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Owner / Yayın Sahibi: Burhanettin Duran, on behalf of (adına) SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi (2008) / ISSN 1302-177X

Managing Editor / Sorumlu Yazı İşleri Müdürü: Mehmet Nuri Altun

Printing House / Basım Yeri: Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., Akpınar Mahallesi
Hasan Basri Caddesi, No: 4, Sancaktepe, İstanbul / Turkey • Tel: +90.216.585-9000

Yayın Türü ve Şekli: Yaygın Süreli Yayın / 3 Aylık-İngilizce

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Insight Turkey is a peer-reviewed journal indexed by the following databases and indexes: Bibliography of Asian Studies, Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO), EBSCO, Elsevier Bibliographic Databases, Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), European Sources Online (ESO), GALE-Cengage, Gender Studies Database, Index Islamicus, International Bibliography of Book Reviews of Scholarly Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences (IBR), International Bibliography of Periodical Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences (IBZ), International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), International Political Science Abstracts (IPSA), JSTOR, Lancaster Index to Defence and International Security Literature, Left Index, Middle East & Central Asian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences Bibliographies, Scopus, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, World Affairs Online (WAO).

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SUMMER 2020 • VOLUME 22 NO. 3

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GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

MURAT YEŞİLTAŞ

Turkey's contemporary defense and military strategy can be best understood as a result of the historical process the country has experienced. This historical process has significantly altered the security environment surrounding Turkey while transforming her alliance relations, ultimately producing a new political vision for the country and a defense and military strategy that serves this vision.

Firstly, although the end of the Cold War and the ensuing dissolution of the Soviet Union has ameliorated international security, Turkey was faced with both conventional and asymmetric threats on multiple fronts. This situation kept defense spending of the country at record levels despite military expenditures within NATO showing a rapid decline. On the other hand, the emerging political geography led to a series of new conflicts erupting in several hotspots, from the Balkans through to the Caucasus and the Middle East. Emerging conflicts were thought to require a common response which precipitated NATO's evolution from a collective defense organization to a collective security organization. Concurrently, it meant that Turkey would actively join NATO's new missions ranging from the peaceful resolution of disputes to stability operations with expeditionary forces featured by mobility, jointness, and readiness.

Secondly, the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the U.S. created profound ramifications for Turkey's regional security and her alliance relations. In particular, the American military occupation of Iraq jeopardized Turkey's national security by effectively removing the political authority of that country and dismantling the Iraqi army. While the emerging political vacuum was filled by sectarian politics, the scarcity of security was exploited by the PKK, consolidating its presence in northern Iraqi territories. Divided Iraq has also transformed into a

breeding ground for international terrorism which resulted in the rise of various extremist armed organizations, including ISIS.

Thirdly, since the so-called Arab spring started in the early 2010s, the political and security landscape of the Middle East and North Africa has undergone significant changes. While the overthrow of dictators led to intra-state conflicts in several places, it was particularly the civil war in Syria that alarmed Turkish decision-makers due to its transformation into a safe haven for various terrorist groups operating at Turkey's southern frontiers. Bereft of concrete ally support, Turkey unilaterally launched military operations into northern Syria in order to eliminate ISIS elements as well as curbing the long-term territorial ambitions of the PKK. The Arab spring has also aggravated previous tensions and engendered various factions that facilitated new alignments which is the case for today's Eastern Mediterranean and Arab-Israeli relations.

Against the backdrop of these considerations, Turkey's contemporary defense and military strategy has been formed. In general, this strategy lays down the principles of using military force to support the political aims of the country. It operates as a "bridge" between policy and operation, in a classical sense. And that strategy is now not just informed by protecting the territorial integrity of the nation but has wider objectives, including enhancing the country's international standing as well as achieving strategic autonomy. This in turn has necessitated new tools that extend beyond a sole deterrent force, namely military activism, and defense industry investments, along with the contribution to international security and commitments to the NATO alliance.

The summer issue of *Insight Turkey* aims to explain the changing dynamics of Turkey's military and defense strategy by taking into consideration current foreign and security policy practices of Turkey in the Middle East and North Africa region. More specifically, this issue is an attempt to develop a new framework to understand Turkey's revolution in its military and defense strategies.

Hulusi Akar, the Minister of National Defense of Turkey, in his commentary sheds light on the global and regional developments that threaten Turkey's peace and stability and which contributed to shaping its defense strategy. A strategy that targets finding common solutions to international problems in a collaborative way. Akar gives special attention to the contribution of the distinguished, deterrent, efficient, motivated, well-trained, and disciplined Armed Forces that are equipped with high-level weaponry produced domestically using national resources.

Within the context of the Turkish Defense Industry's strong historical background, İsmail Demir highlights the transformation and rationality of the Turkish Defense Industry. He emphasizes the necessity of addressing the recent

rise of the Turkish Defense Industry in two different but interrelated periods. The first provided the defense industry with strong support with an extremely decisive and long-term projection. The second represents the transformation of the expectations from the defense industry, in coordination with the changing position and function of the defense industry in bureaucratic mechanisms.

Michaël Tanchum's commentary is a coherent and rigorous analysis of the logical result of Turkey's post-Cold War strategic reorientation, presented in its new expeditionary capability of enhanced naval capacity and new forward bases. Michaël examines Ankara's challenge of calibrating the use of its hard power instruments to serve its post-Lausanne strategic orientation toward establishing Turkey-centered, inter-regional connectivity.

In the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Minister of Health of the Republic of Turkey, Fahrettin Koca, underscores the role of Turkey in the management of COVID-19. His commentary asserts that Turkey has successfully contained the COVID-19 pandemic and prevented devastating consequences due to its idiosyncratic approach to the crisis and the robustness of its health-care system.

After 85 years as a museum, Hagia Sophia welcomes Muslim worshippers, a decision that has drawn intense criticism in Turkey and worldwide. However, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Yavuz Selim Kıran, argues that the functional change of Hagia Sophia will not affect Turkey's centuries-old tradition of promoting tolerance, harmony, and diversity.

The final off-topic commentary of this issue underlines the challenges to Pakistan's nuclear threshold. Muhammad Haris Bilal Malik and Muhammad Abbas Hassan explain why Pakistan has been further threatened by India's aggressive policies and provocative military modernization. The commentary concludes that Pakistan may be compelled to further revisit its nuclear threshold level to overcome India's aggression.

Besides the commentaries, this issue comprises five articles that focus on the Turkish Defense Industry past, present, and future and underline the factors that led to its remarkable evolution. The first article by Murat Yeşiltaş presents a general framework of Turkey's Military and Defense Strategy. By taking into account the main drivers, primary objectives, and essential pillars, as well as its tangible repercussions on the military mindset, the author explains how the change in Turkey's defense and military strategy stems both from Turkey's changing security landscape and its quest to be an assertive regional player.

Can Kasapoğlu's research article covers two interrelated strategic topics regarding Turkey's national military capacity in the 21st century: its defense techno-

logical and industrial base and its military policy, both currently characterized by a burgeoning assertiveness.

In light of the rapid advances in technology that are continually shaping developments in the aerospace and defense sector, notably the evolution of airpower, Arda Mevlütoğlu, provides us with an understanding of the features of the next generation of air warfare, while presenting the status of the Turkish Air Force and offering suggestions on several challenges and opportunities.

As a reply to the critics that Turkey is caught between a rock and a hard place due to the adamant opposition of its NATO allies, Mustafa Kibaroglu tries to make sense of Turkey's S-400 choice by assessing the impact of the S-400 deal on Turkey's defense industries. On one hand, he presents his conception of the current "international political non-order" as an underlying factor behind the deal. On the other, he suggests that the deal must be approached from a wider perspective to grasp the extent of the service it has done in bolstering Turkey's military-industrial complex.

The last article related to the main theme of this issue focuses on Turkey's defense spending. Merve Seren attempts to show that prioritization of defense spending during the AK Party era is specifically the outcome of a political preference. In other words, the shift in the political landscape from idealism to realism, associated with pragmatism.

Our initial off-topic article highlights how Trump's peace plan optimistically called the "Deal of the Century" adopts the Zionist discourse regarding al-Aqsa and its effects on undermining the Muslim sovereignty over the mosque, which will be a clear violation of the International law and status quo. Khalid el-Awaisi and Cuma Yavuz investigate the results of the implementation of Trump's plan which they assert will lead to three main changes that would undo the centuries-old status quo of Masjid al-Aqsa completely and give Israel full control over this important historic and religious site.

Ahmad AlShawra and Ahmad Almuhtady's off-topic article completes the dossier of this issue. The authors examine the potential implications of Jordan's decision to import Mediterranean gas through Israel on Jordanian energy security, with special attention to how this decision will impact Jordanian foreign policy regarding the Palestinian cause.

Through a wide range of articles and commentaries, this issue aims to bring to its readers a comprehensive framework on the transformation of Turkey's Defense Industry and changing patterns of its military strategy. ■