

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- Researcher Mehmet Kılıç interviewed Syria expert Ömer Özkızılcık on Türkiye's strategy regarding areas controlled by the YPG/SDF.
- With the inclusion of the CHP in the National Unity and Solidarity Commission established for the Terror-Free Türkiye process, a broad base of parliamentary representation has been achieved.
- Türkiye unveiled its latest defence products.

How Will Türkiye Confront the YPG/SDF and Balance Diplomacy in Its Syria Strategy? Interview with Ömer Özkızılcık



(Bakr Al Kasem - Anadolu Agency)

Researcher Mehmet Kılıç interviewed Ömer Özkızılcık, a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council, on recent diplomatic developments in Syria, focusing on the YPG/SDF's role in northeastern Syria and the March 10, 2025, integration agreement.

Devlet Bahçeli flags YPG/SDF's PKK ties as a threat to Türkiye's security, citing their non-compliance with the March 10, 2025, integration deal. What are YPG/SDF's key political and military aims in northeastern Syria, and how do they clash with Türkiye's security goals? What diplomatic or operational hurdles does Türkiye face in countering this?

In reality, what we see is that the YPG/SDF has established a de facto autonomous region in Syria. It is not recognised by anyone, but it is established. They want to preserve this status quo and aim to gain a constitutional position in Syria, which is quite against the spirit of the March 10 agreement.

The SDF's political analysis has changed in recent times. There is now a belief on their part that, due to the disarmament process of the PKK and the Israeli intervention in Syria, they no longer need to concede to the demands of Damascus and can instead impose themselves on Damascus. I think this is a miscalculation on their part, because Türkiye has the military leverage to push the SDF out of the way or to force them toward the negotiation table with Damascus.

In the past, Russia, Iran, the Assad regime, and the United States would not directly, but simultaneously, pursue the same goal: to preserve and protect the SDF against Türkiye. Now, however, the Russians are no longer there, the Iranians are no longer there, the Assad regime has changed and is now aligned with a government close to Ankara, and the Americans have significantly reduced their military presence in Syria. They are also unlikely to impose sanctions on Türkiye.

So, in reality, there is no significant obstacle in front of Türkiye. Yet Ankara has chosen not to impose a military solution but instead to use this new momentum and strength to reach out with an olive branch to the YPG, SDF, and PKK, calling on them to disarm entirely. We will have to see how they respond. The recent remarks by Devlet Bahçeli serve as a reminder of Turkish military pressure and the threat it poses to the SDF — a push to bring them back to the negotiation table and implement the March 10 agreement.

Türkiye issued a 30-day ultimatum for YPG/SDF to join Syrian state institutions, hinting at military action if

they don't comply. How likely is a Turkish cross-border operation against YPG/SDF? What border security benefits would Türkiye gain, and what risks might it face with Syria and regional actors?

In military terms, a potential Turkish military operation in northeastern Syria would be quite easy. The terrain is suitable, and the demographics are favourable — 80% of the region is Arab, and even among the Kurds, there is no full support for the SDF. From a military point of view, it would be easy to launch such an operation. It would likely result in very few casualties on the Turkish side, given Türkiye's full air dominance, professional army, internal support, and support from Damascus. The SDF would be sandwiched between the Turkish Armed Forces in the north and the Syrian army in the south.

That being said, this remains a secondary preference for Türkiye. Türkiye prefers to see a renewed disarmament process of the SDF so that a historic opportunity can be seized. Türkiye sees itself at a historic turning point — a chance for the PKK and the SDF, as its Syrian branch, to lay down arms and bring an end to the terror period in Türkiye, and an end to terrorism.

To be clear, Türkiye can eradicate the territorial control of the SDF and PKK in Syria militarily, but this will not mean that the PKK, as an organisation, will be eliminated entirely. It will be crushed and weakened significantly. However, it is in Türkiye's interest to reach a peaceful resolution and achieve a political victory, rather than a purely military one.

Türkiye aims for a Syria where the YPG/SDF no longer threatens its security, ideally via integration or dissolution, to ensure stability. From Ankara's view, what would a successful resolution of the YPG/SDF issue entail, and what political, diplomatic, or military steps must Türkiye take?

From a Turkish perspective, the resolution is quite clear in terms of what it should entail. Türkiye wants all PKK entities and affiliates to enter the political sphere. Türkiye believes this group can operate politically — it can have a presence in the Syrian parliament, as well as in Türkiye and the Iraqi Kurdistan parliament. Türkiye is not bothered by that. Türkiye believes politics should be conducted freely and openly, within the legal framework.

In Syria, especially, Türkiye also recognises that the SDF/YPG has made significant gains over the years, largely thanks to American support and Russian protection. Türkiye has offered the YPG/SDF the opportunity to organise politically and lead local governance in Kurdish areas — namely in Ayn al-Arab, and in areas west and east of Qamishli city. These are three separate areas along the Turkish border with relatively low population density.

According to this offer, the SDF would be integrated into the Syrian army, and the YPG could become a local police force tasked with securing the Kurdish Syrian population. So, Türkiye is not strongly opposed to this idea if it results in a political solution. This is, essentially, the olive branch: Ankara is giving the SDF/YPG the option of playing a local and political role — or facing total annihilation.

CHP Decides to Join the National Unity and Solidarity Commission

A new parliamentary commission titled the "National Unity and Solidarity Commission" is being established to oversee and provide a legal framework for the terror-free Türkiye initiative. Both the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the DEM Party had long emphasised the need for such a commission. Last week, Speaker of the Parliament Numan Kurtulmuş held talks with various political parties, bringing the preparations for the commission to completion. According to the proposed structure, every party represented in parliament will have at least one member in the commission, and seat distribution will reflect the parties' proportional representation in the assembly.

Initially, the main opposition party, CHP, was hesitant to participate. However, after receiving assurances from the Speaker that strategic decisions would require a qualified majority, the CHP eventually agreed to join. President Erdoğan also publicly voiced the importance of the main opposition's involvement, stating, "We hope to resolve this issue permanently through solidarity between the government and the opposition, and we reiterate our call for cooperation." The CHP's inclusion in this process marks a significant moment, especially in terms of ensuring broader societal representation and political legitimacy.



(Arda Kūçūkkaya - Anadolu Agency)

Had the CHP remained outside the commission, it could have been vulnerable to growing ultranationalist rhetoric within parts of its voter base. Such a stance would likely have undermined efforts toward national reconciliation at a critical juncture. Although some media figures and politicians close to the CHP continue to criticise the decision, the party's participation can be seen as a constructive and forward-looking step for now. Nevertheless, sustaining this approach will require careful navigation to avoid internal fractures and to maintain its role in the broader democratic consensus.

Türkiye Unveils Newly Developed Indigenous Defence Technologies

In recent years, Türkiye has emerged as a prominent actor in the global defence industry, backed by robust investments and an expanding portfolio of indigenous technologies. Turkish-made drones, such as the Bayraktar series, have gained considerable attention for their effectiveness in various conflict zones from Ukraine to Africa. These systems have not only demonstrated Türkiye's growing technological capacity but have also enhanced its geopolitical standing as a reliable defence partner for many states.

Importantly, Türkiye's defence production is not limited to drones. In recent weeks, the country unveiled several advanced weapon systems, underscoring its broader strategic ambitions. Two of the most notable developments were the Tayfun Block 4, a hypersonic ballistic missile, and GAZAP (Wrath), described as one of the most powerful non-nuclear bombs ever developed. The unveiling of such weapons carries symbolic and political significance, especially in the current climate of volatility in the Middle East, where Israeli policies continue to exacerbate instability. These military advancements reinforce Türkiye's aim to build a credible deterrence capability and project strategic autonomy in a region marked by uncertainty.



(Esra Bilgin - Anadolu Agency)

On a broader scale, Türkiye's growing defence industry also holds implications for its relationship with Europe. As the EU grapples with its security architecture and seeks more resilient partnerships, Türkiye's defence capabilities could serve as valuable assets. In fact, Türkiye has already engaged in defence cooperation with key European countries such as Spain and Italy. Joint projects, technology transfers, and arms trade agreements reflect the potential for deeper integration and mutual benefit in the evolving security landscape.

Highlights

- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed 20 agreements during the Kazakh leader's official visit to Türkiye.
- Türkiye joined the Hague Group's Bogota joint statement outlining measures against Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, while stating it does not consider itself bound by references to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- In June, Türkiye set a record for electricity generation from wind and solar, which accounted for 29.6% of the total production, according to the Energy and Natural Resources Ministry. Combined, these renewable sources produced 8.4 billion kWh, the highest monthly share to date. Türkiye ranks 11th globally and 5th in Europe for total installed renewable energy capacity, according to IRENA.

No Edition Next Week

We wanted to inform you that there won't be an edition of *Türkiye in Focus* next week as we take a short break. We'll return the following week with fresh perspectives and updates on the latest developments in Türkiye. Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding!

The *Türkiye in Focus* Team