

## The Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy

Hakan Mehmetcik & Arda Can Çelik

To cite this article: Hakan Mehmetcik & Arda Can Çelik (2022) The Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 24:1, 24-41, DOI: [10.1080/19448953.2021.1992190](https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2021.1992190)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2021.1992190>



Published online: 18 Nov 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1256



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE



## The Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy

Hakan Mehmetcik <sup>a</sup> and Arda Can Çelik <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of International Relations, Marmara University, Beykoz, Istanbul, Turkey; <sup>b</sup>Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey

### ABSTRACT

Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) has undergone structural changes over the last few years due to the perception of immediate threats to Turkish national security which, according to Ankara, has brought a need for a more assertive foreign policy. Consequently, Turkey is expanding its military presence in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Africa, and utilizing frequently coercive diplomacy to resolve foreign policy issues. This article analyses both the drivers and the consequences of the militarization of TFP. The main argument is that there are at least three drivers in this militarization, namely, the pursuit of strategic autonomy, the closing tandem between the domestic and foreign policy, and the Turkish military-industrial complex. The broader security and diplomatic consequences of TFP militarization in regional and international politics are also investigated.

### Introduction

This article scrutinizes the militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) over the past few years. Turkey has recently established several foreign military bases in Qatar, Somalia, and several military posts and enclaves in Syria along with long-running bases in Northern Cyprus and Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Sudan's Suakin Island<sup>2</sup> and Azerbaijan<sup>3</sup> are two other places where Turkey may extend its military foothold. In addition to bases in both the Middle East and Africa, the Turkish military has engaged in military operations in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh, with ever-extending scope and on the ground presence.<sup>4</sup> The Turkish navy is actively used for coercive purposes in handling the long-running Eastern Mediterranean crisis. Turkey also has military personnel in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and several hot spots in Africa on various North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and United Nations (UN) training and peacekeeping missions. The tone of military activism in TFP has gained pace in recent years signifying that Turkey has grown into an important country in terms of overseas military presence.<sup>5</sup> However, with the current literature on TFP paying little attention to this aspect of its activism, this article aims to contribute to the body of literature by analysing both the drivers and the consequences of TFP militarization.

Militarization is not a novel phenomenon in TFP research. Since 1960, the military has been the most powerful institution in Turkish politics. In retrospect, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) had long been a significant political player in Turkish politics influencing a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues. The 1980s and 1990s were known as the golden age of militarism in this sense.<sup>6</sup> Civil–military ties, however, have long been experiencing significant transformation. The coup plots, court lawsuits, and reform packages that have occurred since 2002 have had a considerable impact on the military’s power, restricting and eventually breaking its influence in domestic and foreign affairs.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, a new type of militarism with different instruments and actors arises, which has an impact on TFP’s outlooks. Besides this type of militarism in politics, the glorification of the use of hard power/warfighting as a foreign policy option is referred to as the militarization of foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> The majority of militarism research in this sense has concentrated on the social and political consequences of military values, rather than their influence on foreign policy decision-making.<sup>9</sup> Increased militarization isolates and distorts decision-making processes, making conflicting policies more visible.<sup>10</sup> According to traditional militarization theory, as the military’s influence in government grows as its capabilities increase, the state is more likely to pursue an aggressive foreign policy that leads to conflict.<sup>11</sup> As such, militarization is not only measured by military spending and there are numbers of factors that can be linked to foreign policy behaviours in the militarization literature.<sup>12</sup>

This article takes TFP militarization as a function of three interconnected drivers: i) the pursuit of strategic autonomy; ii) the nexus between the domestic and foreign policy and iii) the military-industrial complex. With respect to the first of these, both the Cold War environment and the strategic choices of Turkey’s founding father led the nation to integration with the West, an integration institutionalized in the form of NATO membership for Turkey. However, from the late 1990s onwards and at an ever-increasing pace in the 2000s, Turkey has become an ‘autonomy maximizer’ in terms of its foreign policy preferences. In particular, TFP implementation within the last 5 years is indicative of a quest for maximum strategic autonomy in the light of what Turkey’s sees as the disregard among its traditional allies for its security concerns.<sup>13</sup> The second driver of militarization for Ankara is the changing dynamics between domestic and foreign policy. Indeed, the tandem between Turkey’s domestic and foreign policies is growing closer due to the role of domestic identity and ideology in determining Turkish foreign policy. In addition, the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) makes skilful use of foreign policy crises in the pursuit of larger domestic legitimacy by having foreign and domestic policies operate in tandem. The third driver of militarization is the growing Turkish military-industrial complex. The Turkish defence industry is an enabling factor in Turkey’s pursuit of several military operations in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey’s extensive (and successful) use of military drones and its national warship programme (MILGEM) are particularly significant on this front.<sup>14</sup> However, it should be noted that, while it is an informal partnership between the army and the defence industry, the military-industrial complex is nevertheless becoming an active policy influencer.

As for the consequences of TFP militarization, one major outcome may be observed in Turkish deterrence and defence policies. In this sense, the forward defence strategy on which Turkey relies heavily in Syria, Iraq, and the Eastern Mediterranean has become an important blueprint for foreign policymakers, yet comes with diplomatic and political

consequences such as isolations, backlashes and rising diplomatic tensions. The second important consequence of TFP militarization is overstretching. Turkey is a middle-power country with limited political, military and economic capacity and which faces prolonged crises on more than one front. This is a major threat that may lead to depletion, fatigue, and the possible collapse of critical domestic resources. Moreover, Turkey's military capabilities are insufficient to deal with numbers of crises simultaneously in different parts of the region, which endangers the stability or sustainability of the current course of action. In short, then, it may be said that TFP militarization has significant ramifications in the realms of politics, economics, and diplomacy.

### **Drivers of militarization in TFP**

Turkey, like many other Middle Eastern or Eastern European countries, faces a difficult domestic political environment and troubled regional settings in making for its foreign policy choices. Uncertainties about the outcomes of its foreign policy in the fast-changing dynamics and foreign interventions in its region have evolved considerably, meaning Turkey's own political and economic problems are on the ascent. In such an environment, Turkey has become a more assertive and autonomous player on the international stage in the last decade by becoming overly dependent on coercive tools.

The significant rise in Turkey's military presence outside its borders in recent years is a clear indication of the militarization trends in TFP. Turkey has established several different types of military installations, pockets, bases, or posts with different objectives ranging from deterrence to peacekeeping and anti-terrorism operations across the Middle East and Africa.<sup>15</sup> In addition to long-established military installations in Northern Cyprus, Albania, Afghanistan and Kosovo, Turkey has now established bases in Qatar, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. Its ongoing military operations in Syria, Iraq, and Libya and its involvement in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict are particularly important in terms of TFP militarization. Turkey's relations with countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, such as Greece, Egypt, and Israel, are also rhetorically or physically militarized through numbers of reciprocal and unilateral actions. These problems naturally cause discomfort in Western capitals with respect to Turkey's actions and complicate the region's multilateral dynamics.

We argue that TFP militarization derives from three interconnected factors: i) the pursuit of strategic autonomy; ii) the nexus between the domestic and foreign policy and iii) the military-industrial complex.

### ***Pursuit of autonomy***

The pursuit of autonomy is an important explanatory parameter for TFP. In Turkish case, the pursuit of strategic autonomy implicitly refers to 'autonomy from the West'. As such, it refers to positions in which Ankara has taken an independent option for its immediate security environment even if it ruffles the feathers of NATO allies. Historically, there have been times when Turkey and its traditional allies had deep strategic differences and Turkey went on to charter its own course anyway, the most memorable of which is probably events that followed the 'Johnson Letter'. This was

intended to prevent Turkey from launching a military operation in Cyprus, and Turkey's subsequent actions were a significant landmark in the shift of TFP to a more multi-dimensional outlook.<sup>16</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, many foreign policy experts express that Turkey faces a more chaotic and unpredictable world, and that building resilience in such competitive geopolitical settings needs a sort of strategic autonomy.<sup>17</sup> Another crucial aspect of strategic autonomy is that foreign policy has always been domesticated by JDP leaders as a critical issue in consolidating their position within Turkey's internal power politics.<sup>18</sup> However, strategic autonomy for Turkey always comes with several challenges. At the international level, any pursuit of strategic autonomy by Turkey is perceived as an indication of its drifting away from the West and becoming more a Middle Eastern or Eurasian power by aligning with Russia and China.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the pursuit of strategic autonomy eventually leads a discussion of Turkey's position in NATO.<sup>20</sup> At the domestic level, it is viewed as being in opposition to the 'westernization/modernization' paradigm, and through varied foreign and domestic policy activisms, creates fundamental polarization in Turkish society.<sup>21</sup>

An emerging Turkish version of Gaullism—a more nationalist, self-confident and defiant Turkey—has been emerging under the JDP governments since the early 2000s.<sup>22</sup> Retrospectively, we can identify two different sets of systemic and domestic political contexts between 2002–2011 and 2011–2020, in which different tools have been used to achieve more autonomy in foreign policy implementation.<sup>23</sup> Even though JDP has remained in power, these two periods have witnessed divergent political priorities and systemic settings at both domestic and international levels. In the latter period, the course of foreign policy actions gained momentum in the light of the deteriorating security conditions stemming from the spillover of the Syrian civil war. Since then, Turkey has started relying more on coercive tools to increase its autonomous foreign policy. The soft-power approaches were eventually supplanted by an assertive search for 'autonomy', followed by military interventionism and coercive diplomacy.<sup>24</sup>

In recent years, a series of crises in trust have developed in Turkey's relations with the United States (US) and the European Union (EU). This trust problem has accelerated the militarization in TFP in two particular ways: firstly, by enhancing Turkey's traditional suspicions of foreign intervention, and secondly, by further convincing Turkey that it can only be sure about its sovereignty if it relies on its own power. In recent years, three important events had significant ramifications for Turkish understanding of its security; the 2016 coup attempt, the emerging PKK-statelet in the Northern Syria, and the EU's standing with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean. All three reinforced the pursuit of autonomy in TFP by relying on its own military powers.

In the wake of the 2016 coup attempt, Turkey was traumatized not only by the coup events themselves, but also by the silence of its traditional allies. Their indifference to the events of the night of July 15 severely damaged Turkey's ties with its allies. Another major problem in this period was Washington's close alliance with local Kurdish units in Northern Syria that became a fully fledged Kurdish militia armament program. This created a sense of existential threat in Ankara, where in response to these actions Turkey had launched a series of diplomatic and military counteractions, including purchase of the Russian S-400 surface to air missile system, serving to further widen divisions between the US and Turkey.

As another factor increasing Turkey's perception of military power in defining its security and interests we should also add recent events in the Eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus and problems related to the Aegean Sea are always laboratory examples of the soft-hard power dichotomy for TFP and must be mentioned as an integral part of Turkey's perceptions on security. Greek Cypriots were accepted into the European Union in 2004 even though they had not accepted the Annan Plan in a referendum in the same year. This shocked the Turkish side, and has had toxic effects on Turkey-EU relations since. Many in Turkey lost faith and questioned the sincerity of diplomatic initiatives between the two, and the experience left deep fractures in the negotiating tools for conflict resolution of any issue with the EU. Those experiences undoubtedly created a gradual impetus towards force projection that is considered as the sole option in Turkish policy formation. With ever-increasing tensions on the Exclusive Economic Zone demarcation lines with Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey perceives military power as the only tool in defining its security and interests. The maritime jurisdiction treaty between Turkey and Libya signed on 27 November 2019, was an important step for Ankara in this direction, and reinforced its claims with respect to the continental shelf zones in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>25</sup> Yet, the implementation of the accord requires Turkey to enforce it by military force against numbers of actors including traditional allies.

Matter of fact, the institutional relations with the US and other NATO partners have deteriorated to unprecedented levels in the transatlantic alliance's history over regional security challenges.<sup>26</sup> Turkey's failure to win support from Europe and the US for the policies that it sees as vital caused a toxic atmosphere in which Russia skilfully used its relations with Turkey and its overarching military presence in Syria as a pull factor. This move also caused growing divisions within NATO. Despite the rift between Turkey and Moscow with respect to the aircraft crisis in 2015, Russia established a highly constructive partnership with Ankara in a very short period of time. While Western capitals were still in confusion and silent on the matter, Putin was among the first to call President Erdogan after the coup attempt. Russia also showed significant cooperation in Turkish efforts to push Kurdish forces out of strategic towns in northern Syria. In short, Turkey's compulsory cooperation with Moscow as a result of Russia's dominant position in Syria was one factor that raised international concerns about Turkey's stance. Yet, there remains great divergence between Russia and Turkey on issues ranging from Syria, Libya, Ukraine, and the Black Sea to trade quotas, export-import balances, and energy prices. In an international environment where the US and EU appear unwilling to respond to crises, Turkey has managed to create room for manoeuvre for itself that enables it to take an autonomous position and pursue its own objectives while benefiting from the Western alliance.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, TFP under the JDP is seeking autonomy by maximizing its independence in foreign policy decision-making rather than the promotion of attachment to any particular identity. In another words, 'Turkey yearns, more than anything, to be a standalone power'<sup>28</sup> and this requires a coercive edge.

### *Domestic politics*

The linkage between domestic politics and foreign policy has long been identified by International Relations scholars.<sup>29</sup> The literature on this assumes that foreign policy can be defined in terms of domestic political priorities, aims and structures, just as domestic

policy can be formed for foreign policy priorities, aims and structures.<sup>30</sup> Putnam introduces this as two-level games in the literature.<sup>31</sup> International Relations theorists have also addressed the tendency among governments with declining electoral success to use adventurous foreign policy choices or make radical shifts in their foreign policy to win in a re-election.<sup>32</sup>

As for Turkey, foreign policy discourses and practices have never been independent of the internal/domestic power struggle.<sup>33</sup> However, the tandem between Turkish domestic politics and TFP has been growing closer—most significantly since 2011—to the extent that TFP is now firmly embedded in domestic politics. Alongside increasing geopolitical risks and challenges, Turkey's domestic politics too has undergone a wave of crises in recent years; the renewed waves of PKK terrorism after the failed peace process, never-ending election cycles, the bloody attempted coup of 15 July 2016, a constitutional amendment to replace the parliamentary system with a presidential system, and financial and economic difficulties, last but not least the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Primarily, there are two sets of domestic factors that have paved the way for the ascendancy of conservative nationalism in Turkey since 2011. The first is the dramatic change in the priorities and perceptions of the ruling elites. The increasing role of domestic identity and ideology—a conservative nationalism—has become the default form of ruling identity in Turkish politics. In the political discourse of the JDP elites, references to foreign policy for domestic political purposes have become prominent as TFP issues become popular in domestic political disputes. From the time of the 2013 Gezi Park protests, JDP elites moved away from the liberal-conservative and western-oriented coalition to a conservative-Islamist-nationalist coalition for whom regime survival has grown into a priority.<sup>34</sup> The ruling elites are inclined to read what happens in domestic politics and international relations in terms of their own survival, and prioritize taking necessary steps towards this by fusing domestic and foreign policy perceptions. In this sense, foreign policy issues are seen as a platform for carrying domestic rivalries and power politics beyond national borders, and foreign policy has greatly served as an extension of domestic politics in order to manipulate domestic political rivalries.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, rogue decisions by junior parties impacting foreign affairs<sup>36</sup> have become apparent in TFP decision-making and implementation. The role of junior coalition partner, the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (NMP), in influencing foreign and domestic politics has been a highly-debated issue in Turkish politics since the last presidential election. Once JDP formed an electoral coalition with NMP, the latter's stance on national security and foreign policy has become radical right-wing.<sup>37</sup> Instead of new warships, Turkish-made armed drones, and international troop deployments, JDP could have been proud of a strengthened human rights record, greater economic cooperation with Europe, or a stronger position for Turkey in NATO, yet domestic political alliances have moved the nation in the opposite direction.<sup>38</sup> Both JDP and NMP believe that hostile powers, external and internal, are threatening Turkey's peace and prosperity.

It should also be noted that this newly emerging domestic coalition of elites tends to use foreign policy crises to cover domestic difficulties, especially the economic ones. Foreign policy rhetoric and actions also boost their domestic legitimacy and standing. Increasing economic troubles and democratic deficits in domestic politics have all been followed by a more assertive foreign policy outlook.<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising that several of

the cross-border operations Turkey launched against PKK/YPG overlapped with election dates. For instance, after two police officers are assassinated by the PKK, Turkey carried out military operations in northern Iraq targeting PKK positions on July 24, 2015, with JDP having lost its majority in Parliament in the June 2015 election. The breakdown of the ceasefire with PKK was related to weak results in the June election, and President Erdogan aligned with nationalists' votes following this parliamentary loss.<sup>40</sup> Later, the incremental shift towards more nationalistic tones in domestic politics turned into a formal alliance with NMP. An April 2017 referendum on constitutional change, the 2018 Turkish general election, the March 2019 local elections, and the twice-run 2019 Istanbul local elections all somehow coincided with cross-border operations of varying magnitudes. Operation Olive Branch for Afrin (January 20–March 24, 2018) was followed by the June 2018 general elections, Operation Euphrates Shield (24 August 2016–29 March 2017) was followed by the April 2017 constitutional change, and Operation Claw in May–June 2019 was followed by the 2019 local elections, and continued with the major Peace Spring Operation in October 2019. It should be noted also that despite severe political polarization, the latest interventions in Syria, Iraq, Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean receive broad cross-party support in Turkey.<sup>41</sup> The domestic and foreign security problems Turkey faced during this period created a nationalist atmosphere. In brief, it is clear that JDP handles foreign policy crises in the pursuit of larger domestic legitimacy, and the momentum it builds in doing so is assisted by populist rhetoric as an integral part of domestic consumption. Thus, the militarization of Turkish foreign policy progresses in tandem with the securitization of domestic politics.<sup>42</sup>

### ***The military-industrial complex***

The structures of preparing and planning for war reflect a cordial relationship between policymaking and militarism. Similarly, production and industrialization practices have always been linked to the processes of waging war and preparing for war. As such, the military-industrial complex casts itself as a mentality and collection of structures that view war as a natural and beneficial social practice.<sup>43</sup> If this mentality grows unchecked, very few institutional limits remain in restricting geopolitical militarism and adventurism or at least supplanting diplomatic instruments over military one. Military-industrial power as a social link between military and social capital establishes networks that include other economic and political actors seeking to nourish their sources of political, administrative and financial power. Therefore, the military-industrial complex is built by firms operating in the war industry who receive a high level of military spending and the military and/or civilian bureaucracy that controls the tenders for military procurement.<sup>44</sup> Even though as yet the Turkish military-industrial complex is far from being such an institutional power in determining TFP, it is fast becoming such a social force by using the various forms in which domestic militarism combines with the powers of (crony) capitalism and social legitimacy. We may say that Turkey's defence sector has now developed to the point where it has become a central factor in the state's geopolitical calculations. Another point to mention here is the possibility of creating a national defence industry lobby—as happened in the US—and its establishing its own markets.

The Turkish Military Industrial Complex is divided into four clusters: government, industry, military, and research segments.<sup>45</sup> A crucial factor in Turkey's growth has been its capacity to combine government and private sector partnerships within these four clusters. Through the implementation of several national defence programmes, the partnership between different clusters enhances defence industry's independence. During the Cold War, the Turkish defence industry continued its development programme with American support and acquired new capabilities as a result of NATO membership, all the while still dependent on western imports, assembly techniques and production. In the 1970s, however, important progress was noted in the Turkish defence structure. Established in 1975, ASELSAN was an army-owned company that began to produce military communication devices and electronic systems. Following in its footsteps during the 1980s, state-owned companies such as TUSAŞ, HAVELSAN, ROKETSAN all began to fulfil for the armed forces various procurement requirements such as missile parts, components in the aviation industry, simulation units, and electrical and electronic units. Although significant domestic progress was made, these steps were not taken independently from the Western defence industry scheme; Turkey acted in cooperation with countries such as the United Kingdom, the US and Germany and thus become an active member of the multilateral defence supply programme. With the gradual participation of the private sector in the 1980s, important steps were taken in the field of organized domestic production. In 1983, the General Directorate of Defence Equipment Enterprises was established, and hence a cooperative platform became possible with local companies harmonizing their production capabilities. In this period, while the main platform imports from Western countries continued, technological advancements were made in sub-systems. The Undersecretariat for Defence Industries, which was restructured in 1989, started to execute a coordination programme that would further encourage domestic production. These steps in turn laid the foundations of the Turkish Defence Industry Policy and Strategy Principle, a revolutionary agenda that would be responsible for a high tech-oriented programme. In brief, one may say that the process was an evolvement from ready purchases to a domestic production model that included high-incentive schemes for private companies. These policies began to bear fruit in the 2000s, and subsequently made Turkish public and private defence contractors an important international player.<sup>46</sup> According to the 2020 Defence News annual rankings, seven of the top 100 defence companies in the world are Turkish, placing Turkey fourth on the top 100 list in numbers of defence companies.<sup>47</sup>

Historically, Turkey's domestic defence industry growth appears to have relied on Western know-how and when we talk of independence in defence industry that refers independency from Western sources. Indeed, in the case of generators, radars, counter-measurement equipment, optics and missile defence systems, Turkey still relies heavily on Western suppliers. This dependence inevitably creates a structural vulnerability, with embargoes always a possibility.<sup>48</sup> Until recently, Turkey had never managed to reach a tangible level of domestication in the defence industry,<sup>49</sup> but thanks to the dynamism of its national defence industry and its diversification of supply procurement from foreign governments—to include those such as South Korea, Ukraine and the United Kingdom—it has partially overcome these structural weaknesses.<sup>50</sup>

According to SIPRI data, Turkey's defence spending has increased approximately 60 per cent since 2002 from \$12,476 million in 2002 to \$20,796 million in 2020. Likewise, the ratio of military spending to government budget increased from 6 per cent to 7.8 per cent in the same period.<sup>51</sup> One important point is that a significant portion of the military spending went to the domestic suppliers. In addition, Turkey is the world's fifteenth largest arms importer, accounting for 3.7 per cent of world arms imports between 2010 and 2014. Between 2015 and 2019, this ratio decreased to 1.8 per cent, with the steep decline a result of increasing domestic arms production. As for arms exports, Turkey's share was 0.5 per cent from 2010 to 2014 and this grew to 0.8 per cent from 2014 to 2019.<sup>52</sup> As such, Turkey is the only nation among its neighbours in the top ten in terms of military strength.<sup>53</sup> Now, Turkey is able to export advanced systems to NATO countries.<sup>54</sup> The sale of defence equipment demonstrates not just Turkey's determination to increase defence exports, but also Ankara's desire to drastically expand its domestic defence industry.

It is important to note that domestic military production capabilities have always appeared to be the core medium in sustaining strategic autonomy in the Turkish case. Turkey's understanding of strategic autonomy reflects a desire for domestic production or non-Western procurement of defence equipment as a means to independence in its foreign policy decision-making and execution. From Turkey's 1974 Cyprus intervention to its cross-border operations into Syria, the level of its strategic autonomy historically derives from the level of its military dependency on the West. As its dependency decreases, Turkey becomes more willing to adopt an independent foreign policy that ascribes to its interests. Looking at this equation conversely, we see Turkey increasingly expanding its armed powers by manufacturing weapons domestically, which in turn serves as a source of autonomy in foreign policy implementation.<sup>55</sup>

The projection of Turkey's influence is multi-layered,<sup>56</sup> and its hard-power approach is only one factor that has arisen in recent times.<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, a capable military is crucial in achieving Turkey's external operational capabilities and enables its leadership to become a more assertive player in foreign policy.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, domestic developments in the defence industry represent a reshaped foreign policy, one that adopts a more offensive stance against national threats and gives Turkey more room for manoeuvre against subjection to Western sanctions. As noted earlier, domestic production of arms functions as an important dynamic for Turkey's independent and autonomous foreign policy decision-making and implementations. In particular, expertise in drone manufacture appears to be an important enabler for Turkish power projection. Several unmanned systems independently designed, developed and manufactured by the Turkish industry are now at the forefront of the Turkish military's 'Revolution in Military Affairs'. Turkish-made drones have proved to be the most valuable asset in projecting the hard power of Turkey into the larger geographic terrain.<sup>59</sup> Some have labelled this the 'dronization' of TFP.<sup>60</sup> These systems are casting themselves as multi-purpose, highly powerful and combat-proven on a variety of terrains such as Iraq, Syria, Libya and Nagorno Karabakh.

One important issue for the government is the capacity of the military industry to impact on voters and domestic politics, and there can be little doubt that display of the Turkish military-industrial complex and its military successes functions as a tool in bringing about a 'rally round the flag' effect in domestic politics. Since the middle of

the 2000s, the JDP has acknowledged the power of propagandizing developments in the military industry and new platform acquisitions in the defence sector. For the majority of nationalist conservatives, the progress of defence capabilities has been a major reason to support the ruling party, while reducing criticisms from secular Kemalists about the strength of the country. In a country where the majority of the people attach importance to national glory and strong military power, this propaganda continues to be highly influential in voting behaviours. It is hardly surprising therefore that government-led channels produce waves of introduction videos regarding military equipment and platforms. The same may be seen on a broader scale on social media such Twitter and YouTube, where propaganda goes on in a highly effective manner. Huge amounts of infographics, video clips and simulations are delivered by the Presidency of Defence Industries, all devoted to consolidating public perception of the improvements in Turkey's capabilities and creating a perfect voting mechanism for nationalist voters. In this respect, Turkish youth in particular is increasingly encouraged to concentrate on the emerging power of the country rather than focusing on economic problems. Furthermore, their success in international operations creates an effective marketing strategy for these products,<sup>61</sup> and Turkey is making use of the export potential of these platforms to forge more sustained and deeper relations with several countries, such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Tunisia and others.<sup>62</sup> As of now, it well can be said that the Turkish military-industrial complex plays a certain role in defining the nationalism, militarism and risk-taking tendencies observed in recent TFP.

## **Consequences of TFP militarization**

TFP militarization brings with it various consequences. As first-order consequences there are diplomatic and economic implications such as isolations and backlashes from several states. Second-order consequences are over-stretching in terms of economic and military capabilities.

### ***First order consequences of TFP militarization: counter coalitions and isolation***

One main outcome of TFP militarization has been noticed in the context of the forward defence doctrine. In cross-border areas, forward defence policy casts itself as military operations and territorial control, and this strategy's maritime wing is called 'Blue Homeland'.<sup>63</sup> In this context, the militarization of Turkish foreign policy departs from the argument that Ankara cannot have a seat at the negotiation table if it is not physically active in the field.<sup>64</sup> However, this hard-power approach has an important first-order consequence: it establishes counter coalitions against Turkey. Turkey's interventions in Syria, Iraq and Libya have created intense rivalry with both the Iran-led axis and the Saudi-United Arab Emirates (UAE) bloc.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Turkey's extensive coercive diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean has created a bloc of countries opposing Turkey that includes France, Israel, the UAE and Egypt, along with Greece, South Cyprus, and a number of other European countries.<sup>66</sup> Egypt, Israel, Cyprus and Greece have stepped up close partnerships over a range of initiatives, including the exploitation of gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean, and have side-lined Ankara in the process. France, which opposed the Turkish operations in Syria and backed the Libyan government based in

Tripoli, has also come out in support of the Eastern Mediterranean energy initiative.<sup>67</sup> France and the United Arab Emirates took part in MEDUSA exercises on November–December 2020 alongside Greece, Cyprus and Egypt for the first time in history.<sup>68</sup>

Ready use of the hard-power approach has broader consequences too in terms of diplomatic isolation and backlash, two very significant consequences of TFP militarization. In 2013, Ibrahim Kalin, then advisor to the Prime Minister and now Presidential spokesperson, argued that it was unfair to say that Turkey has been left alone in the Middle East, adding that, ‘if that argument is true, then I’d say it’s a precious loneliness’. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Arab Springs of 2011, it could have been labelled a ‘precious loneliness’ much akin to the ‘splendid isolation’ of Britain under the governments of Lord Salisbury between 1885 and 1902. However, in the intervening years, Turkey has hardly strengthened its relations with anyone as the problems Ankara now faces with its neighbours and Western allies become even more difficult to overcome. Recent events put Turkey’s name next to Russia and China as a threat to EU and transatlantic alliances.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, in the eyes of several European powers, Turkey has gone from accession candidate to hostile power.<sup>70</sup> In the words of the EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, ‘the recent actions widen Turkey’s separation from the EU’.<sup>71</sup> According to a poll conducted by ISPI and Ipsos, Italians, generally known as friendly to Turkey, now perceive Turkey as a dangerous country posing a threat to the world.<sup>72</sup> In no other period in history has Turkey been isolated diplomatically to this extent,<sup>73</sup> while Turkey itself has very few options other than Europe in terms of trade, short-term financing, foreign direct investment or technology—even though there is a degree of diversification in energy supply and arms procurement.<sup>74</sup>

### ***The second order consequences of militarization in TFP: overstretching***

Overstretching is another significant consequence of TFP militarization. Turkey is a middle-power country with limited political, military and economic capabilities. Turkey does not have adequate military resources to deal with protracted crises on more than one front simultaneously, nor does it have the military or economic capacities to sustain its current course of action. Indeed, it should be noted that the hard-power policy approach poses great risks not only to ties with traditional allies and neighbours, but too to the economic and political stability of the country itself. Turkey’s military budget has gradually increased, reaching over \$20 billion in 2019. Defence spending is generally perceived to be an inefficient expenditure because the opportunity cost—the potential civilian uses of such resources that are lost—is too great.<sup>75</sup> Given Turkey’s economic fragility, ramifications of its use of scarce resources to support the militarization of foreign policy do not remain exclusively in the political and/or military sphere, but have significant economic consequences.<sup>76</sup> A crisis-prone foreign policy, coupled with worries about President Erdogan’s unorthodox economic practices, has been an important source of Turkish lira devaluation against major currencies, making the Turkish economy much more vulnerable. Although Turkey has experienced considerable domestic change in the last decade, its emergence as an economic power was possibly the more significant shift.<sup>77</sup> However, the Turkish economy has been in crisis since 2018 and slowing growth trends have been exacerbated by COVID-19. Since 2013, Turkey’s gross domestic product, which had been rising, has gone into reverse, falling in nominal terms

to \$754 billion in 2019, a drop of \$200 billion in 6 years.<sup>78</sup> It should be noted that there is a strong correlation between economic stability and electoral success in Turkish politics, and therefore it is not surprising to see that JDP has shifted to a more conciliatory tone, partly to attract foreign capital to prop up its ailing economy, while at the same time it promising reform and growth.<sup>79</sup> The cost of hosting several million refugees is another important side effect of TFP. President Erdogan has underlined several times that Turkey spent \$40 billion hosting some 3.7 million Syrian refugees<sup>80</sup> Even though this figure is controversial,<sup>81</sup> Turkey has undoubtedly been overburdened with increasing numbers of refugees in recent years,<sup>82</sup> bringing about other consequences such as a changing labour market outlook and the socio-cultural polarization of society. We can also assume there are some collateral economic consequences, such as embargoes on Turkish goods in several Arab countries.<sup>83</sup> A decrease in foreign direct investment and growth potential, and financial instability and rising inflation are just some of the economic implications of TFP, and it would seem that TFP militarization will not allow Turkey to ease the unfolding economic crisis it faces.

## Conclusion

In recent years, we have witnessed significant shifts towards more assertiveness in TFP. Various military incursions into Syria and northern Iraq, deployment of troops to Libya, naval stand-offs with Greece, and support for Azerbaijan in the fight against Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh are all recent expressions of Turkey's increasingly aggressive foreign policy posture, a posture enhanced by an uncompromising rhetoric.<sup>84</sup> Turkey's hard power approach has grown its ability to project its power in Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

This paper aimed at teasing out the main factors leading to TFP militarization. To this end, we studied the militarization trends in TFP in the light of three self-enforcing causes, namely, Turkey's pursuit of strategic autonomy, the closing gap between its domestic and foreign policy, and its growing military-industrial complex. TFP militarization, on the other hand, has a variety of repercussions. Diplomatic and economic ramifications, such as isolation and reaction from many countries, are first-order effects. Second-order repercussions include an overstretch in economic and military capabilities.

## Notes

1. Hürcan Aslı Aksoy, 'Excursus: Turkey's Military Engagement Abroad', Centre for Applied Turkey Studies, 2020, <https://www.cats-network.eu/topics/visualizing-turkeys-foreign-policy-activism/excursus-turkeys-military-engagement-abroad/>.
2. Ali Topchi, 'Why Is Sudan's Suakin Island Important for Turkey?', Why is Sudan's Suakin island important for Turkey? 26 December 2017, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/why-is-sudan-s-suakin-island-important-for-turkey-13630>.
3. 'Turkey to Establish Military Base in Azerbaijan', Hürriyet Daily News, 21 July 2016, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-establish-military-base-in-azerbaijan-101906>.
4. Selcan Hacaoğlu, 'Mapping the Turkish Military's Expanding Footprint', *Washington Post*, 21 December 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/energy/mapping-the-turkish-militarys-expanding-footprint/2020/12/19/284b8882-41b7-11eb-b58b-1623f6267960\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/energy/mapping-the-turkish-militarys-expanding-footprint/2020/12/19/284b8882-41b7-11eb-b58b-1623f6267960_story.html).



5. Clemens Hoffmann, 'Neo-Ottomanism, Eurasianism or Securing the Region? A Longer View on Turkey's Interventionism', *Conflict Security & Development*, 19(3), 2019, pp. 301–7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1608016>.
6. İlhan Uzgel, 'Between Praetorianism and Democracy: The Role of the Military in Turkish Foreign Policy', *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, (34), 2003, pp. 177–211.
7. Mehmet Bardakçı, 'Coup Plots and the Transformation of Civil–Military Relations in Turkey under AKP Rule', *Turkish Studies*, 14(3), 1 September 2013, pp. 411–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2013.831256>; Yaprak Gürsoy, 'The Changing Role of the Military in Turkish Politics: Democratization through Coup Plots?', *Democratization*, 19(4), 1 August 2012, pp. 735–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.623352>; Acar Kutay, 'Turkey: The Rise and Fall of the Influence of the Military in Politics', in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics*, 2020.
8. Karl W. Eikenberry, 'The Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy', *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 35(1), 1 January 2013, pp. 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2013.757952>.
9. Julian Schofield, *Militarization and War*, Palgrave Macmillan US, New York, 2007, p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-07719-6>.
10. Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan*, Routledge, 2003.
11. Schofield, *Militarization and War*, 1.
12. Kenneth Benoit, 'Democracies Really Are More Pacific (in General) Reexamining Regime Type and War Involvement', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 40(4), 1996, pp. 636–57; Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali, 'Regime Types and International Conflict, 1816–1976', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 33(1), 1989, pp. 3–35.
13. Özgür Özdamar and Balkan Devlen, 'Man vs. the System: Turkish Foreign Policy After the Arab Uprisings', in Roberto Belloni, Vincent Della Sala, and Paul Viotti (ed.), *Fear and Uncertainty in Europe : The Return to Realism?* Global Issues, Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2019, p. 177, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91965-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91965-2_9).
14. Kareem Fahim, 'Turkey's Military Campaign beyond Its Borders Is Powered by Homemade Armed Drones', *Washington Post*, 30 November 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/turkey-drones-libya-nagorno-karabakh/2020/11/29/d8c98b96-29de-11eb-9c21-3cc501d0981f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/turkey-drones-libya-nagorno-karabakh/2020/11/29/d8c98b96-29de-11eb-9c21-3cc501d0981f_story.html); Laura Pitel, 'Turkey's Armed Drones Bolster Erdogan's Hard-Power Tactics', 8 October 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8e9e9892-2bf2-4912-a6cd-46b5c09cbff6>; Scott Ritter, "'Like Horse-Mounted Cavalry against Tanks": Turkey Has Perfected New, Deadly Way to Wage War, Using Militarized "Drone Swarms"', RT International, 29 November 2020, <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/508000-turkey-drone-swarms-war/>.
15. Sinem Adar et al., 'Visualizing Turkey's Foreign Policy Activism', Centre for Applied Turkey Studies, 2020, <https://www.cats-network.eu/topics/visualizing-turkeys-foreign-policy-activism/>.
16. Baskin Oran, ed., *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1919–2006*, trans. Mustafa Akşin, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2011, p. 415.
17. Şaban Kardaş, 'Turkey: A Regional Power Facing a Changing International System', *Turkish Studies*, 14(4), 1 December 2013, pp. 637–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2013.861111>; Şaban Kardaş, 'Quest for Strategic Autonomy Continues, or How to Make Sense of Turkey's "New Wave"', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 28 November 2011, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/quest-strategic-autonomy-continues-or-how-make-sense-turkeys-new-wave>; Ian Lesser, 'The Evolution of Turkish National Security Strategy', in Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, and Philip Robins (ed.), *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, St Antony's Series, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 2010, pp. 258–76, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230277397\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230277397_14); Ian Lesser, 'Turkey's Third Wave—And the Coming Quest for Strategic Reassurance', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 25 October 2011, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/turkeys-third-wave-and-coming-quest-strategic-reassurance>.
18. Alper Kaliber and Esra Kaliber, 'From De-Europeanisation to Anti-Western Populism: Turkish Foreign Policy in Flux', *The International Spectator*, 54(4), 2019, pp. 1–16.

19. Stephen J. Flanagan, 'The Turkey–Russia–Iran Nexus: Eurasian Power Dynamics', *The Washington Quarterly*, 36(1), February 2013, pp. 163–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2013.751656>; Emre Erşen and Seçkin Köstem, *Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia: Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order*, Routledge, 2019.
20. Jakob Lindgaard and Moritz Pieper, 'Turkey's NATO Future: Between Alliance Dependency, Russia, and Strategic Autonomy', Research Report (DIIS Report, 2020), <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/227710>.
21. Hsan D. Dai, 'Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization', *Turkish Studies*, 6(1), 2005, pp. 21–37; Senem Aydın-Düzgüt and Alper Kaliber, 'Encounters with Europe in an Era of Domestic and International Turmoil: Is Turkey a De-Europeanising Candidate Country?', *South European Society and Politics*, 21(1), 2 January 2016, pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2016.1155282>; Kaliber and Kaliber, 'From De-Europeanisation to Anti-Western Populism'.
22. Ömer Taşpınar, 'Turkish Gaullism?', *Brookings* (blog), 12 April 2010, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/turkish-gaullism/>.
23. Hakan Mehmetcik and Emel Parlar Dal, '2000'li Yıllar sonrası Türkiye'nin Yükselişini Neoklasik Gerçekçilik Çerçevesinden Anlamak', in *Türk Dış Politikasında Güncel Sorunlar ve Teorik Uygulamalar*, 1. Baskı (İstanbul: Nobel Yayınevi, 2019), 27–45.
24. Mustafa Kutlay and Ziya Öniş, 'Turkish Foreign Policy in a Post-Western Order: Strategic Autonomy or New Forms of Dependence?', *International Affairs*, 97(4), 5 July 2021, pp. 1085–1104, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iab094>.
25. Daren Butler and Tuvan Gumrukcu, 'Turkey Signs Maritime Boundaries Deal with Libya amid Exploration Row', *Reuters*, 28 November 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-libya-idUSKBN1Y213I>.
26. Kutlay and Öniş, 'Turkish Foreign Policy in a Post-Western Order'.
27. Henri J. Barkey, 'How Erdogan Muscled Turkey to the Center of the World Stage', Council on Foreign Relations, 30 October 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/article/how-erdogan-muscled-turkey-centre-world-stage>.
28. Asli Aydintasbas, 'Turkey Will Not Return to the Western Fold', 19 May 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2021-05-19/turkey-will-not-return-western-fold>.
29. James D. Fearon, 'Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1(1), 1998, pp. 289–313, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.1.1.289>.
30. Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2016; Gideon Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51(01), October 1998, pp. 144–72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100007814>.
31. Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games', *International Organization*, 42(3), 1988, pp. 427–60.
32. John E. Mueller, 'Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson', *The American Political Science Review*, 64(1), 1970, pp. 18–34, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1955610>; John R. Oneal and Anna Lillian Bryan, 'The Rally 'round the Flag Effect in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1985', *Political Behaviour*, 17(4), 1 December 1995, pp. 379–401, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01498516>.
33. Ali Balci, 'Why is "precious loneliness" so precious?', Bog, accessed 19 August 2020, <http://www.abalci.com/2013/11/12/why-is-precious-loneliness-so-precious/>.
34. Mehmetcik and Parlar Dal, '2000'li Yıllar sonrası Türkiye'nin Yükselişini Neoklasik Gerçekçilik Çerçevesinden Anlamak', 34.
35. Esen Kirdiş, 'The Role of Foreign Policy in Constructing the Party Identity of the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP)', *Turkish Studies*, 16(2), 3 April 2015, pp. 178–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2015.1044444>.
36. Toby Greene, 'Foreign Policy Anarchy in Multiparty Coalitions: When Junior Parties Take Rogue Decisions', *European Journal of International Relations*, 25(3), 1 September 2019, pp. 800–825, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066119828196>.

37. Halil M. Karaveli, 'The Rise and Rise of the Turkish Right', *The New York Times*, 8 April 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/08/opinion/turkey-nationalism-right-wing.html>.
38. Marc Pierini, 'Emerging From the Pandemic, Turkey Rolls Out a More Assertive Foreign Policy', Carnegie Europe, 3 June 2020, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2020/06/03/emerging-from-pandemic-turkey-rolls-out-more-assertive-foreign-policy-pub-81963>.
39. 'Turkey Is Wielding Influence All over the Arab World', *The Economist*, August 2020, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2020/08/01/turkey-is-wielding-influence-all-over-the-arab-world>.
40. Evren Balta, 'How the Turkish Elections Changed the Foreign Policy of Turkey', *OpenDemocracy*, 27 July 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/how-turkish-elections-changed-foreign-policy-of-turkey/>.
41. Hoffmann, 'Neo-Ottomanism, Eurasianism or Securing the Region?'
42. Meliha Benli Altunışık, 'The New Turn in Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Regional and Domestic Insecurities' (FEPS—Foundation for European Progressive Studies, -IAI project 'Fostering a New Security Architecture in the Middle East', July 2020., 2020).
43. Tim Jacoby, 'For the People, Of the People and By the Military: The Regime Structure of Modern Turkey', *Political Studies*, 51(4), 2003, pp. 669–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0032-3217.2003.00452.x>.
44. İsmet Akça, 'Peripheral Type of Military–Industrial Complex: Military Capital in Turkey', *Fourth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence/Montecatini Terme*, 19, 2003, p. 23.
45. Kadir Demir, Ebru Caymaz, and Fahri Erenel, 'Defence Industry Clusters in Turkey', *Journal of Defence Resources Management*, 7, 30 April 2016, pp. 7–20.
46. 'How Turkey Became One of the World's Leading Manufacturers of Weapons Systems', *Defence News*, 22 July 2020, <https://www.defencenews.com/native/turkish-defence-aerospace/2020/07/21/how-turkey-became-one-of-the-worlds-leading-manufacturers-of-weapons-systems/>.
47. 'Top 100 for 2020', *Defence News*, 2020, <https://people.defencenews.com/top-100/>.
48. 'Canada Scraps Export Permits for Drone Technology to Turkey, Complains to Ankara', *Reuters*, 12 April 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-calls-canada-review-defence-industry-restrictions-2021-04-12/>.
49. Burak Ege Bekdil and Matthew Bodner, 'No Obliteration: Western Arms Embargo Has Little Impact on Turkey as It Looks East', *Defence News*, 24 October 2019, <https://www.defencenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2019/10/24/no-obliteration-western-arms-embargo-has-little-impact-on-turkey-as-it-looks-east/>.
50. Marc Pierini Siccardi Francesco, 'Why the EU and the United States Should Rethink Their Turkey Policies in 2021', *Carnegie Europe*, 21 January 2021, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/01/21/why-eu-and-united-states-should-rethink-their-turkey-policies-in-2021-pub-83662>.
51. 'SIPRI Military Expenditure Database', SIPRI, June 2020, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.
52. SIPRI Fact Sheet, 'TRENDS IN WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE, 2019', 2020.
53. Şener Aktürk, 'Turkey's Grand Strategy as the Third Power: A Realist Proposal', *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs*, 25(2), 4 January 2021, pp. 152–77.
54. 'Poland to Become First NATO Country to Buy Turkish Drones', *Reuters*, 22 May 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-become-first-nato-country-buy-turkish-drones-2021-05-22/>.
55. Richard Weitz, 'Reducing Its Dependence on Foreign Arms Suppliers, Turkey Enhances Its Strategic Autonomy', 30 August 2010, <http://www.hudson.org/research/7305-reducing-its-dependence-on-foreign-arms-suppliers-turkey-enhances-its-strategic-autonomy>.
56. Hakan Mehmetcik, 'Making Sense of Turkey's Development Aid Policies: The Comparison of Turkish and Indian Development Aid Towards Africa', in *Middle Powers in Global Governance: The Rise of Turkey*, ed. Emel Parlar Dal, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), [//www.palgrave.com/de/book/9783319723648](http://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9783319723648).
57. Adar et al., 'Visualizing Turkey's Foreign Policy Activism'.
58. Siccardi, 'Why the EU and the United States Should Rethink Their Turkey Policies in 2021'.

59. Pitel, 'Turkey's Armed Drones Bolster Erdogan's Hard-Power Tactics'.
60. Cem Çetingüç, 'Turkey's Military Drones Changes Foreign Policy', *P.A. Turkey* (blog), 13 January 2021, <https://paturkey.com/news/turkeys-military-drones-changes-foreign-policy/2021/>.
61. Burak Ege Bekdil, 'Export Potential: Turkey's Homemade Drones Could Boost Local Industry', *Defence News*, 18 April 2019, <https://www.defencenews.com/unmanned/2019/04/22/export-potential-turkeys-homemade-drones-could-boost-local-industry/>.
62. 'Pakistan Enters into Trilateral Military Industrial Complex Agreement', *Times of Islamabad*, 18 December 2017, <https://timesofislamabad.com/18-Dec-2017/pakistan-enters-into-trilateral-military-industrial-complex-agreement>.
63. İlhan Uzgel, 'The "Blue Homeland" and Turkey's New Forward Defence Doctrine', *Newspaper, Duvar English*, 25 June 2020, <https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/06/25/the-blue-homeland-and-turkeys-new-forward-defence-doctrine/>.
64. "'Sahada Varlık Göstermeyen, Masada Kendine Yer Bulamaz'", T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 9 February 2019, <https://tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/101909/-sahada-varlik-gostermeyen-masada-kendine-yer-bulamaz->.
65. Altunışık, 'The New Turn in Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Regional and Domestic Insecurities'.
66. Micha'el Tanchum, 'How Did the Eastern Mediterranean Become the Eye of a Geopolitical Storm?', *Foreign Policy* (blog), 18 August 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/18/eastern-mediterranean-greece-turkey-warship-geopolitical-showdown/>; Yunus Emre Açıkdoğan, 'Turkey's East Med Policy: Victory at Home, Isolation Abroad | Heinrich Böll Stiftung | Niwêneriya Tirkîyeyê', Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 12 September 2020, <https://tr.boell.org/en/2020/09/12/turkeys-east-med-policy-victory-home-isolation-abroad>; 'Turkey, the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean Crisis', accessed 30 December 2020, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020C62/>.
67. Tamara Qiblawi, 'Turkey's Combative Foreign Policy Could Soon Reach a Dead End', *CNN*, 11 October 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/11/europe/turkey-analysis-erdogan-intl/index.html>.
68. Paul ANTONOPOULOS, 'France And UAE To Participate In MEDUSA Exercises With Trilateral Alliance For The First Time—Greek City Times', 2020, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/11/29/france-egypt-medusa-exercises/>.
69. Denis Mashane, 'Turkey Is the Biggest Threat to Europe Today, and the Greeks Need Our Help', *The Independent*, 21 September 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/turkey-erdogan-brexit-european-union-migrants-sanctions-greece-b512524.html>; 'Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Head of Cabinet Bjoern Seibert of the European Commission', *The White House*, 28 January 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/state-ments-releases/2021/01/28/statement-by-nsc-spokesperson-emily-horne-on-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivans-call-with-head-of-cabinet-bjoern-seibert-of-the-european-commission/>.
70. Sinem Adar and İlke Toygür, 'Turkey, the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean Crisis', the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP, December 2020, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020C62/>; Laura Pitel et al., 'Erdogan's Great Game: The Turkish Problem on the EU's Doorstep', *Financial Times*, 13 January 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/62fe8ff3-4ef3-478f-94fa-39273b7f53ca>.
71. 'Remarks by HR/VP Josep Borrell at the Press Conference Following His Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Çavuşoğlu', Text, EEAS—European External Action Service—European Commission, 6 July 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/82146/turkey-remarks-hrvp-josep-borrell-press-conference-following-his-meeting-minister-foreign\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/82146/turkey-remarks-hrvp-josep-borrell-press-conference-following-his-meeting-minister-foreign_en).
72. 'Italians perceive Turkey as "a major threat to the world"', Text, *Duvar English* (*Duvar English*, 20 December 2020), <https://www.duvarenglish.com/italians-perceive-turkey-as-a-major-threat-to-the-world-news-55547>.

73. Pitel and Faunce, 'Erdogan's Great Game'.
74. Siccardi, 'Why the EU and the United States Should Rethink Their Turkey Policies in 2021'.
75. Sam Perlo Freeman, 'The Opportunity Cost of World Military Spending', STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIPRI), 5 April 2016, [https://public.tableau.com/views/Healthspendingversusmilitaryspending/Dashboard1?:embed=y&:display\\_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no&:showVizHome=no](https://public.tableau.com/views/Healthspendingversusmilitaryspending/Dashboard1?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no&:showVizHome=no).
76. Gülay Günlük-Şenesen, 'The Role of Defence on External Indebtedness: An Assessment of Turkey', *Defence and Peace Economics*, 15(2), 1 April 2004, 145–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1024269032000110522>; Gülay Günlük-Şenesen, 'Some Economic Aspects of Turkish Armaments Spending', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 13, 1995, pp. 75–91, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0896634600002363>.
77. Svante E. Cornell, 'What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?', *Middle East Quarterly*, 1 January 2012, <https://www.meforum.org/3129/turkish-foreign-policy>.
78. Sinan Ulgen, 'A Weak Economy Won't Stop Turkey's Activist Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy*, 6 October 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/06/a-weak-economy-wont-stop-turkeys-activist-foreign-policy/>.
79. Serkan Demirtas, 'Will Turkey Recalibrate Foreign Policy in the New Era?', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 14 November 2020, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/will-turkey-recalibrate-foreign-policy-in-the-new-era-160018>.
80. 'World Avoiding Refugee Problem Does Not Eliminate It', *TRT World*, 18 December 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/world-avoiding-refugee-problem-does-not-eliminate-it-president-erdogan-32305>.
81. Mustafa Sonmez, 'Mystery Surrounds Turkey's \$40 Billion Refugee Bill', *Al-Monitor*, 2 November 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/turkey-syria-40-billion-refugee-bill-calls-for-explanation.html>.
82. M. Hande Akmehmet, 'The High Cost to Turkey of the Syrian Civil War', *Newsweek*, 10 December 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/high-cost-turkey-syrian-civil-war-403535>.
83. "'Secret Embargo': Saudi Arabia Stops Turkish Exports from Entering Kingdom", *Gulf Business Expert* (blog), 31 July 2019, <https://gulfbusinessexpert.com/business/secret-embargo-saudi-arabia-stops-turkish-exports-from-entering-kingdom.html>; Ragıp Soylu, 'Exports from Turkey to Saudi Arabia Plummet by 92 Percent amid Unofficial Boycott', *Middle East Eye*, 4 February 2021, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-saudi-arabia-exports-shrink-unofficial-boycott>.
84. Laura Pitel and Liz Faunce, 'Erdogan's Great Game: Soldiers, Spies and Turkey's Quest for Power', *Newspaper*, *Financial Times*, 12 January 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/8052b8aa-62b9-40c9-a40c-d7187d5cd98a>.

## Disclosure statement


No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributors

*Hakan Mehmetcik* is an Assoc. Prof. at the Department of International Relations, Marmara University, Turkey. He has two master degrees in Economics and Eurasian Studies from Dalarna and Uppsala Universities in Sweden respectively. He finished his Ph.D. in 2017 in International Relations from Yildiz Technical University in Turkey and his research interests lie in the area of International Political Economy, Regionalism, Globalization and broader Security Studies. He has several major publications on Middle Powers, Rising Powers, and Turkish Foreign Policy. His recent article has appeared in *International Politics and Third World Quarterly*.

*Arda Can Çelik* is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Antalya University.

## ORCID

Hakan Mehmetcik  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1882-4003>

Arda Can Çelik  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3325-7112>