

# Turkey's National Security Architecture post April 16 Referendum: Consolidating the Pillars

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- **What are the institutional necessities of effective threat response within the current security environment?**
  - **What advantages will the new constitutional amendments provide in meeting these necessities?**

## INTRODUCTION

Turkey's new orientation and reconstruction of its national security architecture post April 16 referendum will be an important anchor of domestic and regional stability. In this sense, Turkey needs a more comprehensive, long-term and realistic national security strat-

egy. In order to develop such a strategy; Turkey first and foremost should determine its capacity to deter the threats emanating mainly from regional insecurities. Turkey's defense and security strategies require agile, network-centric forces capable of taking action from a determined front line, rapidly and flexibly pro-

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jecting its military power to reinforce weak regions and counteracting threats, especially those consisting of non-state military actors, swiftly and decisively while defending Turkish soil from offensive action. Such a military force in this new era for Turkey is also essential for deterring conflict on home territory as well as abroad and for assuring Turkey's commitment to a peaceful and stable region.

Although Turkey's military power today has significant advantages in comparison to the other regional actors, Turkey is challenged by newly emerging threats that pose tremendous risks in terms of its national security. The new insecurity trends, especially at the regional level, facilitate other state/non-state actors in challenging Turkey. However, Turkey is also faced with multiple nonconventional threats and risks that the wider globe has experienced. Hence Turkey appears to be the touchstone in identification and response implementation with regard to threats for the well-being of Turkey as well as the entire globe. This reality makes Turkey an indispensable partner for the international community in the sustaining of stability in the framework of structure-agent interdependency. In this light, Turkey is not a peripheral security agency, but at the central position in the pendulum of security and insecurity of the current international politics.

Where mutual dependency is concerned, Turkey's attempt to enhance her security apparatus can be utilized by both the western and wider hemispheres. In this context, the Turkish constitutional amendments are to be beneficial to both Turkey and the international security structure in cementing the security architecture of all nations. For this purpose, the security landscape of the international realm, namely the neighborhood of Turkey, should be treated within the perspective of common interests of regional and global actors.

### **SECURITY LANDSCAPE FOR COMMON INTERESTS**

International actors have common threats, but differing responses. In this sense, global security governance

has failed to overcome the most major challenges; particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. The sources of threat have the potential of diffusing to remote regions and communities while disregarding established borders. These threats can also come in different forms and discourses, the consequences of which could spill over at the expense of humanitarian costs. However this reality has not united the international public, but rather acted to alienate its various actors enhancing emerging instabilities which have created bolder footprints as a result. Turkey, being in the center of existing and potential turmoil, appears to be the principal actor in preventing the rise of these threats through its own security concerns and architecture, along with those of the international community.

Despite the vitality of co-opted international security mechanisms, Turkey has been criticized for actions it has taken regarding its national security. For instance, most Europeans perceive Turkey not as "of Europe" but as "partially in Europe" in terms of its geography and culture; however, Turkey cannot be excluded from the security architecture of neither Europe nor the wider international community because of its proximity to probable crisis zones. Turkish, Western and international security concerns and interests should be complementary to each other and instigate concordant action, as the threats/risks that Turkey is facing are also concerns of the overall structure of international security. Two cases in point, illegal immigration and foreign terrorist fighters are shared security concerns for both Turkey as well as Europe to which both are obliged to respond.

The awareness of 'massive uncertainty' in defining and treating various threats/risks will push international actors, mainly Europe, to re-adjust their relationship with Turkey. The threat, with its evolving capabilities in terms of spatiality, assets, methods and timing; is no longer distant for actors of the international community. Initially, "revisionist" and "revolutionist" state and non-state armed actors should be perceived as a threat if the ultimate security aim is to consolidate the foundation of global order. This macro picture can be

observed by a micro presence of many types of threats surrounding Turkish territory. It is a reality that Turkey has become the gatekeeper of European security against threats that diminish the conventional concept of sovereignty by emerging radical and non-conventional territorial brokers such as YPG, PKK, PYD and ISIS. Turkey and its allies do not have the luxury of risking their own security. It would be mutually favorable for the West as well as other actors in the global scene to support the security mindset that Turkey has put together and implemented thus far.

Turkey and global actors have faced security challenges that are common and well known. In this regard, the sources of instability have appeared to be prevalent in the triangle of the Balkans, Caucuses and the Greater Middle East, which asymmetrically affects global order. For many years, Turkey has struggled with these threat types, such as terrorism, amid the disinterest of her western allies. The same Allies have now felt the consequences of these threats in differing forms. Among the long list of threats are terrorism, radical formations, soft threats such as illegal immigration and humanitarian disasters, as well as the collapse of state authority. Thus, it has become a necessity for Turkey to design her security architecture to respond to contemporary security challenges through mutual compromise with her traditional allies.

The constitutional amendments Turkey has passed will facilitate the re-construction of an enhanced security mechanism, contrary to Western prejudices relating to the latest referendum.

### **THE SECURITY SCOPE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

Within the proposed security mechanism, the desired features and gained advantages will be: increased preparedness due to the elimination of bureaucratic barriers, a comprehensively conceived security strategy, the enhanced capability to acquire adequate quantity and quality of means, and civilian supremacy over the Armed Forces through democratic control, preventing any future military coup d'états. The macro system to

be designed will not be bound to the preferences of individual decision makers, but will rather constitute an institutionalized structure in developing a sound security strategy. The authority of the established Presidency will enable the building of state organizations and the appointment of appropriate human resources to embrace the various state mechanisms within a single hub of coordinated efforts.

A general review of the enacted security-relevant amendments shall put into perspective the benefits that they are to provide Turkey. The Presidency, if needed, will have the authority to release executive orders and regulations in building security organizations. Hence, the pace of response to challenges will determine the pending level of perceived threats. Practical and effective solutions will be employed in coordination with relevant security bodies while misuse of time and resources are prevented. It should be noted that the previous system was based on the lengthy discussion and decision making of Parliament, while the current exigencies to directly mobilize the state apparatus must focus on threats.

Moreover, the security strategy, consistent with the current threat level, is to be formulated by the National Security Council and its Secretariat, which are composed of security and intelligence related agencies. The Secretariat, under the supervision of the civilian authority, will draft a security strategy based on the accumulation of threat-related data to provide recommendations to the Presidency. Although the previous architecture was theoretically executing the same mission, the objective of the new mechanism is to be more pragmatic in practice.

Another advantage to be provided by the amendments is the ability to establish required security apparatuses by direct Presidential executive orders. The President will be able to form organizations and establish their codes in accordance with the prerequisites of the expected security environment, actors and concerns. In this sense Turkey will be able to align its security structure with those of its Allies by eliminating procedural barriers.

The Turkish Presidency has obtained the authority to mobilize the Armed Forces without the specific permission of the National Assembly. In this way, Turkey can respond to risks and threats with limited or no time delays. Previously the National Assembly alone had the decision-making authority to mobilize Armed Forces abroad or in Turkey. The Turkish government had previously overcome the delays by requesting this authority for certain time periods, but the new system facilitates the Presidency to use the Armed Forces in a more pro-active manner.

Civilian supremacy over the military has long been a matter of struggle on the road to building a democratic state system. The transfer of authority to the Presidency will curb the influence of military circles as well as dictating bodies upon legal and elected state mechanisms. As far as the Turkish example in the Middle East is concerned, democratic and civilian control will be a model for most state actors.

Progress in the field of security will offer an active security mechanism, not only for Turkey but also the wider community of shared interests. The interdependency of Turkey and Europe has the potential to harmonize both parties' security perceptions in an integrated modus operandi if the awareness of their common interests is established and a coordinated approach is employed.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSOLIDATING THE PILLARS OF NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE**

The new amendments to the constitution will spearhead four major pillars of opportunity to consolidate Turkey's security capabilities. Firstly centralization will contribute to easing the communication and coordination among state organizations. Hence, contrary to criticisms, a centralized security system will be an advantage for Turkey and the West. In this sense, the building of a security and defense strategy requires comprehensive collation and analysis through the operation of a well-established state system. The Turkish National Security Council and its Secretariat will be

restructured to identify risks and threats, consult with other relevant state organizations, prepare and present recommendations, and track challenges. In this sense the new security paradigm is based on a proactive (rather than reactive) course that focuses on responding to cross-border threats. Operation Euphrates Shield is a significant case for such an approach showing that the West and Turkey can act jointly and proactively against the common threat.

Another prospective gain is to be the institutionalization of the entire security sector through the direct involvement of the Presidency. In this way, a holistic approach will be built and maintained, directing all relevant security organizations to the same ultimate goal. One major problem among these security organizations had been the deficiency of coordination in their efforts, especially in countering terrorism. The new system has established unity of command in the security forces by attaching them to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. On the other hand, the Armed Forces have become subordinate to the Ministry of Defense whilst being tasked to reinforce security forces in the event of internal threats. Hence democratic control and efficient coordination of security mechanisms have been systematically designed in the frame of the Constitution.

A third advantage that should be mentioned is the involvement of the Presidency in identification of security processes. The President can assign procedural amendments to relevant governmental bodies according to emerging security risks. The process of drafting, approving and releasing these measures will be the initiative of the Presidency not requiring further permission of the Parliament, but remaining in the frame of the constitution and law. However, the Parliament will have the power to control and rearrange presidential executive orders within specific time periods.

Capability building has always been an issue in developing an efficient response mechanism. For instance, procurement and armament processes were subject to long bureaucratic procedures. This produced a deficiency in the security and armed forces in

assets necessary for task completion as well as a risk of a discredited image in the eyes of the public. The new arrangements promise an enhanced functional capability with regard to the Turkish security system as it entails a more pragmatic capacity for process building.

All the pillars mentioned above serve to create a state of readiness. This readiness does not only refer to that of the Turkish state mechanisms in responding to threats. The interconnectedness of the risks/threats and their increasing capabilities requires a high degree of preparedness in the international community to be to engage them in an effective manner. Hence, as a constituent of the international security structure, Turkey needs to enhance her preparedness by establishing mechanisms to coordinate and cooperate with other actors in an international context. The increased pace of security building processes within Turkish state institutions will reinforce the readiness of security mechanisms in accordance with her partners.

## THE WAY AHEAD

The purpose of the Turkish referendum on April 16th was to build an efficient state system, which included a wide range of enhancements for the security sector. Turkey had suffered from an inherited security sys-

tem, which was traditional, static, and resistant to change. Turkey needs to shift away from this former state in order to effectively mobilize her capacities and capabilities to overcome various risks and threats. Europe, the USA and the wider global community also share and suffer from concerns plaguing Turkey due to the emerging security environment and actors within this environment which necessitates they face a common future. Damage made to one will have consequences on the other. The international community and Turkey together are obliged to respond to these challenges collectively. Despite the difficulty tied to international re-structuring, Turkey has initiated her own reformation process through the latest constitutional amendments which have the potential to strengthen Turkey's ability to carry out her responsibilities towards both her own citizens as well as those towards the international community. The contemporary types of threat/risk, as seen in Syria and Iraq, require that all actors act responsibly and align their efforts to achieve their common end. Turkey is committed to using her own resources to fight against these threats, as can be witnessed in the nature of its constitutional amendments, and expects her partners to work with the same intentions in a coordinated fashion.



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