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A NEW FRONTIER IN RELATIONS BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND TURKIC REPUBLICS: COOPERATION IN DEFENSE INDUSTRY

In the post-Soviet era, Türkiye has been steadfast in strengthening its relations with newly independent Central Asian and Caucasian countries. These relationships initially encompassed various fields, including economics, culture, and education, but evolved towards energy cooperation and international initiatives in the 2000s. The 2010s witnessed the emergence of platforms like the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TÜRKPA), and International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSOY), fostering unity among Turkic nations. The defense and military sectors became focal points of collaboration. Türkiye has played a pivotal role in this, achieving significant success in its defense industry, with domestic production rates reaching 80% by 2022. This paper explores the historical context and key developments in Türkiye's defense industry, emphasizing its role in shaping diplomatic relations with Turkic Republics. The study also highlights Türkiye's efforts to become a regional power, fostering stability and peace in its neighborhood while expanding its influence in the defense industry sector. Collaborations with countries like Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan have led to the establishment of military agreements and partnerships. These developments reflect the strategic aspirations of Turkic nations to enhance their defense capabilities and industries, with exchange of expertise and experience in the global defense arena.

Key words: security, Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Turkic Countries, defense industry, Organization of Turkic State.

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Түркия және Түркі Республикалары арасындағы қатынастарда жаңа әріптестік: қорғаныс өнеркәсібіндегі ынтымақтастық

Кеңестік дәуірден кейінгі уақытта, Түркия жаңадан тәуелсіздік алған Орталық Азия және Кавказ елдерімен қарым-қатынастарын нығайтуға берік болды. Бастапқы кезде бұл қатынастар экономика, мәдениет және білім салаларын қамтыса, 2000 жылдары энергетикалық ынтымақтастық пен халықаралық бастамаларға бағыт алды. 2010 жылдары Түркі мемлекеттері ұйымы (ТМҰ), Түркітілдес елдердің парламенттік ассамблеясы (ТҮРКПА) және Түркі мәдениетінің халықаралық ұйымы (ТҮРКСОЙ) сынды платформалардың пайда болуы, түркі халықтары арасындағы бірлікті нығайтуға ықпал етті. Қорғаныс пен әскери салалар ынтымақтастықтың негізгі орталықтарына айналды. Түркия бұл жерде шешуші рөл атқарып, өзінің қорғаныс өнеркәсібінде айтарлықтай табысқа жетті, 2022 жылға қарай ішкі өндіріс көлемі 80%-ға жетті. Бұл мақалада Түркияның қорғаныс өнеркәсібіндегі тарихи контекст пен негізгі даму бағыттары қарастырылған, сондай-ақ Түркі Республикаларымен дипломатиялық қатынастар қалыптастырудағы оның ролі ерекше атап өтілген. Сонымен қатар зерттеу, Түркияның аймақтық күшке айналуға деген ұмтылысын, өз көршілерінде тұрақтылық пен бейбітшілікті қолдауын және қорғаныс өнеркәсібі саласындағы ықпалын кеңейтуді көрсетеді. Қазақстан, Әзербайжан, Өзбекстан және Қырғызстан сынды елдермен жасалған ынтымақтастықтар әскери келісімдер мен серіктестіктердің орнауына әкелді. Бұл дамулар, түркі халықтарының өз қорғаныс қабілеттері мен өнеркәсіптерін жақсартуға, глобалды қорғаныс аренасындағы біліктілік пен тәжірибе алмасудағы стратегиялық мақсаттарын білдіреді.

Түйін сөздер: қауіпсіздік, Қазақстан, Түркия, Түркі елдері, қорғаныс өнеркәсібі, Түркі мемлекеттері ұйымы.

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Новое партнерство в отношениях между Турцией и тюркскими республиками: сотрудничество в оборонной промышленности

В постсоветскую эпоху Турция неуклонно укрепляла свои связи с новообразованными независимыми государствами Центральной Азии и Кавказа. Начавшееся с экономического, культурного и образовательного сотрудничества, в 2000-х годах взаимодействие переросло в энергетическое сотрудничество и международные инициативы. В 2010-е годы были созданы такие платформы, как Организация тюркских государств (ОТГ), Парламентская ассамблея тюркоязычных стран (ТЮРКПА) и Международная организация тюркской культуры (ТЮРКСОЙ), которые способствовали укреплению единства тюркских наций. Секторы обороны и военного сотрудничества стали ключевыми точками сотрудничества. Турция сыграла в этом решающую роль, добившись значительных успехов в своей оборонной промышленности, доведя уровень внутреннего производства до 80% к 2022 году. Данная работа исследует исторический контекст и ключевые этапы развития оборонной промышленности Турции, акцентируя внимание на её роли в формировании дипломатических отношений с тюркскими республиками. В исследовании также подчёркиваются усилия Турции стать региональной державой, способствующей стабильности и миру в своём окружении и расширяющей своё влияние в секторе оборонной промышленности. Сотрудничество со странами, такими как Казахстан, Азербайджан, Узбекистан и Кыргызстан, привело к заключению военных соглашений и партнёрств. Эти события отражают стратегические стремления тюркских наций усилить свои оборонные способности и промышленность, обмениваясь экспертизой и опытом на глобальной арене обороны.

Ключевые слова: безопасность, Казахстан, Турция, Тюркские страны, оборонная промышленность, Организация тюркских государств.

Introduction

Türkiye has consistently demonstrated a commitment to strengthening its bilateral relations with the newly independent countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Up until the early 2000s, these relations developed at certain levels in economic, commercial, cultural, and educational fields. However, as the 2000s progressed, the consolidation of energy cooperation and international initiatives became the hallmark of these relationships. Since the early 2010s, the creation of platforms that allow for the unification under a single umbrella within organizations such as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TÜRKPА), International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSОY), and the International Turkic Academy has been among the leading developments. Over the last decade, we have observed the institutionalization and strengthening of ties in many areas, including defense and military sectors.

The groundwork for Türkiye's defense industry's focus on local and national manufacturing was established in the 1960s and 1970s. This sector experienced a significant expansion in the 2010s, which facilitated the creation of military and defense

industry connections between Türkiye and Central Asian nations. In recent years, the organically evolving relationships among the Turkic Republics have included areas of strategic importance, which have served to solidify bilateral and regional bonds. At the forefront of these are military and defense industry collaborations. Türkiye is leading the way among the Turkic Republics in this field with its achievements and growing capacity. Recent achievements in Turkey's defense industry, with domestic production hitting up to 80% and the effectiveness of equipment like UAVs, tanks, and missile systems, have gained international recognition, often highlighted in major global media outlets (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2023).

It is imperative to learn from the defense industry successes currently achieved by Ankara and to conduct a thorough examination of the historical events that have unfolded. This analysis is also critical for determining foreign policy orientations for the developing defense industry sectors of the Turkic Republics. This is because the defense industry sector stands apart from economic, social, or environmental cooperation in the international arena, being at the forefront of protecting national interests and various local and international

sensitivities. Furthermore, when establishing defense industry relations, parties take into account many balances, responsibilities, and potential impacts. To put it more simply, although the defense industry sector operates under competitive and free market conditions like other sectors, however it is also a field where the rules are set by the exporting countries due to security policies. Therefore, in the international arena, the defense industry sector is one of the areas where political interest conflicts are most deeply felt and manifested.

In the global defense industry, while the United States leads the way, it is followed by major Western and European countries such as France and countries like Russia and China, which have shown regular development in recent years, also finding their place among the front-runners. Countries like Türkiye are also securing their position at the forefront in this field. The mentioned countries are increasing their deterrence and expanding their share in the global arms trade with their successes and superiority in various areas of the weapon industry. Therefore, it is understandable that countries that have developed earlier in the industry pose various challenges to those that are developing later, both from a realist perspective and due to national interests and policies. Among Turkic Republics Türkiye has an extensive experience which is valuable to learn lessons from it. Therefore analysis of the recent history of development stages of Türkiye and the challenges they face would be an great asset for the development process of the Turkic Republics.

Materials and Methods

This paper discusses the cooperation opportunities among the Turkic Republics through the qualitative analysis of different researches in literature and back by analysis of quantitative data taken from various international and national official sources. With analyzing the development stages and current situation of Türkiye's defense industry sector author aims to represent the difficulties on developing an defense firms and environment that would enhance the security of a country. To illustrate the obstacles within this process a historical analysis of hurdles that Ankara has gone through is critically important lesson for countries developing their defense industries. Moreover, in a greater scale strengthening security and defense industries collaborations among Türkiye and other Turkic Republics would enhance their regional security and common vision in the international arena.

Literature review

The Turkish defense industry, a sector marked by bold aspirations and intricate realities, has undergone a fascinating journey in recent decades. Examining different insightful academic articles unveils a multifaceted narrative, woven with threads of progress, persistent challenges, and strategic pivots.

Arda Mevlutoglu (2017) dives into the industry's unique structure, dominated by the Turkish Armed Forces and driven by an emphasis on developing an R&D strategy while simultaneously increasing its import-substitution as well. This way defense industry achieves self-sufficiency in many areas, however, certain concerns have been raised about its long-term sustainability. Janos Besenyo and Andras Malnassy (2022) echo this concern, stressing the need for adaptation in a rapidly evolving global landscape where new technologies emerge at breakneck speed. Striking a balance between cutting-edge quality, competitive pricing, and secure supply chains becomes crucial for navigating this dynamic environment.

Huseyin Bagci and Caglar Kurc (2016) delve into the core motivations behind Turkey's defense industrialization efforts: strategic autonomy, economic benefits, and international prestige. However, they argue that achieving complete autarky remains elusive in the short term. While export growth offers a glimmer of hope, long-term sustainability hangs in the balance. Mustafa Kibaroglu (2019) sheds light on the politically charged S-400 deal with Russia, highlighting Turkey's desire for a robust air defense system and the challenges faced in collaborating with traditional allies. This strategic move, aimed at enhancing security and garnering domestic political support, carries the potential for strained relations with NATO and looming sanctions.

Mevlutoglu (2017) points towards the 2000s economic boom as a period of significant progress but identifies export performance as the cornerstone of future sustainability. He emphasizes the need for effective coordination and communication between military and civilian actors to navigate upcoming challenges. Besenyo and Malnassy (2022) reiterate this call for adaptability, suggesting that the industry must prioritize technological advancement, cost-competitiveness, and secure supply chains to thrive in the dynamic global landscape.

As we can see from these articles in the literature review part the Turkish defense industry presents a compelling case study of ambition,

structural limitations, and external pressures. Recognizing the historical motivations, existing challenges, and future directions as outlined in these academic articles offers valuable insights into the sector's ongoing development and its potential to navigate the complexities of a competitive global environment. By embracing agility, fostering collaboration, and prioritizing strategic investments, the Turkish defense industry can continue its journey of transformation and carve its place on the world stage.

Thus, current and future partnerships are crucial for Türkiye's defense industry development, with cooperation among Turkic World countries likely enhancing Türkiye and Central Asian defense networks.

Türkiye's Defense Industry Evolution: From Embargoes to Global Leadership

Within this political conjuncture, Türkiye's defense industry sector continues its development process amidst many challenges. We can divide the development process of Türkiye, into three periods: First period the establishment of domestic defense industry companies in the 1970s-1990s, second period: Privatization and international partnerships in the 1990s-2000s, third period: Strengthening of domestic production from 2005-2023. The Cyprus Peace Operation in 1973 is considered a turning point in Türkiye's political and military history. This is because, starting from 1974, the arms import embargoes imposed on Türkiye by many Western countries, including the United States, prompted Ankara to place greater emphasis on the development of its domestic defense industry. Consequently, Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAŞ) and Aselsan, established in 1973, Havelsan, established in 1982, and the Machinery and Chemical Industry Corporation (MKE), which has been in production since 1950, became the main pioneering companies with the acceleration of the modernization process. By the 1990s, modernization and maintenance of aircraft and tanks were being carried out through international partnerships and programs. This process continued into the early 2000s until 2004.

In 2004, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) decided at the Defense Industry Executive Committee to cancel the tenders for the purchase of tanks, helicopters, and UAVs from abroad, opting instead to meet the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces with national means. This decision provided more opportunities for the creation of new projects and the development of domestic companies. In the following years, the fruits of developed cadres

strengthened companies, and increased investments began to show, paving the way for the successes achieved in the last decade. Thus, by 2022, the domesticity rate in defense and assault weapons, vehicles, and equipment equipped with the latest modern technologies has reached 80% (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023).

The achievements of Türkiye's defense industry, whether we look at them on a project basis or by dividing them into land, air, and sea categories, are evident in various platforms. In the air, we see the T129 ATAK attack helicopter, Anka UAV, Hürkuş training aircraft, Kızıl Elma unmanned combat aircraft, and the national fighter jet "Kaan"; on land, the modern main battle tank Altay, mine-resistant ambush-protected personnel carrier BMC Kirpi, 6x6 armored personnel carrier TULPAR, and the medium-weight class tank Kaplan MT, along with the Siper air defense system. At sea, Milgem and Ada class corvettes, TCG Anadolu, and the ARES 150 HERCULES offshore patrol vessel stand out.

These and many other weapons, vehicles, and equipment that have been completed and put into use not only meet the needs of the Turkish air, sea, and land forces within the framework of domestic capabilities but are also exported to more than 170 countries worldwide. Among these countries, the Turkic Republics, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan, show the most interest in the products of the Turkish defense industry (Savunma sanayist.com, 2023; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023).

If we express this extensive export network in figures, in 2022 the defense industry's export figure exceeded 4.4 billion dollars, an increase of 36.9%, thus surpassing the 4 billion export target. The Bayraktar company took the top spot with exports of 1.1 billion dollars, while UAV exports constituted almost a quarter of the total export volume, holding the largest share. In terms of profitability rates, missile systems lead with an increase of 1.8 times (Savunma sanayist.com, 2023).

The success of Türkiye's defense industry companies allows them to rank high in international listings. In the top 100 defense companies list organized annually by Defense News, five Turkish companies were included in 2019, and this number rose to seven in 2020. As for the top company on the list, American Lockheed Martin has maintained its leadership as in the previous year. Similarly, the clear dominance of the USA with 45 companies within the top 100 is noteworthy. The defense industries have also been affected by COVID-19,

which has impacted the entire global economy and developments. Therefore, due to the short-term decrease in export volumes, the number of companies dropped to three in 2022. The listing is based on export figures and other data declared by the companies. Many world-renowned companies choose not to participate in this list. For example, in Türkiye, the Bayraktar company opts not to be included in this listing (Defense News, 2023).

Among the main factors in the development of Türkiye's defense industry is the strong financial support for an ecosystem open to development. To express this development process in figures, the number of defense industry companies has increased from 56 to 2,700 since the mid-2000s, with a focus on developing local and national capabilities, and the number of defense industry projects has risen from 62 to 750. The resources allocated for R&D have also increased from 49 million dollars to 2.05 billion dollars in 2022. Thus, the budgets for defense industry projects have grown over the years, reaching 60 billion dollars in 2022 from 5.5 billion dollars, and with ongoing tender projects in 2023, this figure is expected to rise to 75 billion dollars. Especially when we examine the gains made in the last 5 years, we see that the annual turnover has doubled (6.6 billion dollars), exports have grown 2.5 times (1.82 billion dollars), and R&D resources have increased by 65% (1.23 billion) (Sasad, 2023).

All these developments are adding strength to Türkiye's initiatives to conduct an independent and original foreign policy today. Ankara, being in the midst of regional conflict environments, emphasizes the policy of being a "stabilizing" force for ensuring stability and peace within its close geography and carries out relevant foreign policy moves based on this conjuncture. Integrated with this strategy, policies include reinforcing friendship ties with the Turkic Republics at an institutional level through joint structures like KazAselsan, activating "Equal Partnership" initiatives in the African geography, and launching the "New Asia" initiatives with countries on the Asian continent.

To achieve all this, Türkiye needs military, economic, and political power. Various weapons and equipment developed with recent initiatives have demonstrated successful performances in international incidents. The most shining examples are the effective air superiority provided by UAVs and armed UAVs to the side using them in the battlefields of Libya, Syria, and Azerbaijan (İnat and Caner, 2022). These military successes demonstrate Türkiye's military strength, which is one of the main cornerstones of its strategy to be a stabilizing

force. On the other hand, in addition to opening up international investment opportunities to regions that have achieved stability, the entry of Turkish businessmen and their investments into these regions to strengthen economic relations also constitutes another important leg of the stabilizing force policy. While enhancing Ankara's prestige and image in the political arena through both military and economic relations, it paves the way for the third leg, which is political collaborations.

The initiation of all these conditions has solidified Türkiye's position as a regional power, and it has implemented moves in line with its national interests, such as steps taken to reduce conflicts in Syria, trilateral meetings with Iran and Russia, the Astana process, negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, supporting Azerbaijan in the Karabakh war, and backing the central government recognized by the United Nations in Libya. For example, following Türkiye's Peace Spring operation in northern Syria, the purchase of S-400 air defense systems from Russia, and Ankara's support for Baku during the Second Karabakh War, Western countries have imposed various embargoes on Türkiye regarding arms exports and imports (Sputnik, 2023).

Among these countries, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Canada, and Norway can be cited as examples. It can be said that the heaviest sanctions have been applied by the United States. As is known, following Türkiye's decision to purchase S-400 air defense systems from Russia, the United States began to apply sanctions to Türkiye under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (Sputnik, 2023). These restrictions range from sanctions applied to officials of the Presidency of Defense Industries, difficulties in obtaining export licenses from the US, and restrictions on the use of credit from international financial institutions associated with the US. On the other hand, Türkiye has been removed from the F-35 fighter jet project and is unable to receive the aircraft it ordered. Despite these tensions between the US and Türkiye, especially regarding the F-35 issue, it should be noted that collaborations between the two countries continue.

Canada, after Türkiye's Peace Spring operation in 2019, lifted the embargoes it had imposed on Türkiye following high-level bilateral talks with Ankara (Sputnik, 2023). However, during the Second Karabakh War in 2020, following Ankara's export of UAVs and armed UAVs to Baku, Canada decided to reimpose sanctions by stopping the sale of the camera system used in the Bayraktar

TB2 armed UAVs, which was imported from a Canadian defense company, in 2020. Following this development, the CATS camera system developed by Aselsan, which has more advanced features, began to be used in the TB2s shortly thereafter (Sputnik, 2023). These efforts are being further developed, and the cameras for many weapons and equipment needed by the Turkish Armed Forces are now being developed by Aselsan instead of being imported from abroad. According to news reports, various Western defense firms that rely on Türkiye as a main supplier have either been in economic trouble or have gone bankrupt due to the embargoes imposed on Türkiye (Savunma sanayist.com, 2021). Similar obstacles have been introduced by Germany for the Altay tank produced by Türkiye's BMC company. Due to Ankara's Peace Operations in 2019, the German government banned the export of engines to be used in Altay tanks. Following this decision, Türkiye reached an agreement with South Korea for engine supply in October 2021 (Euronews, 2023). However, the ongoing submarine construction process between Germany and Türkiye continues without any embargo. This shows that both the US and Germany, as well as other countries, engage in restrictive actions that do not significantly harm their interests.

In the field of missile production, the consortium with France and Italy, EuroSam, and the SAMP-T air defense systems were suspended in 2019, citing Türkiye's Peace Spring operation as the reason. However, in 2022, following a meeting between the leaders of the three countries—Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi—working groups have reconvened to continue the project. At this point, the acceleration of the development of the capabilities of the domestically produced Siper air defense system towards the end of 2022 also strengthens Türkiye's hand (Savunma sanayist.com, 2023).

As can be seen, the defense industry sector is significantly influenced by political interests, shaping the foreign policies of countries. In the current changing international environment, we can see that the geopolitical security landscape allows for the disruption and violation of established economic, energy, and even military security networks and thoughts. In such an environment, the successes Türkiye has achieved in possessing a deterrent armed force are of great importance. In this direction, developing and deepening defense industry relations among the Turkic Republics will open the doors to a new field for joint collaborations. The member states

within the Organization of Turkic States, which are strengthening the institutionalization phase, will contribute to all parties through cooperation in protecting regional values and balances via joint ventures and projects.

Results and Discussion

This section Therefore, both the Central Asian countries and the member states of the Organization of Turkic States should form their arguments based on their unique ideas in the international arena and reach a consensus in terms of ideas within the concept of friendly countries. Thus, defense-oriented arguments presented as a single body in maintaining regional stability will be used by political authorities to articulate their security visions. This regional common security and stability vision to be created will represent the foreign policy vision, which is the first leg of regional stability, as in the case of Türkiye. The second leg should be the development of defense industries. The third leg should involve steps to strengthen the developing economic and trade relations based on the maintained stability.

Although the argument that there are no friendships between countries on the international stage, only national interests prevail, the Turkic Republics, sharing common origins in terms of language, religion, and history, can benefit from this heritage today by advancing their friendly relations to further levels. This will benefit them both in terms of geo-political balances and in preserving their common historical heritage.

If we were to address the current state of security ties limited to the cooperation among the leading Turkic Republics and countries that can unite under an umbrella like the Organization of Turkic States, one of the most significant initiatives in the defense industry between Kazakhstan and Türkiye is the joint defense and electronics company Kazaselsan, established between Aselsan, a leading Turkish defense industry firm, and Kazakhstan Engineering in 2011. Since its establishment, the company has been producing high-technology security products for the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan. These include communication systems, electro-optic systems, command and control systems, among many other projects.

Among the leading current developments is the agreement signed in May 2022 between Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAS) and Kazakhstan Engineering, based on which Türkiye's Anka UAVs can be produced in Kazakhstan. Thus, Kazakhstan will be the first country outside of

Türkiye to be granted the license and facilities to produce the ANKA (Bicer, 2022). In the same month, Kazakhstan and Türkiye also signed a military intelligence agreement. Moreover, various issues of cooperation, including military training and joint exercises, are being discussed between the defense ministries of the two countries. All these developments and more took place during the official visit of President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to Türkiye on May 10, 2022. During this visit, numerous agreements were signed in the economic and trade fields, elevating the relationship between Kazakhstan and Türkiye to the level of strategic partnership (Akorda, 2022).

The defense relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye have been developing over the years, with Baku gradually reducing its reliance on Soviet infrastructure and Russian arms imports. This gap has been filled with weapons, vehicles, and equipment obtained from various Western countries, including Türkiye (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019). However, the defense industry cooperation between Ankara and Baku developed rapidly after the demonstrated superiority of Turkish-exported UAVs and armed UAVs over Armenian forces equipped with Russian and various Western weapons during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in November 2021 (Kanik and Celik, 2021). Currently, Azerbaijan is one of the leading countries among the Turkic Republics in importing Turkish defense industry products (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023). Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has stated plans to transform the Azerbaijani Armed Forces into a model suitable for the country's conditions, based on the Turkish Armed Forces (TRT Haber, 2021).

Turning to Uzbekistan, in addition to being one of the leading armed forces in the region, the relations between Tashkent and Ankara have been rapidly developing in recent years, influenced by Türkiye's field successes and the cooperation with other significant military powers like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. During the official visit of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Ankara on March 30, 2022, 10 agreements were signed between Ankara and Tashkent during the Second Meeting of the Turkey-Uzbekistan High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council. One of the notable agreements was the signing of a Military Framework Agreement between Türkiye and Uzbekistan. Following this agreement, a Military Cooperation agreement was signed between Türkiye and Uzbekistan on October 26, 2022, institutionalizing the defense industry relations between Ankara and Tashkent and

opening new opportunities and areas of cooperation (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2020).

Regarding Kyrgyzstan, a Military and Military Technical Cooperation Roadmap agreement was signed between Türkiye and Kyrgyzstan in March 2022 (Savunma Sanayii Dergilik, 2022). Various training programs and cooperation opportunities in different fields are currently being discussed between the relevant institutions of the two countries. In October 2022, Kamchybek Tashiev, the Chairman of the National Security State Committee of Kyrgyzstan, visited Türkiye and toured the Baykar company. It is known that Kyrgyzstan has acquired at least three Bayraktar TB2 drones.

When we consider all these developments, a striking point emerges: these initiatives developed shortly after the start of the war between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, which can be seen as a move by Central Asian countries to enhance their defense capabilities and industries rather than mere coincidence of dates. Moreover, the increasing influence of Türkiye, a friendly and brotherly country with proven advanced weapon technologies in Karabakh, Libya, and the Syrian front, also is a strategic power-balancing policy of Turkic Republics rather than a selection by chance. This indicates that the defense industry collaborations among the Turkic Republics can continue with projects and initiatives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Türkiye's defense industry has evolved significantly, transitioning from reliance on imports to achieving global leadership, driven by strategic investments in domestic production and a focus on exporting advanced military technologies, notably UAVs. The industry's growth trajectory can be divided into three key phases: the establishment of foundational defense companies in the 1970s-1990s, a shift towards privatization and international partnerships in the 1990s-2000s, and a substantial emphasis on strengthening domestic production from 2005 to 2023. This progression was catalyzed by the arms import embargoes of the 1970s, notably following the Cyprus Peace Operation, which underscored the critical need for Türkiye to develop its indigenous defense capabilities.

This process has been shaped by strategic partnerships with Central Asian countries, built on a common cultural and historical heritage, which deepened military and technological collaborations. Moreover, such initiatives play an essential role

in advancing regional security and cooperative efforts in the region. Therefore it could be said that by 2022, Türkiye's defense industry not only met internal security requirements but also marked significant export achievements, reinforcing its influence on the international stage alongside with enriching its cooperation with countries of the region.

Türkiye's achievements in defense sector is highlighted by the production and export of a broad range of military equipment, from unmanned aerial vehicles to naval vessels, marking a significant step towards technological self-sufficiency and strategic independence. These gains emphasize Turkey's

role in regional stabilization, utilizing its defense capabilities to deepen economic relationships, enhance political collaborations, and contribute to world peace. The ongoing partnerships with Central Asia and the Turkic world open doors for joint ventures and projects that support Turkey's strategic objectives and regional equilibrium.

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