

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- With the Terror-Free Türkiye agenda focused on potential shifts in Syria, the Chief of General Staff made a notable trip to Damascus.
- Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's visit to Türkiye saw the two governments seal a series of new cooperation agreements, adding momentum to their growing partnership.
- In Ankara, the Grand National Assembly has opened its annual round of year-end budget deliberations, a process that traditionally offers a clear snapshot of the broader political mood.

Chief of General Staff Visits Syria

General Staff Chief Selçuk Bayraktaroğlu's visit to Syria, which included high-level meetings with President Ahmet Sharaa, marks a notable moment in regional diplomacy. The agenda appears to have centred on the overlapping security concerns of Syria and Türkiye. Both governments frame Israel's actions in southern Syria as a destabilising force, while also converging on the need to bring an end to SDF control in the north in a way that restores Syria's territorial coherence. This latter matter carries particular weight within Türkiye's "Terror-Free Türkiye" initiative, where the future of the northern administration is viewed as a pivotal element.

It is hardly difficult to imagine that Bayraktaroğlu's conversations in Damascus touched on this question of governance and the eventual reintegration of the northeastern region into the government's centralised structure. The timing is notable: public appeals from Ankara urging compliance with the 10 March agreement made between the Sharaa government and SDF have grown louder. Speaking at the Doha Forum, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan underscored that non-Syrian elements within the SDF must be removed, warning that some PKK-aligned factions embedded in the group are resolved to harm Turkish interests. Although SDF representatives have verbally indicated adherence to the March understanding, their actions on the ground suggest a strategy aimed at stretching the clock rather than fulfilling commitments.

Another development drawing attention has been the visible movement of Turkish units in northern Syria, widely circulated on social media. Reports soon followed indicating that Damascus was dispatching reinforcements toward SDF-held areas in Deir ez-Zor. Yet, according to information provided by Turkish Defence Ministry officials to a newspaper, this uptick in activity reflects routine patterns rather than a new operation. While Türkiye has long signalled its preference for a negotiated outcome regarding the north, past military campaigns serve as reminders that force remains a contingency if circumstances shift unfavourably.



(TSK - Anadolu Agency)

Hungarian Prime Minister's Ankara Visit Strengthens Ties

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's visit to Ankara underscored the steady deepening of relations between Türkiye and Hungary. During the trip, Erdoğan and Orban led a session of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, a body created in 2013 to structure and elevate the partnership



(TUR Presidency / Mustafa Kamacı - Anadolu Agency)

between the two countries. President Erdoğan noted that the two sides are close to reaching a trade volume of 6 billion dollars and suggested raising the target to 10 billion, reflecting confidence in the direction of economic ties.

The visit also carried clear geopolitical weight. Orbán emphasised that Hungary and Türkiye share similar views on the Russia-Ukraine war, stressing that both nations stand for peace. The signing of 16 cooperation agreements, including in defence and aviation, showcased the widening scope of the strategic agenda. As Hungary increasingly seeks room to develop alternative alignments beyond Brussels' main line, its areas of convergence with Türkiye have become more visible.

For Ankara, Hungary's posture aligns with Türkiye's own efforts to expand its influence across regional and global platforms. Budapest's recognition of Türkiye as a key gateway to Central Asia, combined with historical ties, is reflected in Hungary's observer status in the Organisation of Turkic States. Taken together, these dynamics point to a bilateral relationship that is not only strengthening but also steadily gaining strategic depth.

Turkish Parliament Begins Year-End Budget Talks

The Turkish Grand National Assembly has entered its year-end ritual: the annual budget talks that set the financial course for the coming year. Presenting the draft on behalf of the



(Osmancan Gürdoğan - Anadolu Agency)

presidential cabinet, Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz framed it as a "stability and prosperity budget," emphasising the government's aim to post a 29-billion-lira primary surplus. As always, these sessions serve not only as a technical review of fiscal planning but also as a barometer of the political climate.

At the same time, the debates have once again become a stage for airing the country's broader political tensions. The Terror-free Türkiye process emerged as one of the most prominent themes, shaping much of the rhetoric across party lines. In his opening remarks, Speaker Numan Kurtulmuş underlined that this initiative is a state project, an assertion that appeared aimed at anchoring the conversation beyond partisan competition. The talks are expected to continue uninterrupted until 21 December.

Highlights

- Take Off Istanbul 2025, an event bringing together entrepreneurs and investors in the technology sector, was held in Istanbul on 10–11 December.
- The investigation into match-fixing and illegal betting in football continues to widen; most recently, individuals, including one player each from Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray, were arrested and sent to jail.
- The Central Bank announced its final interest rate decision of 2025, lowering the policy rate from 39.5% to 38%.

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- [The Global Reset: From the Old Order to New Realities](#) by The TRT World Research Centre Team
- [A Deficit of Coherence? Türkiye and the Search for American Strategic Reason](#); Discussion Paper by Çağdaş Yüksel



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