The Renaissance of Turkish Drones:
How Has Türkiye's Concept of Security Changed?

Türk İHA'larının Rönesansı:
Türkiye'nin Güvenlik Anlayışı Nasıl Değişti?

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Tuğba KOÇ [ID]
(Sorumlu Yazar-Corresponding Author)

İstanbul Aydın University Institute of Graduate, Studies, Political Science and International Relations, İstanbul, Türkiye

İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler, İstanbul, Türkiye

tugbakoc5@stu.aydin.edu.tr

Abstract

Unmanned aerial vehicles have many uses around the world. These vehicles, which are used in multidisciplinary fields, have brought along the tactical change in the counter-terrorism process of the Republic of Türkiye and have presented a great importance in terms of Türkiye's contribution to international security within the scope of the National Technology move. Ground breaking studies on this subject in the UAV/SIHA production process were developed by many governmental institutions and individual initiatives like BAYKAR and significant successes were achieved in cross-border operations led by Türkiye, and hence Türkiye played an important role in ensuring regional security. Since the data security of the devices and weapons purchased as a result of foreign dependency since the 1990s could not be ensured, the country has created its own defence industry strategy and the operations carried out with state-of-the-art warplanes and unmanned aerial vehicles which significantly restricted the mobility of the terrorist organizations capable of launching air-to-air missiles with a successful intelligence base are used against terrorist organizations, especially ISIL and made Türkiye an important player in the field of regional and international security. Nowadays, when the independence of countries cannot be limited only to the management of freedom and democracy, a country must be able to innovate and make progress, especially in the defence industry, for its own security. Unmanned aerial vehicle systems, which Turkey has gained significant momentum in recent years, have enabled the country to gain a new role in both state security and regional and international security. In other words, these vehicles have advantages such as cost effectiveness and low risk compared to traditional military aircraft, and Turkey's use of UAV/SIHAs in its own internal security operations and in areas such as border security has increased the strategic importance of this technology. Turkey's progress in this field can also be considered an important development in terms of international security policies and defence industry trends. Conducting a detailed analysis of how these technological developments affect Turkey's foreign policy and defence strategies can help us better understand the complexity of this issue.

Keywords: UAV, security, terrorism, counter-terrorism

Öz

İnsansız hava araçlarının dünya genelinde birçok kullanım alanı mevcuttur. Multidisipliner alanda kullanılan bu araçlar Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin terörle mücadele sürecinde taktiksel değişimi beraberinde getirmiş ve Millî Teknoloji Hamlesi kapsamında Türkiye'nin uluslararası güvenliğe katkısı açısından büyük öneme sahip olmuştur. İHA/SİHA üretimi sürecinde bu konuda çığır açan çalışmalar resmî kurumlar ve BAYKAR gibi şahsi girişimler tarafından geliştirilmiş ve Türkiye'nin liderlik ettiği sınır ötesi operasyonlarda önemli başarılar kat edilmiş ve bölgesel güvenliğin sağlanmasında Türkiye önemli bir rol oynamıştır. 1990'lardan bu yana yurtdışı bağımlılık neticesinde satın alınan cihaz ve silahların veri güvenliği sağlanamadığından ülke kendi savunma sanayi stratejisini oluşturmuş ve başarılı bir istihbari temel ile havadan havaya füze atma kapasiteli son teknoloji savaş uçakları ve insansız hava araçları ile yapılan operasyonlar başta DAEŞ olmak üzere terör örgütlerinin hareket kabiliyetlerini önemli ölçüde kısıtlamış ve Türkiye'yi bölgesel ve uluslararası güvenlik alanında önemli bir oyuncu hâline getirmiştir. Ülkelerin bağımsızlığının sadece özgürlük ve demokrasi yönetimi ile sınırlandırılamayacağı günümüzde bir ülkenin kendi güvenliği için özellikle savunma sanayisinde yenilikler yapıp ilerleme kaydedebilmesi gerekmektedir. Türkiye'nin son yıllarda önemli bir ivme kazandığı insansız hava aracı sistemleri hem devlet güvenliği hem de bölgesel ve uluslararası güvenlik hususlarında ülkenin yeni bir rol elde etmesini sağlamıştır. Bir başka deyişle bu araçlar geleneksel askeri hava araçlarına kıyasla maliyet etkinliği ve riskin az olması gibi avantajlara sahip olup ayrıca Türkiye'nin İHA/SİHA'larını kendi iç güvenlik operasyonlarında ve sınır güvenliği gibi alanlarda kullanması bu teknolojinin stratejik önemini artırmıştır. Türkiye'nin bu alandaki ilerlemesi, uluslararası güvenlik politikaları ve savunma sanayisi trendleri açısından da önemli bir gelişme olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu teknolojik gelişmelerin, Türkiye'nin dış politika ve savunma stratejilerini nasıl etkilediği konusunda detaylı bir analiz yapmak, bu konunun karmaşıklığı daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İHA, SİHA, güvenlik, terör, terörle mücadele

Introduction

In the context of international relations, the definition of security refers to the condition in which a state or group of states is free from threats to its survival, territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the well-being of its citizens. Security encompasses a wide range of concerns and can include various dimensions beyond just military threats. The concept of security in international relations is multifaceted and has evolved over time to encompass a broader range of challenges beyond traditional military threats. Different states and actors may prioritize different dimensions of security based on their unique circumstances and interests. As a result, discussions about security often involve a complex interplay of political, economic, social, and environmental factors, especially for states.

In relation to this complexity, state security which refers to measures taken by a government to ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens from threats can be analyzed in detail. The security of the states includes both internal threats, such as crime, social unrest, or economic instability, and external threats, such as military aggression from other nations or terrorist attacks. It also encompasses the protection of the state's institutions, ensuring they can function effectively to uphold law and order. State security also extends to protecting the state's sovereignty, meaning its right to govern its territory and people without external interference. This involves maintaining territorial integrity and political independence. Furthermore, state security involves ensuring economic stability, as economic disruptions can lead to social unrest and undermine the state's ability to provide for its citizens. A secure environment is conducive to economic investment and growth and this can be sustained domestically by maintaining societal harmony and managing divisions, or internationally, by protecting access to resources or maintaining strategic alliances. In essence, state security is a broad term encompassing the various measures a state takes to protect its citizens, institutions, and interests, maintain stability, and uphold its sovereignty.

State security primarily involves the protection of its political and social systems from threats that could destabilize or harm them. These threats can come in various forms such as military aggression, terrorism, cyber-attacks, espionage or even internal unrest and civil disobedience. Traditional understanding of state security, which is focused heavily on military power and interstate relations has broadened to include economic stability, environmental security and societal resilience, reflecting the increasingly complex and interconnected nature of contemporary global threats. However, the concept of state security has been evolving and expanding, particularly in the post-Cold War Era. More importantly, the specific strategies and priorities within state security now differ greatly between countries as they are shaped by each state's unique geopolitical context, internal political dynamics and perceived threats.

Among the states with this unique geopolitical context, as Türkiye has been exercising an influence on the other states, the country is focused on the security concept more than ever. Türkiye's concept of state and regional security is deeply rooted in its historical experiences, geopolitical position and evolving strategic priorities. Over the years, Türkiye's understanding of security has expanded beyond traditional military considerations to encompass a range of political, economic and social dimensions. This multidimensional approach reflects the complexities of modern security challenges and the dynamic nature of international relations. The country has been steadily increasing its position in the global defense industry, particularly throughout the past decade. The significant growth in various sectors including aerospace, naval systems and land vehicles is supported by the drone technology with remarkable successes in domestic and cross border operations.

As Türkiye navigates a changing global landscape, its approach to security continues to adapt, encompassing a wide range of factors that impact its stability, prosperity and influence. The foreign-source dependency in terms of defense industry is declined with the help of the UAVs which ensured an advantage to the country with its fight with terrorism in conjunction with the aim of providing domestic and regional security and brought a change in tactics. Hence, the new security concepts of Türkiye and the effectiveness of UAVs reflect a broader understanding of security that includes stability and cooperation. Türkiye faces challenges such as managing refugee flows, balancing relationships with global powers and navigating regional rivalries and the rise of its defense industry, particularly the success of Turkish drones, has provided new opportunities to enhance security capabilities.

The Relation between Security and States
The Definition of the Security

Security generally refers to a state or condition of being protected from harm, danger, or threats. It's a broad concept and can apply to various areas including personal safety, financial stability, cybersecurity, and national defense. In a personal context, security can involve measures taken to protect individuals from physical harm or crime, like home security systems or personal safety practices. In a financial context, security refers to measures taken to ensure financial stability and prevent losses, such as savings, insurance, and investments. It also refers to tradable financial assets like stocks and bonds. In terms of cybersecurity, security involves protecting digital information and systems from threats like viruses, hacking, and data breaches. This can include firewalls, encryption, and other protective measures. At a national level, security involves measures taken by a state to protect its

citizens and territory from external threats like war or terrorism, as well as internal threats like crime or civil unrest. In essence, security is about protection, stability, and resistance against potential harm or loss, and the specific meaning can vary depending on the context in which it is used.

Security is an important term for the people around the world. To live in a secured society does not mean only to be secured from terrorist attacks but to continue their daily lives in a peaceful atmosphere. Along similar lines, the definition of the term has changed especially after the Cold War. The states began to evaluate the security with the questions of what is security, what is a threat, against whom there is a threat and whose security to be maintained. As a result, the way to define the term of the security has been debated in recent years. *"The security of the state is connected with the protection of the fundamental values: territorial integrity, sovereignty, independence, constitutional and interior order etc. Scientists, philosophers and military experts since deep antiquity have emphasized that the main among all the reasons for a state coming into being is the need to guarantee the security (defense and public order) of society."* (Stefanov, 2018: 592).

As a complicated term for the international relations studies, security can have different meanings for the states around the world. The underlying argument here is that the security does not have the same meaning for every state. While the traditional security concept is state centric in which the state is accepted as the ultimate power, the period after the Cold War changed the concept in different ways. *"During the Cold War years security challenges were shaped by competitive power relations between Soviet Union and the United States. On the other hand, after the end of the Cold War, global security was redefined and wide range of security challenges and threats occurred. After fragmentation of security threats, new threats emerged such as terrorist attacks, massacres which are made by humans' own governments, chronic politic instabilities, environmental degradations etc."* (Kocamaz, 2011: 467).

Reflecting the changing international context and the emergence of new security challenges, the concept of state security has seen significant shifts since the end of the Cold War. The post-Cold War era saw the rise of non-traditional security threats which include terrorism, cyber warfare, global pandemics, climate change and transnational crime. These threats are often transnational in nature, blurring the traditional distinctions between domestic and international security. Thus, the concept of security has broadened to include human security, which emphasizes the security of individuals in addition to the security of state. The challenges that is confronted by the states are often not limited by national borders, making them complex and challenging to address.

The process of globalization has also had significant implications for state security. On one hand, it has increased interdependence among states, creating new opportunities for cooperation. On the other hand, it has also created new vulnerabilities as challenges in one part of the world can quickly spread to others. Furthermore, in the post-Cold War era, there is recognition of the role of non-state actors including international organizations, NGOs and multinational corporations in security. Lastly, the post-Cold War era has seen the rise of regional powers and the shift of power from the West to the East. This has resulted in changing alliances and power dynamics affecting state security strategies. The end of the Cold War has led to a broader, more comprehensive understanding of state security, incorporating a wider range of threats and involving a more diverse set of actors. It is marked by an increased focus on non-traditional security threats, human security and the implications of globalization and technology.

Different from the traditional understanding of the security with the military power, the security concept in our century requires different arguments for the states. Actually, this discussion takes its roots from the theory of Realism, which focuses on states as the main actors in international politics. As it can be argued in the context of the Realist theory, which emphasizes the primacy of the state and the enduring nature of the international anarchy, states with more power, are better positioned to defend themselves, make alliances and influence global events. The concept of security of the state and the threats that are met can be argued in detail in the context of the Realist theory in full sense as the theory ensures a dominant theoretical perspective in the field of international relations that offers a unique lens through which to understand the concept of state security. "The fact that each state tries to ensure its own security, which is one of the main points emphasized by the realist theory, also brings about the armament of every state. When one state takes up arms, the other/others can perceive a threat from it and take up arms, which creates a security dilemma. In addition, the perceived threat is not eliminated." (Şahin, 2016: 50). Overall, realist theory provides insights into why states prioritize armament and military development as a means to enhance their security and protect their interests in a world where power dynamics and self-interest play a crucial role.

Realism and the Concept of Security

Realism is a prominent theory in international relations that emphasizes the importance of power and self-interest among states. It posits that states are driven by the pursuit of security in an anarchic world where there is no central authority to enforce rules. Security, within the realist perspective, is seen as the primary objective for states, often defined in terms of military strength

and the ability to protect national interests. Realism views security as a central concern because it believes that states must protect themselves from potential threats and maintain a favorable balance of power to ensure their survival. This perspective assumes that states are rational actors seeking to maximize their own interests, which can lead to competition and conflict. Realists argue that international relations are characterized by a struggle for power and influence, and that states will use various means, including military force and alliances, to secure their interests. They often focus on the relative capabilities of states and the dynamics of their interactions to assess security situations.

While realism provides valuable insights into state behavior and the pursuit of security, other perspectives, such as liberalism and constructivism, offer alternative views. These perspectives may emphasize different factors, such as international institutions, economic interdependence, or norms and identities, in shaping security dynamics. It's worth noting that the concept of security is multifaceted and can include not only military security but also economic, environmental, and human security. Different actors, such as non-state actors and international organizations, can also play important roles in shaping security dynamics beyond the traditional state-centric realist framework. Security, particularly in the context of international relations and national defense, refers to the measures taken by states to ensure the safety of their territories, populations, interests from threats, which could range from conventional military threats to non-traditional security threats like terrorism, cyber-attacks and pandemics.

In the context of realism, the security of the state is paramount and therefore security becomes the most important objective for any state. This is often associated with military power and the concept of "self-help" where states must primarily rely on themselves for protection. Realists believe that in the absence of a global authority, states must be prepared to defend themselves and their interests and to do so; they need to amass and maintain power. Therefore, realists tend to prioritize national security and military strength, believing that it is only through power that states can ensure their survival in the international system. In summary, realists argue that states are sovereign entities with the right to make their own decisions without external interference. This sovereignty is maintained and defended through the accumulation of power.

Realism is based on the idea that in international system, the states are operating in Oakeshott's anarchy environment, which is a vast sea that does not reach the ground; therefore, their only goal is to survive and this can only be succeeded with armament (Yavuz, 2009: 139). Although seen as an old-world theory recently, the wake of 9/11 attacks highlighted the fundamental aspect of the theory, which is the need for states to secure their own interests. Security means the security of the nation, which can be sustained through military power. State is the rational actor and has the utmost importance. Realism presents a primitive but forceful interpretation of security, purposely defining the term narrowly, using the state as the only analytical reference point, and describing security threats exclusively in terms of military might (Hough, 2015: 14).

Within the realist perspective, security encompasses the military capabilities of states, their relative power position and the balance of power among them. The main objective of security, according to realism, is to ensure the survival and autonomy of the state in the face of potential threats or aggression from other states. These threats can be named as military threats, non-state actors, economic challenges and cyber threats. In essence, according to realism, threats to state security are predominantly viewed through the lens of power dynamics, with both external and internal factors playing crucial roles. As realism perceives the international system as anarchic with no overarching authority to enforce laws, leading to an environment characterized by self-help where states are primarily responsible for their own security, this situation makes security a matter of survival for states. In other words, in the world of power politics, as depicted by realism, security underpins all actions. States seek to amass power in different forms - military, economic, or diplomatic - as a means of safeguarding their interests, maintaining sovereignty, and ensuring survival. This power plays a crucial role in deterring potential threats and preserving a state's place in the international system, making security a cornerstone of state behavior.

Shifting Security Paradigm: The Example of Türkiye and the New Concept of Security

While defining the term of the security and how Türkiye analyses this concept, the reason behind this need of Türkiye to have a new concept of security should be analyzed in detail first. The method of the operations in Türkiye has changed in an enormous and unexpected way in the last century. The idea of the minimum risk of the loss of lives, the financial advantage of the less expenditures and the tactical practicality present a new model of security concept for the country. After the Cold War ended, the security concepts of the states have evolved into different perspectives. The question was if the security would be sustained in military, traditional or intelligence areas as well. When the cross-border military operations of Türkiye resulted in a success, the effectiveness of the UAVs, which were banned to be produced for a while and the country, was given HERONs, which were unarmed before, began to be discussed and the government forced the pace for development of the vehicles. During the counter-terrorism operations of the Turkish Republic in 1990s, the country was exporting the tactical vehicles and weapons from the countries like Germany. Since the countries, that the weapons are brought could see the codes on the products they sold, they were also sharing this data with the armed terrorist organizations that the country was fighting with. These organizations were

becoming capable of fighting back with these weapons, as they had already know the weak aspects of them. This situation was both misleading the country in its fight with terrorism, slowing down the process and caused enormous economic damage as the weapons became useless and ineffective.

The Cold War's vision of security was rather clear-cut and well defined, whereas the contemporary security context is extremely nuanced and multifaceted. While globalization has fundamentally altered how the world functions, the end of the Cold War has emerged as a constitutive event that has called into question some of the core tenets of conventional security thinking. According to Bill McSweeney, the difficulty with traditional security notion was that it not only overemphasized the military aspect of security to the exclusion of other aspects but also did it from a statist viewpoint (Ağır, 2014: 107). While traditional security is primarily state-centric and focuses on military threats, contemporary security is more comprehensive, encompassing a variety of threats that affect both states and individuals.

The shifting security paradigm globally involves moving beyond traditional military and geopolitical considerations to include non-traditional security threats like transnational terrorism, cyber-attacks and even climate change. Türkiye offers a compelling case study in how this new concept of security is being incorporated into national strategy. Historically, Türkiye has focused on traditional security threats, mainly from its neighbors and internal ethnic tensions. Today, Türkiye is grappling a wider array of threats such as cyber-attacks, transnational terrorism and refugee crises. The Syrian conflict has introduced new non-traditional challenges for Türkiye, notably the inflow of refugees and the risk of radicalization, which diverge from conventional warfare and demand comprehensive, multi-pronged solutions.

During the Cold War, Türkiye's understanding of security was influenced by its geopolitical position and the international climate. Türkiye shared borders with two communist countries — the Soviet Union and Bulgaria — and was in close proximity to the Middle East. Thus, its security understanding was largely shaped by the need to counter potential Soviet aggression and to maintain stability in its region. In this context, Türkiye became a key strategic ally of the West. It joined NATO in 1952, strengthening its ties with Western powers and serving as a bulwark against the spread of communism. Türkiye's location was particularly important given its control of the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits, which were vital for Soviet access to warm water ports. The security threats perceived by Türkiye during the Cold War were predominantly external, focusing on military invasion or political subversion by communist powers. This was not uncommon for the time, as the period was characterized by heightened tensions between the two major blocs and fears of a global conflict.

Türkiye's stance in the Cold War period about the security was related to the importance of its geopolitical position as always. In the process of time, the transformation of the warfare of Türkiye brought the search for new alternatives for action to ensure both the domestic and the regional security from the conventional perspective to a comprehensive one. As a country located in an important area in geostrategic and geopolitical sides, Türkiye's fight with terrorism in the country with various groups that are either members of religious terrorism or ethnic groups, shaped the country's understanding of the security in the homeland first. To put it in a different way, the Balkans in the north, the northern Gulf in the south, the eastern Mediterranean in the southwest, and the Caucasus in the northeast make up a nearly entirely encircling area of instability for Türkiye. Given its immense extent, this multi-regional crescent of instability is unlike any other region in the world, not even northeast Asia (Sezer, 1999: 265).

The problem of the security in Türkiye was associated with the inadequacy of the education of the local people or the economic problems for a while. However, terrorist attacks of all stripes continue to push the edges of what may be seen, although this potential is usually only seen after the fact. As they challenged the preexisting theories and presumptions of terrorism prevention, it can be claimed that the events of 9/11 had long-lasting effects. Something that had been considered inconceivable, unthinkable, or beyond comprehension actually happened. (Heino, 2022: 35) Türkiye was no exemption to suffer from the results of these events as the country have always been the target of the terrorist organizations either because of the political issues or the international ties. Although there are some non-military threats for the security of a state like diseases or economic crisis, *"organized violence has been a central part of human existence for millennia and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Not surprisingly, therefore, preparations for war have preoccupied organized polities throughout history."* (Walt, 1991: 213). Relatedly, Türkiye has been engaged in extensive counterterrorism efforts, both within its borders and beyond, especially in Syria, due to the country's complex geopolitical situation. This situation is complex due to country's location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, as well as its proximity to several conflict zones and this has direct implications for its counterterrorism efforts. In response to the challenges like geographical proximity and refugees, Türkiye has undertaken military operations against terrorist organizations both within its borders and in Syria to maintain the security.

Türkiye's Fight with Terrorism and Counter Terrorism Efforts
Domestic Operations

Türkiye's strategic location in the Middle East and the demographic situation directed the country in a combat with terrorist

groups who were aiming an instable political atmosphere and chaos in the region. The history of the fight with terrorism of Turkish Republic begins at the early 1990s with the formation of PKK in the southeastern part of Türkiye by claiming freedom and independence. The fact that the aim of the terrorist organizations was not close to the welfare of the people living in the region made the Turkish government take military actions towards the terrorist organizations with armed force. Within the compass of the military power, the human force (soldiers) and the helicopters and fighter aircrafts were key concepts in this struggle. However, there was an inconsistent situation with the purchase of this military equipment from the Western countries.

In 2001, Türkiye made a deal with Israel about the HERONs, which were the technological UAVs of that time. It took nearly seven years for these UAVs to be bought and acted for the Turkish Army. However, the camera shots that were taken by the HERONs were being sent to Israel first and then the parts that were proven by the Israel Intelligence were shared with the Turkish Army, which was a waste of time. The UAVs were also directed late or even not directed before the military operations, as it was not approved by Tel Aviv. And what is worse, it was known by Türkiye that these countries were giving the confidential data of the weapons to the terrorist organizations also that the country was fighting with.

Before the use of the UAVs produced by Türkiye itself, the capacity of the aerial vehicles and the military tanks which were driven by soldiers were able to be active in certain parts. The Turkish soldiers were spending days and nights in the mountains without actually knowing from where the attack would come. The out of date tanks became disadvantageous by the time passes for Türkiye as the terrorist organizations also received help from the countries that Türkiye was fighting with. It was clear that these old-fashioned tanks could be used for the aim of defense, but just a small UAV can be enough to destroy a huge military tank. Therefore, Türkiye needed a new technology and a change in its strategy for the counter terrorism activities in its borders. The UAV technology was the answer for that need in various ways. *"While terrorist and insurgent use (and projected use) of UAVs is important for the Army's homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) implications, it is also and quite possibly more importantly – likely to have great influence on the conduct of future forms of conventional warfighting."* (Bunker, 2015: 2).

During the period in which the activities of the terrorist organizations in Türkiye rose to a level that some businessmen and journalists were captured and killed without any evidence, the country was unable to specify the activities because of the deficiency of an advanced technology. One of the most destructive attacks happened in Türkiye which made the country take aggressive actions was the one in Istanbul in 2003. *"The terrorist bombings in Istanbul in November 2003 brought Türkiye's challenges with terrorism into sharp focus. Until these bombings, much of the external attention to the terrorist situation in Türkiye had lessened considerably with the capture of the separatist PKK's leader, A. Ocalan, and the subsequent dip in the activities of his movement."* (Cline, 2004: 321).

This success was important as the fight with the terrorist organizations has been carried out in many ways during the years in the country. This process was costing huge amounts of money besides the human force that was integrated within the military operations. The disadvantage of the vehicles like helicopters caused a need for a better technology which would secure the capability for manoeuvre in addition to the fuel efficiency and the hanging time of the UAVs because *"one of the greatest problems facing modern armies today is how to detect and destroy a target under both symmetric and asymmetric conditions. The most important issues in this regard are to limit loss of life and to avoid collateral damage as much as possible."* (Eker, 2014: 101). Therefore, the technology that was sustained by the UAVs were very vital in order to prevent the casualty rates also.

Cross-Border Operations

Türkiye's aim to keep potential threats away from its borders they share with Syria and Iraq especially made the country focus on the fight against terrorism. The goal of ensuring the regional stability was also important for the country. The military operations that Türkiye have been conducting are generally aimed at preserving its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. From a realistic point of view, such proactive interventions are necessary to keep possible threats a bay. In fact, Türkiye aimed at controlling internal turmoil and conflicts in neighboring countries with the help of these operations. The reasons like the border security, regional stability, geopolitical influence and national sovereignty have simultaneously influenced the decision-making process for cross-border operations especially after the Syrian War.

Historically, Türkiye has conducted several cross-border operations since 1995, largely focused on countering the PKK, which is based in northern Iraq where the group has a long-maintained presence. During the years of 1995-2008 Türkiye conducted these military operations mainly in Iraq to neutralize the PKK's ability to conduct cross-border operations into Türkiye. In more recent years, Türkiye's operations have expanded in scope to include Syria, primarily due to the Syrian Civil War and the rise of ISIS. Starting from 2016-2017 with the Operation Euphrates Shield, Türkiye aimed to clear ISIS from its border and prevent the Syrian Democratic Forces (largely composed of YPG) from controlling contiguous territory along the border. Along with the Operation Olive Branch (2018) and Operation Peace Spring (2019) Türkiye maintained an important development for its national security,

particularly in relation to the ongoing conflict with the PKK and the threat from ISIS.

Before the operations began, there was already a chaotic situation in the region Türkiye belongs. After the Saddam regime, many local people who were police and soldiers became unemployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The political instability and the Western intervention were causing more chaos in the Middle East and the tension was rising. There were foreign fighters to interfere also. The rise of the Arab Spring protests was an important reason for this chaotic situation. The radical groups like Al-Nusra Front first and the ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) next were causing more chaos with the help of the social media and propaganda videos they were broadcasting via Internet. This chaotic situation was growing just besides the borders of Türkiye who would be affected by both military terms and social terms with the great number of people migrating to the country. It is known that the Arab Spring, which began in late 2010, sparked uprisings in several Middle Eastern and North African countries, leading to political instability and power vacuums in some areas. This situation was exploited by various armed groups, including ISIS, to extend their influence. ISIS, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, took advantage of the chaos and social discontent that resulted from these uprisings. It was able to establish a strong presence in both Syria and Iraq and declared a caliphate in territories under its control.

Türkiye, which shares a long border with both Syria and Iraq, was heavily affected by this. The influx of refugees from both countries, coupled with the threat posed by ISIS, led to significant security concerns for Türkiye. In response, the Turkish government initiated cross-border operations. These operations aimed to accomplish several objectives. First, to combat ISIS directly and prevent the group's spread to Turkish territory. Second, to manage the refugee crisis by establishing safe zones within Syria itself. Third, to counter the influence of militias like the YPG, whom Türkiye considers a terrorist organization linked to the PKK. The decision of a series of cross border operations were objected by many countries and Türkiye was claimed to unbalance the regional stability. In analyzing this, it's important to consider the complexity and multiplicity of the issues at hand, and that each player - be it ISIS, Türkiye, the various groups involved in the Arab Spring, or the international community - has its own set of objectives and considerations.

As the ISIS grew more powerful and started conducting terrorist attacks inside Türkiye, the Turkish government took a more active role in fighting against the group. This change was marked by a suicide bombing in Suruç, near the Syrian border which killed 33 people in July 2015. This was followed by the deadliest terror attack in Türkiye's modern history, when twin suicide bombings killed over 100 people at a peace rally in Ankara in October 2015. In response, Türkiye allowed the US-led coalition against ISIS to use Incirlik Air Base for airstrikes. Turkish security forces also increased internal crackdowns on suspected ISIS cells throughout the country. ISIS was responsible for many deadly terrorist attacks around the world, utilizing a range of tactics, including suicide bombings, mass shootings, vehicle-ramming attacks and beheadings. The terrorist organization was also responsible for the death of 30 English tourists in Tunisia, the suicide attacks in Beirut, Ankara and 130 people in Paris. To put it another way, they were causing an international security problem but Türkiye was the worst-hit country to be affected by this security problem. All things considered, in order to create a region which is cleansed from terror, Türkiye pioneered for a series of operations in the region with the intent of providing both the domestic and international security.

Consequently, Türkiye is now attempting to directly intervene in the events from the outside after learning that the humanitarian disasters on her border directly affect her own nation. It took a while to find a solution to this issue, which has persisted for more than ten years and is predicted to do so, but when the situation began to take a dangerous turn, Türkiye was required by international law to act (Tunca, 2021: 137). With the help of the strategies like establishing buffer zones of control, Türkiye aims to create a buffer against the spillover of conflict and instability into other regions, which could have wider international implications. This is important for the international security as Türkiye's presence on the ground could provide valuable intelligence about extremist groups, human trafficking routes and other security concerns which can be shared with international allies.

The Emergence of Turkish Drones
Development of Defense Industry

"In the 1970s Soviet generals realized that America, with its lead in microelectronics, was racing ahead in the development of long-range precision weapons, sensors (such as satellites) to spot targets, and networks to connect the two. They gave this a grand name: the 'reconnaissance-strike complex'. Operation Desert Storm, America's swift and easy triumph over Iraq in 1991 seemed to offer further proof of the concept." (Economist, 2023: 3). It is a fact now that the electronic warfare is on the rise in the recent years. Electronic warfare a is continually evolving discipline as technologies advance and new vulnerabilities are identified. It is an integral part of modern military operations and is used in both defensive and offensive operations. Therefore, for the future of their security, states need the capabilities, which should involve a complex interplay of engineering, strategy and an understanding of the electromagnetic environment.

Based on the new strategies of other states with the help of the technology, Türkiye has taken actions on the advancement of defense plans. The development of the Turkish Defense Industry is marked by a strategic focus on self-reliance and technological innovation. In the past few decades, Türkiye has shifted from being a predominantly import-dependent country for its defense needs becoming an emerging player in the global defense industry. Initially, the Turkish industry was heavily reliant on NATO allies, particularly the United States, for military hardware and technology. However, a series of geopolitical events, including conflicts in neighboring regions and intermittent tensions with traditional allies, fueled a sense of urgency to develop domestic capabilities.

Starting in the 1980s and accelerating in the 2000s, Türkiye initiated several programs to modernize and localize its defense infrastructure. Agencies like the under secretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), and later its successor, the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB), were established to oversee and coordinate the development of domestic defense technologies. Investment in research and development grew substantially, and partnerships were forged with private companies as well as universities. Today, Türkiye produces a wide array of military equipment, including drones, armored vehicles, and missile systems. Unmanned aerial vehicles like the Bayraktar TB2 and the Anka have gained international recognition for their performance and capabilities. The Altay tank, a domestically produced main battle tank, is another significant milestone in Türkiye's pursuit of self-reliance in defense production. Furthermore, Türkiye has also entered the global defense market as an exporter. Countries in the Middle East, Africa, and even some NATO allies have shown interest in or already purchased Turkish military hardware. This has not only boosted Türkiye's geopolitical influence but also helped to offset the significant costs associated with developing a domestic defense industry.

Türkiye's Self-Sufficiency and the Role of BAYKAR

Türkiye has made substantial strides towards self-sufficiency in its defense industry and Baykar stands as a prominent example of this trend. The development trajectory of Türkiye's defense industry can be attributed to a mix of geopolitical considerations, a desire for technological independence and the will to become a global player in the defense market. Türkiye historically relied on NATO allies, especially the United States, for much of its defense needs. However, conflicts in neighboring regions and a desire to assert greater independence led Türkiye to pursue domestic production capabilities. Investments in R&D, government support and partnerships with private industries have been key driving forces behind this as before the use of UAVs in the counter terrorism activities; Türkiye was dependable on the war crafts or helicopters, which had limited vision to target the denied area completely. When an area suspected to hold terrorist groups was bombed, it was hard to calculate in detail whether there was a school or hospital in the inner circle. A useful and helpful instrument for field investigations, the various acquisition techniques and the ability to get high spatial and temporal resolutions allow for the derivation of precise information on landscape evolution over large areas. In this situation, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) provide new mapping opportunities and exceptional spatial resolution at local scales, where a survey may only span a few square kilometers and the utilization of aerial or satellite platforms may be deemed too costly (Giordan, 2017: 1).

It's necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by the advantages of the UAVs to specify the target enemies as there is a possibility of the collateral damage. The risk of the damage of civilian zones was giving harm to the sensibility of the situation of the region that Turkish government was struggling to stabilize during that time. It's an obvious fact that the UAVs has the capability to specify the areas more clearly and on-target as the cameras can detect them in focus. As a matter of fact, without doubt, the course of the operations has changed. The minimum risk of the loss of lives or to be captivated brought a great advantage to the Turkish forces who uses the UAVs in an aggressive way, in a constant trace with a long altitude, in the combat against terrorism. In terms of the new methods for counter terrorism, it was a great development for the country to have "unmanned" vehicles which were making them be able to go for miles away that the land vehicles and the unarmed HERONs that were sold to the country could not succeed.

Türkiye's burden to sustain not only the individual security but the regional one also brought the need for new ways to fight with the terrorist groups in the country with an institutionalized system like the foundation of the defense industries and the companies like BAYKAR. "Many factors play a role in Türkiye's border security, such as its geopolitical position, the instability in neighboring countries and the increase in global threats due to these instabilities, the presence of terrorist groups, the interests of other actors in the region, the economic and social weaknesses in the region and the difficulty of geographical conditions (İstanbullu, 2022: 233). The states have a natural right to make changes in their security concepts, therefore the Republic of Türkiye found new ways of solution to the problem of terrorism by decreasing the external dependence for weapons and ammunition.

The success of Baykar's drones exemplifies Türkiye's broader ambition to become technologically independent. Producing engines, avionics and weapon systems domestically reduces reliance on foreign suppliers and mitigates vulnerabilities associated with geopolitical tensions. The ability to produce home-grown technologies like the Bayraktar TB2 has economic advantages as

well. It creates jobs, stimulates R&D and opens up export opportunities. Moreover, by demonstrating its military capabilities, Türkiye gains strategic leverage in the global arena. In fact, the success of Türkiye's defense industry can attribute to a combination of factors that span policy initiatives, technological advancements and geopolitical considerations. This is the reason why Türkiye has prioritized its defense sector as part of its broader national strategy.

The Turkish defense industry has shown an ability to adapt to changing circumstances, whether it be the fallout from international sanctions or the emergence of new technological trends like drone warfare. Political will and a nationalistic drive have been strong motivational factors. While the aim is self-sufficiency, Türkiye has also engaged in selective partnerships with other countries for technologies that are beyond its current capabilities, allowing it to leapfrog certain development stages. This aim reflects Türkiye's broader ambitions to be a self-sufficient and influential player on the global stage. The key here for Türkiye's advantage is the saving time of the delivery processes for the vehicles bought from other countries. As an important actor in the industry, Türkiye also created a diversity of the resources with the speed of the delivery of the UAVs to the countries like Libya, Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

The Cases of Azerbaijan, Libya and Ukraine

"On October 26, 2021 a TB2 had a strike on D-30 howitzer in Russia-occupied Donbas. The strike was Ukraine's first confirmed use of the now ubiquitous TB2, the Bayraktar – manufactured drone that the Turkish military has used to great tactical effect in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh." (Stein, 2022: 2). Another key thing to remember was that before the chaotic situation in Ukraine started, there had been crisis in many regions in the Middle East that Bayraktar drones had already gained enormous success. Especially after the crisis in the Middle East that started with the Arab Spring effecting the countries like Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Jordan, the increasing chaos caused the terrorist organizations to make use of this instability to spread around the region and get organized. Among these countries, Libya had some hallmarks that made the country target of the Western countries. In fact, it is not surprising for Libya to encounter this chaotic situation as *"Libya is especially close to the European continent; besides it is a bridge between Europe and Africa, which increases the strategic importance of the country. Due to its geographical location, the country has faced some opportunities and threats. Libya is a country with rich oil deposits."* (Güneş, 2022: 193).

The US military used to be the only one with access to trustworthy and precise military drones. However, the technology has spread in popularity in recent years and is now a familiar sight on many battlefields in the twenty-first century. And the top supplier right now is Türkiye. Turkish Bayraktar drones have been spotted in Ethiopia, Azerbaijan, Libya, and Syria over the past two years in addition to Ukraine. (Perrigo, 2022: 2) When the Karabakh war started, no one expected the war to be won by Azerbaijan. However, the direction of the war changed when the Bayraktar UAVs started to operate and even Armenia made a call to NATO to make them stop the use of the Turkish drones. The game changing role of the Turkish UAVs would be on the field again when the crisis in Ukraine broke out but the victory in Azerbaijan was important for the stability in the region as it was important in Libya also. *"Their impact has been substantial. The drones played a central role in recent months in shifting Libya's civil war in favour of the Turkish-backed government based in the capital, Tripoli, and they helped Azerbaijan, an ally of Türkiye, prevail over Armenian forces in the fighting over the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region, according to military analysts."* (Fahim, 2020: 1).

Türkiye has always followed a peace process in both the domestic and international security as a strong NATO ally. In terms of the international agreements, Türkiye felt the responsibility to sustain stability as being the bridge and the key player in the region for the sake of international security. The success of the TB2 Bayraktar UAVs was pointing out a renaissance of the new security and defense strategies of Türkiye besides being the game-changer member of the international community anymore. In other words, *"air power has played an increasingly important role in the Libyan conflict. The relatively flat featureless desert terrain of the north and coast means that ground units are easily spotted, with few places to hide."* (Gatopoulos, 2020: 1).

Transforming Türkiye's Military Capabilities and The Importance of Intelligence in UAV Operations

"To be sure, national security, as Arnold Wolfers wrote many years ago, is an ambiguous symbol. Security is used to encompass so many goals that there is no uniform agreement on what it encompasses and hence no universal understanding of the concept. Certainly, it involves more than national survival." (Loffler, 1990: 144). The necessity to reevaluate and redefine the scope of national security strategies in contemporary nations has grown as a result of the scenario that has recently emerged in Europe and the rest of the world after the "cold war" ended (1990). It appears that it is now essential to create a new security structure in which the military factor's traditional function might be reduced (and the principle of armed security would not be the dominant force), and replaced by a wider adoption of common security measures (Grizold, 1994: 37).

"Intelligence and security issues are now more prominent than ever in Western political discourse as well as the wider public consciousness." (Scott, 2010: 139). The 9/11 attacks in the US proved this prominence as the bond between intelligence and

prevention of terrorist attacks are related in an undeniable way. The political instability around the world made the countries focus more on the intelligence and the technology. As a result of being a good NATO member, the Turkish army has never hidden the national armament politics of the country or refrain from developing technology to nationalize the weapons. Being one of the most powerful agencies in the world, The Turkish Intelligence Service has been changing its strategies in the last few decades. Although the aim of the service was to protect the political regime before, the demilitarization of the service brought a new perspective to the country's role in the region.

On the other hand, the fact that the intelligence is not enough by itself directed the country towards a new strategy of defense industry in the last few decades. *"Development, democracy and openness have positive influences in creating a more peaceful environment for countries that are a source of terrorism. But they also note that these same factors make a country more likely to be a target for terrorism."* (Yıldırım, 2013: 198). There seems to be no compelling reason to argue that Türkiye is responsible not only for the national security but also the regional one because of the geostrategic reasons. It is claimed that Türkiye is struggling to achieve to some point in the defense industry because of an uncertainty in the region, however the main reason is the cyclical development.

Unmanned aircraft are nothing new. UAVs are now smaller, faster, more accurate, more dependable, and overall more powerful than they were in the past thanks to recent technology advancements (Renehan, 1997: 5). Türkiye was working on these vehicles for a time up until 1984 when BAYKAR was founded. With the help of the technology especially developed by the BAYKAR company and with a large scale of the area of use, the UAVs have become the milestones of a new age for the changing concept of the security for Türkiye. The BAYKAR UAVs, notably the Bayraktar TB2, have had a profound impact on Türkiye's security strategy and approach to modern warfare. Compared to traditional manned aircraft, UAVs generally offer a more cost-effective solution for surveillance and strike missions. This is especially valuable for prolonged conflicts where sustaining operations can be economically draining. In fact, the BAYKAR UAVs have not only reshaped Türkiye's military and security operations but have also had broader geopolitical implications. They symbolize Türkiye's ambition to be a significant player in the modern defense landscape and have certainly altered the regional security dynamics in its favor.

"Advances in communications technology, microprocessors, artificial intelligence and weaponry now permit unmanned systems at costs and lethality previously thought unattainable. Unmanned air vehicles (UAV) have been used for many years in warfare but only recently have demonstrated such enormous success in the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) realm that their potential use in combat systems has gained real interest and momentum in the Unites States." (Trsek, 2008: 1). The International Space Station (ISS) was characterized for the majority of the Cold War by a predominantly military agenda of nuclear weapons-related problems and a deeply ingrained belief that the Soviet Union posed a serious military and ideological danger to the West. As the nuclear relationship between the superpowers developed starting in the 1970s, the original scope of the term security started to reappear, creating pressure to broaden the international security agenda away from the military-political focus (Buzan, 2009: 2).

Traditionally, Türkiye had maintained a vast conscription-based army. Over the years, there has been a shift towards a more professional, technology driven force. Alongside its aerial capabilities, Türkiye has invested in its naval strength, aiming a blue-water navy that can project power beyond its immediate shores. Also, the country has invested in developing its cyber warfare capabilities, understanding the importance of the digital domain in modern conflicts. This transformation of Turkish military capabilities, especially in the realm of UAVs, has allowed Türkiye to exert greater influence in its region. The integration of intelligence into UAV operations has further magnified their effectiveness, solidifying the importance of technology and information in contemporary warfare.

Expanding Role in International Conflicts and Regional Influence
Türkiye's Foreign Policy Goals and Regional Stability

Türkiye has been playing an increasingly assertive role in various international conflicts and regional issues. This includes its involvement in Syria, Libya, the Eastern Mediterranean and Nagorno-Karabakh among others. Indeed, Türkiye aims to safeguard its national interests, which often entails projecting power beyond its borders. For instance, its involvement in Syria is partly to combat groups it deems as terrorist organizations, thus maintaining border security. In this manner, by following an assertive manner, Türkiye enhanced its regional influence and secure its interests, and have stretched its military and economic resources. Overall, Türkiye's role in international conflicts is a complex interplay of strategic interests, ideological convictions and geopolitical considerations. Its assertiveness serves to advance its own interests but also contributes to regional instability.

Considering the fact that if a state does not have a strong army to back up its diplomacy, there can be no economic growth, territorial integrity or ideological spread, Türkiye focused on that a robust military can serve as a deterrent against threats and provide leverage in negotiations. However, military power should be used judiciously and in alignment with diplomatic efforts.

Having an important geographical advantage, Türkiye has an expanding role in international conflicts lately. Especially after the latest crisis between Russia and Ukraine, the country has been spending a strong effort for the regional stability. The diplomatic visits based on Türkiye have been contributing for the global crises to be negotiated to provide mutual security and strong alliances. Türkiye's role here is formed mostly by the defense industry in which the country became an important production and export center.

Türkiye has often attempted to position itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, such as between Iran and Saudi Arabia or between Russia and Ukraine. This role has its limits but allows Türkiye to exercise soft power and maintain a position of relevance. Türkiye's foreign policy, especially in the 21st century, has been shaped by a combination of its historical legacy, geopolitical considerations, domestic politics and global developments. Ensuring the safety of its borders and maintaining its territorial integrity remains a top priority for Türkiye, especially with ongoing threats from groups like the PKK and the dynamics of the Syrian conflict. Türkiye positions itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, given its unique position bridging Europe and Asia. In conclusion, Türkiye's foreign policy goals are multifaceted, reflecting its complex history, diverse challenges, and regional ambitions. While its actions and strategies can sometimes promote stability, they also carry the risk of exacerbating regional tensions. The balance Ankara strikes between its ambitions and the concerns of its neighbors will significantly determine the future stability of the region.

The Effect of UAVs and the Strategic Advantages

After the production of the small UAVs and the similar devices, Türkiye has pointed a new target for itself to develop the unmanned combat air vehicles to provide a new defense industry strategy. From a number of 56 companies in 2002 to 2700 defense industry companies today, Türkiye has proven that the country is ready to be the game changer factor in terms of international security. The military and intelligence operations towards the terrorist organizations were successful enough to take the UAV projects to the next level. *"New competition, increased digitization and accelerated procurement timelines will continue to weigh on incumbent players. To succeed in uncertain times, leadership teams must plot strategy to anticipate changes, rather than reacting to them."* (PWC, 2020: 5).

In a competitive world of defense industry, Türkiye seems to direct its strategy towards developing the UAVs they have produced to the first unmanned combat air vehicles like the Kızılelma which is produced by BAYKAR. The speed and the advantage of the not getting pointed by a radar, the air-to-air missile, Kızılelma, will open a new age for the Turkish defense systems. The next level that the country aims will be the development of the herd UAVs and the electronic combat strategies. The aerial superiority is the key concept of the new world military defense strategies and Türkiye's role as the leader of the region when analyses in the cases of Baku, Libya and Ukraine. All things considered, *"Türkiye's previous national role conceptions include Türkiye as a 'bridge between continents', 'gateway of civilizations', 'model country' and 'active independent country'. Further, there is a widely shared understanding of Türkiye's role that conceptualizes the country as a significant actor in all its regions – diplomatically, militarily, politically, and culturally."* (Neşet, 2021: 5).

Conclusion

"In a military operation in 2017 in Şırnak, a target of the terrorist organization is hit by ATAK helicopter with CİRİT missile with the help of Bayraktar İHA which pointed the target with laser." (Erboğa, 2019: 113). In an effort to leave the atmosphere of the external dependence for the defense industry behind, Türkiye has been in a race with the Western countries from which the country was buying the vehicles before. During the political crises in the countries like Azerbaijan, Libya and Ukraine, Türkiye took the responsibility to be the regional security actor to provide stability. This was the proof of the country's aim of affect without being affected. The UAVs produced by BAYKAR and before by the defense initiatives of the country proved the success of the new security concept of Türkiye to have the leading role of providing both domestic and international security.

In close relation with the successful foreign policy strategies of Türkiye, it is not surprising that the country is a strong candidate to become the leading security actor. It should be remembered that Türkiye is also important for the security of the European countries besides the Middle East and the Black Sea regions. This role of an international security provider is beyond the regional one anymore. The results of the actions of Türkiye in Azerbaijan and Libya and lately in Ukraine is the proof of a arbiter Türkiye in international community. The best help for this success came from the initiative of UAVs produced by Baykar as an indicator of a new renaissance in Turkish defense industry and regional and international security. The UAV initiative that the country started has both increased the self-confidence of the country in the international community and raised the domestic support of citizens with a strong Turkish national security strategy. This can be analyzed as the best outcome of Türkiye balancing the international security power with stronger and national defense industry.

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Yapılandırılmış Özet

Devlet güvenliğinin temel amacı, sosyal ve politik yapılarını, onları zayıflatabilecek veya yok edebilecek dış etkilere karşı korumaktır. Bu tehlikeler; casusluk, siber saldırılar, terörist saldırılar, askeri saldırı, iç hoşnutsuzluk ve sivil itaatsizlik gibi birçok farklı biçim alabilir. Modern küresel zorluklar her zamankinden daha karmaşık ve iç içe geçmiş olduğundan, askeri güce ve devletlerarası ilişkilere güçlü bir vurgu yapan geleneksel devlet güvenliği anlayışı, ekonomik istikrarı, çevresel güvenliği ve toplumsal dayanıklılığı içerecek şekilde genişlemiştir. Ancak devlet güvenliği fikri özellikle Soğuk Savaş'ı takip eden yıllarda gelişmeye başlamıştır. Daha da önemlisi, her devletin kendine özgü jeopolitik arka planı, iç siyasi dinamikleri ve algılanan güvenlik tehditleri olduğundan, günümüzde devlet güvenliğine ilişkin spesifik stratejiler ve hedefler ülkeler arasında büyük farklılıklar göstermektedir. Türkiye'nin güvenliğe yaklaşımı ise değişen küresel ortamda istikrarını, zenginliğini ve etkisini etkileyen çeşitli konuları dikkate alarak sürekli olarak gelişmektedir.

Savunma sanayisi içerisinde geliştirilen İHA'lar sayesinde savunma sanayinin dışa bağımlılığı azalarak, terörle mücadelede ülkeye avantaj sağlanırken, aynı zamanda bölgesel ve ulusal güvenliğin desteklenmesi ve yeni stratejilerin devreye sokulması sağlanmıştır. Böylece, iş birliği ve istikrarı dikkate alan daha geniş bir güvenlik tanımı, Türkiye'nin yeni güvenlik konseptlerine ve İHA'ların verimliliğine de yansımıştır. Türkiye, mülteci akışını yönetmeli, büyük ülkelerle dengeyi sürdürmeli, bölgesel rekabetleri yönetmeli ve Türk insansız hava araçlarının popülaritesinde örnek olarak görülen savunma sektörünün büyümesiyle baş etmelidir. Esasen güvenlik kavramını tanımlarken ve Türkiye'nin bu kavramı nasıl analiz ettiğini belirlerken öncelikle Türkiye'nin yeni bir güvenlik kavramına sahip olma ihtiyacının arkasında yatan nedenin detaylı bir şekilde incelenmesi gerekmektedir. Türkiye'deki operasyonların yöntemi son yüzyılda çok büyük ve beklenmedik bir şekilde değişmiştir. Can kaybı riskinin minimum olması, daha az harcamanın getirdiği mali avantaj ve taktiksel pratiklik düşüncesi ülkeye yeni bir güvenlik anlayışı modeli sunmuştur. Soğuk Savaş bittikten sonra devletlerin güvenlik anlayışları farklı bakış açılarına evirildiğinden Türkiye'nin güvenlik konusunu askeri ve geleneksel yöntemlerle sürdürüp sürdürmeyeceği sorusu gündeme gelmiştir. Savunma sanayisinin geliştirilme çabası da bu soruların ülkenin gündemine gelmesi ile başladığı bilinmektedir. Ülke içerisinde yürütülen terörle mücadele politikasının ardından ülke bölgesel çatışmalar odağında sınır ötesi operasyonlar içerisinde bulunmuş ve bu noktada en büyük katkı güçlü ve etkin istihbarat servisinin yanı sıra insansız hava araçları ve silahlı insansız hava araçlarının müdahil olması ile elde edilmiştir. Böylece Türkiye, tampon kontrol bölgeleri oluşturmak gibi stratejiler sayesinde çatışma ve istikrarsızlığın diğer bölgelere yayılmasına ve bunun uluslararası alanda daha geniş sonuçlara yol açmasına karşı bir tampon oluşturmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu, uluslararası güvenlik açısından önemlidir; çünkü Türkiye'nin sahadaki varlığı, aşırı gruplar, insan kaçakçılığı rotaları ve uluslararası müttefiklerle paylaşılabilecek diğer güvenlik kaygıları hakkında değerli istihbarat sağlayabilmiştir. Bu bağlamda Türkiye BAYKAR gibi girişimler sayesinde bölgesel güvenlik hususunda önemli bir aktör haline gelmiştir.

Türkiye'nin sadece bireysel güvenliği değil bölgesel güvenliği de sürdürme zorunluluğu, ülkedeki terör örgütleriyle savunma sanayii kuruluşları ve BAYKAR gibi şirketler gibi kurumsallaşmış bir sistemle mücadele etmenin yeni yollarına olan ihtiyacı da beraberinde getirmiştir. Devletlerin güvenlik anlayışlarında değişiklik yapma hakkı doğal olduğundan, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti silah ve mühimmatta dışa bağımlılığı azaltarak terör sorununa yeni çözüm yolları bulmuştur. BAYKAR'ın insansız hava araçlarının başarısı, Türkiye'nin teknolojik açıdan bağımsız olma yönündeki daha geniş hedefine örnek teşkil etmektedir. Motorların, aviyoniklerin ve silah sistemlerinin yurt içinde üretilmesi, yabancı tedarikçilere olan bağımlılığı azaltır ve jeopolitik gerilimlerden kaynaklanan kırılganlıkları azaltmaktadır. Bayraktar TB2 gibi yerli teknolojilerin üretilebilmesinin ekonomik avantajları da vardır. İstihdam yaratmak, Ar-Ge'yi teşvik etmek ve ihracat fırsatlarının önü açılmıştır. Üstelik Türkiye, askeri yeteneklerini ortaya koyarak küresel arenada stratejik üstünlük kazanmaktadır. Aslında Türkiye'nin savunma sanayiinin başarısı, politika girişimlerini, teknolojik gelişmeleri ve jeopolitik hususları kapsayan faktörlerin bir kombinasyonuna bağlanabilir. Türkiye'nin daha geniş ulusal stratejisinin bir parçası olarak savunma sektörüne öncelik vermesinin nedeni budur. İHA teknolojisindeki gelişmeler ülkenin hem askeri stratejisini hem de diplomatik ilişkilerini etkilemiş bölgesel bir güç olarak konumunu pekiştirmiştir. Son yıllarda özellikle Libya ve Suriye'de elde edilen başarılar BAYKAR tarafından üretilen İHA ve SİHA'ların Türkiye'nin çatışmanın seyrini değiştirmesinde kritik bir rol oynamasını sağlamıştır. Bu başarılar, Türkiye'nin savunma sanayisi ihracatını artırmış ve uluslararası sahnede Türkiye'nin askeri teknoloji alanındaki yeteneklerini sergilemesine katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu minvalde Türkiye, hava yeteneklerinin yanı sıra deniz gücüne de yatırım yaparak yakın kıyılarının ötesine güç yansıtabilen bir açık deniz donanmasını hedeflemiştir. Ayrıca ülke, modern çatışmalarda dijital alanın önemini anlayarak siber savaş yeteneklerini geliştirmeye yatırım yaptı. Türk askeri yeteneklerinin, özellikle İHA'lar alanındaki bu dönüşümü, Türkiye'nin bölgesinde daha fazla nüfuz sahibi olmasına olanak sağlamıştır. İstihbaratın İHA operasyonlarına entegrasyonu, bunların etkinliğini daha da artırdı ve çağdaş savaşlarda teknoloji ve bilginin önemini pekiştirmiştir. Dolayısıyla, Türkiye'nin uluslararası güvenliği dengeleme stratejisi ve ulusal savunma kapasitesinin artırılması Türkiye'nin aktif çok boyutlu dış politikasını desteklemiş ve yapılan bölgesel ve küresel düzeydeki etkileşim ve iş birlikleri uluslararası barış ve istikrarın sağlanmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak Türkiye'nin uluslararası güvenliği dengeleme çabaları ve ulusal savunma gücünün geliştirilmesi çok yönlü yaklaşımının ve stratejik bir vizyonun doğal sonucudur.