



Turkey's Defense Industry Releases Strategic Plan for 2019-2023

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) recently released its "Strategic Plan for 2019-2023," which lays out Turkey's vision for its defense and aerospace industries through 2023. According to document, Turkey plans to increase its defense and aerospace revenue from 6.7 billion in 2018 to 26.9 billion in 2023.

The plan analyzes the previous strategic plan for 2017-2021 and takes stock of their accomplishments. As the excerpted passage from the document states, the main objective is to strengthen the capacity of Turkey's defense



Bayraktar TB2 Runway.

Source: Bayhaluk via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_Runway.jpg, CC BY 4.0

industry by domestically producing defense products to meet the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces. Another objective is to ensure the skills acquired in the defense industry sector are being spread to the civilian sector.

The plan reveals three main policies to achieve its objectives: minimize foreign dependence in the defense industry by developing domestic technologies; strengthen the defense industry by ensuring sustainability in training a skilled labor force (by supporting companies in the defense sector and taking measures to increase cooperation among them); and ensure critical technologies that support defense industry are 100 percent domestically developed.

According to the article from *Anadolu Ajansı*, Turkey did not have "a dull moment...in its military affairs agenda in the year 2019" because of its military actions and the use of indigenous weapons in real combat situations. The author states that the warfighting capability of Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and "dronization" are the bricks of Turkey's defense eco-system. The TAF have successfully been carrying out military operations and testing its indigenous arms in Syria and northern Iraq simultaneously in the "most dangerous operational environments" as it faced hybrid warfare fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) simultaneously. Developing indigenous drones and adding them to TAF's inventory has been "the most crucial aspect of Turkey's defense modernization" in past decade. Turkey's indigenous medium altitude and long-range (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) TB-2 and Anka have been instrumental in combat in Turkey's incursions into Syria and in northern Iraq against the PKK. Additionally, Akıncı, a high-altitude long-endurance unmanned combat air vehicle that is currently under development with "its planned payload (up to 1.5 tons) and advanced sensors... would be tantamount to a breakthrough in 'dronization.'"

However, the author states that while the strategic plan and developments in the defense industry seem promising, Turkey faces three significant challenges in the defense industry: "the advancement in artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons systems; acquiring fifth-generation fighter jets for its air force; and augmenting and diversifying its international defense ties." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“The main objective is to strengthen the defense industry ecosystem in order to meet the needs of our Armed Forces and security forces...”



Continued: Turkey's Defense Industry Releases Strategic Plan for 2019-2023

Source: "2019-2023 Stratejik Plan (Strategic Plan for 2019-2023)," Savunma Sanayi Baskanligi (The Presidency of [Turkish] Defense Industries), 04 December 2019. https://www.ssb.gov.tr/Images/Uploads/MyContents/V_20191213172340705166.pdf

The main objective is to strengthen the defense industry ecosystem in order to meet the needs of our Armed Forces and security forces with the goal of continuous development with national technologies and domestic opportunities...

Policy and Measures

Projects will be implemented to minimize foreign dependence in the defense industry with national technologies and domestic opportunities.

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In order to strengthen the defense industry ecosystem and ensure sustainability; in order to meet the need for qualified manpower, the training infrastructure will be strengthened, support will be provided to sector companies, especially to [small and middle scale businesses], and measures will be taken to increase cooperation in exports.

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The transformation in defense industry technologies will be achieved and the national technology momentum will be elevated...

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoglu, Turkey's defense outlook for 2020s very promising," Anadolu Ajansi (Anatolian News Agency), 03 January 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/turkey-s-defense-outlook-for-2020s-very-promising/1691178>

Turkey's main procurement body, the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB – Savunma Sanayii Baskanligi) released the document in late 2019. The plan envisages the nation's military roadmap until 2023, the centennial of the republic.

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The document prioritizes managing technological transformation and building the required elite workforce to enable it. In other words, for the first time, an official release by Ankara primarily focuses on the broader defense eco-system with all the stakeholders involved, rather than on the defense sector itself with a purely industrial mindset.

In league with the new strategic plan, Turkey's military and defense-technological uptrend hints at more aspirant capability development efforts in the 2020s. To grasp the new reality, one should glance at the bricks of this eco-system.

The Turkish Armed Forces remain a battle-hardened, warfighting deterrent. Since 2016, Ankara has flexed its military muscles in Syria's most dangerous operational environments. Having faced a hybrid warfare threat landscape on both sides of the Euphrates River against Daesh and the PKK, the Turkish Armed Forces have firmly relied on indigenous weaponry to a considerable level...

Notably, the Turkish Armed Forces' emerging concepts of operations (CONOPS) are promising as to digesting the newly gained capabilities. Unmanned aerial systems' ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance) tactical fusion with land-based fire-support elements (artillery and MLRS), for example, were essential for the Turkish military's counter-terrorism expeditions in Syria.

'Dronization' has been the most crucial aspect of Turkey's defense modernization in the 2010s...

With Bayraktar TB-2 and Anka lines registering key achievements, the next up for Ankara remains the development of more advanced systems to execute strategic missions. Akinci, thanks to its planned payload (up to 1.5 tons) and advanced sensors (including AESA radars), would be tantamount to a breakthrough in this respect...

Despite the remarkable scorecard noted hitherto, Turkey also has to face and overcome significant challenges in the coming decades.

Firstly, ... there is a long way to go with regards the cognitive layer revolving around artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous weapon systems...

Secondly, there is the 5th-generation military aviation agenda still awaiting clarity...

Thirdly and finally, ... Ankara has to augment and diversify its international defense ties.