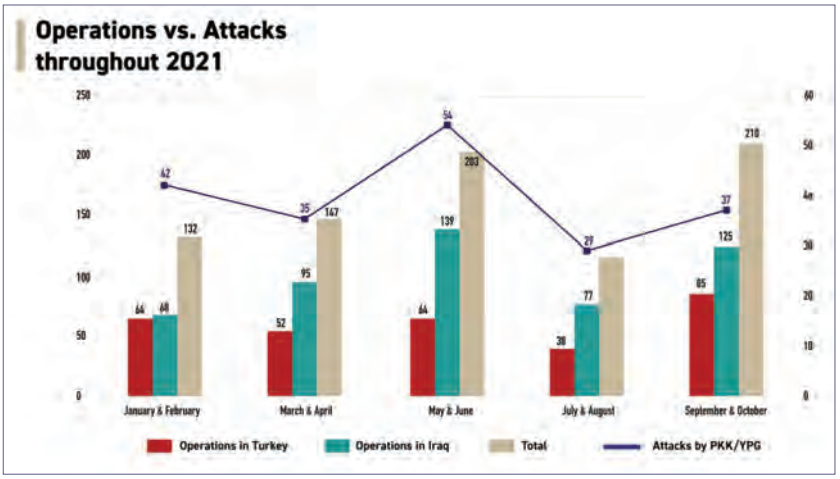
2 "Turkey Launches Counter-terror Operation Claw-2 in N. Iraq," *Anadolu Agency*, (July 13, 2019), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-launches-counter-terror-operation-claw-2-in-niraq/1530592.

3 "Turkey Launches Operation Claw 3 in Northern Iraq," *TRT World*, (August 24, 2019), retrieved from https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/turkey-launches-operation-claw-3-in-northern-iraq-29250.

4 "Turkey Launches Operation Claw-Tiger in Northern Iraq," *Anadolu Agency*, (June 17, 2019), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-launches-operation-claw-tiger-in-northern-iraq/1879479.

regions.[5] To sum up, the main goal of the Turkish security forces has been to neutralize the threat emanating from the PKK at its source while preserving the operational superiority of security units and maintaining operational gains throughout 2021. As illustrated in Figure 1, Turkey's intensified counterterrorism operations have dramatically decreased the capability of the PKK to conduct a new wave of terrorist attacks both on Turkey's territorial boundaries and within the territories of Iraq and Syria.

Figure 1: Number of Counterterrorism Operations



Source: *Terrorism Analysis Platform*

MAIN DYNAMICS

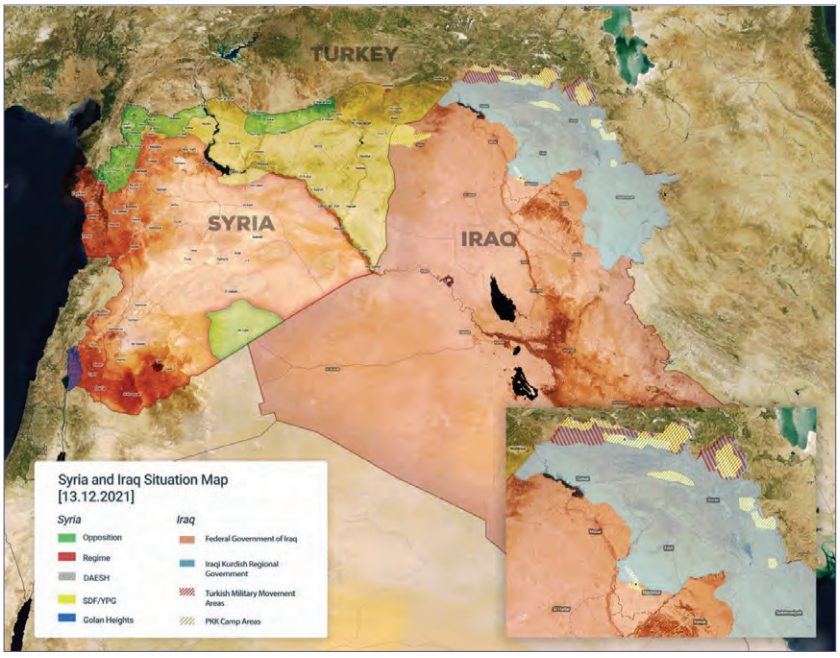
Targeting Terrorist Leaders and Operatives

The Peshmerga's cooperation with the TAF turned out to be a great challenge for the PKK. The fact that the Peshmerga and its special Zeravani forces started to surround the terrorist camps in the northern Iraq region, though they do not directly confront the PKK, has seriously restricted the organization's logistics and operational mobility. By clearing the PKK presence, the TAF's deployment in the dominant hills on the strategic mountains and the Peshmerga's deployment to the new areas have virtually isolated the PKK in its control zones. Therefore, as it is displayed in Figure 2, between Haftanin and Metina, Gara and Qandil, and Makhmur and Sinjar; the organization is

5 "Millî Savunma Bakanı Hulusi Akar, TBMM Plan ve Bütçe Komisyonunda Bakanlığın 2022 Yılı Bütçesinin Sunumunu Gerçekleştirdi," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Defence*, (November 16, 2021), retrieved from https://www.msb.gov.tr/SlaytHaber/16112021-14807.

trying to survive in small islets. So logistic lines between these regions have been cut to a large extent.[6]

Figure 2: Turkey's Operational Environment



Source: *Compiled by using Suriye Gündemi's data.*

Ongoing cross-border military operations under the coordination of the TAF and MIT are proceeding in a more divergent manner than in the past, aiming for direct area dominance. While the mountainous areas and strategic hills parallel to the Turkey-Iraq border were taken under control and the PKK was forced to withdraw further south, the organization's presence in areas such as Haftanin, Metina, Hakurk, training camps, and command and control zones was almost eliminated. While the TAF is advancing in northern Iraq with conventional military operations, the MIT is gradually liquidating the leadership of the organization with effective intelligence and unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs). In this process, many high-profile cadres of the PKK, including the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) Presidential Council members and executive committee members, regional officers, and field commanders, were neutralized[7] (See Figure 3 as an example).

6 Can Acun, "PKK'nın Peşmergeye Saldırması Ne Anlama Geliyor," *Sabah*, (June 12, 2021), retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/canacun/2021/06/12/pkknin-pesmergeye-saldirmasi-ne-anlama-geliyor.

7 Can Acun, "Türkiye'nin Terörle Mücadelesi İvme Kazanıyor," *Kriter Dergisi*, (November 1, 2021), retrieved from https://kriterdergi.com/dis-politika/turkiyenin-terorle-mucadelesi-ivme-kazaniyor.

Figure 3: Eliminated Terrorist Leaders and Operatives

Source: *Terrorism Analysis Platform*

Deepening Turkey's Military Presence in Northern Iraq

The TAF has proven the capabilities of its Special Forces Command in unique operations by introducing its deep operation tenet that has enabled the destruction, suppression, and disbandment of the terrorist elements throughout the depth of northern Iraqi territory. Herein, Operation Claw-Eagle 2 serves as an excellent example, which was recorded as the largest hostage rescue operation of Turkey, mainly focusing on the caves and their immediate surroundings in the Siyane region of Gara, Iraq. The Gara region is centrally located between the PKK's Hakurk and Qandil camps on the Iraq-Iran border and the highways stretching to the Syrian border in the west. This region also has

strategic importance because it links the PKK's activities in Amadiya, Duhok, and Erbil in northern Iraq and the organization's mountain cadres[8] (Figure 2).

During Operation Claw-Eagle 2, the Special Forces Command approached the cave region by land as they launched an air attack from helicopters on critical terrain sections, together with precision air engagements against tactical targets determined in the near and far surroundings of the cave. Furthermore, in order to support these operations, S-70 transport/utility helicopters were also used to provide air attack operations for combat support, T129 attack helicopters that provided close air support, UAV/UCAVs that employed continuous surveillance and instant strikes, and F-16 aircraft that protected the operatives against possible threats from the air with peripheral tactical targets in the operation area and airborne early warning planes.[9]

The rescue mission could not be realized because the PKK terrorists had already massacred the hostages; however, the operation achieved its goal by pushing the PKK back from the Gara region and preventing the PKK from creating a "safe haven" in Gara. As a result, 51 terrorists were neutralized, and two terrorists were captured alive. Three Turkish soldiers from the operation unit were martyred, and four soldiers were injured[10] (Figure 4).

The PKK/YPG elements continue their terrorist activities on the east-west axis of the Euphrates, under the protection of the U.S. and Russia. In a safer manner than in Iraq, they are waging a "war of attrition" against the TAF and its supporting elements. In fact, the PKK/YPG operate in Syria under two flanks. While the first was built as an upper structure under the name of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with the support of the U.S. including Syria-based PKK organizations such as the PYD and the YPG; the second flank, which is also composed of the PYD and the YPG, is active east of the Euphrates along with the engagement of Russia and the Assad regime. However, those flanks, especially the one cooperating with the U.S., have now become a serious concern for Russia and the regime with their maximalist demands.[11] A decentralized administrative model, such as a federal system or autonomous government, is acceptable for Russia; however, any form of government that alters the territorial integrity of Syria abidingly, as suggested by the YPG/SDF

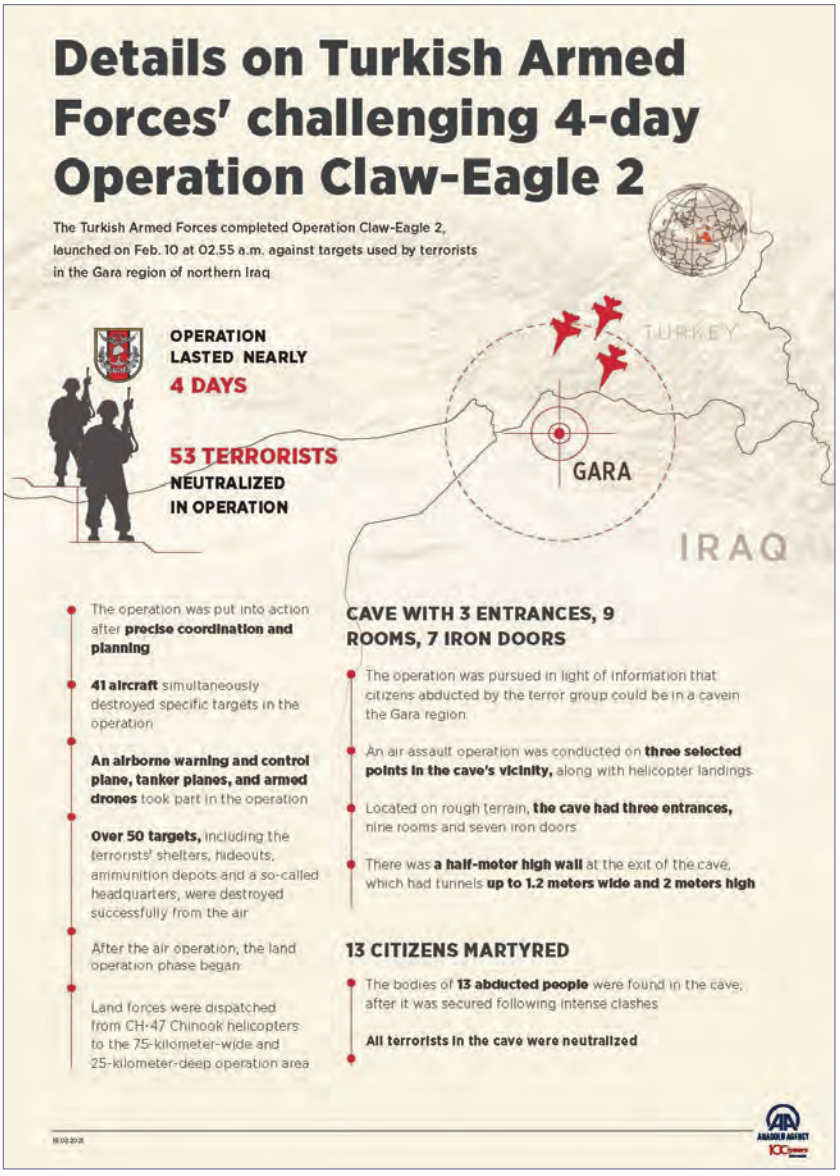
8 Necdet Özçelik, "Gara Operasyonu," *Kriter*, (March 1, 2021), retrieved from https://kriterdergi.com/siyaset/gara-operasyonu.

9 Özçelik, "Gara Operasyonu."

10 "TSK'nın 4 Günlük Zorlu Pençe Kartal-2 Harekatı'nın Ayrıntıları Netleşti," *Anadolu Agency*, (February 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/tsknin-4-gunluk-zorlu-pence-kartal-2-harekatinin-ayrintilari-netlesti/2145577.

11 Can Acun, "Türkiye'nin Terörle Mücadelesi İvme Kazanıyor," *Kriter*, (November 1, 2021), retrieved from https://kriterdergi.com/dis-politika/turkiyenin-terorle-mucadelesi-ivme-kazaniyor.

Figure 4: Details on Turkish Armed Forces' Operation Claw-Eagle 2



Source: *Anadolu Agency*

partnered with the U.S., creates distrust between Russia and the YPG/SDF. Keep in mind that Russia enjoys filling the power vacuum after the U.S. withdrawal in Syria and therefore may oppose any invitation calling the U.S. back into the Syrian equation. The degree and magnitude of that concern for Russia may present Turkey with a green light for further military action in Syria. Currently, Turkey is testing the waters in tandem with remaining committed to the decisions agreed on with Russia on Syria.

This reciprocal show of power by these international and regional factions and the complex nature of the Syrian conflict have caused a stalemate. In such an environment, to sustain its efficient counterterrorism efforts, Turkey has several options to use as trump cards. The first one is to intimidate the PKK/YPG in Syria by employing precision strike capabilities and targeting the key terrorist elements whose removal is likely to result in organizational collapse. Turkey's second option is conducting a war of attrition by shelling the PKK/YPG positions and fortifications, which affects the psychology, morale, and motivation of terrorist elements and eventually separates terrorists from the population from which they get support. The last move may be the initiation of a new ground offensive; however, this is contingent upon Russia remaining committed to the mutual negotiations with Turkey.

PROJECTING THE FUTURE

In the coming period, some political and military trajectories may provide Turkey with new opportunities regarding further military action and political gains in which Turkey's priorities maintain their status and prominence. First, in the not-too-distant future, Turkey can force Russia to take action in Syria and discuss the military option. Conceivably, Turkey may take new military/political steps against the PKK/YPG, primarily in the Sinjar, Gara, and Makhmur regions. As it is expected, according to the *SETA Security Radar Survey,* possible military action may take place against the PKK/YPG with a percentage of 44.8 percent. The aforementioned survey also highlights Idlib as the second most likely operational area with a rate of 22.8 percent. Lastly, the PKK's indiscriminate violence targeting its political rivals may serve in favor of Turkey shaping the course of Kurdish politics both in Syria and Iraq.

New Opportunities and Priorities

Russia and the regime's concern emanating from the U.S.-supported SDF/YPG east of the Euphrates creates new opportunities for Turkey's fight against terrorism. Russia and the regime may carry out a military operation covering the south of the M4 highway against the HTS and its affiliated groups in Idlib. In return, Turkey may carry out military operations with its Syrian National Army (SNA) allies in the areas west and east of the Euphrates against the PKK/YPG operating under the protection of Russia and the regime.[12]

12 Acun, "Türkiye'nin Terörle Mücadelesi İvme Kazanıyor"; "Turkey Plans Military Action against Syrian Kurdish YPG if Diplomacy Fails," *Reuters*, (October 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-plans-military-action-against-syrian-kurdish-ypg-if-diplomacy-fails-2021-10-15/.

> "Turkey is perhaps the only country simultaneously fighting several terrorist organizations, including the PKK/YPG, FETÖ, ISIS, and extremist left terrorist organizations, and in contact with the global terrorist threat with such intensity … We no longer only face the danger on our own soil but also where it occurs. We are immersed in a continuous operation. Particularly since 2016, we have been fighting with all components of terrorism … Did we get results? Of course, we did. Thankfully, there have been no terrorist incidents in our cities since December 31, 2016. Even the PKK's activity in rural areas has decreased by 95 percent in the last six years. We blocked 697 plans of terrorist organizations in 2017. This number has decreased each year and fell to 156 in 2021. In other words, both the number of plans carried out and those prevented before they occurred have decreased."
>
> **Süleyman Soylu**
> Minister of Interior of Turkey

There are also rumors that Turkish and Russian military delegations are discussing possible areas of operation. It is difficult for Russia to give the green light for the SNA to come to Tel Rifat because of the security of Aleppo. A similar scenario is valid for Manbij. It could be assumed that Russia, which was opposed to both attempts by Turkey in 2017 and 2019, would want the regime to take over the region by pacifying the YPG/PKK in Manbij. Based on the Sochi Agreement, which envisages that the YPG/PKK terrorist organization will be completely removed from Tel Rifat and Manbij, Turkey can force Russia to take action in these regions and discuss the military option in the Ayn al-Arab region, as well. [13]

Moreover, because of the successful cross-border military operations coordinated by the TAF and MIT, the PKK is currently stuck in areas such as Qa-

13 Kutluhan Görücü, "Suriye'nin Kuzeyinde Terör Tehdidi Büyüyor," *Anadolu Agency*, (October 12, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/suriyenin-kuzeyinde-teror-tehdidi-buyuyor/2389964.

ndil, Gara, Sinjar, and Makhmur. In this conjuncture, it seems very possible for Turkey to take new military/political steps against the PKK/YPG, primarily in the Sinjar, Gara, and Makhmur regions, together with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi central authority in the region. For Turkey, it is of strategic importance to cut the Iraq-Syria transition line by pacifying the PKK, especially in Sinjar.[14] Clearing Sinjar from the PKK will mean that the Iraq-Syria line of the organization is severely cut off and isolated. Therefore, eliminating the PKK from Sinjar via whatever formula will be of vital importance in Turkey's fight against terrorism.[15]

In brief, Turkey's counterterrorism approach was centralized on suppressing and annihilating the terrorist organization by targeting the leadership cadre, qualified human resources, and key material resources of the organization; minimizing the PKK's cross-border mobilization; eradicating terrorist networks and hubs in Turkey; rendering the PKK unable to respond, and consolidating a safe zone alongside Syrian and Iraqi borders.

The PKK's Indiscriminate Violence Spreads to the Next Room

As a direct result of Turkey's success in the fight against terrorism, the PKK terrorist organization has become unable to take action inside Turkey. For this reason, the PKK tries to terrorize civilian areas in Syria and target local security elements whenever possible.[16]

Moreover, with the initiative of the U.S., reconciliation talks have been held for a while between the Kurdish National Council (ENKS), the umbrella organization of Syrian Kurdish elements close to the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), and the PYD terrorist organization. However, the Peshmerga-PKK conflict caused the reconciliation talks to fail. The U.S.' attempt to separate the PYD/YPG from the KCK and a new PKK attempt under the leadership of Mazlum Abdi seems to have failed. The increasing conflict and power struggle between the Peshmerga and the PKK in Iraq also affected the positions of the parties in the Syrian equation. Asayish forces affiliated with the PYD/YPG started to arrest ENKS

14 Acun, "Türkiye'nin Terörle Mücadelesi İvme Kazanıyor."

15 Can Acun, "Olası Sincar Harekatı ve Farklı Senaryolar," *Sabah*, (February 20, 2021), retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/canacun/2021/02/20/olasi-sincar-harekati-ve-farkli-senaryolar.

16 Görücü, "Suriye'nin Kuzeyinde Terör Tehdidi Büyüyor."

politicians and activists. For instance, the murder of politician Emin Isa from Qamishli by torture in the YPG/SDF prison increased the tension between the parties. Keeping in mind that Emin Isa is a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Syria (KDP-S), the whole process from his detention on May 22, 2021, to his death by torture has been read as a message from the PKK to the KDP leadership. After the murder of Emin Isa, the tension between the parties seems to have reached its peak in the Syrian field as well.[17] In the coming period, the PKK's indiscriminate violence targeting its political rivals may continue and accelerate regarding the tension between the KDP and the PKK.

In brief, Turkey's counterterrorism approach was centralized on suppressing and annihilating the terrorist organization by targeting the leadership cadre, qualified human resources, and key material resources of the organization; minimizing the PKK's cross-border mobilization; eradicating terrorist networks and hubs in Turkey; rendering the PKK unable to respond, and consolidating a safe zone alongside Syrian and Iraqi borders. On the flip side, Turkey may turn the PKK/YPG's incompetent balancing act between Russia and the U.S. into an advantage for further military action in Syria to curb attacks from areas protected by Russia. Regarding Syria, it's vital to pressure Russia on the PKK/YPG, maybe by playing Turkey's trump cards in Ukraine and the Turkic world. Moreover, if the rift between the KDP and the PKK widens, the PKK may become more violent, resulting in the loss of its legitimacy and popular support. This could result in the PKK's political and military rivals kicking the terrorist organization off the court in favor of Turkey.

17 Can Acun, "Peşmerge-PKK Çatışmasının Suriye Ayağı," *Sabah*, (July 17, 2021), retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/canacun/2021/07/17/pesmerge-pkk-catismasinin-suriye-ayagi; "Civilian Dies in Northeast Syria Prison amid Allegations of Torture," *K24*, (June 30, 2021), retrieved from https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/24883-Civilian-dies-in-northeast-Syria-prison-amid-allegations-of-torture.

TURKEY'S DEFENSE INDUSTRY AND POLICY

Rıfat Öncel

13

SUMMARY OF 2021

1. Turkey and the U.S. engaged in bilateral talks regarding the modernization of Turkey's F-16 fleet while Turkey continued its national efforts in modernizing its F-16 Block-30s.

2. Turkey signaled after the G20 meeting that the SAMP/T project with France and Italy has regained importance among Turkey's defense concerns. On the other hand, Turkey introduced its indigenous Hisar A+ low-altitude air defense missile system into service, and the HISAR O+ medium-altitude version is close to mass production.

3. Drone platforms maintained their popularity within the Turkish defense industry as several countries purchased or intended to purchase relevant Turkish products, while the first deliveries of AKINCI and AKSUNGUR drones were made to the relevant commands.

4. Greece's ambitious air force modernization risks Turkey's future air superiority in the region, which has the potential to produce emboldened Greek foreign policy behavior and a strategic shift in Turkish security orientation.

5. The transaction between Turkey and Russia regarding the second batch of S-400 air defense systems remains ambiguous and seems to proceed under the shadow of political considerations with significant implications.

INTRODUCTION

The Turkish defense industry proceeded in 2021 in line with key defense policy objectives, such as maximizing indigenous input in defense products and achieving leader status in one of the critical military technologies. However, international political relations remained a crucial force in the defense sector as it both impeded and facilitated defense policy objectives.

In line with its efforts to modernize its air force fleet, Turkey continued its Structural Improvement Program of F-16 Block-30 aircraft. In May, the sixth modernized aircraft was delivered to the Turkish Air Force. In total, Turkey will implement this modernization on 30 F-16 Block-30 aircraft. The modernization program expects to lengthen the structural life of aircraft from 8,000 hours to 12,000 hours. On the other hand, Turkey and the U.S. engaged in bilateral talks regarding the modernization of Turkey's F-16 fleet.[1] The negotiations involve Turkey purchasing 40 new F-16V aircraft and 80 modernization kits for its current inventory.[2]

A renewed prospect for developing a common SAMP/T long-range air defense missile system between Turkey, France, and Italy emerged with the statement of President Erdoğan after the G-20 meeting.[3] Signing a letter of intent with France and Italy back in late 2017, Turkey has long been interested in the

1 Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey: US Proposed to Sell It F-16 Fighters," *Defense News*, (October 17, 2021), retrieved from https://www.defensenews.com/air/2021/10/17/turkey-us-proposed-to-sell-it-f-16-fighters/

2 Ragıp Soylu, "US Encouraged Turkey to Modernise Fleet of F-16 Fighter Jets," *Middle East Eye*, (October 11, 2021), retrieved from https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-turkey-encouraged-fighter-jet-modernisation

3 "Erdoğan: "SAMP/T Konusunda Olumlu Adımlar Atacağız," *Savunmasanayist*, (October 31, 2021), retrieved from https://www.savunmasanayist.com/erdogan-samp-t-konusunda-olumlu-adimlar-atacagiz/.

system due to its capabilities against ballistic missile threats. Meanwhile, Turkey's indigenous multilayered air defense umbrella is developing with HISAR A+ entering its inventory and HISAR O+ about to enter mass production.[4]

Defense industry exports have continued to be a key motive of Turkish decision-makers as they contribute to the sustainability of the national defense industry and increase bilateral relations with friendly and ally countries. In line with these objectives, Turkish drones, armored vehicles, and electronic systems, among other products, were exported to several countries following a record number of agreements.[5] Moreover, Poland became the first NATO and EU member country to purchase a Turkish drone, which will likely pave the way for further exports.[6] On the other hand, the advanced drones AKINCI and AKSUNGUR were also added to the inventory, which will help in missions requiring ground attacks, intelligence collection, surveillance, reconnaissance, and other crucial aspects.

Defense industry exports have continued to be a key motive of Turkish decision-makers as they contribute to the sustainability of the national defense industry and increase bilateral relations with friendly and ally countries.

MAIN ISSUES

Turkey's defense policies and the relevant trajectory of its national defense industry efforts have been greatly influenced by two major factors: external political ties and the emerging balance of regional airpower. These two factors are at the center of international political relations and geopolitical alignments and are inescapably linked to each other.

Regarding the first issue, Turkey's external relations and the changing geopolitical landscape in world politics have a strong influence over defense policy priorities. The United States imposed CAATSA sanctions on Turkey and canceled delivery of F-35 aircraft after the latter purchased the S-400 air defense missile system from Russia. Turkish-American relations have fluctuated over the last decade and gradually deteriorated because of increasingly antagonistic

4 Zeynep Çetinkaya, "SSB Başkanı Demir: HİSAR A+ Tüm Unsurlarıyla Teslim Edildi, HİSAR O+ Seri Üretime Geçme Aşamasına Geldi," *Anadolu Agency*, (July 10, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/bilim-teknoloji/ssb-baskani-demir-hisar-a-tum-unsurlariyla-teslim-edildi-hisar-o-seri-uretime-gecme-asamasina-geldi/2300221.

5 See, Rıfat Öncel, "Türkiye'nin Savunma Sanayii İhracatı," *Kriter*, No. 60 (2021).

6 See, Rıfat Öncel, "Drivers and Implications of Bayraktar TB2 Sale to Poland," *SETA Perspective*, (May 2021).

views toward regional issues ranging from Syria and Libya to Greece and Russia. Currently, lobby groups in the U.S. are pushing a widespread campaign to prevent the sale of new F-16s to Turkey, a move that is mostly facilitated by the intense anti-Turkish sentiment in the American Congress.

On the other hand, some U.S. senators are trying to convince the Biden Administration that the CAATSA sanctions should not be issued against India, even though the country also purchased the S-400 system from Russia and deliveries have begun.[7] The U.S. will likely grant a waiver for India for some important reasons. American decision-makers are aware India has been a long-standing customer of major Russian weapon systems and has established cooperation with Russia. More importantly, the increasingly assertive challenges posed by China in the Pacific have forced the U.S. to accelerate its efforts in forming alliances in the region, making India one of the key pillars of this counterbalancing alliance because of its massive manpower and military mobilization potential. Therefore, the Turkish and Indian cases demonstrate how changing geopolitical landscapes decisively influence the ally commitments and indicate the importance of achieving maximum independence in key military technologies.

The second major issue is the emerging shift in regional airpower between Turkey and Greece that originated from the ambitious Greek air force modernization program and Turkey's aging F-16 fleet. Greece has launched a comprehensive military modernization program for which it purchased 18 French advanced Rafale fighters with an additional six aircraft. Furthermore, the country intends to purchase F-35s and submitted a letter of request to the U.S. regarding the sale of a squadron (18-24) of the aircraft. While French Rafales are technologically superior to even modernized F-16s, the possible delivery of F-35s to Greece will create a significant capability gap between Greece and Turkey in terms of airpower, favoring the former. Considering Greece's special investments in its air force, a strategic act intended to compel Turkey to back down in air dominance,[8] air force modernization has emerged as a major operational exigency for Turkey.

7 Mark R. Warner, "Warner, Cornyn Urge Biden Administration to Waive CAATSA Sanctions Against India," (October 26, 2021), retrieved from https://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2021/10/warner-cornyn-urge-biden-administration-to-waive-caatsa-sanctions-against-india; Sriram Lakshman, "U.S. Senators Introduce Amendment Supporting CAATSA Sanctions Waiver for India," *The Hindu*, (November 2, 2021), retrieved from https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-senators-introduce-amendment-supporting-caatsa-sanctions-waiver-for-india/article37296514.ece; "S-400 Delivery to India Has Begun: Russian Official," *Al Jazeera*, (November 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/15/russia-starts-supplying-india-with-missildespite-us-sanctions-thr.

8 Rıfat Öncel, *Greece's Unlikely Compellence*, (İstanbul: SETA Publications, 2021).

> "We are one of the leading countries in the world in some areas, and we develop competitive products in others. However, we always say; our goal is full independence in the defense industry. In other words, we need to own whatever technology is critical and strategic."
>
> **İsmail Demir**
> President of Defense Industries of Turkey

PROJECTING THE FUTURE

Turkey's defense policy and industry will be strongly influenced by the aspects discussed above in the coming years. Thus, any future defense projection must take into account how Turkey's traditional security partnerships are evolving and, to an extent, Greece's emboldened foreign policy behavior emerging in the region. Against this backdrop, Turkey will need to address the emerging regional airpower capability gap that is currently in favor of Greece.

There is significant opposition to Turkey in the American Congress even though President Biden, during the joint statement with President Erdoğan, stated that he will do his best to ensure the sale of the F-16Vs. However, given the intense anti-Turkey atmosphere in the American Congress, it seems unlikely the Biden Administration will be able to achieve that objective. Furthermore, President Erdoğan stated in late August that Turkey "has no hesitation" about purchasing the second batch of S-400 air defense missile systems from Russia,[9] which would likely trigger more Congress pressure on the administration against Turkey. On the other hand, if Turkey switched to the SAMP/T system from France and Italy and renounced S-400, it could significantly alter perceptions. Therefore, procurement choices of air defense systems and modern aircraft have become inextricably connected and will decisively influence Turkey's bilateral relations in the coming years. Nevertheless, a basic threat assessment suggests that meeting the increasingly pressing needs of the Turkish Air Force should be a priority and as the decades-old military experience

9 "No Hesitation over Purchase of 2nd batch of S-400s: Erdoğan," *Daily Sabah*, (August 29, 2021), retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/no-hesitation-over-purchase-of-2nd-batch-of-s-400s-erdogan?gallery_image=undefined#big.

demonstrates, receiving the latest model of F-16s would be the best way to achieve that objective for Turkey.

Meeting the needs of the Turkish Air Force will help Turkey counter Greece's increasingly aggressive foreign policy that aims to compel Ankara to back down from its vital interests. Greek decision-makers are not only implementing a comprehensive military modernization program, but they are also seeking further allies, trying to gain security guarantees from countries such as the U.S. and France against Turkey, and undermining Turkey's international standing via multilateral efforts such as embargo calls and lobby group campaigns. Therefore, Turkish security planning will have to develop and implement a clearer response to Greece's systematic effort in the coming years. This response, in turn, will need to be soundly calibrated among the country's political objectives, diplomatic relations, and military needs.

In the meantime, the Turkish national defense industry will likely continue its path toward more independence in line with the political goal of developing and launching more autonomous foreign and security policy initiatives. Moreover, achieving a leading role in critical technologies will continue to be a significant factor in the defense industry. This policy is and will be facilitated by the search for more Turkish drone exports. Several countries, including NATO and EU member states, showed interest in Turkish drone platforms in previous years, indicating that more exports in the coming year will be likely. Defense exports also help the country develop and enhance bilateral relations and increase its influence, which may have the potential to translate to higher levels of cooperation in different sectors between Turkey and friendly countries.

ISSUE	LIKELIHOOD	REASON	POTENTIAL OUTCOME
Turkey's F-16 Procurement	Unlikely in the short term.	Strained political relations; Congressional antagonism.	Turkish Air Force will remain below the technological level of the Greek air force.
Greek F-35 Purchase	Unlikely in the short term.	American balance of power logic in the East. Med.	The essence of Turkish-American relations will be protected.
SAMP/T Joint Production	Unlikely.	Strained political relations and Turkey's request for technology transfer.	Turkey will maintain its national efforts in developing air defense systems.
S-400 Second Batch Purchase	Unlikely.	Turkey's continued balancing act.	Russia will increase pressure on Turkey in several areas ranging from economy to security.

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SETA SECURITY RADAR

TURKEY'S GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN 2022

Edited by **Murat Yeşiltaş, Gloria Shkurti Özdemir**

As states try to recover from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, not much has changed in global affairs in 2021. The downward trend in the U.S. primacy, the lack of global leadership, and problems in global governance are still persistent, leaving more room for the rise of the "rest," including China and Russia. In this context, the ongoing transformation in the international system and the return of great power politics have produced *global ambivalence*, compelling many states, including Turkey, to reconsider their foreign policies and readjust their position in the international arena.

From a regional perspective, important changes have been going on, including the regional realignment in the Middle East and North Africa, the continuous strategic competition in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the increased tensions in the Black Sea.

These intertwined dynamics will continue to shape Turkey's geopolitical landscape for 2022, bringing to the fore the necessity for Turkey to focus on improving its strategic resilience by contemplating how to use its resources so it can consolidate its strategy while avoiding possible distractions.

SETA Security Radar 2022 aims to offer a general background of the main dynamics that shaped Turkey's geopolitical portfolio in 2021 followed by a prognosis about the foreign policy and strategy that Turkey may follow in 2022.

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