



Deals, Drones, and National Will

The New Era in Turkish Power Projection

Rich Outzen



Photo: Yasin Bulbul/
Presidential Palace/Handout
via REUTERS

The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) attracted much attention in 2020 for its devastating employment of unmanned aerial vehicles during combat in Syria, Libya, and the Caucasus. UAVs (drones) were just one dimension of Turkish regional interventions, but they were particularly potent symbols in an age of ubiquitous cameras and Internet connections.¹ A number of analysts have assessed the tactical and operational impact of Turkish drones.² Yet the Turkish drone program is just part of a revamped national approach to power projection in neighboring regions—an approach with economic, diplomatic, strategic, and reputational effects, as well as implications on the battlefield. An expanded network of Turkish military agreements and overseas basing, the maturation of partner and proxy relationships, the expansion of the defense industry beyond UAVs, military doctrine to integrate new sensors

and weapons, and—perhaps most critically—the development of risk-tolerant political will in foreign affairs have enabled Turkey to become a formidable hard-power player in the Middle East, North Africa, the Caucasus, and the Black and Mediterranean Seas. Scholarly analysis is therefore needed that both contextualizes new capabilities for Western audiences and assesses the role and impact of these developments for the coming years. Signaling larger change within the Turkish military, drones represent a technical leap wrapped in a “revolution in military affairs” embedded in a regional realignment.

This study presents an overview of Turkish power projection capabilities beginning in 2011 and extending over the current decade, and examines their impact on regional security balances at present and in the future. The study reviews existing data and literature related to Turkish power projection, lays out several short case studies, and incorporates interviews with security and policy experts familiar with Turkey and the region. It starts with a review of Turkish military engagements during 2020, assesses the drivers of Turkey’s bid for strategic independence and the means employed to achieve it, then finishes with an analysis of implications for the coming decade.

A Watershed Year for Turkish Power Projection

In 2020, the TAF was committed to no fewer than four major overseas military campaigns—three sequential and one sustained. Each case illustrated unique geopolitical incentive dynamics and common Turkish strategy and modalities.

February–March 2020: Operation Spring Shield (Idlib)

After consolidating control of Greater Damascus and southwest Syria in 2018, the Assad regime in late 2019 launched its “Dawn of Idlib” operations to seize the last remaining bastion of opposition control.

Abbreviations

GNA	Government of National Accord (Libya)
LNA	Libyan National Army
MIT	Milli Istihbarat Teskilati (Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party (Turkey)
RMA	revolution in military affairs
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle (drone)
YPG	People’s Defense Units (Syria)

Eager to prevent new massacres, refugee flows, and border-area control by Iran-supported forces, Turkey responded with increased support to the rebels and, ultimately, direct military defense against the combined attacking force of the Syrian regime, Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah. Unlike previous Turkish operations in Syria (Euphrates Shield in 2016, Olive Branch in 2018, Peace Spring in 2019), the Idlib operation was fought against a combined-arms opponent—the Syrian Arab Army, backed by Iranian militias and Russian and Syrian airpower—rather than irregular forces.

Regime forces had been grinding down their Syrian opposition counterparts for months in Idlib as the Turks tried to slow or deter the offensive by maintaining fortified observation posts. On February 27, 2020, Russian and Syrian aircraft struck a TAF convoy in southern Idlib, killing thirty-four Turkish soldiers, the largest Turkish loss of military life in an overseas engagement since 1974. The TAF in response launched Operation Spring Shield, a week-long counterattack incorporating drones, artillery, rocketfire, and precision strike from air and ground platforms. Unlike operations against the scarce and elusive targets of the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Turks’ drone-driven assault

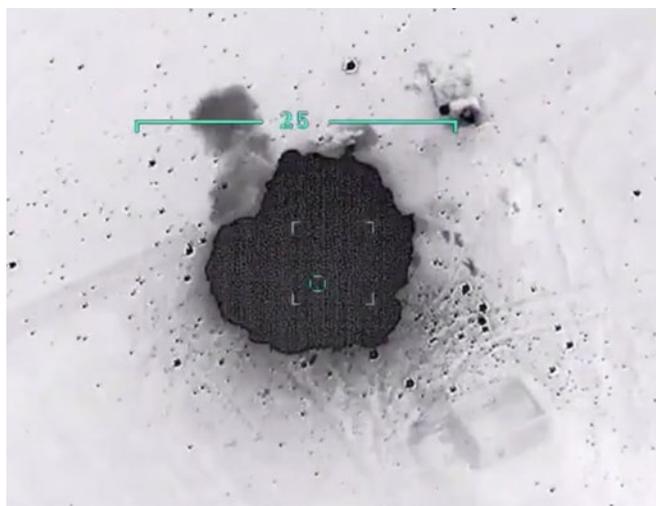
in Spring Shield faced a target-rich environment. Turkish intelligence and observation systems rapidly identified targets and passed them to precision-strike platforms. Those platforms proceeded to destroy numerous Russian-made Syrian military vehicles and fixed sites, removing the advantage that had enabled Bashar al-Assad's forces to drive back the armed opposition. Spring Shield successfully stabilized the Syrian opposition's defenses and inflicted serious losses on regime forces—by Ankara's estimate, 2 jets, 2 drones, 8 helicopters, 135 tanks, and 10 air defense systems, along with 2,557 personnel killed or seriously wounded. Dozens of Hezbollah fighters were also reportedly killed by the TAF.³

Turkey defied a tenet of Western air doctrine by conducting massed and coordinated drone strikes without gaining air superiority over Idlib, but it achieved tactical success at an acceptable cost.⁴ Syrian air defenses, utilizing Russian equipment, had been considered formidable, if vulnerable to the world's top air forces; even the U.S. military portrayed their defeat as a daunting, high-resource task.⁵ Instead of fully suppressing enemy air defenses through an extended air campaign, Turkish drones destroyed individual Syrian point air defense systems, either preemptively or when activated, enabling further drone strikes. Although Syrian air defenses downed some Turkish drones, Syrian forces suffered far greater losses. In the future, more sophisticated armies with layered air defense,

electronic warfare, and own-drone or counter-drone capabilities may fare better than the Syrians did, but Spring Shield demonstrated that for now the TAF "drone blitz" represented an asymmetric advantage.⁶

April–June 2020: Operation Peace Storm (Libya)

Libya's decade of intermittent civil war following the 2011 death of Muammar Qadhafi entered a new phase in 2019 when Gen. Khalifa Haftar, who leads the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA), launched an offensive to seize western Libya and Tripoli, supported to varying degrees by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia, and France. Ankara had important commercial and cultural ties to Libya and sought to preserve its future role there through a negotiated settlement that protected groups with connections to Turkey. After months of watching the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) lose ground to General Haftar's force, including newly arrived Russian mercenaries, Turkey intervened to prevent the GNA's collapse. Following negotiations in November 2019, Turkey sent weapons, advisors, combat support forces, air defenses, and naval units to bolster GNA defenses. In April 2020, the GNA launched a counteroffensive, which by June 2020 had driven Haftar's forces from the outskirts of Tripoli back to Sirte, leading to a new equilibrium and renewed negotiations.



A Turkish drone strike in Idlib.



Russian-made SA-22 Pantsir air defense system captured by GNA forces after Turkish drone strikes in Libya.

Source: video capture from Anadolu Agency/Reuters Marketplace

During the two months of Operation Peace Storm, the TAF employed naval power, air defense, logistical support, intelligence, and the same combination of radars, drones, precision strike, and electronic warfare deployed in Idlib. The LNA's losses likely included at least one hundred military vehicles, one thousand personnel, and the entirety of its previous year's gains.⁷ The LNA suffered severe shortcomings, of course: older Russian weapons and vehicles, limited air defense of its own, and reliance on a few roads in the open desert. This was a deeply flawed opponent and a target-rich environment. Once again, a Turkey-supported force proved able to turn the tables on an offensive by an attacker with exploitable weaknesses.

September–November 2020: Operation Iron Fist (Nagorno-Karabakh)

The second Nagorno-Karabakh war, lasting from September through November 2020, was a six-week offensive by Azerbaijan to regain territories occupied by Armenian forces in 1991–93. Azerbaijani forces incorporated equipment and tactics used by the TAF in Spring Shield, including drone attacks against Armenian air defenses, troop concentrations, and vehicles over a wide area, coupled with ground-based artillery fires. Azerbaijan's operation covered more territory and involved a broader plan of ground maneuver, for which Turkey provided significant planning and logistical support. Before the November ceasefire, Armenia lost 190 main battle



Damaged Armenian truck in Nagorno-Karabakh.
Source: Reuters

tanks, one hundred armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles, dozens of air defense systems, and more than four thousand personnel.⁸ Russian advisors had trained Armenian forces since Soviet times, providing operating doctrine and an integrated air defense system. As drones of Turkish and Israeli manufacture pierced the air defense umbrella, Armenian forces proved highly vulnerable to detection and destruction.

January–December 2020: Operation Claw (Northern Iraq)

The three previous campaigns ran concurrently with intensified operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. The TAF has conducted episodic operations in northern Iraq for decades and maintained small bases to monitor PKK movement. After 2015, the TAF adopted a new strategy, based on continuous operations to interdict PKK training, supply, and operational movement, especially in the sensitive areas between Khakurk in northeast Iraq and the Syrian border.⁹ What stands out about Operation Claw is its sustained duration; its Claw-Tiger and Claw-Eagle components (ground- and air-focused, respectively) were conducted in multiple phases throughout the entire year as a long-term, rolling series of engagements. This was a departure from 1990s-era Turkish operations, which mobilized tens of thousands of troops for punitive expeditions into Iraq without badly damaging PKK forces or establishing secure areas. The new tempo and tools employed in Operation Claw provided greater reach and potency to the counter-PKK operations in Iraq.¹⁰ The nature of the opponent—irregular infantry in rugged terrain—limited target availability, so the operation relied more on air mobile insertions and commando raids. With airborne surveillance support, these efforts were more effective than past operations.

The phenomenon of a midsize power conducting multiple military campaigns in separate theaters in a single year for independent geopolitical goals is rare, if not unprecedented. At the military-technical level, analysts have taken note and offered initial explanations. More modest assessments argue that the TAF



Turkish commandos in northern Iraq during Operation Claw.
Source: Anadolu Agency

has changed the balance between drones and air defense.¹¹ More ambitiously, the character of ground and armored warfare may have been upended, with tanks now dependent on ever more elaborate layers of camouflage, electronic protection, and air defense.¹² Military innovation expert Col. T. X. Hammes, USMC (Ret.), foresaw in 2019 a revolution in warfare based on “small, smart and inexpensive” solutions that would allow states able to integrate drones, precision strike, and intelligence to overcome more massive conventional opponents; Turkey proved the concept.¹³ Indian military analysts have discerned from the combination of drones, aggressive social media campaigns, and willingness to act and incur casualties a new way of war: fighting with “a large number of small things.”¹⁴ The integration of drones, electronic warfare, maneuver, and precision strike employed by Turkey across technologies and domains (manned/unmanned and ground/air/naval) has been characterized as the opening phase of a revolution in military affairs (RMA).¹⁵ An RMA occurs when new tactics, technologies, and operational concepts enable dramatic increases in effectiveness to provide early innovators a marked advantage and force others to adopt the same methods.¹⁶ While other militaries have used drones for reconnaissance and strike since the 1970s, their employment as the centerpiece of combined arms operations and key enabler of combined arms teams is new. If such widespread integration of unmanned systems into cross-domain operations is an RMA, Turkey is at its leading edge and may not yet have achieved peak advantage.¹⁷

Time will tell whether Turkey’s power projection success was revolutionary or a temporary, if spectacular, advantage. U.S. Army Col. Daniel Barnard points out that the quality of opponent matters greatly:

It was to be expected that the Turkish military, a professional, experienced, and modern NATO force that is arguably the best in the region, could stop Syrian regime–affiliated forces in Idlib; stop and roll back the LNA militia and [Russian-backed] Wagner mercenaries outside of Tripoli; and help tip the balance on behalf of the Azerbaijan military in pushing back Armenian forces. This limited, expeditionary approach would likely face greater challenges against a similarly professional and modernized force equipped with better anti-drone systems, more effective electronic warfare, and integrated air defenses; organized under better doctrine; and more capable of long-range precision strikes. Turkey can likely sustain its current regional advantage because there are no such militaries currently in Turkey’s near abroad, barring a highly unlikely direct conventional conflict with Russian forces.

Given that Turkey... successfully repeated this formula at least three times in 2020, there is certainly something new afoot. A true revolution in military affairs, however, would need to be exportable, and the Turkish military’s recent success may be unique. As discussed, Turkish operations did not rely solely on hardware, but were enabled by well-trained and experienced forces, particularly its special forces, as well as a close relationship with partner militias and militaries. RMAs cannot be achieved by selling a weapon system, as the knowledge and expertise in a new way of fighting have to transfer as well. Many militaries, and even militias and irregular forces, are now fielding drone technology, but none have done so with the lopsided success of the recent Turkish interventions.¹⁸

Turkey expert Can Kasapoglu sees the situation as “an RMA in the making. The Turks and their partners changed the roles and ways existing tools

are used. Drones have existed for more than four decades, but applying them for wide-area strike while simultaneously using them to locate targets for cannon and rocket artillery was entirely new.”¹⁹ RMAs can take a generation to unfold, though, and Kasapoglu believes the drone-centered RMA will not be mature until today’s junior officers, for whom it has been formative, replace senior officers, for whom it has been disruptive. Time will tell whether Turkey’s drone-centered warfare was revolutionary or merely reflective of shrewd application of a temporary advantage against a particular enemy, but it certainly marks a milestone in the country’s power projection trajectory.

Motivating a More Assertive Turkey

If one accepts that these operations mark a major change in both modern warfare and Turkey’s power projection capability, the question still remains of what motivated the breakthrough. The central logic driving Turkey’s regional assertiveness is encapsulated in an expression increasingly heard in the country: *oyun oynanan degil, oyun kuran, oyun bozan bir Turkiye* (translated roughly, “a Turkey that doesn’t play the game, but upends and resets it”).²⁰ This phrase captures a strategic narrative that foreign powers are playing geopolitical games in and near Turkey, that Turkey will not fall for them, and that Turkey has the tools and the will to change the dynamics and establish new “games” on terms favorable to its interests.

This narrative flows from a geopolitical mindset shared across much of Turkey’s political spectrum, rather than from nostalgic (neo-Ottoman) or internationalist (Atlanticist, Islamist, pan-Turkist) impulses that traditionally exert less traction.²¹ The geopolitical narrative explains both Turkey’s liberalization and Western turn in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as its reopening to Eurasia and Africa in the twenty-first century as rational responses to shifting power dynamics:

to Turkey’s precarious geopolitical position in the first case and increasing strength in the second.²² Strategists have framed Turkey’s foreign policy as driven in large measure by a steady stream of regional conflicts and geopolitical threats, and decisionmakers have long sought to marry military force with diplomatic goals in addressing such threats.²³ Master narratives that drive elite and popular foreign policy discourse frequently proceed from geopolitical premises, such as the Sèvres Syndrome, which in Turkey’s strategic discourse describes the habitual tendency of external powers, especially Western imperial powers, to undermine the country’s strength and independence of action—as embodied in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which divided Turkey and subjected it to military occupation. Sèvres is a far more potent and durable cautionary tale than American equivalents (e.g., the Vietnam or Munich Syndrome).²⁴ In short, Turkish strategic culture is geopolitically oriented, with a long historical memory and an extreme trust deficit.

The predictable response within this strategic culture to the dramatic regional events from 1991 to 2011 was greater independence and assertiveness.²⁵ Turkey’s foreign policy remained generally Western oriented, cautious, and multilateral as things went from bad to worse in its neighborhood for two decades after the Cold War. The Iraq wars, Syrian revolution, Libyan fiasco, Palestinian plight, European Union accession failure, Nagorno-Karabakh impasse, and perceived Western duplicity regarding threats to Turkey’s interests (e.g., the PKK, Cyprus, and the eastern Mediterranean) gradually convinced Turkey’s elites and the general public that the country had to chart its own path. This can be seen as the return of a national Turkish geopolitical approach, after dalliances with “zero problems” globalism, optimistic pan-Islamism, and the disappointed Western vocation.²⁶ Turkey’s accumulating disappointments coincided with its attainment of the economic, military, and diplomatic reach to enable more assertive regional policy, and provided the motive needed to put the parts into motion.

Figure 1: Turkey's Diplomatic Network



Source: Lowy Institute

Step One: Building a Network for Regional Access

For decades prior to its Syria, Libya, and Caucasus excursions, Turkey laid the groundwork for strategic power projection through diplomacy. Power projection depends on access: basing, overflight, military exercises, coordination programs, defense-industrial cooperation, and more. Access begins with diplomatic representation in-country. In Africa, Turkey increased its number of embassies from twelve in 2003 to forty-two by 2020, accompanied by increased direct flights, aid projects, and a sextupling of bilateral trade.²⁷ Some African leaders have found Turkish aid, trade, and diplomatic cooperation a positive alternative to a growing dependence on China, owing to perceived cultural similarities.²⁸ The expansion occurred on other continents too; of thirty-seven Turkish embassies opened between 2006 and 2014, four were in South Asia, two in Europe, and five in Latin America. The expansion required a 30 percent increase in real terms for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget but yielded even greater increases in bilateral trade.²⁹ After fifteen years of expansion, by 2019 Turkey had deployed

the sixth-largest diplomatic network in the world (see figure 1 for a depiction).³⁰ The Turkish navy has provided an adjunct to the diplomatic presence with an expanding program of port visits to Africa, Russia, China, and elsewhere.³¹ Another area of focus for Turkish diplomacy has been central Asia, where the laborious effort of turning the Turkic Council from a periodic ceremonial gathering into an economically focused international organization has gained some traction after two decades.³² The Turkic Council represents a version of Eurasian geopolitics independent of Russian or Western domination, a fact intriguing enough to attract Hungary as a participating observer, and the council's utility as a means of balancing Russian and Chinese influence in central Asia should not be overlooked.³³

Diplomatic outreach has opened the door to the stationing of Turkish military forces. Turkey has operated bases in Cyprus since 1974 and northern Iraq since 1992,³⁴ but the basing network developed since 2010 exceeds these very specific deployments. The cornerstone for expansion was the 2015 approval for a long-term base in Qatar, enabling the growth of what would become a “modular and

complex adaptive system” of basing and power projection across nearly a dozen countries.³⁵ The maritime component of forward basing has been compared to China’s “string of pearls,” a series of ports and bases designed to enable access and operations beyond its own littorals. Construction of this network represents a significant new element of the twenty-first-century regional security architecture.³⁶

What follows, then, is a summary of known significant forward basing of Turkish security forces as of 2021:

- **Cyprus.** For most of the past forty-five years, Turkey has maintained 30,000 troops at several large bases in northern Cyprus, including Camlibel, Pasakoy, and Degirmenlik. Owing to other operational commitments, the number of troops may now have dipped below twenty thousand but remains significant.³⁷ Turkey has begun using Gecitkale Air Base to support drone operations in the region and may be considering construction of a naval base at Iskele Bogazi.³⁸
- **Iraq.** Turkey maintains a dozen regional bases in northern Iraq with roughly 2,000 troops, adding temporary operating locations and forces as needed to interdict PKK bases and movement along the border or between the Qandil Mountains and Syria.³⁹ Longstanding fixed bases include those near Batifa, Kani Masi, Bamarni, Bashiqa, and Begova.⁴⁰
- **Syria.** Turkey controls a buffer zone in northern Syria that includes parts of Idlib, Aleppo, and Raqqa provinces, shielding more than five million Syrians while excluding PKK-aligned and regime forces.⁴¹ There are an estimated 10,000–15,000 Turkish troops in Idlib, with thousands more in Afrin and the Euphrates Shield and Peace Spring operation zones.⁴² Turkish troops operate from dozens of fortified outposts and training bases and are partnered with more than 25,000 troops of the Syrian National Army.⁴³ Syrian military and civilian bodies dependent on Turkey enable basic security, economic, and administrative life to continue.
- **Libya.** Turkey signed a military support and training agreement with the Tripoli government in 2020 and has use of al-Watayah Air Base, the naval base at Misratah, and training facilities in and near Tripoli.⁴⁴ Turkish force levels almost certainly have come down from the thousands present during the Tripoli campaign in mid-2020, but it is likely that at least one thousand remain to maintain air, advisory, and training operations. The interim government of Muhammad al-Menfi and Abdulhamid Dbeibeh has indicated that Turkish forces will stay in Libya for the foreseeable future.⁴⁵
- **Caucasus.** Turkey has worked intensively to improve the Azerbaijan military in the past two decades, especially after signature of a strategic agreement in 2010.⁴⁶ Turkey maintains hundreds of trainers, advisors, and support personnel in Azerbaijan at bases including Baku and Nakhichevan and at air facilities at Gabala, Dollyar, and Yevlach.⁴⁷ Since 2012, Georgia has participated in a trilateral military mechanism with Turkey and Azerbaijan that does not appear to involve permanent basing but does include frequent joint military exercises and cooperation for infrastructure security and counterterrorism.⁴⁸
- **Somalia.** Camp TURKSOM is a four hundred–hectare training base built in 2017 at a cost of \$50 million. It has a 200-strong Turkish contingent training 500 Somalis at a time, with 1,500 permanently stationed Somali troops. The camp is near an airport and a Turkish-built hospital and provides a hub for multiservice training as well as civilian-military “soft power” outreach. Turkey is helping Somalia build a commando brigade, a special police unit, and more.⁴⁹ As with Qatar, Turkey struck this access agreement by providing unequivocal support to an allied government at a time of crisis—while Somalia faced UAE-assisted separatist movements in Puntland and Somaliland.
- **Afghanistan.** Turkey has supported U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan since 2002, operating at various times from military bases in Wardak, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kabul. A Turkish

contingent currently leads the multinational force training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces in Kabul province.⁵⁰ Turkish forces have also assisted with the training of officers, noncommissioned officers, commando units, and military instructors. There are currently more than six hundred Turkish troops in Afghanistan, and a new agreement was signed in late 2020 for another five years of military assistance, the U.S. decision in early 2021 to withdraw militarily notwithstanding.⁵¹

- **Qatar.** Tariq bin Ziyad base opened in April 2016, with an estimated capacity of 3,000 troops, although current troop levels are likely well below that number. Qatar also hosts units from Turkish naval, air, and special operations forces. The base reflects mutual commitment between Doha and Ankara, embodied by unwavering Turkish support for Qatar during the Saudi- and Emirati-led blockade against it that began in 2017.⁵²
- **Albania.** Turkey and Albania signed an agreement in 1998 under which Turkey renovated the Pasha Liman naval base for Albania and was granted access for a naval logistics unit and a commando training presence.⁵³ The Albanian government ratified a new agreement for defense goods and services in 2020.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa.** Turkey signed a ninety-nine-year lease for Suakin Island with the Sudanese government in 2018, with the goal of renovating the port to improve tourism, religious pilgrim travel, and potentially naval visits. After Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in 2019, there was speculation the deal might be canceled, but transitional authorities have yet to do so. Turkey will likely defer any military use of Suakin until political conditions in Khartoum mature and will focus instead on civilian use and restoration.⁵⁴ Turkey has concluded military agreements for training, counterterrorism, and defense-industrial cooperation with Nigeria and Niger, enhancing its position in Libya and allowing greater access in central Africa.⁵⁵ Turkish assistance to Chad also involves a

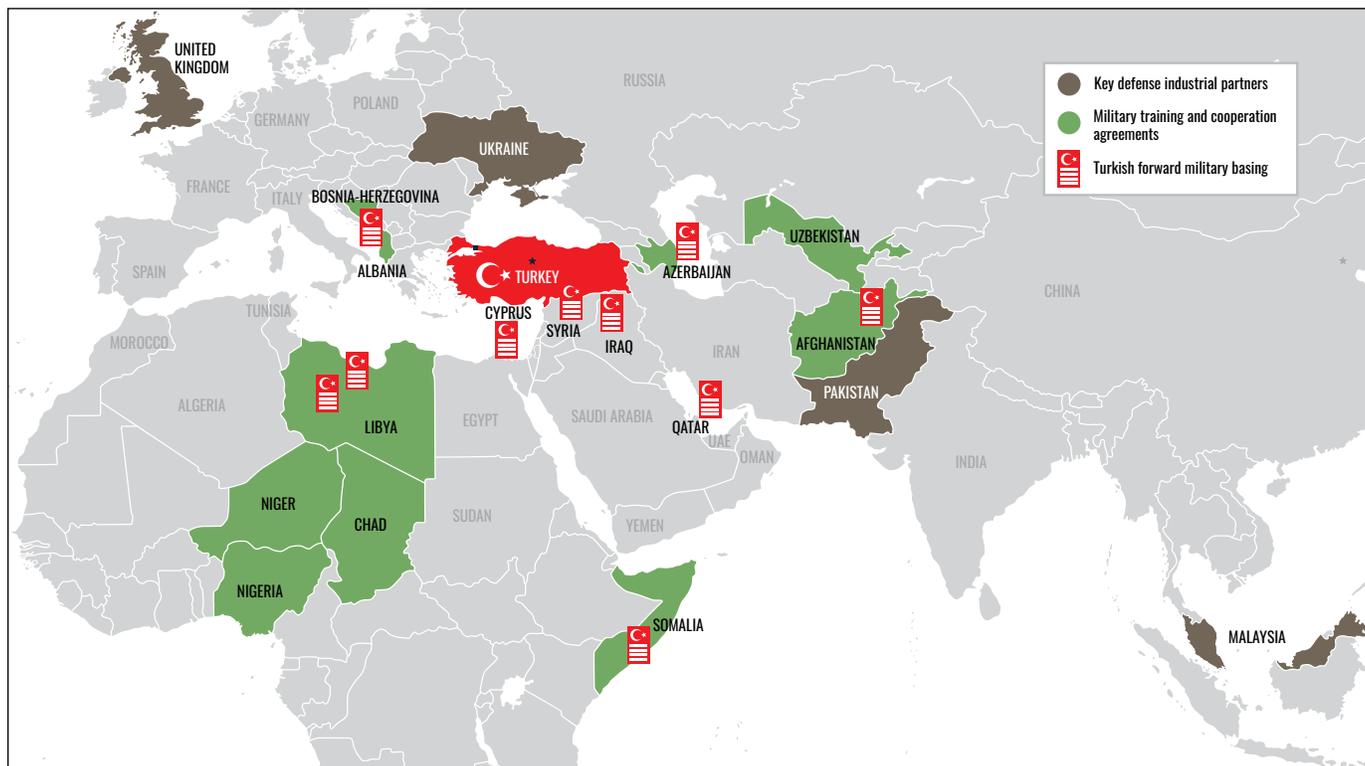
military framework agreement, prompting Egypt to ramp up its own efforts to increase aid to and engagement with Chad.⁵⁶ Turkey has succeeded in building influence in Africa largely owing to its soft power and perceived cultural compatibility, but it has gained a hard-power foothold, too.⁵⁷

- **Multilateral contributions.** Turkey contributes to forces for multilateral missions in a number of countries. Because these forces generally fall under multinational command structures and operate from shared facilities, they are less of a factor for power projection, but they still provide some degree of influence in the affected countries. In the Balkans, Turkish forces serve in such missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, with several hundred soldiers in each.⁵⁸ In Africa, Turkish troops serve in multinational missions in Mali and the Central African Republic. There are also Turkish troops serving within the UN Interim Force in Lebanon.⁵⁹

Security cooperation is not limited to basing and access agreements; defense-industrial partnerships also play an important role. Friction between the United States and Turkey on defense-industrial matters—expulsion of Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet program because of its purchase of Russian S-400 missiles, and export restrictions on U.S.-made engines in Turkish attack helicopters, for instance—are well known. Less well known is that Turkey is forging other cooperative defense-industrial relationships even as it strives for self-sufficiency in armaments. Of note are the following relationships:

- **Pakistan.** Turkey and Pakistan have institutionalized military cooperation under their High Level Military Dialogue Group mechanism and have joint projects in aerospace, ground vehicles, electronics, and naval construction.⁶⁰ The multibillion-dollar cooperative program includes extensive exchange in military education and training and is reportedly expanding to include drone development.⁶¹ Turkey and Pakistan share a history of exposure to sanctions and arms embargoes from Western governments and view each other as reliable partners.⁶²

Figure 2: Turkey’s Overseas Military Bases and Partnerships



- **Malaysia.** Turkey and Malaysia have ramped up defense industrial cooperation in order to avoid reliance on either the West or Russia and China. Malaysia has imported Turkish armored vehicles and remote weapon systems, and the two countries have undertaken joint naval construction. Some commentators see a triangular relationship between Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia as a bulwark for Muslim interests in Asia.⁶³
- **Ukraine.** Turkey and Ukraine signed a defense-industrial agreement and a military framework agreement in 2020, which both countries view as a means of balancing Russian power in and around the Black Sea.⁶⁴ Kyiv has reportedly collaborated with Turkey-based Baykar Defense on its Akinci drone project since August 2019 and has purchased its TB2 drone.⁶⁵
- **Britain.** Turkey and Britain’s defense-industrial cooperation—notably UK support for development of Turkish Aerospace Industries’ fifth-generation TF-X fighter jet—has been slowed by the U.S.-Turkey impasse over Ankara’s purchase of

the Russian S-400 missile system, but Britain remains involved in discussions on the TF-X program, and a post-Brexit free trade agreement portends closer collaboration over the next decade.⁶⁶ Turkey’s Ministry of National Defense has devoted more domestic resources to the TF-X in light of the country’s expulsion from the F-35 program and now expects to conduct TF-X test flights in 2025, with operational flights in 2029.⁶⁷

- **Uzbekistan.** Turkey and Uzbekistan signed a military cooperation agreement in October 2020, when Turkish defense minister Hulusi Akar visited Tashkent. The agreement reportedly covers both defense-industrial cooperation and joint training.⁶⁸

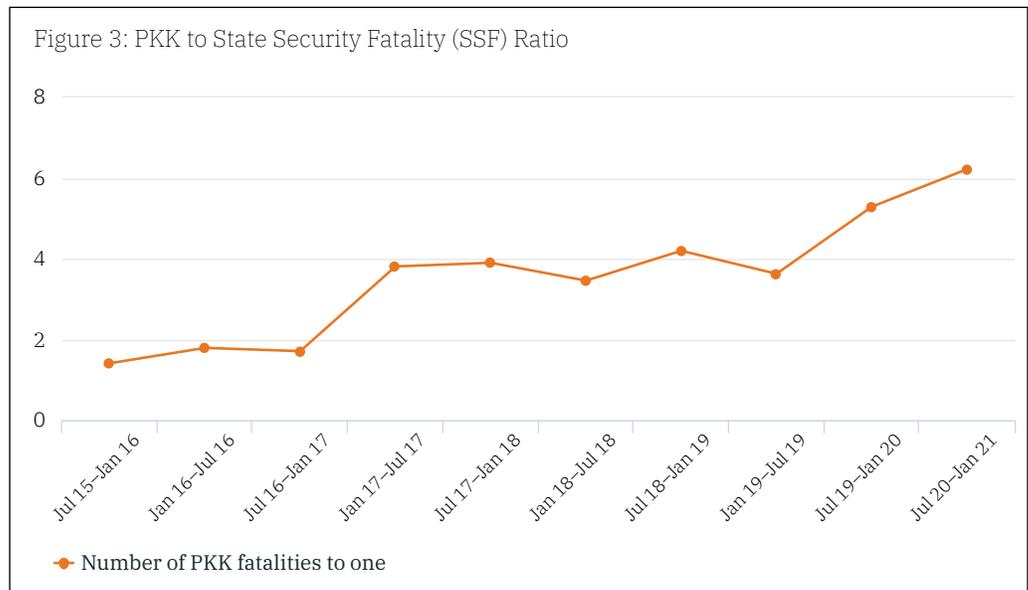
Figure 2 shows the array of basing, access, and cooperation agreements Turkey has accumulated over the past twenty years. Although U.S.-Turkey military ties have frayed in the twenty-first century, Turkey has replaced them with a far more extensive and diverse network of relationships.

Turkey's network of defense and strategic partnerships provides regional access, diplomatic influence, and geopolitical assurance. Some commentators criticize the network as a militarization of foreign policy,⁶⁹ but in reality it exemplifies an expansive use by the civilian government of the military as a diplomacy tool—and enables deepening economic as well as diplomatic ties.

Turkey has forged many of these relationships during times of crisis for the other partner, establishing a reputation for dependability in periods of isolation, unrest, and external threat. Leaders in Doha, Tripoli, Baku, Kyiv, and elsewhere have survived security and political threats because of Turkish intervention and are unlikely to forget such experiences in the coming decades. The network renders Turkey power projection capable, embodies relationships of trust, and provides a counterbalance to U.S. adversaries China (in Africa), Iran (in Iraq and Syria), and Russia (Black Sea Caucasus).

Step Two: Assembling Power Projection Tools

Agreements and access are necessary for power projection, but they can be utilized only if a state develops the necessary industrial and operational tools. Turkey has done so in the past decade, leading with defense-industrial innovation. Drones have become the centerpiece of Turkey's defense-industrial brand. The urgency of the drone program stems from the U.S. refusal to sell MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper aircraft to Turkey in the first decade of the current century.⁷⁰ Turkey initially sought drones to enhance its border security and to conduct limited counterterrorism strikes, but it faced significant hurdles in technological integration, doctrine, and



operational coordination. Turkey's frustrations predate the U.S. refusal; Ankara had purchased Gnat 750s in 1996 from General Atomics, an American firm, plus Heron and Harop systems from Israel a decade later.⁷¹ Testing of domestically produced systems began in 2004, and by 2010 it was clear to Ankara that the foreign systems on hand were insufficient and that foreign supply was not reliable.⁷² Turkish Aerospace Industries and Selcuk Bayraktar's start-up firm pressed forward on drone variants, and by 2015 Turkey had successfully tested drones for high-altitude precision strike. Turkey's independent surveillance and strike drones showed great effect against the PKK in Iraq and Turkey. Between 2015 and 2021, the ratio of conflict-related PKK fatalities to Turkish fatalities rose from roughly 1.5:1 to more than 6:1 (see figure 3).⁷³ By the time the United States quietly ended its decade-old program of providing drone-derived intelligence on the PKK to Turkey, Ankara no longer needed it.⁷⁴

Counter-PKK drone usage was analogous to U.S. use of such systems for counterterrorism strikes against al-Qaeda in 2019 and prior years: precise location and strike against single targets in a fixed area. What followed in 2020 was categorically different, though, as Turkey used large numbers of drones for sustained attacks against organized military forces across wide areas in several conflict zones. Turkish drones proved very effective against the Syrian Arab

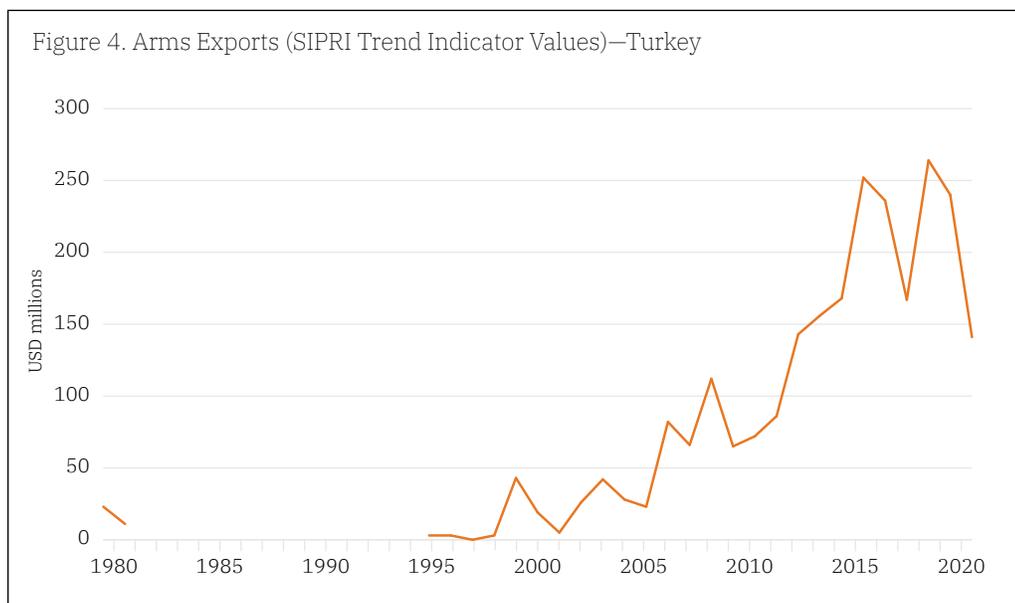
Army, the Libyan National Army, and Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh, as they had against the PKK. As other countries develop countermeasures and comparable systems, the element of technological surprise will be dampened, but Turkey's advantage of operational experience will remain.⁷⁵ Turkey continues to advance its own capabilities in the meantime, with greater-payload/range drones (Akinzi and Aksungur), sea-launched drones (Bayraktar TB3), and swarming kamikaze drones (Kargu-2 and Alpagu) fielded in 2021.⁷⁶ The addition of drones for Turkey's amphibious assault ship (TCG *Anadolu*) will enhance naval reach, especially for intelligence gathering, anti-submarine warfare, and littoral attack.⁷⁷ With annual global expenditures on military drones expected to approach \$10 billion in the coming decade, Turkey has a significant role in the burgeoning market.⁷⁸

Turkey employs its drones as part of a package combined with other weapon systems, making them much more effective. One element of this approach is long-range precision strike. Turkish tactical ballistic missiles such as the Bora (GPS guided, 280 km range, first combat use in 2019) can be targeted with the assistance of surveillance drones, whereas the TRLG-230 (laser guided, currently in development) will be able to home in on target designation lasers carried by drones.⁷⁹ Turkey has homegrown artillery and rocket systems made more effective in tandem use with drones, such as the T-122 Sakarya and TRG-300 Kasirga rocket launchers and the T-155 Firtina howitzer; it is exporting and training allies on these systems as well.⁸⁰ Turkish drones locate targets for strike by other aerial assets, including F-16 aircraft and attack helicopters. The drones, furthermore, complement an airborne early-warning and targeting system that includes ground-based radars and airborne early-warning and control aircraft, enabling Turkish F-16s to engage enemy aircraft without leaving Turkish airspace or activating their own radars.⁸¹ Another critical component of this combined-arms approach is the use of electronic warfare; Turkey's Koral system was employed in Libya to jam, deceive, and paralyze Russian-made SA-22 Pantsirs, enabling Turkish-aligned forces to defeat their opponents' air defense array.⁸² Turkey's

defense industry has developed an array of home-grown precision munitions, including antiship missiles (Atmaca), air defense missiles (Hisar missile family and Sungur man-portable system), an air defense gun system (Korkut), and antitank missiles (OMTAS and UMTAS).⁸³ Turkey has also designed its own military support satellites (Gokturk), with launch services provided by China and in continuous operation since 2012.⁸⁴ Turkey's defense industry is also aggressively pursuing directed-energy weapons for air defense/anti-drone tasks, including Roketsan's ALKA system, and the Turkish government worked to establish the Laser Technologies Center of Excellence.⁸⁵ Turkey has also developed and tested indigenous air-to-air missiles, the infrared-seeking visual range Gokdogan and the radar-seeking, longer-range Bozdogan.⁸⁶

Turkey's defense industry has become both increasingly self-sufficient and a significant source of export revenue for the national economy, with figure 4 reflecting the sharp upward trend in military export value. Turkey had become the world's twelfth-largest military equipment exporter by 2019 and is on a trajectory to crack the top ten in the coming decade. The Turkish defense and aerospace industry manufacturers association, SASAD, reports that total volume for the industry topped \$10 billion for the first time in 2019, including a 40 percent increase in exports (and that was prior to the impact of Turkish drones in the 2020 wars).⁸⁷

Turkey's power projection capabilities have also benefited from a series of reforms within the TAF and the intelligence service. Ground forces began restructuring from a Cold War divisional structure to a mobile and modular brigade structure before the turn of the century, but adaption of equipment and doctrine took decades to mature. Turkey's army decreased its intake of draftees and implemented a system of contracted professional noncommissioned officers as the heart of combat and combat support units. A number of mechanized infantry units were converted to commando brigades, with the number of such brigades rising from five in 2002 to twelve in 2015 and sixteen in 2018.⁸⁸ Although some American observers speculated that officers purged



Source: SIPRI/World Bank. Note: figures reflect constant 1990 USD (data as of 2019).

after the 2016 Gulen movement–inspired coup were Turkey’s finest, there is no empirical reason to believe their successors are less competent; in fact, the removal of a parallel Gulenist chain of command within the military seems to have strengthened rather than weakened the TAF.⁸⁹

The ability of the Turkish internal and external intelligence agency, Milli Istihbarat Teskilati (MIT), to operate beyond Turkey’s borders also has grown significantly in the past two decades. MIT has been placed under civilian control, enjoyed steadily increasing budgets, developed a significant signals intelligence capability independent of the military’s structure, and fielded an operations division for paramilitary actions on the model of the CIA’s Special Activities Division.⁹⁰ In addition to conducting clandestine operations abroad, that operations division appears to be capable of training and organizing proxy forces that have reportedly fought alongside Turkey and its allies in Syria, Libya, and perhaps Azerbaijan.⁹¹ Turkey’s use of proxies in these conflicts has been controversial, but it satisfied several operational needs: to reduce the risk to national forces in overseas conflicts, reduce the perceived costs of conflict to domestic audiences, and provide a pool of experienced fighters for partner forces lacking deep combat experience. The clearest

example of success in this endeavor comes from Syria, where “Turkey’s proxy warfare strategy has effectively merged and centralized many Syrian opposition groups under its own vision of nationalist Islamist governance that will ensure long-term Turkish influence in northern Syria.”⁹² This ability places Turkey in a very select group of nations capable of fielding, training, and deploying proxy forces. Since 2016, cooperation between

MIT and TAF has grown in scope and quality, enabling joint counterterrorism strikes and arrests on Turkey’s periphery (Iraq and Syria) and beyond as well; MIT is now a global intelligence power.⁹³ No intelligence service is flawless—the July 15, 2016, coup attempt and the unsuccessful February 2021 rescue attempt at Gara Mountain in Iraq represent intelligence failures—but MIT has qualitatively and categorically upgraded in recent years.

The Turkish navy also has upgraded its equipment and doctrine over the past decade. Turkish naval construction and modernization has rendered it the largest and most potent naval force in the eastern Mediterranean, with a growing capability for naval operations further afield. The frigates have been upgraded since 2010 with new air defense, radar, gun, and combat management systems, and four specialized frigates are being built with enhanced air defense capabilities for underway forces or littoral operations. Submarines and fast attack craft have been upgraded as well. The MILGEM project produces corvettes and frigates for Turkey and foreign customers—including Indonesia, Ukraine, and Pakistan so far—an important step toward independence in national shipbuilding. Turkey has begun building its own landing ships and landing craft for amphibious warfare and will commission

domestically built submarines beginning in late 2021 or early 2022. Turkey has completed a light aircraft carrier, the TCG *Anadolu*, with another on the way. This marks the beginning of a blue-water capability for the traditionally coastal Turkish navy and a significant shift in the naval balance in the eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁴ Turkey has also purchased energy exploration ships for its national oil company, conferring an ability to operationalize resource claims in the Mediterranean.⁹⁵ A new doctrine has emerged to legitimize and systematize Turkish naval power—*Mavi Vatan* (Blue Homeland). The doctrine rests on three pillars: the principle that Turkey’s legitimate maritime rights and interests have not been recognized and it must act to defend those rights; definition of territorial waters broader than those recognized by the EU’s “Seville Map”; and a commitment to use naval, diplomatic, and legal tools to protect Turkey’s interests.⁹⁶ Given Turkey’s geography and the advances of its defense industry (Anatolia as the proverbial unsinkable aircraft carrier), these naval tools and doctrine mark a major upgrade in the reach of Turkish power. Turkey’s economic, diplomatic, and ground-based operations have all been made more credible and sustainable by naval power.

Partner militaries form another component of Turkey’s power projection capability. Over the past two decades, the TAF has made major investments in forming, training, institutionalizing, and professionalizing military forces in at least a half-dozen conflict zones, making the Turkish military a world leader in this area. These efforts include training Iraqi forces and Peshmerga aligned with the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq, the “Syrian National Army” in Syria, Libyan forces supporting the Tripoli government, Somali forces, Azerbaijan’s military, and Afghanistan’s army and police forces.⁹⁷ These projects have included training in Turkey and in the partner’s country, exchanges of officers at schools and academies, and infrastructure development. Since 1992, Turkey has trained officers and soldiers from more than thirty foreign militaries.⁹⁸ The Turkish focus on institution building stems from both NATO practice and longstanding national practice, and it differentiates Turkish military training

missions from those of nations less willing to play the proverbial long game.

The Turkish government has also become more adept at operationalizing soft power, especially in the digital environment. The popularity of Turkish brands (e.g., Turkish Airlines and soap operas) has been noted, but far more critical is the ability to deploy digital and physical agents to articulate and disseminate narratives to national and international audiences in a timely and coherent manner. The Soft Power 30 index measures this ability; it ranks Turkey twelfth in the world for digital diplomacy and infrastructure and ninth for strength of diplomatic network and contributions to global engagement and development. The comparable rankings in 2015 were twenty-first and twenty-fifth. The rise was enough to ameliorate a decline in Turkey’s image, especially in the United States and Europe, reflected in public polling.⁹⁹ Turkish ministries and pro-government groups and individuals energetically produce and amplify data, stories, videos, and graphics supportive of official narratives. Videos of successful strikes by Turkish drones in various theaters were uploaded to the Internet with minimal delays, producing significant psychological and narrative-shaping effects.¹⁰⁰ Ankara has become adept at producing and reinforcing coherent narratives on issues of international contention and has formed a special department within its presidential communications ministry to identify and counter foreign “perception operations.”¹⁰¹

Finally, international power projection is a matter of acquired skills rather than mere potential, and experience is an asset. States that have met policy goals through the exercise of integrated hard and soft power learn what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable risk, better understand adversarial behavior, and can better judge when to push for what and how far. Political elites and domestic constituencies develop both tolerance and skill for the prudent exercise of power projection. This has been referred to as “learning by doing.”¹⁰² It is possible to draw the wrong lessons from experience and subsequently overreach, but to date, Ankara appears to be managing the risks adequately.

Step Three (Putin's Lesson): The Will to Act as an Element of National Power

Students of policy and strategy have devoted great effort to understanding the determinants of national power, generally focusing on military power, economic power, soft power, and diplomatic skill. But Americans in and out of government have struggled to appreciate the political dimension of international competition and conflict, as either a tool or a motive.

Well-resourced states will struggle to achieve international outcomes without political will and resolve. Action and inaction, commitment and risk tolerance are products of psychological, cultural, and cognitive processes among leaders and publics, not algorithmic outputs or quantitative cost-benefit equations.¹⁰³ Turkey's power projection capabilities have increased in no small measure because both its political leadership and the public have shifted over the past decade from a cautious and consultative approach to regional conflict and competition to one that holds hard power as a reasonable option and that is willing to sustain effort once a national commitment has been made.¹⁰⁴ The politics of Turkish foreign policy and regional strategy have evolved.

This is not the work of one man, despite frequent analyses that attribute Turkish power projection to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ego, adventurism, or ideology.¹⁰⁵ Rather, it is the response of Turkey's political and military elite to disappointment and a sense that the multilateralism embraced during the first decade of this century backfired. Under former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu's "zero problems with neighbors" policy, Turkey pursued EU accession, sought to de-escalate Iranian nuclear tensions, reached out to Assad, tried to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians, cheered the Arab Spring uprisings, held talks with the PKK, and supported negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh and Cyprus. By 2015, this multilateralism had demonstrably failed in every case, while global and regional actors escalated revisionist projects employing hard power in Turkey's immediate neighborhood.¹⁰⁶ Turkish elites saw their national interests threatened in Iraq, Syria, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, Libya,

and elsewhere, and felt a growing urgency to act. Erdogan's decision to abandon multilateralism tapped into rather than created this dynamic.

Moscow's return to regional power projection came at this pivotal moment for Ankara and provided a model of sorts. After reforms to overcome weaknesses revealed during its 2008 campaign against Georgia, the Russian military by 2015 successfully employed hard power to achieve policy aims in Ukraine and Syria.¹⁰⁷ These actions demonstrated that a midsize military power (Russia, beyond nuclear weapons, is not in the same class with the United States and China) can effectively exercise military pressure toward specific policy aims and withstand diplomatic blowback or sanctions tolerably well. Erdogan took note. Although some observers concluded that Putin was in a position to bully Erdogan,¹⁰⁸ increasingly after 2016 Erdogan equaled or bested Putin where Ankara and Moscow's interests diverged, as they did in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh. At the end of 2020, one observer went so far as to say Erdogan had "been humiliating Putin all year."¹⁰⁹

Erdogan's Turkey has developed a knack for (1) signaling crises it cares enough about to employ hard power; (2) preparing the state and the public for a showdown; (3) activating its diplomatic and military networks before acting; (4) acting decisively at a time of Erdogan's choosing; (5) sustaining action toward a clear political goal, even when faced with criticism and tangible costs; and (6) parlaying this leverage to accomplish political outcomes. These tendencies played out in 2020 in Syria, Iraq, Libya, the Caucasus, and the eastern Mediterranean. As foreign policy analyst Joshua Keating points out, the exercise of such political will in international relations is not a fixed characteristic; it changes with conditions, context, and specific personalities. Turkey likely will not see another year like 2020 soon and may prefer soft power when possible. It now has the network, the tools, and the experience, though, to maintain credible hard-power options when it sees no low-risk alternative.¹¹⁰

Turkish Power Projection in the Coming Decade—and U.S. Options

What has Turkey gained practically from its burgeoning power projection capabilities? A number of things—in terms of both operational effectiveness and specific political goals. Since 2016, Turkey has largely pushed the counter-PKK fight off its own territory and border, while badly damaging PKK field capabilities in Iraq and elsewhere.¹¹¹ It has prevented five military faits accomplis threatening its interests or partners: annexation of Azerbaijani territory, General Haftar’s offensive against Tripoli, Emirati subordination of Qatar, liquidation of Idlib opposition, and YPG (People’s Defense Units)/PKK control along the Syria-Turkey border. It has gained significant leverage in other disputes (eastern Mediterranean and Somalia), and become a significant strategic balancer in Ukraine, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Balkans. Turkey has also strengthened its defense export sector and its regional deterrence posture. The combination of access, tools, integration, experience, and will has enabled Turkey to exercise along and near its periphery what amounts to a geopolitical veto. This does not make Turkey an organizing power or a regional superpower but does render it a power player in any regional calculations. The integrated approach examined in this paper confounds Western assumptions that Turkey is either rogue or isolated and therefore an easy target for coercion by major powers, including the United States, Russia, and Europe.¹¹²

There are limits to Turkey’s expanded capabilities. The country remains sensitive to deterrent actions by major military powers, curtailing operations on the credible indication of military preparation: this occurred in Idlib (Russia), Sirte (Egypt), and northeast Syria (U.S. response to Operation Peace Spring). Escalation dominance matters and will vary by case; Turkish power projection is likely to be exercised in those instances where no major external power is positioned or inclined to directly intervene.¹¹³ Turkey’s dependence on international

trade (Russia, Europe) and finance (United States, Europe) also forces it to practice caution in projecting power that might galvanize broad-based sanctions; Turkish operations in Syria have been reined in at various times as a result of economic pressure from both Russia and the United States. The Turkish defense industry’s self-sufficiency provides another constraint, because Turkey still suffers certain critical production gaps (e.g., engines for tanks and fighter aircraft). Turkey’s deployable military forces are spread thin and likely cannot add any new deployments without force expansion or the dropping of a current major operation. And while Turkey’s new military capabilities are impressive, they remain vulnerable to sustained counterattack by a sophisticated air force, missile force, or fully integrated air defense system, none of which the TAF has faced to date. If Turkey is punching above its metaphorical weight class, it remains vulnerable to a body blow from a heavyweight.¹¹⁴ Perhaps the most crucial limitation is the highly personal construction of Turkey’s power projection network. President Erdogan made the deals, commitments, and decisions personally. He will have a successor at some point, and it is an open question whether a less gifted geopolitical operator can manage the same system.

To qualify Turkey’s power projection accomplishment is not to deny that things have changed, in any case. Turkish power now comprises a sophisticated regional security subsystem with mutually reinforcing components. Turkish strategic culture has adopted and adapted to the new footprint, and discussions of national “grand strategy” are becoming popular among Turkish elites.¹¹⁵ Public opinion has changed as well: a majority of Turks now support the use of military force outside Turkey “when it is necessary to protect [the country’s] interests in the international arena,” and roughly a third think military force is more likely than diplomacy to achieve stability.¹¹⁶

A crucial question for the U.S. foreign policy community is whether the empirical reality of a more powerful Turkey—a treaty ally—should be viewed as a threat or an opportunity. Given the U.S. reticence to directly manage the Middle East, Eurasia, or

Africa—and its desire not to see Russia or China do so—Turkey may be a useful element in managing Great Power competition. The natural limits on Turkish power projection, plus the Turkish record of balancing military and diplomatic approaches, should mitigate concern that Turkey will become expansionist in the literal sense; a balancing power should not be mistaken for a would-be hegemon. In some cases, Turkish power projection can provide significant benefits for U.S. policy goals. Examples include Libya, where the Turkish defeat of General Haftar’s Tripoli offensive helped resuscitate stalled UN negotiations; northwest Syria, where the Turkish defeat of Assad’s Idlib offensive prevented a humanitarian catastrophe (albeit at the cost of tolerating and cooperating with extremist elements in some parts of the province); Somalia, where Turkish military forces provide the Mogadishu security that enables a continued U.S. diplomatic presence; Qatar, where the Turkish presence helped deter Emirati military action against Doha, which the United States also opposed; and Afghanistan, where Turkish consent to continue protecting the airport in Kabul as U.S. forces draw down provides a badly needed measure of assurance. Turkey’s strategic relationship with Ukraine may also fall into this category, helping deter further Russian aggression.

In certain other cases, Turkish power projection contravenes U.S. interests: Turkish military operations against the Syrian Democratic Forces in northeast Syria, gunboat diplomacy in the eastern Mediterranean, and defense industry cooperation with Russia are examples. The extreme alternatives of either acquiescing to such moves or ending the

U.S. alliance over them are equally untenable, and the cognitive error of conflating the objectionable exercises with the beneficial is a serious one; Washington must assess Turkish actions and intent on a case-by-case basis. There remain two (complementary) policy options for the United States to effectively manage Turkey’s assertiveness. The first is to play an earlier and more proactive diplomatic role in finding win-win solutions to regional crises, thereby avoiding power vacuums that invite less-constructive Turkish action. Diplomats from both Greece and Turkey, for instance, privately sketch workable systems for demarcation of maritime boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean and for power sharing in Cyprus, but they lack a forceful and balanced mediator to broker compromise. The United States has also underperformed in Caucasus diplomacy, where effective compromise might have prevented the last round of fighting in fall 2020, and in Libya for the better part of a decade. The second policy option is to ensure that when more coercive approaches are justified by emergent crises, they are conducted in a careful and nuanced manner. The United States was able to achieve cessation of Operation Peace Spring in October 2019 because of such an approach—high-powered diplomatic delegation, credible though limited sanctions, carefully crafted demand, and a stepdown that provided benefits to both sides. Washington might be rattled by the emergence of a more geopolitically capable Ankara but can in some cases benefit from and in others carefully restrain it. Reversing or containing a more capable Turkey altogether is not within the bounds of U.S. will or resources at present and arguably runs counter to broader American strategic interests.

NOTES

1. Turkish official and government-friendly social media accounts have disseminated videos widely of effective Turkish drone strikes in various combat zones, bolstering domestic support and providing an important psychological advantage over opponents. See, e.g., Raziye Akkoc, “Turkey Has Used Drone Strikes as Part of Its Operations Inside Syria,” Agence France-Presse, March 3, 2020, available at <https://news.yahoo.com/turkeys-drones-crucial-edge-syria-132915509.html> and on Twitter @ConflictT.
2. Can Kasapoglu and Baris Kirdemir, executive summary, *The Rising Drone Power: Turkey on the Eve of Its Military Breakthrough* (Istanbul: Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, 2018), <https://edam.org.tr/en/the-rising-drone-power-turkey-on-the-eve-of-its-military-breakthrough/>.
3. Anna Ahronheim, “Israel Learned from Hezbollah’s Defeat at the Hands of Turkey,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/israel-learned-from-hezbollahs-defeat-at-the-hands-of-turkey-628836>.
4. Sergey Sukhankin, “Is Turkey About to Become a Drone Superpower?” *Fair Observer*, May 5, 2020, https://www.fairobserver.com/region/middle_east_north_africa/sergey-sukhankin-turkey-drones-superpower-denfense-industry-arms-trade-news-00171.
5. Anthony H. Cordesman, “U.S. Options in Syria: The Dempsey Letter,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, July 26, 2013, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-options-syria-dempsey-letter>.
6. Seth Frantzman, “Russian Air Defense Systems Outmatched by Turkish Drones in Syria and Libya,” *Long War Journal*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/06/russian-air-defense-systems-outmatched-by-turkish-drones-in-syria-and-libya.php>.
7. Jason Pack and Wolfgang Puzstai, *Turning the Tide: How Turkey Won the War for Tripoli* (Washington DC: Middle East Institute, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2TdamSA>. See also Ben Fishman and Conor Hiney, “What Turned the Battle for Tripoli?” *PolicyWatch 3314*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 6, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-turned-battle-tripoli>.
8. Can Kasapoglu, “Hard Fighting in the Caucasus: The Azerbaijani Armed Forces’ Combat Performance and Military Strategy in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War,” SAM Paper 18, Center for Strategic Research, Istanbul, February 2021, <http://sam.gov.tr/pdf/sam-papers/SAM-Papers-No.-18.pdf>.
9. Murat Yesiltas, “Turkey’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Operation Claw,” *Politics Today*, June 20, 2019, <https://politicstoday.org/turkeys-counter-terrorism-strategy-and-operation-claw/>.
10. Hasan Kolukisa, “2020 Yilli Icerisinde 1,900 Terorist Etkisiz Hale Getirildi” [In 2020, 1,900 terrorists were neutralized], *Defence Turk*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.defenceturk.net/2020-yilli-icerisinde-1-900-terorist-etkisiz-hale-getirildi>.
11. Frantzman, “Russian Air Defense Systems,” <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/06/russian-air-defense-systems-outmatched-by-turkish-drones-in-syria-and-libya.php>.
12. Nick Reynolds and Jack Watling, “Your Tanks Cannot Hide,” RUSI, March 5, 2020, <https://rusi.org/publication/rusi-defence-systems/your-tanks-cannot-hide>.
13. T. X. Hammes, *The Melians’ Revenge: How Small, Frontline, European States Can Employ Emerging Technology to Defend Against Russia* (Washington DC: Atlantic Council, 2019), https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The_Melians_Revenge.pdf.
14. R. Srinivasan, “Lessons from Nagorno-Karabakh and Taiwan ODC,” *Defence Research and Studies*, February 11, 2021, <https://dras.in/lessons-from-nagorno-karabakh-and-taiwan-odc/>.
15. Kasapoglu and Kirdemir, executive summary, *The Rising Drone Power*, <https://edam.org.tr/en/the-rising-drone-power-turkey-on-the-eve-of-its-military-breakthrough/>.
16. MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, eds., introduction to *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

17. Can Kasapoglu, “Turkey’s Drone Blitz over Idlib,” *Terrorism Monitor* 18, no. 8 (April 2020): 7–9, <https://jamestown.org/program/turkeys-drone-blitz-over-idlib/>.
18. Daniel Barnard, interview by author, April 16, 2021.
19. Can Kasapoglu, interview by author, April 16, 2021.
20. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan used the phrase at a December 2019 event in London (<https://www.turkiyehaberajansi.com/oyun-oyananan-degil-oyun-kuran-oyunbozan-bir-turkiye/116389/>), analyst Mete Yazar used it during a broadcast in 2020 (<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7mzmad>), and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu employed it in 2021 (<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bakan-cavusoglu-turkiye-artik-oyun-kuran-ulkedir-558002.html>). It may have roots in the *Tatar Ramazan* TV series (2013; <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2992384/>).
21. Emre Ersen and Seckin Kostem, eds., *Turkey’s Pivot to Eurasia: Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order* (London: Routledge, 2019).
22. Tarik Oguzlu, “Turkey and the West: Geopolitical Shifts in the AK Party Era,” in *Turkey’s Pivot to Eurasia*, ed. Emre Ersen and Seckin Kostem (London: Routledge, 2019), 15–30.
23. Timur Akhmetov, “Turkey’s Strategic Culture,” *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 17, no. 2 (2018): 453–70.
24. Ryan Matthews, “Sevres Syndrome: Constructing the Populist ‘Us’ Versus ‘Them’ Through Fear in Turkey,” master’s thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2020, https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/102135/Matthews_RJ_T_2021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
25. Chas W. Freeman Jr., “Turkey in the New Geopolitical Context,” Middle East Policy Council, September 15, 2016, <https://mepc.org/speeches/turkey-new-geopolitical-context>.
26. “The Geopolitics of Turkey in a Multipolar World,” *Perch Perspectives*, November 17, 2020, <https://perchperspectives.com/the-geopolitics-of-turkey-in-a-multipolar-world/>.
27. Abdinor Hassan Dahir, *Turkey’s Evolving Engagement in Africa* (Istanbul: TRT Research Centre, 2020).
28. Asya Akca, “Neo-Ottomanism: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Approach to Africa,” *New Perspectives in Foreign Policy*, no. 17 (Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 8, 2019), <https://www.csis.org/neo-ottomanism-turkeys-foreign-policy-approach-africa>.
29. Yusuf Bagir, “Impact of the Presence of Foreign Missions on Trade: Evidence from Turkey,” MPRA Paper 80845, University of Munich, August 17, 2017, https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80845/1/MPRA_paper_80845.pdf.
30. “Global Diplomacy Index, 2019 Country Ranking,” Lowy Institute, https://globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/country_rank.html.
31. David Shinn, “Turkey’s Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa: Shifting Alliances and Strategic Diversification,” Chatham House, London, September 2015, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150909TurkeySubSaharanAfricaShinn.pdf.
32. Umida Hashimova, “Turkic Council Sets Sights on Upgrade Rooted in Economic Connectivity Projects,” *The Diplomat*, April 12, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/turkic-council-sets-sights-on-upgrade-rooted-in-economic-connectivity-projects/>.
33. Teoman Ertugrul Tulun, “Hungary’s Participation in the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States,” Center for Eurasian Studies, Ankara, September 12, 2018, <https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/HUNGARY-S-PARTICIPATION-IN-THE-COOPERATION-COUNCIL-OF-TURKIC-SPEAKING-STATES>.
34. Can Kasapoglu and Soner Cagaptay, “Turkey’s Military Presence in Iraq: A Complex Strategic Deterrent,” PolicyWatch 2538, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 22, 2015, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/turkeys-military-presence-iraq-complex-strategic-deterrent>.
35. Can Kasapoglu, “Turkey Leaving Its Military Footprint Overseas,” Anadolu Agency, July 31, 2017, <https://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/feature/5/185728/turkey-expands-its-military-footprint-overseas.html>.

36. Michael Tanchum, “Turkey’s String of Pearls: Turkey’s Overseas Naval Installations Reconfigure the Security Architecture of Mediterranean–Red Sea Corridor,” *Fokus* (Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, April 2019), <https://www.aies.at/publikationen/2019/fokus-19-04.php>.
37. Yusuf Kanli, “Turkish Base on Cyprus,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, September 20, 2018, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/yusuf-kanli/turkish-base-on-cyprus-137032>.
38. Seyfettin Ersoz, “KKTC’ye Gecitkale’nin Ardından Deniz Ussu” [A naval base in Northern Cyprus after Gecitkale Air Base], *Milliyet*, December 25, 2019, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/kktcye-gecitkalenin-ardindan-deniz-ussu-6108352>.
39. Vahap Munyar, “Turkey Has 11 Regional Bases in Northern Iraq: PM Yildirim,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, June 4, 2018, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-has-11-regional-bases-in-northern-iraq-pm-yildirim-132762>. See also Ugur Ergan, “Kuzey Irak’ta 2 bin Turk askeri” [2,000 Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq], *Hurriyet*, June 12, 2015, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/kuzey-irakta-2-bin-turk-askeri-40023349>.
40. “PKK Camps and Turkish Military Points in North of Iraq,” map, Republic of Turkey, Directorate of Communications, July 16, 2020, available, e.g., at <https://uprootedpalestinians.wordpress.com/2020/07/09/turkey-has-37-military-points-in-northern-iraq-map-update/>.
41. Carlotta Gall, “In Turkey’s Safe Zone in Syria, Security and Misery Go Hand in Hand,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/16/world/middleeast/syria-turkey-erdogan-afirin.html>.
42. Suleiman al-Khalidi and Orhan Coskun, “Turkey Withdraws from Base in Northwest Syria, Sources Say,” Reuters, October 19, 2020, <https://news.yahoo.com/turkey-withdraws-northwest-syria-sources-162243213.html>.
43. Suleiman al-Khalidi, “FSA Commander Says 25,000 Syrian Rebels Back Turkish Force in Syria,” Reuters, January 21, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-ria-turkey-rebels/fsa-commander-says-25000-syrian-rebels-back-turkish-force-in-syria-idUSKBN1FAOOK>.
44. Barin Kayaoglu, “Turkey Says It Is Institution-Building Through Military Training in Libya,” *Al-Monitor*, August 24, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/08/turkey-libya-qatar-tripartite-military-cooperation-deal.html>.
45. Fehim Tastekin, “What’s Next for Turkey in Libya After Election of New Interim Leaders?” *Al-Monitor*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/02/turkey-libya-interim-government-safeguard-turkish-interests.html>.
46. Ece Goksedef, “Daglik Karabag: Turkiye, Azerbaycan’in Askeri Kapasitesini Gelistirmesinde Nasil rol Oynadi?” [Nagorno-Karabakh: What role did Turkey play in the expansion of Azerbaijan’s military capabilities?], *BBC*, October 2, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-54379105>.
47. Paul Antonopoulos, “Hundreds of Turkish Military Personnel Are Orchestrating Azerbaijan’s Invasion of Artsakh: Reports,” *Greek City Times*, October 18, 2020, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/10/18/turkish-military-artsakh/>.
48. Emil Avdaliani, “The Emerging Azeri-Georgian-Turkish Trilateral—Analysis,” *Eurasia Review*, June 6, 2020, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/06062020-the-emerging-azeri-georgian-turkish-trilateral-analysis/>.
49. Mohammed Dhaysane, “Somali Commandos Trained by Turkey Back Home,” *Anadolu Agency*, March 9, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/somali-commandos-trained-by-turkey-back-home/2169184>.
50. “Turkey Continues Its Efforts for Afghanistan’s Lasting Security, Through the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission,” *NATO*, March 30, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_182914.htm.
51. Embassy of Turkey in Afghanistan and Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan statement (reported by *M5* magazine), “Turkiye’den Kabil Hukumeti Guclerine 115 Milyon Lira Askeri Yardim” [115 million lira military aid from Turkey to Kabul forces], *M5*, December 13, 2020, <https://m5dergi.com/savunma-haberleri/turkiyeden-kabil-hukumeti-guclerine-115-milyon-lira-askeri-yardim/>. See also “Resolute Support Mission: RSM Key Facts and Figures,” *NATO*, August 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/6/pdf/2020-06-RSM-Placemat.pdf.
52. Nader Habibi, “Turkey’s Support for Qatar Goes Beyond Damaged Ties with Saudi Arabia and UAE,” *Globe Post*, September 13, 2019, <https://theglobepost.com/2019/09/13/turkey-support-qatar/>.

53. Ali Ekeyilmaz, “Turk Komandolar Arnavutluk’ta” [Turkish commandos in Albania], *Sabah*, June 2, 1998, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1998/06/02/r01.html>.
54. “Turkey to Remain in Sudan’s Suakin Island,” *Yeni Safak*, July 3, 2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/turkey-to-remain-in-sudans-suakin-island-3484753>.
55. Wale Odunsi, “Presidency Lists New Agreements Between Nigeria, Turkey,” *Daily Post* (Nigeria), October 22, 2017, <https://dailypost.ng/2017/10/22/presidency-lists-new-agreements-nigeria-turkey/>; and Burak Bir, “Turkey Wants to Play a Role in Niger’s Development,” Anadolu Agency, July 21, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/turkey-wants-to-play-role-in-nigers-development/1917600>.
56. Khalid Hassan, “Egypt Seeks to Block Turkish Influence in Chad,” Al-Monitor, March 15, 2021, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/03/egypt-chad-relations-turkey-influence-africa-libya-security.html>.
57. “Turkey’s Soft Power Wins Friends, Influence in Africa,” Ahval, March 25, 2021, <https://ahval.io/africa-turkey/turkeys-soft-power-wins-friends-influence-africa>.
58. Izzet Kaya and Emrah Yesilduman, “Turkiye Osmanli Topraklarina Geri Donuyor” [Turkey returns to Ottoman grounds], *Yeni Safak*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/turkiye-osmanli-topraklarina-geri-donuyor-2951575>.
59. “Turkish Parliament Extends Troop Deployment in Lebanon,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkish-parliament-extends-troop-deployment-in-lebanon-158902>.
60. Dilara Aslan, “Turkey, Pakistan Relations Peak with Defense Industry Cooperation,” *Daily Sabah*, February 13, 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/defense/2020/02/13/turkey-pakistan-relations-peak-with-defense-industry-cooperation>.
61. Asad Ullah Khan, “The Expanding Turkey-Pakistan Military Cooperation,” Center for Iranian Studies in Ankara, January 4, 2019, <https://iramcenter.org/en/the-expanding-turkey-pakistan-military-cooperation/>.
62. Muhammad Sohail Ahmed, “Pak-Turkey Naval Diplomacy,” *Daily Times* (Pakistan), October 18, 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/485014/pak-turkey-naval-diplomacy/>.
63. Altay Atli, “Turkey and Malaysia Boost Cooperation, Eyeing Defense Industry and Islamic Unity,” *The Diplomat*, August 9, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/turkey-and-malaysia-boost-cooperation-eyeing-defense-industry-and-islamic-unity/>.
64. Associated Press, “Turkey, Ukraine Sign Military Cooperation Agreements,” October 16, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-turkey-black-sea-istanbul-recep-tayyip-erdogan-c209b362dc74db18f81801f4a4c73867>.
65. Samuel Brownsword, “Turkey’s Unprecedented Ascent to Drone Superpower Status,” *Drone Wars*, June 15, 2020, <https://dronewars.net/2020/06/15/turkeys-unprecedented-ascent-to-drone-superpower-status/>.
66. Kathryn Cain, “Turkey Agrees £100m Defence Collaboration with Britain and Proposes Post-Brexit Trade Deal,” *The Sun*, January 28, 2017, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2727152/turkey-plans-to-boost-trade-deal-with-post-brexit-britain-to-20billion-as-theresa-may-issues-thinly-veiled-warning-over-its-human-rights-record/>.
67. Burak Ege Bekdil, “With F-35 Expulsion, Turkey’s Top Weapons Buyer Prioritizes TF-X Work,” *Defense News*, May 3, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/industry/techwatch/2021/05/03/with-f-35-expulsion-turkeys-top-weapons-buyer-prioritizes-tf-x-work/>.
68. “Uzbekistan and Turkey Sign Military-Technical Cooperation Agreement,” Kun.uz, October 28, 2020, <https://kun.uz/en/news/2020/10/28/uzbekistan-and-turkey-sign-military-technical-cooperation-agreement>.
69. Ayla Jean Yackley, “How Turkey Militarized Its Foreign Policy,” *Politico*, October 15, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/how-turkey-militarized-foreign-policy-azerbaijan-diplomacy/>.
70. Metin Gurcan, “Turkey Goes All In on Drones,” Al-Monitor, December 28, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/12/turkey-drones-what-is-ankaras-hurry.html#ixzz6nEDCRuSe>.
71. Umar Farooq, “The Second Drone Age: How Turkey Defied the U.S. and Became a Killer Drone Power,” *The Intercept*, May 14, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/05/14/turkey-second-drone-age/>.
72. Brownsword, “Turkey’s Unprecedented Ascent.”

73. “Turkey’s PKK Conflict: A Visual Explainer,” International Crisis Group, data accessed March 29, 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>.
74. Humeyra Pamuk and Phil Stewart, “Exclusive: U.S. Halts Secretive Drone Program with Turkey over Syria Incursion,” Reuters, February 5, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-usa-drone-exclusive-idUSKBN1ZZ1AB>.
75. Sukhankin, “Turkey a Drone Superpower?” https://www.fairobserver.com/region/middle_east_north_africa/sergey-sukhankin-turkey-drones-superpower-denfense-industry-arms-trade-news-00171/.
76. Paul Iddon, “Turkey’s Drones Are Coming in All Sizes These Days,” *Forbes*, October 4, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2020/10/04/turkeys-drones-are-coming-in-all-sizes-these-days/?sh=382f11152004>.
77. Tayfun Ozberk, “Turkey Plans to Deploy Attack Drones from Its Amphibious Assault Ship,” *Defense News*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/2021/03/11/turkey-plans-to-deploy-attack-drones-from-its-amphibious-assault-ship/>.
78. Jon Harper, “\$98 Billion Expected for Military Drone Market,” *National Defense*, January 6, 2020, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2020/1/6/98-billion-expected-for-military-drone-market>.
79. Can Kasapoglu, “Turkey’s Bora Missile Saw Combat Debut: What Next?” Anadolu Agency, June 19, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/turkey-s-bora-missile-saw-combat-debut-what-next/1508723>. See also Burak Ege Bekdil, “Turkey Begins Developing Its First Surface-to-Surface, Laser-Guided Missile,” *Defense News*, September 30, 2020, <https://news.yahoo.com/turkey-begins-developing-first-surface-154450434.html>.
80. Salih Kivrak, “TSK, Libya Ordusuna Topcu, CNRA ve Havan Gibi Agir Silah Atis Egitimleri Verdi” [Turkish forces trained Libyan army on artillery, rocket, and mortar systems], *Defence Turk*, December 25, 2020, <https://www.defenceturk.net/tsk-libya-ordusuna-topcu-cnra-ve-havan-gibi-agir-silah-atis-egitimleri-verdi>. See also Andrius Genys, “T-300 Kasirga,” *Military-Today.com*, accessed March 29, 2021, http://www.military-today.com/artillery/t300_kasirga.htm.
81. “Turkish Air Force Used NATO-[Compatible] Peace Eagle AEW&C and ELINT to Hunt and [Shoot] Down Syrian Su-24,” *Global Defense Corp*, March 4, 2020, <https://www.globaldefensecorp.com/2020/03/04/turkish-air-force-used-nato-compatible-peace-eagle-aewc-and-elint-to-hunt-and-shot-down-syrian-su-24/>.
82. “Lethal Stalkers: How Turkish Drones Are Neutralizing Haftar’s Pantsirs in Libya,” *T-Intelligence*, May 22, 2020, <https://t-intell.com/2020/05/22/lethal-stalkers-how-turkish-drones-are-neutralizing-haftars-pantsirs-in-libya-bda/>.
83. Business Monitor International, *Turkey Defence and Security Report 2020* (New York: Fitch Solutions Group, 2020). See also “Projeler,” *Presidency of Defence Industries*, <https://www.ssb.gov.tr>.
84. “Gokturk-2 Imaging Mission, Turkey,” accessed March 29, 2021, <https://directory.eoportal.org/web/eoportal/satellite-missions/g/gokturk-2>.
85. Burak Ege Bekdil, “Turkey Eyes Directed-Energy Weapons as Key Priority,” *Defense News* 36, no. 3 (March 2021): 12, <https://www.defensenews.com/industry/techwatch/2021/03/15/turkey-eyes-directed-energy-weapons-as-key-priority/>.
86. Seray Guldane, “Tests for Gokdogan and Bozdogan Air-to-Air Missiles Begin,” *Defence Turk*, November 17, 2020, <https://en.defenceturk.net/tests-for-gokdogan-and-bozdogan-air-to-air-missiles-begin/>.
87. Cengiz Ipek, “Turnover of Turkish Defense Industry Exceeds \$10 Billion for First Time,” *Defence Turk*, July 25, 2020, <https://en.defenceturk.net/turnover-of-turkish-defense-industry-exceeds-10-billion-for-first-time/>.
88. Ayse Akalin, ed., “Turkish Land Forces: A Bright Star in Peace,” *Defence Turkey*, no. 37 (Fall 2012): 6–22. See also Demiroren News Agency, “TSK’da Kritik Degisiklik! Komando Tugaylarının Sayisi 12’den 16’ya Cikarildi,” August 14, 2018, <https://www.mynet.com/tsk-da-kritik-degisiklik-komando-tugaylarinin-sayisi-12-den-16-ya-cikarildi-110104333062>.
89. “After Failed Coup, Turkey’s Military Emerges Stronger,” *Fanack.com*, September 13, 2016, <https://fanack.com/turkey/politics-of-turkey/turkeys-military-emerges-stronger/>. Initial U.S. reactions to the post-coup purges were very negative. See Roy Gutman, “Turkey and U.S. at Loggerheads over Purge of Top Military Officers in Wake

- of Coup Attempt,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-turkey-crackdown-20160729-snap-story.html>.
90. Intelligence Online (website), Indigo Publications, France, November 30, 2012; February 15, 2013, November 15, 2018.
 91. Elizabeth Tsurkov, “Who Are Turkey’s Proxy Fighters in Syria?” *New York Review of Books*, November 27, 2019, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/11/27/who-are-turkeys-proxy-fighters-in-syria/>. See also Agence France-Presse, “Pro-Turkish Syrian Militia in Libya Starting to Withdraw: French Diplomatic Source,” *Al Arabiya*, March 25, 2021, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/north-africa/2021/03/25/Pro-Turkish-Syrian-militia-in-Libya-starting-to-withdraw-French-diplomatic-source>.
 92. Engin Yuksel, “Strategies of Turkish Proxy Warfare in Northern Syria: Back with a Vengeance,” CRU Report, Clingendael, November 2019, <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/strategies-turkish-proxy-warfare-in-northern-syria.pdf>.
 93. “Transformation of Turkey’s Intel Agency Plays a Major Role in Confining the PKK in Northern Iraq,” *Straturka*, March 5, 2021, <https://www.straturka.com/transformation-of-turkeys-intel-agency-plays-a-major-role-in-confining-the-pkk-in-northern-iraq/>.
 94. D-Mitch (pseudonym), “Turkish Navy Modernization and Shipbuilding Plans Through 2030,” *Naval Analyses*, September 16, 2017, <https://www.navalanalyses.com/2017/09/turkish-navy-modernization-and.html>.
 95. Bartolomej Tomic, ed., “Turkey Expands Drillship Fleet,” *Offshore Engineer*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.oedigital.com/news/475897-turkey-expands-drillship-fleet>.
 96. Lorenzo Vita, “What Turkey Wants” (interview with Cem Gurdeniz), *InsideOver.com*, September 8, 2020, <https://www.insideover.com/politics/mediterranean-gurdeniz-turkey.html>.
 97. Humeyra Pamuk and Orhan Coskun, “Turkish Soldiers Training Iraqi Troops Near Mosul: Sources,” *Reuters*, December 4, 2015, <https://news.yahoo.com/turkish-soldiers-training-iraqi-troops-near-mosul-sources-001358846.html>; Yuksel, “Strategies of Turkish Proxy Warfare,” <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/strategies-turkish-proxy-warfare-in-northern-syria.pdf>; Kayaoglu, “Turkey Says It Is Institution-Building,” <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/08/turkey-libya-qatar-tripartite-military-cooperation-deal.html>; “Somali Commandos Complete Military Training in Turkey,” *Daily Sabah*, March 9, 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/somali-commandos-complete-military-training-in-turkey>; Susan Fraser, “AP Explains: What Lies Behind Turkish Support for Azerbaijan,” *Associated Press*, October 2, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-territorial-disputes-azerbaijan-ankara-armenia-9a95d9690569623adedffe8c16f3588d>; and Karen Kaya, “Turkey’s Role in Afghanistan and Afghan Stabilization,” *Military Review*, July–August 2013, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20130831_art007.pdf.
 98. Haldun Yalcinkaya, “Turkey’s Overlooked Role in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War,” *On Turkey*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, January 21, 2021, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/turkeys-overlooked-role-second-nagorno-karabakh-war>.
 99. Jonathan McClory, *The Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2019* (Portland and USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2019), <https://softpower30.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/The-Soft-Power-30-Report-2019-1.pdf>.
 100. Mike Eckel, “Drone Wars: In Nagorno-Karabakh, the Future of Warfare is Now,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 9, 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/drone-wars-in-nagorno-karabakh-the-future-of-warfare-is-now/30885007.html>.
 101. Islam Ozkan, “‘Algi Operasyonu’ ile Mucadele Baskanligi Kuruldu” [A ministry for resisting perception operations has been formed], *Gazete Duvar*, September 18, 2020, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2020/09/18/alg-operasyonu-ile-mucadele-baskanligi-kuruldu>.
 102. Saban Kardas, interview by author, April 15, 2021.
 103. Joshua D. Kertzer, *Resolve in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 1–10.
 104. Turkuazlab, “Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey 2020,” opinion poll report, German Marshall Fund of the United States, <https://www.turkuazlab.org/en/dimensions-of-polarization-in-turkey-2020/>.

105. As an experiment, the author conducted an Internet search of the term “Erdogan risky gamble” and found dozens of articles dating back more than a decade, applied to more than a dozen diplomatic, economic, and military initiatives. This has also been referred to as *reductio ad Erdoganum*: see Burak Kadercan, “The Unbearable Lightness of Blaming Erdogan,” *War on the Rocks* (blog), September 8, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/09/the-unbearable-lightness-of-blaming-erdogan-or-what-turkey-experts-are-not-telling-you/>, as well as Soner Cagaptay, *A Sultan in Autumn: Erdogan Faces Turkey’s Uncontainable Forces*, Policy Focus 167 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2021), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/sultan-autumn-erdogan-faces-turkeys-uncontainable-forces>.
106. Saban Kardas, “Revisionism and Resecuritization of Turkey’s Middle East Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Explanation,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 23, no. 3 (February 2021): 490–501.
107. William Heerdt, “Russian Hard Power Projection: A Brief Synopsis,” *The Post-Soviet Post* (blog), Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 25, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/russian-hard-power-projection-brief-synopsis>.
108. Aykan Erdemir and Merve Tahiroglu, “Handling Turkey’s Erdogan: What Washington Can Learn from Russia,” *The Hill*, February 14, 2018, <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/373896-handling-turkeys-erdogan-what-washington-can-learn-from-russia?rl=1>.
109. Mitch Prothero, “Turkey’s Erdogan Has Been Humiliating Putin All Year—Here’s How He Did It,” *Business Insider*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/turkeys-erdogan-has-been-humiliating-putin-all-year-heres-how-he-did-it/ar-BB1aitbu>.
110. Joshua Keating, “Why Is Turkey Suddenly Fighting with Everyone?” *Slate*, October 28, 2020, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/10/turkey-foreign-policy-erdogan.html>.
111. Orhan Coskun, Daren Butler, and John Davison, “Turkey Shifts Fight Against Kurdish Militants Deeper into Iraq,” Reuters, July 22, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-iraq-idUSKCN24N26F>.
112. Eric Edelman and Charles Wald, “Precious No More? A U.S. Strategy for a Lonely Turkey,” Jewish Institute for National Security of America, March 30, 2021, <https://files.constantcontact.com/5fbef467001/6a0f78ca-9c6f-4db9-b721-9d7f8567d7b0.pdf>.
113. Saban Kardas, interview by author, April 15, 2021.
114. Can Kasapoglu, interview by author, April 16, 2021.
115. Kardas, interview.
116. Turkuazlab, “Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey 2020,” 65–66, <https://www.turkuazlab.org/en/dimensions-of-polarization-in-turkey-2020/>.

The Author



COL. RICH OUTZEN (RET.) is a geopolitical consultant and retired foreign area officer who served in the State Department's Policy Planning Staff and as an advisor to several secretaries of state. Over thirty years of active military service, he held a variety of command, staff, and liaison positions, and spent a decade in the Middle East, including combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is currently a doctoral candidate at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government.



THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY
1111 19TH STREET NW | WASHINGTON, DC 20036
WWW.WASHINGTONINSTITUTE.ORG
©2021 THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.