

# Terrorism Monitor

In-depth analysis of the War on Terror

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### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT FORESHADOWS ALGERIAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE REGION

*Brian M. Perkins*

Algerian military and intelligence services are undergoing significant change as Libya continues to grapple with its civil war and terrorist violence rages across the Sahel. Algeria’s political and military structure has undergone notable reform since Abdelaziz Bouteflika was ousted in April 2019 as his successor, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, has attempted to uncouple the country’s intelligence services from the presidency.

Another wave of reshuffling within the intelligence service took place in late April as Mohamed Bouzit was appointed chief of the external security directorate. Bouzit succeeds Kamel-Eddine Remili, who resigned that post just days after the dismissal and subsequent imprisonment of the head of intelligence, General Wasini Bouazza’s (al Bawaba, April 16). On May 7, as part of the government’s constitutional revision project, the Algerian presidency revealed that an amendment to Article 29 of the constitution would overturn the country’s long-standing military doctrine that curtails the armed forces’

involvement abroad (Asharq al-Awsat, May 10).

The previous version of Article 29 did not explicitly ban military intervention abroad, but it does not explicitly authorize it, and Algeria has historically avoided military interventions. The new amendments, which still need to be ratified by parliament, would set the stage for the Algerian military to engage in peacekeeping missions and the country’s “participation in the restoration of peace in the region within the framework of bilateral agreements with the concerned countries” (Algerian Press Service, May 9).

This amendment is being introduced against the backdrop of significant local and regional developments. The constitutional amendment process is taking place amid substantial changes within the country’s political-military systems and intertwined social malaise. It is also taking place at a time of deep insecurity among Algeria’s neighbors as the war in Libya rages on and jihadist violence is rising across the Sahel. Algeria has faced pressure from regional governments and France to participate in regional counter terrorism operations. At the same time, President Tebboune has repeatedly stated the Algerian government’s eagerness to elevate the

country's position both on the world and African stage, particularly as old contests with Morocco, including Western Sahara, continue to simmer.

While the previous constitution did not explicitly prevent the Algerian military's involvement outside its borders, the new amendments will inherently codify a new military posture. This change comes alongside the creation of Algeria's International Cooperation Agency and sends a message to other North African countries, particularly Morocco, that Algeria is eager to influence regional affairs. It is unclear when Algeria will deploy its military outside its borders for the first time following the amendment, but it will likely see the country participate alongside France and the G5 Sahel.

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## **ISLAMIC STATE MORE OPPORTUNISTIC THAN RESURGENT**

*Brian M. Perkins*

Islamic State (IS) has carried out a series of deadly attacks across Iraq as the country continues to grapple with political uncertainty and attempts to contain the outbreak of COVID-19. IS has increasingly targeted Iraqi forces in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Saladin, raising concerns of a potential resurgence. Among the most significant attacks were a suicide bombing targeting Kirkuk's intelligence headquarters on April 28 and a complex nighttime assault on May 1 that killed 10 members of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) just 60 miles north of Baghdad in the villages of Mekeeshfa and Tal al-Dahab (Kurdistan24, April 28; Kurdistan24, May 14).

The uptick of attacks over the past month, however, is not as much a demonstration of significantly improved capacity as it is a demonstration of IS' opportunism, though continued success could further empower the group. Despite no longer holding significant territory in Iraq, IS has remained resilient by exploiting security divisions between Iraqi and Kurdish forces, uncertainty within the Iraqi government, reduced U.S. troop presence, and now the outbreak of COVID-19.

A large percentage of IS attacks this year have taken place in disputed regions of northern Iraq, where poor security cooperation between the Kurdish Peshmerga and Iraqi forces have left swaths of territory uncontrolled. At the same time, the COVID-19 lockdown has drawn forces away from rural areas in order to enforce lockdown measures, reducing patrols and leaving checkpoints and more rural military outposts undermanned. Some COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, but some forces are still being redirected.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi parliament on May 6 finally confirmed the new, but still incomplete, government under Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi after going months without a functioning government following Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi's resignation in November. Despite the positive step, Iraq's political scene remains deeply fragmented and there are lingering questions as to the future role of the country's powerful Shia Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Questions also remain regarding how Kadhimi will address the non-binding resolution that was passed in January to expel U.S. forces, which

have already vacated some forward bases and paused many anti-IS activities (Al Jazeera, January 5). IS will continue attempts to exploit the political tumult as Kadhimi and the new government work to stabilize the political environment and attempt to mend relations with the United States.

The recent spate of IS attacks demonstrates that the group still has the manpower to wage a low-intensity insurgency, and likely will for years to come, but did not yet demonstrate a significant improvement in its capabilities, aside from improved freedom of movement. The group's ability to maneuver will likely once again be restricted as COVID-19 restrictions are eased and local, as well as international, forces resume and intensify operations. At the same time, there is optimism that Kadhimi could help improve relations with the United States and that NATO will heed his request for further support in the fight against IS.

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## Saudi Arabia's Heavy-handed Approach to Tribesmen will Backfire

*Michael Horton*

On April 16, Saudi security forces admitted that they shot and killed Abdul Rahim al-Howeiti, an outspoken critic of Muhammad bin Salman's plan to build a new megacity called Neom (Middle East Monitor, April 17). Neom is a pet project of Muhammad bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's *de facto* ruler. The fantastical city, which will supposedly feature flying cars and an artificial moon, is to be built in the northwestern province of Tabuk. However, much of the land that the city, which is estimated to be 33 times the size of New York City, will occupy, is tribal land.

Abdul Rahim al-Howeiti belonged to the Howeitat tribal confederation whose traditional territory extends across parts of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Palestine. Al-Howeiti refused to sell his land and home to the government and, in online protests, berated the government for ignoring the rights of landowners. [1] The Saudi government, with little or no consultation with locals, is planning to forcibly relocate 20,000 people from the land that Neom will be built on.

The government's response to al-Howeiti's opposition was to send security forces to his home, where they killed him. Following his death, al-Howeiti's family was arrested (Middle East Monitor, April 22). The Saudi government's response to al-Howeiti is hardly surprising given its persistent and wide-ranging crackdown on dissidents, illustrated most notably with the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 (Al Jazeera, October 1, 2019). The killing of al-Howeiti shows that under the leadership of Muhammad bin Salman the Saudi government is continuing its heavy-handed responses to those who oppose it. The chances that these kinds of tactics will result in blowback are steadily increasing. This is especially the case now that the Saudi government is cutting benefits and raising taxes (Al Jazeera, May 13).

### **Pillars of Support**

The House of Saud has long relied on two pillars to hold itself above the people: first is its Faustian bargain with

the fundamentalist Wahabbi religious establishment and the second is money. Saudi Arabia's *de facto* ruler has undermined both. Muhammad bin Salman has attempted to take on clerics who oppose him and his largely superficial reforms by sidelining and even arresting them. Concurrently, Muhammad bin Salman involved Saudi Arabia in an unwinnable war in Yemen which, only until recently, was costing the Kingdom five billion dollars a month. Even before the war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia's finances were far from solid despite its immense oil wealth. Profligate spending on vanity projects, such as the proposed mega-city of Neom, and expenditures on bonuses and subsidies to Saudi Arabia's growing population have undermined Saudi Arabia's financial flexibility.

Now with a global pandemic and an oil-price war, which was instigated by Saudi Arabia, the state budget is under greater pressure than at any time since the first Gulf War. In response, Saudi Arabia is slashing state subsidies and increasing taxes. Saudi Arabia's value-added tax will increase to 15 percent and will hit hardest those who can least afford it (The National, May 11). While Saudi Arabia reports the lowest poverty rate in the Middle East, poverty and falling standards of living are both significant concerns in a county where youth unemployment hovers around thirty percent. It is worth remembering that during the 2011 'Arab Spring,' Saudi Arabia's solution to the unrest was to flood the county with \$130 billion in handouts. At the time, that was the equivalent to 80 percent of the annual state budget.

Due to a raft of bad policy decisions and external factors like the coronavirus pandemic, the House of Saud's ability to paper over discontent with money is now limited. This comes at a time when many of Saudi Arabia's tribes, like the Howeitat confederation, are being antagonized and sidelined.

### **Undermining Tribal Support**

Nowhere is this conflict with traditional centers of power clearer than in Muhammad bin Salman's efforts to ensure the loyalty of the Saudi National Guard (SANG). In November 2017, Muhammad bin Salman removed Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, the son of the late King Abdullah, from his post as Minister of the SANG (Egypt Independent, November 6, 2017). Prince Mutaib's removal and subsequent arrest coincided with the arrest and detention of numerous senior royals, leading businessmen, and generals who were held at the Ritz Carlton in Riyadh (Al Jazeera, November 4, 2019). Prince Mutaib, who was

long thought to be a potential successor to King Abdullah, inherited command of SANG from his father who held the post for 40 years.

SANG is unique among the Saudi armed forces in that it has maintained its tribal structure. In its earliest iteration, SANG was a collection of tribal militias who were loyal to the House of Saud. The tribal character of SANG remains largely intact as does the loyalty of many of its members to its former commander Prince Mutaib. It is also worth noting that members of the Howeitat tribal confederation, to which the murdered al-Howeti belonged, make up a considerable number of SANG's men and officers.

SANG was once thought of as a kind of Praetorian Guard for the House of Saud. It was a force where tribal loyalties and traditions were acknowledged yet funneled into support for the Saudi family. This was accomplished through the doling out of money and positions. Now, this support is being curtailed at the same time that Muhammad bin Salman is taking a hardline with tribesmen like al-Howeti.

The harsh measures taken against any who oppose the House of Saud, or, more accurately, Muhammad bin Salman, extend to southern Saudi Arabia as well. There, in the provinces that border Yemen, religious minorities and tribes whose territories extend into and border Yemen, face consistent persecution. This persecution did not begin with Muhammad bin Salman's rise to power but goes back at least two decades. However, due to the war in Yemen and the threat posed by Yemen's Houthi rebels, persecution of border tribes as well as the region's population of Zaidi and Ismaili Shi'a has increased. The result is widespread discontent among much of the population of the provinces of Najran, Jizan, and Assir. In these provinces, Houthi forces have launched attacks deep within Saudi territory. Despite the lackluster performance of the Saudi military, it is unlikely that these attacks within Saudi territory would be possible or as frequent without a disaffected local population.

### **Conclusion**

Al-Howeti's death has already turned him into a martyr. He is being referred to by many Saudis as the "Martyr of Neom." As a member of a powerful and widely spread tribal confederation, his death will produce blowback just as the persecution of tribes in southern Saudi Arabia has impacted Saudi Arabia's war with the Houthis. At-

tacks on tribal lands, loyalties, and traditional seats of tribal power like SANG could not come at a worse time. The House of Saud's ability to remain in power is—at least partly—dependent on its ability to control and direct tribal loyalties. Yet, with Saudi Arabia facing growing financial pressures, defeat in Yemen, and an absence of prudent leadership, its ability to maintain these loyalties is more imperiled than it has been in decades.

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## Notes

[1] Days before he was killed, al-Howeti predicted in a tweet that he would be murdered and that the government would plant weapons in his house and call him a terrorist.

# France to Lead Joint Effort in War on Terrorism in Sahel Region

*Sergey Sukhankin*

## Introduction

Through 2019 into early 2020, the G5 Sahel Group (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger) has suffered painful losses caused by the activities of regional terrorist organizations. In January, the United Nations' envoy for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, told the Security Council that since 2016, attacks have increased fivefold in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, with more than 4,000 deaths reported in 2019 alone (Al Jazeera, February 2). Aside from civilians, local armed forces (trained by France and the United States) continue to suffer major losses. Nearly 300 Nigerien, more than 180 Malian, 30 Burkinabe and 20 Chadian soldiers have been killed (Africa News, January 14; France24, March 20). Having suffered the heaviest military losses since 1983 as a result of a 'Tigre' and 'Cougar' helicopters collision in Mali in November 2019, France—the region's most influential external player—has decided to increase its ongoing fight against terrorism in the region (Lefigaro.fr, November 26, 2019). According to French Minister of the Armed Forces Florence Parly, stability and eradication of the terrorist threat in the Sahel is instrumental not only for local governments and France, but to the EU as a whole, because regional instability breeds terrorism and illegal migration (Opex360.com, March 28).

## The Pau Summit: 'Coalition for the Sahel' and Further Steps

On January 13, the G5 Sahel member countries' heads of state and the French President assembled in Pau, France. The meeting resulted in a new framework entitled 'Coalition for the Sahel' that identified complex measures aimed at confronting regional terrorism. First, targeting Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) as the main regional threat (to be enacted under the umbrella of the ongoing Operation Barkhane). Second, strengthening the military capabilities of regional players via military and practical training, which is to include—aside from France—other regional players such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS). Third, strengthening the rule of law via reforms in penal and judicial systems. Importantly, this is to be done through the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel (P3S), promoted by France and Germany—an initiative concerned with the training and deployment of staff in civil administration, internal security, and justice. Fourth, the main role in the stabilization process is to be played by the Sahel Alliance (German-French initiative) and the G5 Sahel's Priority Investment Programme (PIP) (Diplomatie.gouv.fr, January 13).

Following the meeting, between January and February 2020, France pledged to ramp up its current military presence (4,500 troops) in the border zone linking Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger with another 850 soldiers as a means to “increase the pressure against the ISIS-GS” via taking a direct part in anti-terrorist operations and “accompany them [governmental forces] in combat” (Al Jazeera, February 2). Furthermore, the AU has announced the temporary deployment of a 3,000-strong force in the Sahel. According to Smail Chergui, head of the AU's Peace and Security Commission, this contingent is expected to work closely with the G5 Sahel armed forces and ECOWAS (Al Jazeera, February 27).

Arguably, the most decisive step was made on March 27 with the establishment of the Takuba (*sabre* in Tuareg) multi-national task force, consisting of European Special Operation Forces (SOF) coming from Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Niger, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. This task force is expected to confront terrorists in the Liptako-Gourma region (the Lake Chad basin) zone of activities of ISGS and the Group for the Jemaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). According to statements, Takuba will become a part of the “Coalition for the Sahel” (the first pillar of the Pau Agreement) and is to be placed under operation Barkhane's command. Importantly, this mission is to harmonize its actions with the G5 Sahel partners, the UN mission (MINUSMA) and EU missions (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Mali and EUCAP Niger). According to the statement, Task Force Takuba is planning to have an initial operational capability by the summer of 2020, and expected to become operational by early 2021 (Defense.gouv.fr, March 27).

The bigger question is: will these actions suffice for the task of breaking the back of regional terrorist organizations, given the depth and complexity of the problem

and growing uncertainties both within the G5 Sahel group and France itself?

### **Conclusion: Mission (Im)possible?**

One of the main obstacles that could hinder the above-mentioned initiatives is growing aloofness among the G5 Sahel members themselves. Shockingly, Chadian President Idriss Deby declared that Chad's army will no longer participate in military operations beyond its borders—a statement that he made during a visit to the Lake Chad zone, where Boko Haram is highly active (Africa News, April 11). This decision was influenced by the loss of 152 Chadian soldiers over several weeks. Commenting on this decision, Deby stated that “Chad has felt alone in the fight against Boko Haram” (Newsverge.com, April 13). The main problem with Chad's decision—whose security forces are the most powerful and respected in the region—is that it is likely to affect the resolve and determination of other G5 members. Meanwhile, Nigerien armed forces have also suffered losses as a result of the attack near Sanam, resulting in President Issoufou Mahamadou's decision to fire Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ahmed Mohamed (Africa News, January 14). This suggests that the situation within the Nigerien armed forces is growing more tense. On top of that, another serious issue is seemingly taking shape in France. As noted by Dominique Moisi, a founding member of the French Institute for International Relations, “the shadow of a doubt has emerged amongst the French elite about the sense of purpose of the operation in the Sahel region, given its lack of effectiveness” (DW, January 13).

Renewed efforts in 2020 are expected to bring about some positive results in counter-terrorist operations in the Sahel region. If the new measures are not successful, the resolve of local powers will be damaged, resulting in a fragmentation of efforts. Similarly, the lack of progress will increase doubts and further breed negative sentiment in France, to the exhilaration of third parties, such as Russia, whose cooperation with African countries is premised on the main pillar of a ‘security export.’

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## Turkey's Growing Military Expeditionary Posture

*Can Kasapoglu*

A glance at the Turkish Armed Forces' recent combat record demonstrates that Turkey's defense policy now extends well beyond its borders. Drones loitering in the Syrian airspace, navy frigates along the Libyan coast, Turkish military advisors in Tripoli alongside Government of National Accord (GNA) formations, mountain commando units operating in northern Iraq, and high-ranking Turkish officers in Qatar and Somalia are all pretty common to see now. Overall, the Turkish military is fast becoming an expeditionary actor in league with Ankara's geopolitical worldview.

Turkey's ambitious strategic posture is centered on three pivots. These are the naval transformation toward a blue-water force; the army's expeditionary warfare concepts married to a growing tendency of resorting to proxy war agents in various battlegrounds from North Africa to the Levant; and expanding forward military bases in different parts of the Turkish *zone d'influence*.

### **The Turkish Navy's Blue Homeland**

The Turkish Navy, traditionally a coastal deterrent since the beginning of the republic era, is gaining a power projection edge. This change is centered on defense technology breakthroughs and a novel military-geostrategic approach.

On the technology side, considerable efforts to develop more robust capabilities are underway. Through the 2020s, six *Reis-class* (Type-214) air-independent propulsion submarines will enter into service, bringing in silent navigation capacity (The Turkish Navy, May 9). Turkey's surface combat arsenal is also witnessing an uptrend. At present, the navy now operates four *Milli Gemi* (national vessel) MILGEM corvettes. The second batch, consisting of four more pieces, will consist of larger frigates with air defense capabilities and the indigenous *CAFRAD X* Band radar (The Presidency of Defense Industries, May 9; The Turkish Navy, May 9). These vessels will be equipped with Turkey's new *Atmaca* anti-ship missiles with a range of more than 200 kilometers (ROKETSAN, May 9). Finally, the flagship of the Turkish Armada, the *TCG Anadolu* Amphibious Assault Ship (based on the Spanish Juan Carlos-1 class), is scheduled

to enter into service by the end of 2020 (The Presidency of Defense Industries, May 9).

Finally, the Turkish defense industry plans to build long-range conventional precision strike capacity through the *Gezgin* (Voyager) sea-launched cruise missile, resembling the American Tomahawk and Russian Kalibr missiles (Aksam, November 2018). Should Turkey manage to integrate the planned *Gezgin* missiles into the forthcoming *Reis-class* submarines, this would register a true capability boost by equipping a silent underwater platform with a long-range, high-precision strike asset.

On the military-geostrategic side, a new concept termed *Mavi Vatan* (the Blue Homeland), ushers the Turkish Navy to more assertive horizons. The Blue Homeland refers to extending Turkey's geopolitical calculus to the surrounding waters and high-seas around the Anatolian Peninsula. Revealingly, both the largest naval drills in the republic's history—*Mavi Vatan Tatbikati-2019*—as well as the naval cadet institute's official journal were named after the concept (Turkish Naval Institute *Mavi Vatan Journal*, 2019).

Burgeoning blue-water naval warfare and power projection capabilities, married to the *Mavi Vatan* concept, manifests an emerging reality. Turkish political-military elites now consider the navy to be an active gunboat diplomacy asset, as visibly seen in the hydrocarbon bonanza in the Eastern Mediterranean.

### **The Turkish Army's Growing Capacity for Expeditionary Warfare and Proxy War**

In the 2000s, the Turkish Army's transformation revolved around hybrid warfare challenges. Terrorist networks at Turkey's doorstep have gained asymmetric capabilities, such as advanced man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) and anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), which can seriously bleed conventional formations (Daily Sabah, December 27, 2019). To prevail in complex battle-spaces, Turkish defense planners have been pursuing diligent reforms.

The army has innovatively integrated drones with land-based fire support elements (Daily Sabah, April 1). Armor survivability is a significant problem in modern warfare. As a panacea, Turkey acquired mine-resistant & ambush-protected (MRAP) combat vehicles, procured and co-produced Ukraine's Zaslou-L derivative active protection systems, and equipped armored platforms with remote weapon stations for better performance in

urban settings (ASELSAN, May 9; BMC, May 9; Kyivpost, March 22; ASELSAN, May 9).

Ankara is also getting more accustomed to proxy wars. Having succeeded the former Free Syrian Army and been trained by the Turkish military, the Syrian National Army—an umbrella organization of pro-Turkey armed groups in Syria—has now reached some 70,000-strong with more than 40 factions (SETA, 2019). During Turkey's northeast Syria campaign in October 2019, the SNA fought alongside the Turkish offensive (Anadolu Agency, December 05, 2019).

More importantly, the Turkish administration hints at high-flying plans to its newly built proxy warfare capacity. As publicly confirmed by President Erdogan, some of the SNA fighters were transferred to the Libyan front to support the GNA's operations (Asharq al-Awsat, February 22). According to estimates, the SNA contingent in Libya is at least 2,000-strong (Crisis Group, April 30).

Overall, in the 2020s, the Turkish Army actively operates in a broad axis, ranging from the Levant to the Horn of Africa, Qatar, and Northern Iraq, accompanied by indigenous components in military-strategic integrity.

### **Rise of Forward-Bases**

Out of Turkey's forward-deployed contingents, those with the highest geopolitical significance include the training mission in Somalia, Turkey's forward-deployed corps in northern Cyprus since its military intervention in 1974, the joint base in Qatar, the publicly undetailed special forces and military advisory contingent in Libya, and forward-operating bases in Syria and northern Iraq.

Today, the Turkish military advisory missions are going beyond business as usual. Somalia is a good example in this respect. The Somali cadets graduate singing the Turkish Military Academy's anthem (YouTube July 25, 2019). The African nation's commandos are trained by the Turkish Army's elite instructors and take their oaths in the Turkish language (TRT Haber, November 29, 2019; TRT Haber, June 21, 2019). Overall, in the Horn of Africa, Turkey has been rearing a whole new military generation.

Turkey's 'dronization' trend has also shaped the overseas basing posture. Ankara deployed surveillance drones to northern Cyprus for the first time since the outset of its decades-long military presence on the island (Milliyet, December 18, 2019). Likewise, Turkish un-



manned aerial vehicles are regularly operating in the Syrian, Libyan, and northern Iraqi skies.

### **Conclusion: Into New Frontiers**

Back in the 1990s, Ankara's military policy was based on two main pillars. First, there was the National Military Strategic Concept pioneered by the military leadership of then Chief of Staff (1998 – 2002) General Huseyin Kivrikoglu. The concept's main pillar was the 'active deterrence' strategy, envisaging the use of coercive force to address security threats at their source. The second pillar was the 'Two-and-a-Half War' military-geostrategic paradigm. The 'two wars' referred to the combat readiness to fight simultaneous, inter-state armed conflicts in the eastern and western fronts, while the 'half war' referred to large-scale counter-terrorism operations against the PKK (Turkish MFA Strategic Research Center, 1996).

Turkey's cross-border campaigns into northern Iraq, military 'sparring' with Greece in the Aegean, and its 'maximum pressure' policy on Hafez al-Assad's Syria to expel the PKK terrorist network's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, emanated from the abovementioned understandings. In other words, in the 1990s, Ankara was also keen to actively use its military might.

Turkey now shows political-military interest in a broader axis and the armed forces rely on a stronger defense industry. Besides, ultra-secularist military elite of the 1990s has been replaced by conservative AK Party governments. Consequently, for example, the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation gave way to the Turkey-Qatar defense partnership. Yet, at the end of the day, Turkish statecraft's active military manifestation is long-lasting.

Of course, there arise risks from such an aspirant strategy. Forward-bases offer lucrative targets to hostile intentions, an expeditionary military posture means more burden on defense economics, and there is always the risk of getting overstretched in endless hybrid and proxy wars, among many other challenges. Nevertheless, today, Ankara's military policy as to forward-bases is not a transactional one. Rather, its 'military activism', is there to stay (SETA, January 16).

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