

Working Group:
Military Technology

Title:
Transformation of Turkish Defence Industries and Rethinking Turkey's Role in the European Security Architecture

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Abstract:
Although it is a NATO member, Turkey's position in the European security architecture has been controversial. European actors began to question Turkey's position once again, with Russia's attempt to invade Ukraine in February 2022. As a matter of fact, Turkey has now moved away from its relatively weaker position, thanks to the significant investment in military and defence industries during the last two decades. The country has now become a game-changer, especially in terms of defence technologies and military capacity. This transformation of Turkey undoubtedly brings with it a rethinking of its position in the European security architecture. The most important dimension of this transformation is the questioning of existing military capacities and traditional defence alliances. In this context, Turkey has now become one of the critical countries in terms of European security. The steps Ankara has taken in the defence industry in the recent period provide her with manoeuvrability in its foreign policy. Turkish drones operating in Ukraine, Libya, Azerbaijan and many different conflicts prevented the formation of a new balance of power by serving the goals and interests of the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) countries vis-a-vis regional and international crises. On the other hand, after Russia's attempt to invade Ukraine, many European countries, especially Eastern European countries, preferred Turkish high-tech defence products, including UAVs in, their defence industry purchases. Main driving force behind such decisions is that Turkish UAVs played an active role in both cross-border and intra-border operations at the conflict zones (Qarabağ, Libya, Syria etc.). These countries that are under constant threat from Russia were dependent on NATO for their defence and military policies. This dependency, however, creates some chronic deficiencies for these European actors. It can be argued that Turkey is well equipped to provide efficient and reliant defence product as well as strategic alliance for European countries that look for alternative military alliances. Based on this, the main argument of the study is that the belt forming the Russian border from Northern Europe to Southern Europe for the European security architecture strengthens and consolidates their defence industries. The question of under which conditions Turkey can act as a driving force for the European security within the existing defence industry infrastructure will be the main problematic of this paper.

Author Bio:

Ismail Numan Telci is the Vice President of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM) in Ankara. ORSAM is the largest think tank in Turkey focusing on Middle Eastern affairs. He also works as an Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations and lecturer at the Middle East Institute (ORMER) at Sakarya University. His research focuses on democratic transformations in the Middle East, foreign policy of the Gulf countries and Turkish foreign policy. He is editor of Middle Eastern Studies, a peer-reviewed journal published by ORSAM. Telci is the author and editor/co-editor of six books, Egypt: Revolution and Counter-Revolution (2017), Egyptian Foreign Policy Since the Revolution: From Search for Change to Quest for Legitimacy (2019), Eastern Mediterranean in International Politics (2020), Foreign Policy in the Gulf: Dependency, Interventionism and Neutrality (2021), Turkey-Gulf Relations: Crises, Opportunities and Expectations (2022). His comments and opinion appeared in international media including TRT World, Al Jazeera, BBC, Deutsche Welle, Le Monde and Middle East Eye. His works and activities can be followed at: <https://twitter.com/numanis>