

A NEW ERA IN COUNTER-TERRORISM AND TÜRKİYE'S REGIONAL INFLUENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the importance of the new ways of counter-terrorism efforts of Türkiye in sustaining regional and international security in light of constructivism. In recent years, Türkiye has embarked on a new era, marked by an assertive counter-terrorism approach and expanding regional influence. Once primarily a NATO ally focused on domestic security, Türkiye now employs a proactive strategy that stretches across borders, extending its impact in the Middle East, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Turkish government has reshaped its foreign policy and military strategies, transitioning from a reactive to a forward-leaning stance aimed at preemptively addressing threats and asserting its role as a key regional power.

Key Words: *Türkiye, counter-terrorism, UAVs, constructivism*

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Introduction

Türkiye has been pursuing an aggressive cross-border military campaign in Syria and Iraq since 2010, for example, while making considerable progress in the battle against terrorism with its operations within its borders. Terrorist groups looking for ways into the Mediterranean Sea from the south of the country are not only targeted by the use of military action, but their ability to move is also severely restricted through effective intelligence cooperation.

Türkiye's counter-terrorism efforts significantly contribute to international security by targeting transnational terrorist organizations and stabilizing conflict-prone regions. Situated at a strategic intersection between Europe and the Middle East, Türkiye serves as a frontline defense against groups like ISIS and the PKK, both of which operate across borders and pose global threats. Through intelligence sharing, cross-border operations and cooperation with NATO and other international allies, Türkiye helps to curb terrorist movements, weapons smuggling and extremist recruitment networks that could otherwise expand across continents. Moreover, Türkiye's advanced surveillance and precision strike capabilities, particularly its use of drones, allow it to neutralize threats with minimal collateral damage, enhancing security not only within its borders but also in neighboring countries like Syria and Iraq. By stabilizing these regions, Türkiye plays a crucial role in reducing the flow of refugees and foreign fighters, thus supporting broader efforts to maintain peace and security on an international scale.

The efforts of Türkiye in counter-terrorism can be analyzed through a constructivist perspective. Constructivism, which focuses on the importance of identity, norms and social constructs helps to explain how Türkiye's unique positioning-as a secular, predominantly Muslim country situated between Europe and the Middle East- affects its approach to terrorism. Constructivists would argue that Türkiye's anti-terrorism stance is not only about national security but also shaping its identity on the global stage as a moderate, responsible actor within the Muslim world. Türkiye's actions against Islamist extremists and Kurdish insurgent groups reflect its effort to establish a distinct identity that rejects terrorism and promotes regional stability. This identity-building can affect its relations with both Western allies and Muslim-majority nations, positioning Türkiye as a bridge and a balancing power in regional and global anti-terrorism dialogues.

Counterterrorism strategies around the world have evolved significantly over the years, with countries constantly adapting to new threats and challenges. Türkiye, in particular, has a rich history of dealing with terrorism and has recently shifted towards incorporating technological solutions into its counterterrorism efforts. One key development in this shift has been the implementation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) as a crucial component in Türkiye's counterterrorism strategies. Türkiye has significantly invested in developing latest drone technology, exemplified by the Baykar and important national defense industry corporations in the country. This push towards domestic production allows Türkiye greater self-reliance and control over its military technology, reducing dependency on foreign suppliers. Turkish drones have been operationally successful in various countries such as Syria, Libya and during Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Their effectiveness in surveillance, reconnaissance and targeted strikes has been widely recognized and has reshaped battlefield tactics.

In the contemporary global security landscape, Türkiye occupies a unique and increasingly critical position due to its strategic location, historical legacy, and multifaceted foreign policy. Bridging Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, Türkiye serves as a geopolitical pivot state, influencing regional security dynamics, energy routes, and global trade corridors. Its active involvement in NATO, complex relationships with major powers like the United States and Russia, and evolving role in regional conflicts highlight its significance in international security. Türkiye's security challenges are multifaceted, ranging from domestic terrorism and ethnic separatism to regional conflicts and geopolitical rivalries. Internally, Türkiye faces threats from groups like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Gülenist Terror Group (FETO), both classified as terrorist organizations by the Turkish government. Externally, Türkiye grapples with the implications of the Syrian conflict, tensions with Greece and Cyprus over maritime disputes, and the destabilizing impact of refugee flows.

Unlike traditional realist or liberal approaches that focus solely on material power or institutional cooperation, constructivism considers how Türkiye's historical legacy, cultural identity and evolving domestic narratives influence its international actions and alliances. Türkiye has adopted a more assertive foreign policy in recent years, as evidenced by its

warming ties to Russia, involvement with less developed nations in Asia and Africa, and rapprochement with Iran. In the struggle for control of the region's future, it is caught between the United States and Russia and is fighting other regional powers in the Middle East at the same time.¹ This new approach gave too much importance on the intelligence development besides the new strategy of the country's fight against terrorism. Also, Türkiye's cross-border military actions underscore its proactive stance on national security and reflect its willingness to use military force to protect its interests and influence regional dynamics. These operations play a crucial role in shaping Türkiye's foreign relations.

The country's cross-border military operations in Iraq and Syria are pivotal elements of its national security strategy and foreign policy. These operations, primarily targeting the PKK and ISIS aim to mitigate threats from these groups and prevent the establishment of hostile territories along Türkiye's borders. As a result of these operations, Türkiye have enhanced a control over key strategic areas along its borders, significantly reducing terrorist attacks and infiltration and the country have complicated relationships with global powers, including tensions with the United States and European nations, particularly over the issue of Kurdish groups allied with Western forces in the fight against ISIS. Türkiye's military actions in Iraq and Syria are critical to its broader security and regional influence strategy. While effective in curtailing immediate threats, these operations also contribute to the intricate dynamics of regional stability and pose ongoing diplomatic challenges. These miscellaneous operations highlight Türkiye's commitment to securing its borders and influencing the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.

Throughout the twentieth century, there was very little disagreement among Turkey's academics, decision-makers, and media regarding the importance of the country's geographic location. Turkey's national identity has always been strongly influenced by its physical topography, as has its educational system, which places a strong focus on a sense of patriotism toward the Turkish motherland.² As a country with such a strategic geopolitical position, Türkiye has been actively engaged in counterterrorism efforts

¹ Meltem M. Baç, *Turkey's Grand Strategy in the Context of Global and Regional Challenges*, in "Perceptions", vol. XXV, N. 2, p. 178.

² Çağdaş Üngör, *A 'bridge' pushed to the periphery? Turkey's geopolitical significance in the Asia-Pacific century*, in "Turkish Studies", vol. XXVI, N. 1, p. 28.

to address the persistent threat posed by various terrorist organizations operating within its borders. The country has implemented a range of strategies to combat terrorism, including military operations, intelligence gathering, law enforcement measures, and international cooperation. These efforts are crucial in safeguarding national security, maintaining stability, and protecting citizens from the impact of terrorist activities. One significant aspect of Türkiye's counterterrorism approach is its focus on countering violent extremism (CVE). As a country who suffered more than many countries, a strong strategy is very important for stability. Moreover, Türkiye has taken steps to enhance its legal framework for prosecuting terrorist activities and disrupting terrorist networks. The country has implemented counterterrorism legislation to strengthen its ability to investigate, prosecute, and prevent acts of terrorism. These legal measures are essential in holding terrorists accountable for their actions and deterring future attacks.

Türkiye's alliances and cooperative measures, such as its role in NATO and intelligence-sharing with regional and Western partners, reflect the constructivist idea that international cooperation is guided by shared norms and values. Türkiye's counter-terrorism strategy aligns with a collective goal of combating terrorism, reinforcing the norm of mutual security in its alliances. These partnerships are not only about practical cooperation but also about shared values in fighting global terrorism and upholding regional peace. Actually, Türkiye's commitment to counter-terrorism also reflects its intention to distance itself from extremist ideologies and establish a clear, moderate identity in the Muslim world. By fighting groups that threaten not only national security but also regional stability, Türkiye cultivates an image of moderation and resilience. This stance is intended to counteract narratives of extremism and demonstrate a constructive role within the Muslim world and broader international community.

Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Due to the risks posed by several terrorist organizations operating both inside and outside of its borders, Türkiye has been heavily involved in counterterrorism activities. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Türkiye, the US, and the EU have all labeled as a terrorist group, has been one of the main targets. Since the 1980s, the PKK has waged an armed insurgency against the Turkish government in an effort to secure more

autonomy for the Kurdish community in southeast Türkiye.³ Since May 2019, the Turkish army launched a series of military operations against the PKK in Northern Iraq, called Pençe Hareketi (Operation Claw). Beyond airstrikes, these missions also utilize helicopters, drones, artillery pieces and special forces on the ground.⁴ Beyond immediate security concerns, these operations reflect Türkiye's broader strategic objectives to influence the political outcomes in Syria and Iraq, ensuring that any power structures that emerge are favorable to Turkish interests and do not threaten its security.

In fact, Türkiye's counter-terrorism efforts have a complex history that spans several decades, marked by various challenges and shifts in strategy. In the 1970s and 1980s, Türkiye faced significant internal security challenges, primarily due to political instability and violence. The most notable threats came from far-left and far-right political groups, which often engaged in street battles, bombings and assassinations. PKK terrorist organization, founded in 1984, began an armed insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984, seeking an independent Kurdish state or greater autonomy within Türkiye. The conflict led to a prolonged and violent struggle, which has been the primary focus of Türkiye's counter-terrorism policy. Initially, Türkiye's response to terrorism, especially in the southeast, was heavily militarized. The 1980s and 1990s saw numerous states of emergency, military operations and policies aimed at disrupting terrorist activities, often at significant human rights costs. The 2000s, however, brought new dimensions to Türkiye's counter-terrorism challenges, including the rise of radical Islamist terrorism. Al-Qaeda's presence manifested in major attacks, such as 2003 Istanbul bombings. Later, the rise of ISIS added to the complex security landscape, especially following the Syrian Civil War. Actually, Türkiye's counter-terrorism landscape is shaped by its geographic location, diverse internal dynamics and external threats. Türkiye's geographical location has had a profound impact on its counter-terrorism efforts. Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and bordering eight countries, Türkiye occupies a strategically significant position that has influenced its security policies and challenges. Türkiye's location makes it a pivotal route for migration and trade which has necessitated a robust and

³ Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds: A Modern History*, Princeton University Press, 2016.

⁴ Jean Marcou, *Türkiye's military engagement in Northern Iraq, a never-ending story*, in "French Research Centre on Iraq (CFRI)", February 2022.

proactive approach to counter-terrorism, as Türkiye must guard against threats from multiple fronts. In addition, Türkiye shares borders with Iraq and Syria, two countries that have experienced significant conflict and instability due to the presence of terrorist groups such as ISIS and other militant organizations. As a result, the strategic geographical location is not just a backdrop but a central factor in shaping its counter-terrorism strategy. It has necessitated a multidimensional approach that includes military, diplomatic and legal strategies to address both external threats and internal vulnerabilities. “Therefore, Turkey has always been concerned about its territorial integrity and national security because of its perception of external threats.”⁵

Counterterrorism is one of Turkey's main foreign policy objectives. Turkey has been fighting terrorism for many years. Terrorist organizations that operate under the cover of religion include the ISIS, the leftist-extremist terrorist group DHKP-C, the ethnic separatist PKK, and Armenian terrorist organizations like ASALA and "Revolutionary Organization 17 November or 17N."⁶ In the process of time, Türkiye has strengthened its anti-terrorism laws, although there has been international criticism. By enhancing intelligence capabilities and conducting domestic and cross-border military operations against terrorist groups, Türkiye efforts to prevent radicalization near its borders and neighbor countries. In other words, Türkiye’s approach to counter-terrorism has evolved significantly over the years, transitioning from a predominantly military response to a more holistic strategy that includes legislative, social and international dimensions. In this respect, the success of the foreign policy and the intelligence operations made Türkiye an important ally and actor for the neighbor countries and the international community.

Turkey’s proactive stance against groups like ISIS and the PKK reflects its commitment not only to national security but also to regional stability, reinforcing its image as a responsible actor. By actively engaging in counter-terrorism, Turkey seeks to project a narrative of moderation, rejecting extremist ideologies and demonstrating leadership in maintaining peace in the region. Its partnerships with NATO and collaboration with

⁵ Cenap Çakmak, *Turkish-Syrian relations in the wake of the Syrian conflict: back to securitization?*, in “Cambridge Review of International Affairs”, vol. XXIX, N. 2, 2016, p. 695.

⁶ Bilgay Duman, *Turkey’s Fight Against Terrorism and The Role of The Kurds*, in “ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs”, N. 53, October 2016, p. 1.

international allies further reflect a commitment to shared security norms. Thus, constructivism shows that Turkey's counter-terrorism strategy is shaped by both its security needs and a desire to influence its role and identity within the international community.

RE-DESIGNED SECURITY POLICIES

“For a long time in its Republican history, Turkey did not identify itself as a Middle Eastern actor; rather, it aimed to be a part of the Western state system. Even when Turkey has accepted its Middle Eastern identity, such acceptance has always occurred in the context of defining Turkey as having multiple identities”⁷ Through constructivism, one can understand that Türkiye's counter-terrorism efforts are not only about neutralizing threats but also about influencing regional perceptions. Türkiye's actions communicate its rejection of terrorism and a commitment to regional security, which reinforces its desired role as a leading Middle Eastern actor committed to both development and peace. Since it first initiated efforts to combat terrorism in the 1970s, Türkiye has experienced a number of terrorist attacks both domestically and abroad. This process has had a significant impact on determining Türkiye's regional and international relationships as well as her national security strategies. In Türkiye's history of counterterrorism, the battle against the PKK has played a crucial role. The group launched an armed uprising in 1984, inciting fierce fighting in Türkiye's southeast regions and rural areas. The PKK's terrorist actions have given harm to both Türkiye and neighboring countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Since the early 2010s, DAESH, which “emerged” in the Middle East, has posed a new threat. DAESH's terrorist attacks in Türkiye prompted a reconsideration of border security as well as interior security policy. Türkiye attacked DAESH with international support, staging cross-border military operations in Syria and Iraq. The Turkish military industry and its excellent intelligence infrastructure probably made the most significant contributions to this process.

As stated above, the most enduring and significant terrorism-related challenge for Türkiye has been its conflict with the PKK terrorist organization. This terrorist group which is designated as a terrorist group by Türkiye, the United States, EU and some other countries initiated an armed struggle against the Turkish state in 1984, primarily advocating

⁷ Ayşegül Sever & Gonca O. Gök, *The UN factor in the “regional power role” and the Turkish case in the 2000s*, in “Cambridge Review of International Affairs”, vol. XXIX, N. 3, p. 1150.

for Kurdish autonomy and rights. The conflict has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and has seen various phases of intensified violence and attempts at peace negotiations, particularly the failed peace process in the early 2010s. In addition to PKK, Türkiye has faced threats from jihadist groups, particularly following the onset of the Syrian Civil War. Türkiye's proximity to Syria and Iraq made it a significant route for foreign terrorists joining ISIS and in return Türkiye has suffered multiple deadly attacks attributed to ISIS. The country has had to balance its domestic security needs with its role in international efforts against ISIS, leading to extensive military and security operations both within and outside its borders. Especially the situation in Syria made things getting worse for the neighbor countries. In other words, "the conflict became increasingly internationalized, drawing in a range of regional and international actors, notably Saudi Arabia, Iran, Hizballah, the UK, the USA, Russia and Türkiye. At this time, Syria became an area of proxy competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran and between the USA and Russia."⁸

Within the counter terrorism strategy, Türkiye has implemented strong technological security measures and counter-terrorism laws to combat these varied threats. These measures include extensive surveillance, the detention of suspects and military operations. These operations were necessary in terms of regional and international security and also necessitated international cooperation. Türkiye's geographical position and transnational nature of the terrorist threats it faces mean that international cooperation is crucial. Türkiye is an active participant in NATO and collaborates with various international bodies and stabilize the region, especially concerning the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. This means that Türkiye is a strong actor in sustaining both the regional and international security. In this manner, Türkiye's fight against terrorism is complex and deeply intertwined with its domestic politics and regional dynamics.

Türkiye's location as a bridge between continents and a gatekeeper of vital maritime routes defines its strategic importance. The Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits connect the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, offering Russia and other Black Sea nations a critical passage to global markets. Control over the straits enhances Türkiye's geopolitical leverage, especially concerning Russia and NATO members in Eastern Europe.

⁸ Simon Mabon & Stephen Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd. London, 2016.

Besides, Türkiye shares borders with Syria and Iraq, making it a frontline state in conflicts involving ISIS, the Kurdish separatist movements and other regional actors. Its location makes it a significant buffer zone for Europe against Middle Eastern instability and migration flows. As a NATO member, Türkiye provides strategic depth to the alliance's southern flank, particularly against threats from the Middle East and the Black Sea region. The country's strategic location also makes it susceptible to various regional security challenges.

The Syrian War and the rise of ISIS created spillover effects that impacted Türkiye's security. This situation necessitated a robust border security and counter-terrorism efforts. The conflict with the PKK has transcended borders, as PKK affiliated groups in Syria and Iraq continue to challenge Türkiye's security. Military operations such as Euphrates Shield and Peace Spring reflect Türkiye's efforts to counter Kurdish militant groups near its borders. In this manner, Türkiye's strategic importance has shaped its relationships with key international actors. In other words, Türkiye is a key NATO ally due to its geographical proximity to conflict zones and control of strategic assets like İncirlik Air Base. Türkiye's EU candidacy has been marred by human rights concerns but its cooperation remains vital in counter-terrorism and migration management. Energy cooperation through pipelines like TANAP also enhances Türkiye's strategic value. Türkiye and Russia share interests in regional conflicts but are often on opposing sides, such as Syria and Libya. Economic cooperation, particularly in energy underscores a pragmatic relationship despite strategic competition.

Türkiye has conducted several military operations targeting groups it classifies as terrorist organizations like PKK, YPG and ISIS. These operations contribute to international efforts to dismantle terrorist networks and prevent their resurgence. Actually, Türkiye's involvement in Syria and Iraq aims to ensure stability in its immediate neighborhood. This includes preventing the formation of entities that could threaten Türkiye's security or regional stability. On the other hand, Türkiye's involvement in Libya and its military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean influence regional geopolitics, particularly regarding energy exploration and maritime disputes. As a member of NATO, Türkiye's operations have implications for alliance security. Its strategic position is crucial in controlling access to the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region as Türkiye serves as a buffer between Europe and Middle Eastern conflict zones,

which is essential for European security interests. Türkiye's cross-border operations reinforce its geopolitical position and assert its influence in regional politics. Türkiye also aims to secure energy resources and routes, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean which affects global energy markets and European energy diversification strategies.

POWER BALANCING AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

Türkiye's power-balancing strategies are shaped by a mix of geopolitical needs, historical ties, and strategic pragmatism, often illustrated by its approach to alliances and regional influence. As a NATO member with strong economic ties to Europe, Türkiye balances its Western relationships while also engaging with Eastern actors like Russia and China. This strategic balancing, particularly in the Middle East, allows Türkiye to maintain leverage in regional conflicts and assert its autonomy in foreign policy. Constructivism in international relations provides a useful lens to understand Turkey's power-balancing, emphasizing how identity, historical narratives, and societal values influence its foreign policy decisions. For Turkey, balancing power is not only about responding to material threats but also about aligning with an evolving sense of national identity that values independence and regional leadership. This approach showcases how Turkey's foreign policy is a dynamic construct, shaped by ongoing reinterpretations of its role on the global stage.

Türkiye's history as a balancing power is marked by its strategic maneuvers between regional stability and assertive foreign policy initiatives, shaped largely by its unique geographical location and historical legacy as the successor to the Ottoman Empire. During the Cold War, Türkiye's strategic importance was magnified as it served as a critical NATO ally on the Soviet Union's southern flank, hosting U.S. military bases and participating in collective defense initiatives. This role enhanced its regional security profile while also embedding it deeply within Western security architectures. After the Cold War, Türkiye's foreign policy oscillated between cooperative engagements aimed at integration with European structures and assertive regional policies that often challenge established norms and alliances. Its pursuit to join the European Union exemplified its cooperative stance, whereas its military interventions in Northern Syria and disputes over maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean showcased its readiness to assert its interests unilaterally. The transition of leadership under President Erdogan marked a significant pivot in Türkiye's role as a balancing power,

with an increased focus on national sovereignty and regional influence. This period has seen Türkiye engaging more actively in its near abroad, influencing conflicts in Syria, Libya, and the Nagorno-Karabakh region, often blending military interventions with diplomatic negotiations to craft favorable outcomes. Throughout its republican history, Türkiye has consistently demonstrated its ability to leverage both its strategic location and military capabilities to influence regional dynamics, making it both a valued ally and a challenging negotiator in the international arena. This dual role continues to define Türkiye's complex position as a balancing power in global geopolitics.

The relations between Türkiye and Syria was not chaotic until the beginning of the civil war. However, ties between the two nations rapidly worsened when the Syrian government decided to employ more brutality and repression on civilians. By the end of 2011, the Syrian National Council was acknowledged by the Turkish government as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, and the country had fully thrown its support behind the opposition in Syria.⁹ Syria is an example to define Türkiye's influence in regions of historical and strategic interest as it is deeply rooted in its rich history and geostrategic location that bridges Europe and Asia. As a successor state to the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye maintains a vested interest in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, leveraging historical ties and cultural connections to assert its presence and policy. In the Middle East, Türkiye's proactive foreign policy is demonstrated by its interventions in Syria and Iraq, aimed at countering terrorism and managing Kurdish movements, while also seeking to prevent any power vacuum that might threaten its borders. In the Balkans, Türkiye uses diplomatic and economic tools to foster relationships, reflecting its role as a stabilizing force and a counterbalance to Russian and European influences. In the Caucasus, Türkiye's support of Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict underscores its strategic objectives to maintain a Turkic alliance and counter Armenian interests. These activities highlight Türkiye's multifaceted approach to maintaining and expanding its regional influence, leveraging both soft power and military capabilities to protect its interests and enhance its status as a regional power.

In the last years of the international conflicts, Türkiye has taken actions as

⁹ Kemal Kirişçi, *Syrian Refugees and Turkey's Challenges: Going beyond Hospitality*, in "Brookings", May 2014, p. 1.

a proof of being a problem-solver actor in the region the country belongs. These efforts showcase Türkiye's commitment to international security, even beyond its immediate region. The membership to NATO has an importance in terms of significant instability in the Middle East and parts of Central Asia. Türkiye's involvement in regional issues, including the Syrian Civil War and conflicts involving ISIS positions it as a key player in managing regional security threats that have the potential to affect Europe and beyond.¹⁰ It is also evident that Türkiye's counterterrorism approach is crucial to regional security. Türkiye's internal security as well as the stability of the Middle East and Eurasian area in the broadest sense are strongly impacted by its geographic location, regional dynamics, and counterterrorism strategies. However, governments must work together and be resolute in order to tackle terrorism; they cannot do so alone. By thwarting cross-border terrorist threats and perturbing terrorist groups' financial and logistical networks, Türkiye's counterterrorism efforts contribute to the preservation of regional stability in this context. Furthermore, regional and international security cooperation is facilitated by Türkiye's participation in NATO and collaboration with other international alliances. It is important to analyze Türkiye's cross-border counterterrorism efforts in light of international law and human rights. Türkiye's international relations and prestige have been significantly impacted by her actions complying with international law, minimizing civilian casualties, and employing proportionate military force. Such strategies have assisted in fostering regional stability in addition to mitigating terrorist risks that directly impact Türkiye's national security.

In other words, Türkiye plays a crucial role in international security, leveraging its strategic geographic position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and its status as a longstanding NATO member. Its substantial military capabilities and strategic bases are pivotal for NATO operations, particularly in the Middle East. Türkiye actively combats terrorism, targeting groups like ISIS and the PKK, and plays a mediator role in regional conflicts, facilitating dialogue and hosting critical energy transit routes that are vital for European energy security. Additionally, Türkiye's management of one of the world's largest refugee populations, primarily from Syria, influences migration patterns and regional stability. Its complex

¹⁰ Hakan Fidan, *Turkish Foreign Policy at the Turn of the "Century of Türkiye": Challenges, Vision, Objectives, and Transformation*, in "Insight Turkey", vol. XXV, N. 3, Summer 2023, p. 11.

diplomatic engagements, balancing relationships with countries such as the US, Russia, and EU, further underscore its strategic importance. These multifaceted roles enhance Türkiye's position as a significant player in shaping international security dynamics, making it a critical nexus in global geopolitical frameworks.

“Türkiye and the EU at the beginning of the Arab Uprising, shared the same position. Both have the idea of bringing down the Bashar al-Assad regime and replacing it with Sunni Islamist client state, which would satisfy regional and global aspirations of the US, Türkiye and the EU member states.”¹¹ It is clear that the efforts of the Turkish government maintains that its actions are essential for national security and regional stability. It is important to state here that the significance of Turkish intelligence and border security is paramount, given Türkiye's geopolitical challenges and its role as a pivotal nation bridging Europe and Middle East. Turkish intelligence agencies, particularly the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), play a vital role in counterterrorism efforts both domestically and internationally. They focus on gathering intelligence on various terrorist groups that pose a threat to Turkish security, including the PKK, ISIS and affiliated factions. Overall, Turkish intelligence and border security are critical to the nation's defense and regional stability, shaping Türkiye's domestic policies and its international standing. These aspects are essential for managing both conventional and non-conventional threats and for Türkiye's broader strategic and geopolitical goals.

TÜRKİYE AS A REGIONAL ACTOR

“From a historical perspective, how Turkey is geopolitically situated in the inter-national system is a matter of extreme importance for policy-makers.”¹² In recent years, the strategy of the country against the terrorist groups as leaving no space for them contributed to the fight against these groups both technically and psychologically. The synthesis of military operations with real-time intelligence has enabled Türkiye to conduct successful strikes against high-value targets. By monitoring suspected individuals and groups, Turkish authorities have been able to act before these threats materialize into actual attacks. These strategies, especially

¹¹ Zelal B. Kızıllkan, *Changing Policies of Türkiye and the EU to the Syrian Conflict*, in “İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi”, vol. XXXIII, N. 1, Ocak 2019, p. 321.

¹² Murat Yeşiltaş, *The Transformation of the Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy*, in “Turkish Studies”, vol. XIV, N. 4, p. 661.

the success in intelligence operations, demonstrates its capacity to address and mitigate diverse and evolving security threats. As Türkiye continues to refine its strategies, the integration of advanced technology and international cooperation, the fight against the terrorist groups gains an important success. Therefore, Türkiye's role as a crucial actor in its region with a strategic geopolitical position becomes an important factor in sustaining international security.

Türkiye's strategic geopolitical position as a crossroads between Europe and Asia significantly amplifies its role on the global stage. Straddling the Bosphorus Strait, Türkiye controls the vital maritime route that connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, making it crucial for the energy transit corridors that serve Europe and Asia. Its proximity to the Middle East and the Caucasus places Türkiye at the epicenter of several geostrategic interests, including energy resources, migration routes, and regional conflicts. This unique positioning has historically allowed Türkiye to exert significant influence over trade and military logistics, making it a key NATO ally with substantial leverage in regional security matters. Additionally, Türkiye's ability to manage relationships with both Western powers and regional actors like Russia and Iran further underscores the importance of its geopolitical location. By balancing these relationships, Türkiye not only secures its national interests but also positions itself as a critical player in shaping regional dynamics and influencing international policies.

Actually, the presence of international actors in the region and their attempts to broaden their spheres of influence, combined with the authority crises in Syria and Iraq, create an ideal setting for the growth of terrorist groups, necessitating Turkey's presence on the ground as part of its regional policies.¹³ Because of this fact, Türkiye's diplomatic efforts are intricately linked with its military and security initiatives, reflecting a strategic approach that combines soft power with hard power to enhance its regional influence and global standing. Through its active participation in NATO and its own robust military operations, Türkiye has positioned itself as a crucial security player in volatile regions like Syria and Iraq, directly impacting the balance of power and the fight against terrorism. Its military actions, especially against ISIS and Kurdish militia groups,

¹³ Mesut H. Caşın, *Uluslararası Terörizm*, [International Terrorism], Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2008.

align with its broader security goals of maintaining border integrity and regional stability. Diplomatically, Türkiye uses its military engagements as leverage in negotiations, aiming to shape outcomes in its favor, whether it's dealing with the U.S., Russia, or the European Union. For instance, its purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system was used as a strategic counterbalance in its relations with Western allies, demonstrating its willingness to diversify its military partnerships.

Furthermore, Türkiye's role in mediating conflicts, such as in Libya and the South Caucasus, showcases its capability to blend military involvement with diplomatic initiatives to influence peace processes and political agreements. Overall, Türkiye's integration of military prowess with diplomatic strategies helps it manage its image as a strong but pragmatic nation, capable of both defending its interests through force and engaging in meaningful diplomacy to address complex international issues. Türkiye's support in regional and international security remains crucial, given its strategic location and active role in counterterrorism and diplomatic initiatives. While its approach sometimes generates controversy, Türkiye's strategic importance and efforts to contribute to regional stability cannot be ignored. Balancing its national interests with international norms will be key to maintaining its role in supporting security.

Over the years, Türkiye has shifted from a policy of having less problems with its neighbors and sometimes interventionist stance. This is mostly because of the reason that the country is positioned as a regional powerhouse and a significant player in key areas of the regions in the broadest sense thanks to its commitment, strategic location, military prowess, diplomatic initiatives, and multilateral security cooperation. Thus, for any government in the region, losing Türkiye's support or being embroiled in a conflict would not be in their best interests. In conclusion, Türkiye's counterterrorism policy is critical to regional peace and security as well as to the country's own security. Türkiye's value for both regional stability and international security is undeniable, as it has previously shown its exceptional ability to act through its dedication to promoting constructive dialogues and contributing to resolution processes on issues like the Syrian civil war, the conflicts in the Caucasus, Cyprus, Libya and Ukraine.

Conclusion

In this new era of counterterrorism, Türkiye's approach reflects a nuanced strategy that goes beyond traditional security measures, integrating a constructivist understanding of identity and regional dynamics. Through const.

In conclusion, Türkiye's new era in counter-terrorism represents a significant shift towards a more integrated and multifaceted approach to security. As the nation grapples with evolving threats on multiple fronts, from persistent insurgencies to emerging transnational terrorist networks, the necessity for innovation in strategy is undeniable. The modernization of Türkiye's legislative framework, coupled with advancements in technological and intelligence capabilities, underscores a proactive stance in preempting and responding to terrorist activities. Here, constructivism provides a framework to understand Türkiye's counter terrorism not just as security-driven but also as a complex interplay of identity, values and the desire to shape regional norms. Through these efforts, Türkiye seeks to construct a role for itself as a responsible, stabilizing force, thereby shaping how it is perceived by both its neighbors and international allies. Moreover, the increasing emphasis on international cooperation highlights Türkiye's recognition of terrorism as a borderless threat that requires collective action. Partnerships with global and regional entities enhance not only the operational capacities but also the strategic reach of Türkiye's counter-terrorism initiatives. However, the journey is fraught with challenges, particularly in balancing stringent security measures with the preservation of civil liberties and human rights. The criticism from international bodies and internal opposition underscores the complex interplay between national security and democratic governance. As Türkiye continues to navigate these turbulent waters, the effectiveness of its counter-terrorism efforts will largely depend on its ability to adapt to the dynamic nature of global terrorism and the geopolitical shifts in its region. The new era in Turkish counter-terrorism is not just about addressing the threats of today but also about anticipating the challenges of tomorrow. This proactive and comprehensive approach may serve as a model for other nations similarly situated in volatile regions, marking a pivotal chapter in the global fight against terrorism.

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