



Turkish Foreign Security Policy Under an Executive Presidency

OE Watch Commentary: With the 24 June elections, Turkey's governing system shifted to an executive presidency. Many analysts are considering what Turkish foreign security policy will look like under the new system as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan remains in power after winning the elections. According to the accompanying excerpted article from the pro-government *Daily Sabah*, the president's office will be able to make more efficient decisions as "the struggle against terrorism will be the top priority agenda item with regards to Turkey's foreign policy and security matters in the coming months."

The article states that Turkey will focus on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Democratic Union Party (PYD) and "the Gülenist Terror Group (FETO)" in its fight against terrorism. The author argues that the ongoing cross-border operation against the PKK will continue while Turkey will try to "strengthen its ties with friendly local partners by forming new alliances to deal with conflicts at their source." These alliances include getting Iran's support in its operation against the PKK in the Qandil Mountains, where the PKK's leadership has set up camp. Turkey will also work on improving its collaboration with Iraq "to deter the threat of various terrorist groups." According to the author, fighting against FETO will be another important security issue for Turkey as it will try to curb the international activities of this organization by putting "diplomatic pressure on countries," especially NATO allies.

According to the article, Turkey will continue its involvement in Syria to pursue two intertwined goals: combating terrorist groups, in order to later establish safe zones. The Astana process that Turkey, Russia and Iran started will "be the primary framework to stabilize Syria" while the parties work towards creating "a common frame for a realistic political road map." Turkey seeks to establish safe zones in Syria so that refugees currently located in Turkey may be resettled within them. The government aims to stop the growth of resentment against the 3.5 million refugees, especially in cities bordering Syria. The author states that Turkey sees the Syrian Civil War as its own domestic issue and it will continue pursuing a sustainable peace as one of its top priorities. While the author states that there will be "a new game" in Ankara under the executive presidency regarding foreign and security policy, the priorities concerning foreign policy and national security will remain the same. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: Talha Köse, "Turkey's foreign security policy after the June 24 elections," *Daily Sabah*, 28 June 2018. <https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2018/06/29/turkeys-foreign-security-policy-after-the-june-24-elections>

The June 24 parliamentary and presidential elections are one of the most critical elections in the political history of the Turkish Republic... Turkey's governing system and structure are transforming into an executive presidency where the popularly elected president will have command of almost all aspects of critical policy areas including foreign policy and national security...

The president's office will be able to make more efficient decisions and avoid bureaucratic obstacles and procedures....

Turkey's struggle against terrorism will be the top priority agenda item in Turkey's foreign policy and security matters in the coming months. The PKK/ Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ) will be the focus of Turkey's fight against terrorism. The cross-border operations against the PKK will continue and even expand in Iraq and Syria. Turkey will try to collaborate with local partners in the struggle against the PKK/PYD and will strengthen its ties with friendly local partners by forming new alliances to deal with conflicts at their source. Joint efforts with Iran are critical for fighting PKK targets in the terrorist organization's camps and training grounds in the Qandil mountains. Ankara will also try to improve its collaborative efforts with the Iraqi central government to deter the threat of various terrorist groups. Stabilization of the Turkish-Iraqi border is also essential for the strengthening of economic ties, trade and investment opportunities between the two neighbors. Another critical issue for Turkey in the fight against terrorism will be the struggle against FETÖ.

Especially FETÖ leaders that try to maintain their [international] activities will be the primary focus of Turkey's effort against this organization. Turkey will increase its diplomatic pressure on countries, especially Turkey's NATO allies, to deal with the FETÖ threat internationally.

The Astana process between Turkey, Russia and Iran will continue to be the primary framework to stabilize Syria. The parties will continue to work together to find a common frame for a realistic political road map. There are still hurdles for the stabilization of Syria, as Assad feels more confident as he tries to expand his campaign over the opposition-controlled areas, killing more civilians. The critical balance between the U.S., Russia and the local, regional partners is the critical, crucial component of Turkey's efforts to struggle against terrorism. A key incentive for Turkey in dealing with terrorist organizations in Syria is to create safe zones for civilians so that the Syrian refugees in Turkey may safely return to their country. The presence of more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees in Turkey creates problems and puts pressure on the Turkish government, especially on the local cities and provincial administrations bordering Syria. Erdoğan will increasingly feel domestic political [pressure] to deal with the problem of Syrian refugees in Turkey...

In the short and medium terms Turkey's priorities concerning foreign policy and national security will stay the same but how these priority issues are handled may have long-lasting consequences.

“In the short and medium terms Turkey's priorities concerning foreign policy and national security will stay the same but how these priority issues are handled may have long-lasting consequences.”