Drone Power and Political Islam: How Turkey's Military-Tech Complex Fuels Interventionism

By Mohammad Taha Ali

Introduction

This paper explores the intersection of drone warfare and political Islam in contemporary Turkish foreign policy, arguing that Turkey's burgeoning military-tech complex—anchored by companies like Baykar—has enabled a new form of interventionism across West Asia, North Africa, and the Caucasus. By examining Turkey's drone deployments in Libya, Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh, and beyond, the study highlights how unmanned aerial systems (UAS) have become instruments not just of hard power but also of ideological projection aligned with Ankara's vision of neo-Ottomanism and Islamist solidarity. The analysis situates Turkey's drone diplomacy within broader geopolitical ambitions where the fusion of defense-industrial innovation and political Islam under Erdoğan's leadership enables a unique form of assertive, technologically driven interventionism. This paper also interrogates how Turkey's use of drones blurs the lines between state security interests and transnational religious-political networks, reshaping conventional paradigms of regional influence, alliance making, and sovereignty.

Turkey's sudden emergence as an emerging drone power has fundamentally reconfigured its foreign engagements. In the last decade,

Ankara's Drones Signal Erdoğan's Global Ambitions and Islamist Politics (Photo: Turkish Military Combat Drone • Adobe Stock/asset ID 424937833; licensed via Adobe Stock)

Ankara has constructed an indigenous unmanned aviation sector—headed by Baykar's Bayraktar TB2 combat drones—that has become both a strategic instrument and a source of national pride. These drones have allowed Ankara to project military power cheaply in Libya, Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh, and elsewhere, reshaping regional battlefields and projecting Ankara's power. Domestically, the triumph of Turkey's drone industry under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been spun into an ideological mythology about a rising Turkey restoring its Ottoman-era glories and dominating the Muslim world. This fusion of Islamist-guided ideology and military technology is remaking the Middle East and threatening US interests.

The analysis below describes Turkey's drone revolution, its battlefield uses, its ideological sources, and its larger strategic implications,

with clear takeaways and policy recommendations for US policymakers.[1] Turkey's defense industry has made the transition from foreign dependency to assertive domestic production, led by drones. The Bayraktar TB2, a medium-altitude, long-endurance UAV produced by private company Baykar, is a prime example. Once a modest aviation venture, co-owned by President Erdoğan's family (Baykar's founder, Selçuk Bayraktar, is Erdoğan's son-in-law), the firm became internationally renowned by the late 2010s. The TB2 is comparably inexpensive (in the range of a few million dollars per vehicle) but can carry precision-guided munitions and last more than twenty-four hours. It was decisive in initial use against insurgents in Syria and, subsequently, in intense conflicts with conventional forces. Turkey has since added to its unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) arsenal the more heavy-duty Bayraktar Akıncı UCAV (a large-scale combat drone) and the short-takeoff TB3 for its forthcoming aircraft carrier. Other Turkish companies—particularly state-owned Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI)—have also created drones (such as, the Anka series), but Baykar's offerings have been the showpiece success.[2]

This indigenous drone boom has been spurred on by enormous state investment and political favor. Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) has channeled funds into private companies to bypass import controls and sanctions, resulting in a healthy supply chain. By 2024 alone, Baykar earned more than $1.8 billion in exports (approximately 90 percent of its turnover), selling drones to dozens of nations. Turkey has allegedly taken about 65 percent of the world's export market for medium-altitude weapons drones. Baykar has already secured contracts for its TB2 variant, which it has sold to over thirty governments, and another ten for the Akıncı, as well as establishing

production joint ventures internationally (e.g., in Ukraine). Scale-up has been spectacular: by the early months of 2025, Bayraktar systems had accumulated more than 400,000 flight hours globally, and Turkish sales of Baykar's drones surpassed those of the United States, Israel, and China. Erdoğan's government touts these records loudly as proof of Turkey's technological independence, and the drone sector becomes an issue of national prestige.

This reshaping of Turkey's defense industry coincided with political purges of the traditional military leadership. Post-2016, Erdoğan and the AKP marginalized the secularist generals who had controlled national security for years, further entrenching presidential authority in procurement.[3] Today, these new generation factories run with little interference or pushback: Baykar, the drone program, is officially taboo to criticize in Turkish media. In Erdoğan's account, the drone program is not merely a source of income but a validation of Turkey's "indigenous" and "Muslim-rooted" science. Baykar's factories and proving grounds have become national icons, covered by the media and even celebrated in textbooks. The proliferation of drone production in Turkey—frequently through family-linked conglomerates—highlights how the military-tech complex has been intertwined with the political regime.

Drones on the Battlefield: Intervention in Practice

Turkey's military UAVs have not stayed limited to domestic symbol status. Beginning in the mid-2010s, Bayraktar TB2 drones and their relatives have been rolled out in several theaters actively, frequently changing conflict dynamics for Turkey. Turkish drones have been employed in remote theaters, but some of the most significant use cases have

been the government's interventions and proxy wars in Libya, Syria, and the Caucasus. In Libya, Turkey militarily intervened in 2019–2020 on behalf of the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) of Tripoli against rival Libyan National Army (LNA) leader Khalifa Haftar. Erdoğan sent a combination of Turkish soldiers, Syrian militia fighters, and advanced weapons—preeminently Bayraktar drones and air defense missiles. The TB2 played a decisive role: it destroyed LNA artillery and tanks with missile attacks, breaking Haftar's siege of Tripoli. Turkish drones gained time for the GNA to regroup until a UN ceasefire was negotiated. Mid-2020 saw Turkey's intervention reverse Haftar's advances and victories for the GNA that ultimately compelled a politically negotiated resolution. In Libya, Bayraktar drones thus effectively became Ankara's spearpoint, allowing a modest Turkish military deployment to exert disproportionate influence.[4]

In Syria and northern Iraq, Turkey has used its UAVs in a series of cross-border strikes against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and allied forces (the Syrian Kurdish YPG/SDF) and, to a lesser degree, surviving ISIS fighters. Starting from about 2016, Turkish drones mounted intensive surveillance and strike flights along the Iraqi border and in northeast Syria. In 2019–2020, Turkey conducted mass incursions (Operations Olive Branch, Peace Spring, Spring Shield, etc.) to drive Syrian Kurdish elements from the Turkish border and to create "safe zones." Bayraktar drones attacked Kurdish outposts, entrenched defensive positions, and even hit IS cells. These attacks demoralized Kurdish militia forces and aided in the advance of Turkish-backed rebel forces. In 2020, Turkey also used drones to protect its interests in Idlib province: when a spring Syrian regime (Russia-backed) offensive was launched,

Turkish TB2s strafed advancing columns and missile batteries, blunting the assault. Turkish drones in Syria also made US plans difficult, as Washington's primary local ally (the SDF/YPG) was attacked. Overall, Turkey's drones were central to its sustained effort to remake northern Syria and prevent any Kurdish-controlled enclave on its frontier.

Another exemplar of drone diplomacy by Turkey was the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey supported Baku vigorously, furnishing its ally with hundreds of Bayraktar TB2s and training Azerbaijani pilots. The outcome was a complete Azerbaijani military triumph. Turkish drones pursued Armenian armored forces, anti-aircraft defenses, and troop densities throughout the disputed territory. Footage and testimony depicted Armenian tanks and rocket launchers destroyed from the air. This aerial domination by unmanned aircraft so conclusively altered modern warfare in the region that analysts said it radically shifted the face of war. The conflict concluded with a new truce significantly tilting in Azerbaijan's favor, allowing it to reoccupy most disputed land. Bayraktar TB2s thereby provided Turkey with a force multiplier that enabled it to reshape the South Caucasus—a region long rooted in Ottoman historic ties—on Ankara's own terms.[5]

Outside of these flagship conflicts, Turkey's drones have also appeared in other wars. They have assisted Turkish-backed militias in Libya and Somalia and have been exported to Algeria, Tunisia, and North African nations. Bayraktar drones were used by the military of Ukraine to some success in countering the Russian invasion, and in 2024, Turkey even contracted to build a drone assembly facility in Ukraine. In 2021–2022, Ethiopia imported TB2s for use in its civil

war. Reuters and others reported that Pakistani forces employed Turkish drones in a skirmish with India (the first use of Turkish UAVs in South Asia). In every case, TB2s and similar drones impressed by striking targets at standoff range and operating for long hours. A notable feature is that Bayraktar drones can loiter over battlegrounds for a day or more, relaying real-time imagery to commanders and independently dropping guided munitions.

Turkish politicians commemorate these victories. As Erdoğan frequently reminds everyone, Bayraktar drones are a "national weapon" capable of blasting missile defenses and aircraft from the air.[6] At home, the story is that a humble Turkish drone with its "white flag" (the logo of Baykar) killed tanks and helicopters in enemy bases, something even America would struggle with. Indeed, during the Ukraine conflict, even governments and foreign volunteers have crowdfunded to purchase Bayraktar drones for Ukraine for about $5 million each. Such tales buttress the way Ankara markets the drone program as evidence of how "Muslim minds" can out-innovate conventional great powers.

Islamist Ideology and Neo-Ottoman Ambitions

Turkey's drone capabilities are not an isolated phenomenon; they are part of a wider strategy on the part of President Erdoğan to combine nationalism, political Islam, and Ottoman nostalgia. Erdoğan's foreign policy has moved emphatically away from secular Kemalism toward an "ambitious Islamist and neo-Ottoman vision," according to analysts. Erdoğan invokes symbols and memories of the Ottoman era in speeches and in rhetoric in order to mobilize a pan-Turkish, pan-Islamic constituency. He famously alluded in a 2011 election victory speech to cities formerly subject to Ottoman dominance—

Sarajevo, Beirut, Damascus, Ramallah, Jerusalem—assuring that "they would benefit" from Turkey's ascendance. This sort of rhetoric is not merely verbiage. It outlines an ideological agenda of reinvigorating Turkey as a regional hegemon of the Muslim world and an emancipator from Western patronage.[7]

Erdoğan himself comes from Islamist politics (the AKP has its roots in the Islamist Welfare Party), and, during his tenure, Turkish identity has become more intertwined with Islamic and Ottoman themes. He has reopened the historically closed Hagia Sophia museum as a mosque, promoted Turkey as the guardian of Palestinians and other Muslims, and fostered alliances with Sunni Islamist forces globally. The *Jerusalem Post*'s recent commentary refers to Erdoğan's group as a "Turkish version of the Muslim Brotherhood, a radical anti-Western movement," highlighting how profound are these currents. This translates into foreign policy as support for fellow Islamist-led governments or movements, opposition to secular military governments (e.g., Egypt post-2013), and brazenly forging independent trajectories even when in opposition to NATO or EU allies. For instance, Turkey's agreement with Libya's GNA was couched as standing in favor of a "legitimate" Muslim-led regime against a secular Western-backed warlord.

Drones comfortably fit this blend by performing both instrumental and propagandistic purposes. Instrumentally, UAVs enable Turkey to intervene in Muslim-majority nations with few "boots on the ground," reducing casualties among religious or ethnic kin. The digital warfare approach can be marketed domestically as a contemporary tool for protecting Muslim interests. Ideologically, UAV success nourishes Turkish domestic pride: every

success is framed as a victory of Turkish creativity and an Islamic identity. Erdoğan and his supporters tend to stress that these weapons are "made in Turkey" by Muslim engineers—a subtle comparison with Western-made weapons. Effectively, the drone revolution is part of Erdoğan's rhetoric of a "national technology leap" (*milli teknoloji hamlesi*) that will bring Turkey to its rightful place in the Islamic world.[8]

This neo-Ottoman shift has regional aspirations as well. Turkish naval strategy now openly conceives of dominance of the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean (the *Mavi Vatan* or "Blue Homeland" idea). Exercise of control over energy and sea lanes goes with military activism in former Ottoman domains: the Levant, Caucasus, North Africa. Drones also make such ambitions affordable: a dozen TB2s and a few consultants can replace a big ground army or fleet. In Libya, Turkey even invoked history by giving its Libyan expeditionary force the name of Omar al-Mukhtar (the Libyan anti-colonial warrior), framing its intervention as anti-imperialist solidarity rather than conquest. Such ideological presentation—connecting Ottoman heritage to current Islamist solidarity—is a recurring motif. Briefly, Erdoğan's Turkey sees contemporary military technology such as drones as facilitators of a grand strategy inspired by Islamism.

Alliances in Arms: Islamist Networks and Strategic Partnerships

Turkey's drone capability is not apolitical; it is matched by an equally ideological tradition of alliance and proxies. Erdoğan's administration has established a strategic alliance between its military establishment and a constellation of similarly like-minded Islamist forces. The most well-known ally is Qatar. Doha's ruling family, which funded Erdoğan's ascent amid his economic tribulations in the 2010s, has a common soft power policy with Ankara of backing the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist forces at the regional level. Qatar became one of Baykar's very first international customers; its affluent military bought Bayraktar TB2s and training packages. In return, Turkey granted Doha military training facilities and logistical assistance. Together, they provided backing to friends. Turkey shielded Qatar in the 2017 Gulf crisis, and Qatar invested funds into Gaza and Syria via Turkish conduits. This Turkish–Qatari "Sunni alliance" supported Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood franchises in Libya and Tunisia, and Syrian Islamist elements. The *Jerusalem Post* mentions that Qatar "is a long-time supporter of Muslim Brotherhood activities across the globe" and that Turkey's motives are "augmented by the economic generosity of Qatar." In reality, Baykar drones and Qatari petrodollars have turned into twin levers, driving Islamist agendas.

Turkey also openly aligned with some militants beyond traditional Middle Eastern monarchies. Erdoğan invited Hamas leaders to Turkey for years, giving them political cover and a home base. Hamas officials have established Istanbul as a second headquarters, hosting press conferences and raising money with no Israeli pressure. Turkey's military and intelligence officials had contact with the Gaza group for years. In turn, Turkish NGOs have cooperated with Brotherhood-affiliated parties in Egypt (prior to the Sisi crackdown) and Tunisia's Ennahda (particularly in the Arab Spring aftermath). In Libya, Turkey became patron to the GNA militias, most of which were derived from or based on the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood. As a report by an Israeli think tank (Dado Center) remarks, Ankara's Libyan strategy was positively carried out "under the cloak of Ankara's relation with the

Muslim Brotherhood." This involved supplying arms (including drones) and combatants to GNA-aligned militias, while Western powers called out all foreign fighters to leave. During the Syrian civil war, there were some indications that Turkish-backed rebels had included hard-line Islamists (from Ahrar al-Sham to HTS) that coexisted with one another in operations. Turkey's patronage had helped such groups to endure as a buffer against Assad and Kurdish forces.[9]

Ankara has, according to reports, facilitated networks that transfer money from Iran to Hezbollah-held Lebanese operations, and some Turkish NGOs maintain contacts in Iran for commercial purposes. Ankara's collaboration with Iran (for instance, concerning airspace or proxy coordination in Iraq and Syria) has been identified as concerning in capitals such as Riyadh and Tel Aviv. One of the senior Israeli officials warned that Turkey's combination of Islamist and Turkish nationalism renders it "a greater threat than Iran" since it can walk across Sunni–Shia fault lines and organize Islamist solidarity. In reality, Turkey has already sold drones to a variety of non-western states — Algeria, Pakistan, Malaysia—expanding the circle of influence of its military-tech exports. With these alliances, Turkish drones have even marched in parades and air shows from Islamabad to Tripoli, broadcasting a clear message: Turkish military capabilities are for lease to those who can match its strategic or ideological affinity.

The Erdoğan period has witnessed the convergence of Turkey's defense industry and Islamist foreign policy. High-tech drones are at once a diplomatic bargaining chip and a force multiplier for Islamist-linked proxies. We observe this in synergistic arms contracts (e.g., Baykar securing deals from Pakistan and Qatar), in mercenary groups (Syrian militants transited through Turkey to Libya), and in technology trade (even talks started about co-manufacturing TB2s with Egypt after ties were normalized). [10] For anti-Western and Islamist movements, Turkish drones provide cutting-edge support; for Baykar and its sponsors, providing these customers secures additional global market presence and strategic depth. This strategic partnership complicates regional order: it empowers militias in Libya, supports Hamas in Gaza, and even connects Turkey to Islamist groups in Europe through diaspora networks. And always at its center is the notion that drones, invented by "Muslim engineers" as Turkish propaganda insists, empower a sort of pan-Islamic resistance to Western hegemony.

Regional Impact and Challenges to the United States

Turkey's interventionist approach—mixing Islamist ideology with advanced drones—is redefining regional dynamics that directly impinge on US interests. Turkey is still a member of NATO, with the organization's second-largest military, but its actions frequently conflict with other allies and with the US strategic agenda. Turkish drones and military deployments have emerged as a wild card in theaters where the United States has long been the security guarantor. [11] In the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkish assertiveness endangers a precarious regional balance. Ankara's exploration endeavors and sea claims (accompanied by military actions) provoke Greece, Cyprus, and Israel, all of them US allies. The 2019 naval agreement with Tripoli effectively created a vast sea zone that disregarded Greek and Cypriot interests and outraged EU allies. Turkish drones have been used to patrol and exercise in Cypriot airspace, increasing the risk of collisions with EU-backed naval patrols. This undermines US leverage: Washington has

fostered alliances with Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt to secure Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons and push back against Iran and Russia. Turkey's drone-backed provocations in these waters put new stress on NATO cohesion, forcing Washington to repeatedly mediate between Athens and Ankara to avoid a crisis.[12]

In the Middle East, Ankara's moves balance out US and regional interests. The United States long sought stable relations with Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel as a counter to Iran and jihadist extremism. Turkey's support for Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood set up a parallel Sunni axis that often thwarted those aims. Even as Egypt drifted closer to Greece and Israel against Turkey's regional designs, Ankara has retaliated by backing Islamist blocs and safe havens that resist Egyptian and Emirati agendas (for example, having Muslim Brotherhood ideologues on its territory). In Syria, US policy too frequently has been to shore up areas controlled by Kurdish-led SDF troops, but Turkey regards those troops as terrorists and made repeated attacks upon them, even pushing the United States out of certain border zones.[13] The net impact is that an ally of the United States—Turkey—utilizes cutting-edge equipment in a manner that makes the US struggle more difficult against extremism. Likewise, in Libya, Turkey's backing for one set of forces effectively guaranteed the survival of a government many Gulf Arab powers had opposed (and some Western interests did not actively support either).

Turkey's orientation towards Russia and other non-Western nations also makes Washington nervous. Turkey's acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defense system resulted in its removal from the F-35 program and strained relations with the Pentagon. But while Ankara claims autonomy, it continues to use membership in NATO—hosting American troops at Incirlik Air Base and allegedly on board to sanction Iran—even as it pursues policies the Pentagon abhors (such as letting Iran-backed militias into Syria to battle American forces). Erdoğan's tightrope act— courting China's Belt-and-Road and joining the Moscow-sponsored Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a dialogue partner—warns US policymakers that Turkey may be drifting out of the West. In the Black Sea and wider world, Turkey's expanding arms exports assist it in making new friends (Ukraine, Pakistan) at the expense of the United States.[14]

The test for the United States is how to react without weakening NATO and alliance institutions. US troops in Europe and the Mediterranean now have to factor Turkish drones into considerations that would previously have been deemed unlikely. Middle Eastern allies observe how US focus on Iran and Russia increases the leeway for Ankara. Domestically, Washington policymakers are under pressure from constituencies alarmed at Turkey's Islamist shift. Congressional hearings have brought Turkey's support for Hamas and Hezbollah to the fore, triggering proposals to sanction the Turkish parties involved. The picture is one of a nation that is no longer simply a "good ally" in the US-led system but neither is it absolutely an enemy. It is a rather mercurial ally—powerful militarily, volatile politically—equipped with drones that lend its foreign policy a cutting edge.[15]

Key Takeaways

•**Turkey's drone surge is real and significant:** Over a few years, Turkey has constructed a globally competitive UAV sector. Bayraktar TB2 attack drones and more advanced variants have provided Ankara with the capacity to strike well

beyond its borders at relatively low expense.[16] Turkey now sells this technology extensively and dominates the international market for armed drones.

•**Turkey has facilitated military adventurism:** Turkish drones played a significant role in altering the dynamics of wars from Libya to Nagorno-Karabakh. They multiply Turkish firepower wherever Ankara has intervened, destroying hostile defenses, cutting supply lines, and backing friendly proxies. In all instances, drone attacks have been a force multiplier that enhances Turkey's leverage without necessitating massive troop deployments.

•**The importance of ideological and identity factors:** Erdoğan's administration attributes its drone victories to an overarching story of Islamic unity and Ottoman revival. Sophisticated UAVs are hailed as "Muslim technology" products capable of holding their own against conventional Western weaponry. This serves to reinforce Ankara's outreach to Islamist forces beyond its borders and prop up propaganda domestically. [17] The drone initiative is as much about pride and identity as it is about military strength.

•**Turkish defense exports stream to Islamist-aligned forces:** Turkish drones and weaponry consistently wind up in the hands of governments and forces with Ankara's political perspective. Allies like Qatar and Pakistan, partners in fights such as Libya's GNA or Palestinian Hamas, and even missions in locations like Syria's Islamist fronts have been assisted by Turkish weapons.[18] Turkey has also been accused of supporting Hezbollah financing and cooperating with Iran on certain security matters, demonstrating that its arrangements extend to openly anti-Western circles.

•**American interests are confronted with strategic headwinds:** Turkey's belligerent employment of drones makes the United States more complicated to defend. It increases tensions in NATO, strains diplomacy with essential Mideast allies, and empowers militaries and militias that are sometimes in opposition to US objectives. Turkish drones have been directed against Western-backed fighters and have taken out targets intended to restrict ISIS or Iran. [19] Without restraint, Turkey's new model—marrying Islamist politics to military high-tech—threatens to change balances in the Levant, the Eastern Mediterranean, and North Africa in ways that run counter to US policy.

Policy Recommendations

•**Enhance assistance for regional allies:** Reinforce security cooperation with the most endangered US allies threatened by Turkish behavior. This involves augmenting the military capabilities of Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt through exercises and arms transfers (e.g., Patriot missile batteries or Western drones). Augment naval and air presence in the Eastern Mediterranean to counter Turkish intimidation. [20] Make sure that Gulf Arab allies have alternatives to Turkish weaponry—for instance, provide US or European drone technology to nations such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE to balance Bayraktar sales.

•**Regulate drone proliferation and countermeasures:** Coordinate with NATO and export-control regimes to limit the spread of sensitive drone technology to conflict areas and potential competitors. Promote anti-drone defenses (such as electronic warfare and kinetic interceptors) to US and allied forces. Invest in next-generation US UAV development [21] (loitering munitions, long-range drones) to sustain technological

advantage. Promote intelligence sharing regarding Turkish UAV deployments to enhance situational awareness among partners.

• **Leverage alliance avenues and sanctions where viable:** Utilize NATO platforms to criticize Turkey's differences publicly (e.g., protest unmanned attacks that thwart coalition objectives). Link US military aid or sales (such as F-16 modernization) to advancement on common aims; demand Turkish efforts against Hamas, Hezbollah, or other listed groups; or condition future arms collaboration on conformance with NATO policy. [22] Where violations occur (such as financing of Iranian proxies), consider targeted sanctions on the facilitating entities to impose a real cost on Ankara's dubious transactions.

• **Engage Turkey diplomatically, but guard principles:** Continue dialogue with Ankara on areas of common interest (counterterrorism against ISIS, economic ties, NATO modernization) to keep Turkey anchored in the West's orbit. Simultaneously, reaffirm publicly US positions on global law to balance Turkey's one-sided actions (e.g., patrols off Cyprus, contended maritime boundaries). Invite EU allies to include human rights and rule of law issues in EU–Turkey relations so that Turkey's drift is not unremarked.[23] Offer support to civil society and moderate forces within Turkey by way of cultural and educational exchanges, making clear that US engagement honors Turkey's prosperity as a stable democracy.

• **The coordination of like-minded countries**: Form alliances within the region against the destabilizing influence of unilateral drone warfare. For instance, join forces with Egypt, France, and others on diplomatic efforts to contain foreign fighters in Libya. Coordinate with the Gulf Cooperation Council to align their security planning and cut reliance on any one supplier.[24] Also, involve major players such as Russia and China to communicate that Turkey's deployment of sophisticated UAVs can fuel wars (e.g., in Syria and Libya) and ought to be regulated collaboratively.

• **Promote non-military options where possible:** Because Turkey's model is premised on the rhetoric of being the defender of Muslim causes, the United States can respond to bad-faith ideology with open-ended assistance. Ratchet up assistance for reconstruction and governance initiatives in post-conflict areas (Libya, Syria, Gaza), emphasizing pluralistic institutions. [25] Demonstrate that Muslim-majority nations can thrive with inclusive, non-ideological politics and thereby diminish the attractiveness of Turkey as the only protector of Muslim interests.

By blending these strategies of security guarantees to friends, export restrictions, principled statecraft, and ideational counterbalances, Washington can start to counterbalance Turkey's rising power. Turkey's drone complex and Islamist-tainted activism cannot be reversed, but the United

States can frame the context so that they do not single-handedly upset regional order. The age of interventionism by drones requires a candid policy reaction: one that dissects both the hard technology on the battlefield and the soft ideology behind it to safeguard US and allied interests.

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