

# Politics, Industry and Academia: Examining Dynamics of Turkish Defense Industry's Great Leap Forward in the Post- 2002 Era\*

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## Abstract

The successive developments in Turkish defense industry has become a core dominant narrative of the AK Party, led to an increasing interest in opposition parties, industrial and academic circles. While the political parties' election manifestos reveal the role of party politics in shaping defense industry priorities, the general trend shows the rising level of political and societal awareness to meet the goal of localization, nationalization, and strategic autonomy as a part of national security strategy. The changing value of investing into defense industry has not only paved way to a nationalistic discourse but also encouraged the civilian engagement into defense sphere which has long been identified as the space dominated by the presence of military and engineers. This paper emphasizes the need for an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary understanding across various science disciplines to support studies of Turkish defense industry, and further promote the academia to engage more with the policymaking and industry. Besides, it stresses the necessity of developing a comprehensive blueprint to build and maintain a long-lasting collaborative culture and relationship between politics, industry and academia which is crucial to optimize the role and promises of political, military, economic, diplomatic and technological dimensions of national defense industry.

## Keywords

Defense industry, election manifestos, nationalization, localization, strategic autonomy.

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## Introduction

In the post-2002 era (the era beginning after the November 2002 general elections which represents a milestone in Turkish politics following the electoral victory of the AK Party) the national defense industry has attracted more attention in Turkey than ever before by political declarations and growing investment in defense technology development; contributed to a raising interest and awareness in the other parts of the state bureaucracy, opposition parties, academia, media, private sector, and the entire society.

While the AK Party has been much focused on defense industry in its' election manifestos, the major opposition parties (CHP, MHP and IP-unlike the HDP) have also started to reveal their growing awareness about the benefits of investing in the national defense industry and its partnership with academia. There are obviously some reasons for the increased interest in Turkish defense industry and its' collaboration with academia over the past two decades.

First of all, over the past 18 years, Ankara has been coping with growing concerns related to foreign-source dependency for critical defense technologies that have evolved and deepened since the Cold War, mainly because of the U.S arms embargo on Turkey between the years 1975-1978. A number of factors have unearthed the need for optimizing the national defense ability including the destructive results of the experiences collected while combatting historical threats; the geopolitical turmoil caused by regional escalations, conflicts, and civil wars; asymmetric threats contained within cyberspace; and the presence of state and non-state actors. Thus, the divergences between Turkey and its' allies on regional matters brought the desire and motivation to achieve *self-sufficiency* in defense.

Second, owing to geopolitical risks and opportunities, reinforcing *military deterrence* at the regional level has become a key priority for Turkey (Yeşiltaş 2020). In order to increase military deterrence and influence in the region, Ankara has understood the significance of realizing the objectives of *localization*, *nationalization* and *strategic autonomy* that would help to solve the complex issues stemming from heavy reliance on foreign imports and foreign clients.

Third, the successful developments in the national defense industry

has been considered as a means of creating favorable circumstances that increase the chances of success or effectiveness in diplomacy. In other words, advantageous position in defense has seen as a diplomatic tool and an international prestige to increase *strategic flexibility* in foreign policy, as seen in the cross-border operations conducted since 2016.

Fourth, as defense industry is a significant driver of economic development, Ankara has appreciated the advantages of investing in Turkish defense industry in terms of the economic benefits such as sustaining the success in defense industry by finding new trade partners and increasing export rates.

Fifth, Turkey's quest for being listed as one of the most technologically developed countries of the world required Ankara to increase its investments in defense industry, meanwhile the continuing growth in global defense market expected to bring more opportunities. In this regard, there is a remarkable support given to the state-owned defense contractors and major Turkish arms manufacturers in the last two decades. On the other side, Turkey's goal to become a high technology producer and exporter country paved the way to comprehend the great value of industry and academia partnership.

Lastly, the advances in technology and the continuing growth in national defense industry has become a major issue in domestic politics as seen in the political parties' election manifestos. While AK Party is the one extensively making use of the success story of defense industry as its own striking victory, the major opposition parties do also mention their rising interest in defense industry depending on various reasons.

From this viewpoint, the main purpose of this paper is to examine the dynamics of Turkey's great leap forward in the defense industry by focusing on political parties' interest towards defense sector and its reflections and implications in industry and academia.

By questioning the long-neglected opportunities and advantages of a collaborative relationship between three parties, the paper compares the role of party politics in shaping Turkish defense industry priorities, while focusing on AK Party's defense industry approach triggering both the populist narrative among the policymakers, as well as the increasing interest in opposition parties, industrial and academic circles. To this end, the paper

puts emphasis on political parties' election manifestos (from 2002 to 2018) in order to understand the change, trends, and the main narrative regarding Turkish defense industry. Besides, the paper explores the new defense initiatives launched by the AK Party to reach strategic autonomy and the defense industry related academic products within last decades. Though the paper recommends strengthening the relationship between politics, and industry, and academia for the mutual benefits of cooperation that will bring greater advantages to develop skills and expertise in industry and academia; it must be underlined that the amount of cooperation between parties must have limits in order to avoid *politicization*. Lastly, this paper aims at contributing to the literature by analyzing defense narrative as well as the promises and strategies of Turkish political parties toward defense industry, and the collaborative relationship between politics, industry and academia from a macro perspective. In fact, the majority of the studies published after 2002 ignored opposition parties' perspectives on Turkish defense industry as well as undermined the importance of Turkish academia's interest for defense studies, especially in the field of national defense industry.

The paper is divided into three major parts. The first section is primarily focusing on AK Party's changing defense discourse in election manifestos, and the success story of the national defense industry regarding the developments taking place within the last two decades. The second section deals with the opposition parties, aiming to understand their attitudes toward the defense industry and its' collaboration with academia. In this regard, the section discusses the changing significance given by the political parties' to national defense industry; meanwhile examining their strategic goals and future promises in the election manifestos in order to sustain the success story of defense industry dedicated to AK Party era. The third section assesses how political parties' rising interest and the successive developments in national defense industry influenced the academic studies. To assess the reflection in Turkish academia, the section analyzes the changing trend in academic studies on Turkish defense industry by referring the number and variety of PhD and Masters theses increased in the post-2002 era. Besides, the section mentions the current government policies to strengthen the relationship between industry and academia.

## **AK Party's Changing Discourse on Turkish Defense Industry**

Even though it is difficult to argue that there has been a rich variety of sectorial and institutional approaches towards the Turkish defense industry, when viewed from a historical perspective, the AK Party era shows a distinct stance in this regard for a number of reasons.

Firstly, Ankara embarked on an ambitious goal of moving from a medium-scale power to a *center* – or, in a more assertive sense, a *global power* – which has necessitated that Turkey overcome its *self-sufficiency* problem. Thus, this situation has primarily required Turkey to develop a model that can obtain its strategic autonomy in the defense domain urgently. Besides, the distribution, diversification, and changes needed by the TAF have necessitated the urgent adaptation of a new approach by the Turkish defense industry.

Secondly, this model has been further necessitated by Turkey's fight against terrorism since the 2000's and by regionally-scaled threats caused by an environment characterized by mistrust – which has resulted from the Arab Spring and the periphery that identifies with this environment of mistrust and instability.

Thirdly, since the beginning of the 2000's, Turkey has faced a wide range of issues that obliged the country to reconsider its NATO-centric security and defense strategies and policies, due to shifting perceptions of domestic, regional, and global security threats. For instance, in the early 2000's, Turkey suffered because of the significant delays both in the AWACS and T-70 Turkish Utility Helicopter projects. Each negative incident since the AK Party came to power has revealed that nationalization and localization processes of the Turkish defense industry should have happened sooner. These incidents have highlighted how Turkey's dependency on NATO, European allies, and especially the U.S. has created serious security gaps and weaknesses. As a matter of fact, the defense industry initiative towards domestic production and national products became a profound policy through the political and economic confidence that was secured in the 2007 elections. To this purpose, the AK Party has abandoned both foreign provider firms and one-way institutional and political dependency on NATO. In this regard, the Defense Industry Executive Committee (SSIK)'s

decision represents a turning point for the Turkish defense industry. In May 2004, the SSIK adopted important decisions under the chairmanship of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan and cancelled projects worth \$20.5 billion, including a new generation of main battle tanks, attack helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles. This cancellation was the first indicator of a shift in strategy away from co-production under license towards local design and production (Milliyet 2004).

Fourthly, the fast and stable growth trends in the economy have also contributed to the advancement of this industry during the AK Party era, unlike during the previous eras.

### **First manifesto: loyalty to western defense architecture**

It is possible to argue that the AK Party has put a greater emphasis on revisions and reforms concerning national defense policy, as well as on the autonomization of the defense industry than previous governments. In the first Election Declaration, published in 2002, the AK Party's national security and defense perception appeared to be a vague continuation of Turkey's conventional security and defense policies emphasizing confidence in the presence of the regional alliances provided by the EU and NATO. This framework stressed that Turkey, besides contributing to NATO, would make the necessary effort to be part of the European Security and Defense Identity.

The 2002 Declaration did not dismiss Turkish-American relations, which were deemed a strategic partnership during the Clinton and Bush administrations; rather ensured the continuation of the mostly defense-oriented cooperation with the U.S., as well as a widening of cooperation in economics, investment, science, and technology (AK Parti 2002: 90).

### **2007 Declaration: revealing the increasing awareness**

The defense mentality outlined in the 2007 Declaration displayed major differences concerning the minimum cyclical changes in the economic and political conditions of 2002. The "Foreign Policy and Defense" title can be pointed out as the most profound indication of the 2007 Declaration, which was more extensive and detailed than the previous. This title signaled that the defense domain would have a greater focus in the AK Party's agenda. Moreover, the 2007 Declaration made it obvious that in the defense domain

the AK Party's had adopted an "integration model" as part of the "2023 Goals." (AK Parti 2007: 32-33).

Apart from this, the necessity of improving the capacities and means to prevent and diffuse international threats, to track technological changes in the world, and to reform the defense industry on the basis of the TAF's primary needs and objectives were also stated.

It is worth noting that the AK Party's economic reform programs and financial policies, which were implemented after the 2002 Elections, have rapidly improved the dire economic situation that emerged in 2001, one of the worst eras of the Turkish economy. The AK Party's improvement initiatives regarding the economic crisis in 2001 have since resulted in positive outcomes in a short span of time: beginning in 2003, the Turkish economy, owing to favorable regional and global circumstances, has stabilized and entered a promising growth process. Factors such as low inflation rates from 2002–2007, increased production and export rates, and high growth volumes have provided Turkey with political and economic stability and increased confidence. As the AK Party overcame the economic challenges left from previous administrations, it pushed Turkey beyond becoming a self-sufficient state towards having a competitive stance in international markets. The promising economic development trends and political stability in 2007 led the AK Party to declare that it would sustain its "national defense policy," which prioritized the improvement of the national defense industry as well as R&D efforts. It can be argued that the AK Party's efforts to create opportunities and resources to motivate domestic industry have played an important role in bringing autonomy to the Turkish defense industry.

In the 2007 Declaration, the increase in Turkish industry's participation and production was portrayed as a source of pride. As an example of this well-deserved pride, the declaration stated that the ratio of the TAF's domestically to internationally sourced needs had risen to 50 percent in 2007 from 25 percent in 2002. Moreover, the defense industry had increased its international market share; the value of exported military assault boats, ships, weapons, and other defense equipment as well as the command and control and electronic warfare systems had reached 320 million dollars. On the other hand, the AK Party has conducted many projects modernizing the

TAF that require advanced technology, engineering, and design. Among these projects that bear the most significance were the Modern Tank Enhancement, Attack, Tactic/Exploration Helicopter, National War Ship, Jet Training Plane, Combat Drone, and New Generation Warplane (AK Parti 2007: 250-251).

Another important move was the activation of a satellite and space policy leading to the creation of Turkish satellites. For instance, the “National Defense Research” and “National Space Research” programs have been designed and implemented. As seen in the 2007 Declaration, the AK Party’s increased transparency regarding Turkey’s national defense policies was an outcome of increased political and economic harmony (AK Parti 2007: 209, 212).

### **2011 Elections: a milestone in valuing defense industry narrative**

One could argue that the 2011 General Election Declaration represents a milestone: despite the Global Finance Crisis in 2008 and the decline in the growth rate of the Turkish economy in 2009, the AK Party showed a determined attitude towards the completion of defense projects. Turkish defense policy, which was built on the domestic production and national production standards, gained a different momentum through this declaration. The determined attitude of the AK Party administration has pushed the country towards a *partner* and *vendor* oriented position in the global defense arena. The two defense-related titles, “Defense Industry” and “Defense” under the “Macro Economy” and “Leader Country” sections in the 2011 Declaration demonstrated the AK Party’s willingness to advance the Turkish defense industry. The national defense strategy has gained more leverage through economic and political means in Turkey.

The 2011 Declaration drew attention to the notable progress in the defense industry throughout the AK Party era and expressed the fact that Turkey has begun to produce most of its defense equipment within its borders. The declaration also mentioned that the R&D efforts and innovation-oriented projects with unique military equipment and systems have made significant contributions to the Turkish defense domain. As its external dependency declined, the performance and potential of the defense industry increased. Moreover, the favored practice of domestic production has caused a

significant increase in defense exports, bringing economic gains to the country. The output of the defense sector increased from 247 million dollars in 2002 to 1 billion dollars in 2010. Along with these developments, during the AK Party era, 24 million dollars were spent within the framework of TAF modernization projects, and 90 percent of which were realized through the participation of the domestic industry. Meanwhile, direct foreign procurement declined by 10 percent (AK Parti 2011: 55, 56, 84).

The 2011 Declaration represents a crucial turning point regarding the growing confidence of the Turkish defense sector and the transformation of defense perception. In keeping with this renewed sense of pride and confidence in Turkey's military self-sufficiency, the AK Party also indicated in its 2011 Declaration that by 2023 Turkey would design and produce its own rifles, field guns, tanks, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and satellites.

Examining the 2015 Declaration, one can see that the AK Party has managed to realize the majority of these goals. Moreover, it must be highlighted that the value of defense and aviation exports increased to 1.4 billion dollars in 2013 from 331 million dollars in 2003. The rate of domestic production in the defense industry has increased more than 55 percent from 24 percent since the AK Party came to power (AK Parti 2015: 252).

In parallel with the previous manifestos, AK Party's latest election bulletin published in 2018 also gave a wide coverage to defense industry. Within the 360 pages long manifesto, AK Party provided a comprehensive place to technology, R&D, digitalization, defense, aerospace and space industry (AK Parti 2018: 196, 218).

Briefly, over the past 18 years the Turkish defense industry has managed to accomplish many defense projects in every domain of warfare and in weapon and missile systems. For instance, since 2003 Turkey has completed fourteen military ship programs and the number of Turkish shipyards has increased from 37 to 80. Turkey has also become capable of domestically producing between 70 and 80 percent of all naval needs (compared to an only 20 percent self-sufficient capability a decade ago) and is listed as one of the top 10 shipbuilding nations globally (Bekdil 2018). It should be stated that the SSB recently released Turkish defense industry's product catalogue

which contains the most critical and modern projects representing the current state of an inventory of approximately 225 companies and more than 1,500 products. As explained by the SSB, this digital document was prepared as a living index; it will be enriched with companies active in the defense industry and also will be updated regularly. Certainly, this catalogue is a significant step toward informing key decision makers in governments and industries as well as an essential resource for the studies of academic researchers (SSB 2019).

These improvements were not solely based on AK Party's election promises but were also supported by the enrichment of the defense infrastructure, changing the mindset regarding the defense industry and the trend towards economic stability. The changing mindset took place not only in security and defense bureaucracy but also in academia, media and private sector in general. Highlighting that Turkish defense industry does not serve only for military purposes but also positions as a field of opportunity with regard to the improvement of domestic production and R&D efforts in science and technology. As a striking success in technological production capabilities, Turkish defense corporations have begun to export armored vehicles, air defense systems, rocket systems, simulators, coast guard ships, and military communication systems, as well as command and control systems and software. While the total sale of the Turkish defense industry in 2006 was 1.86 billion dollars, this number increased greatly and reached to 6.69 billion dollars in 2017. Additionally, foreign sales reached 2.03 billion dollars in 2018, with a 20 percent increase over 2017 sales. As well, the total number of defense product projects increased to 667 in 2018 with a total contract price of 60 billion dollars (SSB 2019: 10).

Looking at the sector from a different standpoint, the distance that the Turkish defense industry has made since the 2000's is increasingly disturbing to the largest arms exporters who have a say at the regional and global scale. As the global defense market is one of the most important economic inputs for arms exporting countries, the defense market should not only be regarded as an arms trade with a reductionist approach. On the contrary, countries which have reached the competitive level in the market do not only invest in the defense field; moreover, they are gaining their edge over other areas such as education, labor force, employment, the wider sectoral investment

infrastructure, scientific and technological developments, expanding the range of dual-use products. In this sense, Turkish defense industry turns into a long-term economic gain rather than a dead investment. Turkey's position showed remarkable growth; Turkish arms exports increased by a substantial 170 percent during the 2014-18 period. As a result, Turkey was among the top 25 largest exporters of major arms between 2014-2018; Turkey ranked 14th in the list with three main clients which are respectively UAE, Turkmenistan and Saudi Arabia with regards to the share of Turkey's total exports (SIPRI 2019).

In light of its leaning towards international markets, currently the Turkish defense industry exports to countries such as United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Algeria, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia and Ukraine. As a striking example, U.S. arms exports to Pakistan fell by 81 percent between 2009-13 and 2014-18 owing to Pakistan's choice of other suppliers such as ordering 4 frigates and 30 combat helicopters from Turkey in 2018 (SIPRI 2019). As a conclusion, AK Party's defense rhetoric has become a more popular and resourceful instrument after the implementation of the projects promised in the election declarations.

### **The Significance Given to National Defense Industry by Opposition Parties**

The opposition parties represented in the Turkish Parliament did also mention defense industry in their election bulletins. However, the significance given to the development of Turkish defense industry differed greatly across the opposition parties which are namely the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Republican People's Party (CHP), Good Party (IP), and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

### **CHP's promise of Turkish technology clusters lacks blueprint**

To begin with the main opposition party, at the same time the oldest party in Turkey formed in 1923, CHP in its 2002 manifesto promised to provide various government incentives for different industrial sectors such as information technologies, software, biotechnology, genetics, space, new materials and defense industry. Though the 2002 manifesto did only mention "defense industry" once, it stated the significance of building Turkey's own silicon valleys named as Turkish Technology Clusters. In this respect, the

2002 manifesto highlighted the target to meet the equipment and supply requirements of the national defense by the resources and capabilities of the national industry (CHP 2002). Similarly, CHP promised to use more national industrial resources in order to meet the equipment and supply needs to provide for national defense in its' 2007 election manifesto (CHP 2007: 30).

While its 2009 manifesto did not explicitly mention defense industry, it put an emphasis on industry and university collaboration, technology transfer, R&D activities, and techno-park facilities (CHP 2009: 28). In its 2011 manifesto, CHP assured support for public investment, as well as pledged to strengthen the public-private sector partnerships in the field of generic technologies and the defense industry (CHP 2011: 27).

Likewise, in its 2015 declaration, CHP promised to develop Ankara by supporting R&D and innovative policies, promoting software development capabilities for the defense industry and strengthening the collaboration and partnership between techno-cities. Although there was only one sentence related to the Turkish defense industry, the document specified the role and significance of industrialization in general, meanwhile highlighting the great value of information, technology and informatics. Besides, it stressed the necessity of improving electronics, genetics, software, nanotechnology, space, and aviation capabilities with respect to industrialization policies (CHP 2015: 61, 162).

In its 2018 manifesto there were no remarks on the defense industry; on the other hand, it necessarily touched upon new industrial development plans. In this sense, the document pointed out the importance of encouraging industry-university collaboration, transforming Turkey into a technology base by building new STEM high schools, raising overall R&D investment to 3 percent of GDP, as well as defining CHP's objective to increase the share (60 percent target) of high-tech goods and services in the Turkish manufacturing industry. However, the document mostly mentioned the industrial sectors such as agriculture, automotive, furniture, machinery, petrochemical and textile (CHP 2018: 60, 63, 88, 101).

Again, in its 2019 manifesto, there was no statement about defense industry or industrial policies; the only technology related issue was to build

innovative and smart cities by respecting and protecting nature and Turkey's cultural heritage (CHP 2019: 7).

As seen in the election manifestos published from 2002 to 2019, CHP has always been aware of the importance of investing in technology and industry. However, the election manifestos do not lay out a clear definition of CHP's blueprint for building a globally competitive Turkish defense industry.

### **MHP's ongoing nationalist discourse and integration into AK Party's defense narrative after People's Alliance**

The second opposition party is MHP, also the second-oldest party after CHP, which was established in 1969 with a strong nationalist ideology shaped by right-left clashes taking place in Turkey during the Cold War. MHP, formed an electoral alliance called the "People's Alliance" with AK Party for the June 24 presidential and parliamentary elections in 2018. This alliance continued during the 2019 local elections as well. Since MHP employs a rhetoric of putting "the state first"; MHP's traditional policy approach based on conservative and nationalist values is likely to remain a central feature which is clearly visible in most of its electoral manifestos. From this perspective, *nationalization* and *localization* efforts to develop the Turkish defense industry can be seen as a prerequisite for MHP's "strong state" objective.

In this regard, one of the fundamental promises of the 2011 manifesto is to make the Turkish defense industry an important technology producer, instead of being a sector developing based on technology-transfer. Again, it stresses the benefits of investing in the Turkish defense industry; not only to meet security needs, but also for economic gains. According to MHP's manifesto; the government policy on procurement will be largely based on R&D activities in order to improve the Turkey's ability to generate scientific, technological, and innovative knowledge and translate it into new products. On the other hand, MHP pledges providing an integrated defense industrial cooperation, supporting R&D and production activities for various defense technologies such as materials science technologies; electronic warfare; aviation, space, and satellite technologies; network-centric warfare; unmanned aerial vehicles; and guidance, navigation, and control technologies. The 2011 manifesto also underscores the necessity of

strengthening information security, supporting both domestically-developed software systems and domestically-developed satellites, promoting the national defense industry to produce them with the aim of both meeting the needs of TAF and benefiting from the advantages of exporting goods and services to regional and global markets (MHP 2011: 94-95, 181).

MHP's 2015 manifesto expresses similar ideas and promises regarding security and defense issues. Compared to its previous manifesto, the following issues are addressed as principal purposes: increasing R&D programs, promoting unique designs and domestically-developed products for national solutions to meet the demands of TAF, encouraging local firms and private entrepreneurs to invest in arms production, bringing national defense industry much to the fore to be recognized as a strategic sector, and establishing a national space agency. In addition to aforementioned subjects, interestingly, the 2015 manifesto points out the necessity of conducting R&D activities to produce air and missile systems both for offensive and defensive purposes. On the other hand, MHP's 2015 manifesto pledges to decrease foreign-dependency in logistic needs, restructure the allocation of military and defense spending in accordance with the policy of preferring mostly the local content in procurement, enhancing the decision making procedures and processes for procurement requirements, establish a more coordinative and collaborative mechanism among relevant institutions and organizations (MHP 2015: 127, 133, 235-236).

The electoral manifestos of November 2015 (MHP 2015: 136, 141, 246-47) and June 2018 (MHP 2018: 85, 111-12) elections are introducing almost the same ideas and sentences on Turkish defense industry, share-alike content with previously published bulletins.

On the other side, in almost every electoral manifesto MHP showed a great will to increase deterrence and defense capabilities of TAF by means of military modernization and force restructuring; mentioning the vital necessity of adapting to the new era which requires more agile combat employment, better manpower utilization, technological superiority and more functional mechanism. In this respect, MHP's manifestos are full of with remarks related to the quality of education system, abilities in technology, adapting smart approaches, prioritizing artificial intelligence programs, localization and nationalization in various sectors.

## **IP's roadmap for transforming Turkey into a high-tech country**

Despite its establishment in 2017 (the result of a split that occurred following a power struggle within MHP), the newly formed İYİ Party (IP) has succeeded in entering Parliament with the help of forming an alliance with CHP for the 2018 presidential and parliamentary elections which continued into the March 2019 local elections. To date, there is only one electoral manifesto penned by IP, released on May 2018, which apparently shows IP's interest in defense industry and technologies. In fact, in the 2018 Declaration of IP, the "defense industry" was mentioned only one time in a sentence (Article 259) which introduces a campaign promise to reduce the foreign-source dependency for strategic and critical defense technologies.

In accordance with this purpose, IP promises to employ a new program to support the production of strategic defense technologies, R&D activities, and local firms to become globally competitive in the defense industry. However, issues related to defense and critical technologies are widely covered under the headings titled "Information Economics", "R&D", "Turkish Stars Program", "Informatics and Communication Technologies", "Brain Drain" and "Entrepreneurship". Within this framework, the 2018 manifesto places emphasis on supporting R&D activities for aviation and space projects, establishing new technology offices, and building a bridge between companies located in technology development zones and firms operating within organized industrial zones. The manifesto also features development in science and technology by supporting R&D and innovation projects, artificial intelligence and cyber technologies, integration into the global ecosystem, partnership and collaboration with technology producers based in various countries such as U.S., Germany, China or Britain, creating new financial resources for long-term credits, promoting R&D and patent studies both in private and public institutions such as TÜBİTAK, TÜBA, university labs and technology centers. Additionally, the manifesto pledges to transform İstanbul into an "internet hub" where investors from all over the world will come Turkey to invest in information and communication technologies. Moreover, IP declared its objective to establish "cyber security technology networks" in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir, investing more in human capital, applying strategies for more efficient and effective human resources management, opening new undergraduate and graduate programs focusing on key future technology trends.

Apart from its mentioned goals and promises, IP proclaims its' intention to revise and reform the institutional structure and the bureaucratic mechanism by establishing a better system for regulation and supervision, giving support to 'projects' rather than the 'people', preventing waste of resources, and eliminating TUBİTAK's alleged power of tutelage over science and R&D activities. As a last example, the 2018 manifesto promises to transform Turkey into a country which is not known for its "brain drain", but rather acquire the reputation of great "brain power". Accordingly, the 2018 manifesto suggests making Turkey an "attraction center" which will function as a destination for scientists, highly competent foreign researchers, international students, and faculty members (İYİ Parti 2018: 96-100).

### **HDP's promise to decline defense spending to undermine the industrial process**

The fourth opposition party is HDP, founded in 2012 as the last successor to a long list of parties HEP, ÖZEP, ÖZDEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP and latter BDP which were all banned from politics for following a separatist agenda and having links with PKK, recognized as a terrorist organization internationally. HDP's co-leaders Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ and several other MPs have been under arrest since 2016 because of terror-related charges (Radikal 2009, BBC Türkçe 2018).

Given the fact that HDP has long been alleged of promoting a "separatist agenda" and disseminating "terrorist propaganda", it would be irrational to expect its electoral manifesto to reveal an intention to spend more on the development of national defense industry. As already expected, HDP's 2015 declaration does not refer to any approach to develop the Turkish defense industry or invest in future technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, or software development.

On the contrary, the only sentence related to security and defense is HDP's commitment to reduce security and defense spending and making all the military and defense expenditures available for public scrutiny. Furthermore, HDP brought forward the idea of including the "Defense Industry Support Fund" into the budget and then building transparency and accountability in the budget. Besides, HDP proposed the cancellation of funding with covert appropriation (HDP 2015: 30).

In 2018 manifesto, HDP does not define any policies or strategies to be adopted for defense and critical technologies. The only promise related to technology is reducing the foreign dependency over stock farming technology (HDP 2018). HDP's 2019 manifesto does not cover any subject related to the defense industry, critical technologies, or the process of industrialization in general. Throughout the document, a few times the local economy is mentioned as an area to be strengthened with general expressions; there is no objective or promise described specifically to contribute to national economic and technological development (HDP 2019).

### **The role of party politics in shaping Turkish defense industry priorities**

In summation, the Turkish defense industry has always been a top priority for AK Party, an issue connecting foreign and domestic policies. To this end, AK Party set the goal of reaching technological superiority, not only for enhancing self-defense capability but also to gain the ability to project power for *regional deterrence*. After the realization of some indigenous development projects, AK Party's security and defense discourse has gained a more populist ground lauding the successes in terms of *localization* and *nationalization*.

In a similar manner, MHP enjoyed and appreciated the progress in the Turkish defense industry, often highlighting its positive reflections on "military power" and "strong state", while holding joint rallies with AK Party. Nevertheless, looking at MHP's former election bulletins, it is clear that MHP has always been aware of the value of having a well-developed national defense industry. This awareness rests upon one of MHP's basic aims to protect and promote the national interests and goals through the evaluation and integration of all instruments of national power towards achieving an ideal of Turkey as a leader country. When examining CHP, though investing in critical technologies is considered to be key to improving Turkey's defense capabilities, CHP's election manifestos often refer to industrialization policies from a broader economic perspective, rather than focusing on the defense industry in detail.

On the other hand, IP has published only one election manifesto which apparently reveals the significance given to supporting the national defense industry and investing more in future technologies. Despite being a new

party, IP was established by an experienced cadre who are well-known in Turkey's political scene, such as its' Chairwoman Meral Akşener served as the Minister of the Interior and Deputy Chair Ümit Özdağ is a professor famous for his books on security and defense. By taking into account of IP's political background and founders' experience, it might be said that the security and defense industry will remain as a priority in the future. The same suggestion seems to be valid for HDP's party agenda, because of its' political background and the cadres (accused of terrorism-related activities), it would be irrational to expect HDP to support the allocation of greater expenditures to defense.

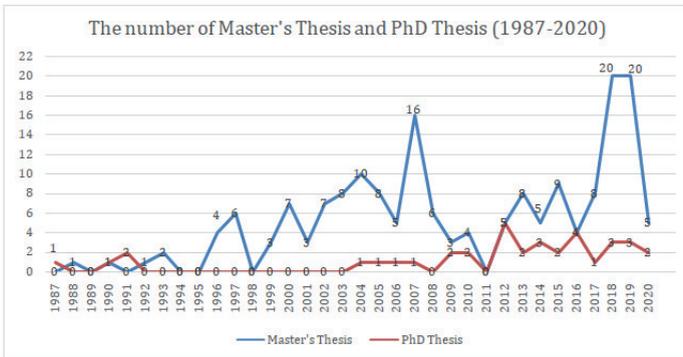
### **Academic Community's Interest in Studying Turkish Defense Industry and the Need for a Blueprint to Build A Collaborative Culture with Academia**

Many academic disciplines can make considerable contributions to Turkish defense industry research -varying from aeronautical, materials, and software engineering to law, history, sociology, psychology, education, and media studies. However, it can be said that the general attitude towards defense studies in Turkey has long maintained the technical approach rather than offering a comprehensive perspective.

Research on the Turkish defense industry is largely ignored by Social and Behavioral Sciences (generally studied by the Department of Economics, or Business Management, while largely ignored by International Relations and Law), because "defense" is widely considered to be an essential component of technology-related studies and engineering disciplines are regarded as the academic profession and workforce of the defense industry. In addition to technical reasoning; 'secrecy attaching' to defense studies has prevented students from integrating the defense industry into their field of interest. The fact remains that many critical research topics have neglected to examine Turkey's changing defense discourse as a domestic and foreign policy instrument, Turkey's military-industrial complex in different aspects, or the politics of military spending in Turkey.

To give an example, law departments in the universities seem very slow to engage in defense industry law. Whereas, defense industry law is a vital necessity in order to protect and promote the interests of Turkish defense industry. Academic research on offset obligations, export licenses,

technology transfer agreements, intellectual and industrial property rights, international trade controls, acquisition clearance, financial guarantees, warranties, material and moral indemnities are important legal issues to be examined. For instance, there are only eight PhD thesis entitled “space” in social sciences and two PhD thesis related to space law. The first one was written by Turgut Tarhanlı examining the remote sensing of natural resources through satellites in accordance with international law (Tarhanlı 1990). However, this thesis was accepted in 1990, so quite old with respect to the radically changing world of disruptive space technologies. The second thesis belongs to Selahattin İbas which was the first thesis focusing on the “military uses of space and disarmament”, published in 2007, again quite old for the rapid changes in this new era (İbas 2007). Since the 2000’s, there are only 10 published master’s theses containing “space law” in their title, three of which were newly approved, in 2019.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 1.** *The number of Master's and PhD Thesis (1987-2020).*

Theses prepared between 1987-2020 with the title of “defense industry” were searched at the Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education and 216 results have been found. Since the doctoral and master theses are multi-disciplined theses, a sharp distinction between “theses on science included” and “theses on social sciences” could not be made. In fact, since theses are multi-disciplined, it is very difficult to classify theses in terms of subject. However, although the theses written are multi-disciplined theses, 24 theses can be evaluated within the scope of Science, mainly in engineering field. Except 24 theses, 192 theses are multi-disciplined theses and can be considered as theses written in the Social Sciences field.

It is seen that most of the 216 theses written between 1987-2020 have been prepared within the Turkish Military Academy. 33 theses were prepared under the Turkish Military Academy and 9 theses were prepared under the Commandant of the Turkish War Colleges, and 23 theses were prepared within the Gazi University and 20 theses were prepared within the Middle East Technical University. 36 of the theses written were prepared in English and 180 were prepared in Turkish. 37 of all theses were prepared as a doctoral thesis and 179 of all theses were prepared as master's theses. It is seen that the number of theses prepared has increased since 2000.

Doctoral theses reached their maximum point in 2012. In 2018 and 2019, master's theses reached their maximum point. As the duration of doctorate is longer than the duration of master's degree, it is seen that the trend of increasing the number of master's theses is higher. Briefly, theses written in the field of defense industry have been increasing since 2000.

Despite relatively little attention paid to studying Turkish defense industry, since one of AK Party's major discourses relies on progress in the national defense industry, an intense interest has emerged in the society. For instance, "Teknofest" represents a new milestone to realize a "national technology movement", launched for the first time in 2017. Despite being newly established, Teknofest 2019 was visited by some 1.72 million; received 50 thousand applications from 17,373 teams from 81 provinces and 122 countries and has become the largest aviation festival in the world by number of visitors (Yıldırım and Yanık 2019). Since Teknofest inspires students from elementary schools to post-graduate programs to participate in its competitions, the festival offers a critical opportunity for encouraging academic research, promoting intellectual property, and revealing the strategic priority of investing in people for science, technology, and skills development.

When viewed through a bureaucratic lens, the SSM (renamed as Presidency of Defence Industries, SSB in 2018) has been playing an increasingly crucial role for strengthening the bond between industry, academia and policymakers. For instance, SSB's Industrial Strategy Plan (2018-2022) points out the necessity and significance of collaboration and synergy among defense companies, small and medium sized enterprises, universities and research centers for Turkish defense industry's increasing competitiveness

and sustainability. For example, it is mentioned that a cybersecurity academy will be established and an inventory of local firms and academicians in the field of cyber security will be prepared (SSB 2019: 66, 68).

Again, one of the important outputs of SSB activities is the “Researcher Training Program for Defence Industry” (SAYP) which was initially carried into effect through the cooperation protocols signed between METU, SSM, ASELSAN, ROKETSAN and TAI in 2011. As of 2018, 31 universities and 35 defense industry companies are included within the coverage of SAYP (SSB 2019).

Likewise, SSB launched a new program in order to inspire Turkish academia to pay more attention to the study of national defense industry, by providing an excellent opportunity for cross-organizational knowledge sharing and a collaborative platform for strengthening partnerships between defense industry, policymakers, and academia. In this regard, SSB launched “Defense Literacy Program” that focuses on defense policies and national defense industry, by encouraging multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to promote critical thinking skills among learners (SSB 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Regardless of the fact that Turkish defense industry has risen in the AK Party Era, there are plenty of security and defense issues remaining to be dealt with. In the simplest term, despite the steps taken towards renewing the mindset of military bureaucracy (and diminishing the military dominance in the decision-making bureaucracy) in security and defense policies, the defense reform which merges all the actors of the ecosystem has not been effectively put into action as it was foreseen. Considering the aforementioned problems and potential pitfalls throughout the article, some findings and recommendations might be outlined as follows:

First and most importantly, Turkey must form a “grand strategy” which is the most challenging form of planning of a long-term strategic objective of the country. Civil-military relations should be redefined in the political mechanism while the new system must re-determine the duties and tasks of civil and military actors in the security and defense domains. This grand strategy is a crucial necessity for Turkey in order to prevent cancellations and delays in completion of defense projects which stems from the changing

mindset and approaches towards national defense and security policies of each new government. On the other hand, this approach is significant for “smart power projection.” If Turkey develops its own conceptualization and doctrine based on grand strategy, then Ankara will better know and be able to decide which instruments of power is best employed at any given time. Another aspect of developing a grand strategy is the issue of determining which institution should be responsible of this. Turkey needs an institution which will function as an office of “national security advisor” that will be responsible for the organization and coordination of inter-agency mechanisms.

Second, coordination and cooperation mechanisms across the private sector and defense bureaucracy should be strengthened. These mechanisms are key to executing the supply & demand chain and improving relations between customers, main contractors, and subcontractors. Within this framework, the dialogue between the civil and military bureaucracies, as well as the interaction, communication, and cooperation between military leaders and civilian technocrats, which is vital during crisis management and cross-border operations, should be redesigned and strengthened.

Third, Turkey’s national security and defense policy must not be determined by reactive but rather proactive measures. Certainly, this approach shapes the future defense projects as well. On the other side, Turkey must improve its strategic planning and recognize that defense planning does not only consist of military concerns. For a long period of time, Ankara’s strategic defense plan was penned in order to meet the requirements of TAF to prevent and respond to threats/risks in Turkish territory. In other words, Turkey applied “threat-based” planning, rather than “capabilities-based” planning. However, over the last 40 years the fight against terrorism both inside and outside the borders has revealed that Ankara must adopt and apply a “hybrid defense planning” model.

Fourth, Turkey has to solve problems that are expressed frequently, as follows: “bureaucratic burden,” “management cadres,” “procurement planning,” “execution process,” and “budget estimations and overruns.”

Last and foremost, Turkey must adopt an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspective in its national security and defense policies. Although civilian authorities have reasserted their role in approving defense

projects in recent years, input from the civil bureaucracy and academics is still sorely lacking from the planning process on defense and security needs, developing national defense strategy, and defense management. Ankara must invest more in human resource development and intellectual capital. In this regard, the AK Party government should offer a more concrete explanation of a multidisciplinary and comprehensive blueprint toward creating a collaborative partnership between policymakers, industry, and academia for Turkey's future defense industrial landscape.

### **Descriptions**

- 1 For the 10 records found on “space law” see. Thesis Center, Council of Higher Education, <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>

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# Siyaset, Sanayii ve Akademi: 2002 Sonrası Türk Savunma Sanayiinin Büyük Atılımının Dinamikleri\*

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## Öz

Türk savunma sanayiinin bilhassa son on yıllık başarı grafiği, AK Parti'nin baskın söylemine dönüşürken; bu anlatı ana muhalefet partileri, sanayii ve akademik çevrelerin ilgisini giderek celp etmektedir. Siyasal partilerin seçim beyannameleri, parti politikasının Türk savunma sanayiinin önceliklerini şekillendirmedeki rolünü ortaya koyarken; genel eğilim yerelleşme, millileştirme ve stratejik özerklik hedeflerinin ulusal güvenlik stratejisinin ögesi olarak içselleştirilmesinde siyasi ve toplumsal farkındalığın giderek arttığını göstermektedir. Savunma sanayiine yatırım yapmanın değişen değeri, salt milliyetçi bir söylemin yaygınlaşmasına yol açmamakta, aynı zamanda uzunca süredir askerlerin ve mühendislerin hâkimiyetiyle özdeşleştirilen savunma alanına sivil katılımı teşvik etmektedir. Ancak mevcut siyaset-sanayii ilişkilerinin sınırlarının ötesinde, akademinin her iki tarafla daha yoğun etkileşime girmesi gerekmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, Türk savunma sanayiine ilişkin akademik çalışmaların taraflarca teşvik edilmesi, bilahare multidisipliner ve interdisipliner bir anlayışın benimsenmesi elzemdir. Öte yandan, ulusal savunma sanayinin politik, askeri, ekonomik, diplomatik ve teknolojik boyutlarının rolünü ve vaatlerini optimize etmek maksadıyla siyaset, sanayii ve akademi arasında uzun süreli ve işlevsel bir işbirliği mekanizması oluşturmak için kapsamlı bir yol haritası geliştirilmesi zaruridir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Savunma sanayii, seçim beyannameleri, millileşme, yerelleşme, stratejik özerklik.

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# Политика, промышленность и академические круги: изучение динамики большого скачка оборонной промышленности Турции в период после 2002 года\*

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## Аннотация

Последовательное развитие турецкой оборонной промышленности стало основным доминирующим нарративом Партии справедливости и развития, что привело к росту интереса оппозиционных партий, промышленных и академических кругов. В то время как предвыборные манифесты политических партий раскрывают роль партийной политики в формировании приоритетов оборонной промышленности, общая тенденция показывает растущий уровень политической и общественной осведомленности для достижения цели локализации, национализации и стратегической автономии как части стратегии национальной безопасности. Меняющийся размер инвестиций в оборонную промышленность не только проложил путь к национально-патриотическому дискурсу, но и стимулировал участие гражданского населения в сфере обороны, которая долгое время определялась как пространство, в котором преобладают военные и инженеры. В этом документе подчеркивается необходимость междисциплинарного понимания различных научных дисциплин для поддержки исследований турецкой оборонной промышленности и дальнейшего поощрения академического сообщества к более активному участию в разработке политики и индустрии. Кроме того, подчеркивается необходимость разработки всеобъемлющего плана построения и поддержания прочной культуры сотрудничества и отношений между политиками, промышленностью и академическим сообществом, что имеет решающее значение для оптимизации роли и перспектив политического, военного, экономического, дипломатического и технологического измерений национальной оборонной промышленности.

## Ключевые слова

Оборонная промышленность, предвыборные манифесты, национализация, локализация, стратегическая автономия.

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