

Uncertainty and Instability: Multiple Crises, a State of Permanent Crisis

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Participants,

I would like to express my great honor in participating in the 11th Istanbul Security Conference, in which I have been involved since its inception. Furthermore, it is a great honor for me to have been given the task of delivering the keynote address at the opening of the conferences for the past six years.

Welcome to our conference, where you are participating to share your thoughts and ideas. Your participation has given us strength.

The progress made by TASAM under the title of Istanbul Security Conference has truly required intense effort and strong stability in the context of Turkey. Mr. President, you have demonstrated strong leadership in ensuring this stability. I offer my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the conference reaching this level and to the organization of the 11th conference.

Organizations and studies on security in Türkiye are not able to have a long lifespan. This situation has many different reasons, primarily financial. However, despite all these difficulties, TASAM has been able to maintain its existence and continue to contribute to our country in its field. TASAM is now a brand, and the Istanbul Security Conference, as a sub-brand of TASAM, has taken its place at the national and international levels. When a history of this conference is prepared a few years from now, it will be seen that it makes a difference in terms of predictability, considering the topics discussed/debated by the participants.

I chose "uncertainty and instability" as the main theme of the conference. "Uncertainty" is a different concept, as you know, and "instability" is even more different. There is tremendous uncertainty in our world right now. Uncertainty is different from risk. You cannot make calculations with uncertainty, but you can make calculations from a risk management perspective. The fundamental problem is the presence of instability along with uncertainty. As the President and the Ambassadors mentioned earlier, this is the kind of world we are facing. Therefore, I tried to express what is happening by bringing these two concepts together and through these two concepts.

Last year, as our President also mentioned, we focused on two important issues. The first is "multiple crises," and the second is "always a crisis." At the previous Istanbul Security Conference, I again made statements referring to multiple crises. Multiple crises, always a crisis, continues exactly the same. Beneath all this lie two fundamental concepts that are increasingly taking root: uncertainty and instability. These two concepts are crucial in triggering multiple crises and continuous crises.

Stalin had a dream: "to create ape-like humans by manipulating monkey genes." In fact, this falls under the field of synthetic biology today. Stalin was a complete dictator, and he conducted many studies on this, but his dream of "monkey soldiers" didn't quite come true. However, today, incredible research is being conducted on this dream in the field of synthetic biology. These studies are being carried out in secret laboratories in many countries. Documents seized by the Russians reveal the existence of numerous such laboratories, particularly in Ukraine.

Similarly, the United States doesn't conduct these studies within its own country, but we know that it generally carries out many studies in synthetic biology in countries under its influence. One important example of this is the "super soldier" project that the Americans are trying to develop by the 2040s.

Look, humanity is actually heading in this direction. As our esteemed Ambassadors and President have stated, this is the "military revolution." Five military revolutions have occurred to date. What we are witnessing today is the 6th Military Revolution. First and foremost, robots. In other words, we are rapidly moving towards an era where robotic soldiers, the product of synthetic biology I mentioned earlier and Stalin's dream of human-animal hybrids, will be directly present on the battlefield. Demographic data supports this.

The world population, according to the latest data from 2024, exceeded 8 billion. It will begin to decline within a few years. The number of countries with increasingly aging populations is growing at an incredible rate. How will countries (especially those with declining populations) fill this gap? Greece is currently trying to meet this need with mercenaries on some of its islands. We saw what happened to the Ukrainian army against Russia.

The situation is similar for Russia. Even when in the midst of an uprising, we can see North Korean soldiers suddenly stepping in when the support provided by Wagner is insufficient.

I will try to address the fact that robotic systems are fully entering the field and that there are other factors we cannot see on the ground in later sections. You know Mike Tyson, the world heavyweight boxing champion; he's a great boxer, but he's also been involved in all sorts of shady dealings, including drug trafficking. He has a great saying: "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." Today, nation-states don't have such a plan. Because now, uncertainty and instability reign supreme. We are in a world where...

Forty years ago, when we entered the military profession, we learned that every soldier, regardless of their unit commander rank, must have at least one backup plan. Because operations rarely unfold as planned. Not all initial plans align with the realities on the ground. No matter how many analyses, assessments, and different scenarios you present, this has always been the case. From the simplest counter-terrorism operation to larger-scale operations and campaigns.

Herzl has a book on the dilemma of security and survival. This is a topic that all countries should examine first. So, how much security? Absolute security is unattainable. Is this enough? Enough to guarantee survival. What is this? This is the question that all countries in the world are currently asking themselves in their defense resource planning. Nobody can find the answer. Why? Uncertainty and instability are the biggest obstacles for countries. Because they cannot allocate resources. And they don't know where to allocate the resources they already have.

I often repeat; the Battle of Verdun in 1916, there's even a film about it. "Weapons conquer, soldiers occupy." This term has returned. Perhaps we will now begin to use expressions like "robots occupy" or "artificial intelligence occupy," etc., instead of "soldiers occupy." But this is a reality.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Gaza issue, the Ukraine-Russia war, the short-lived frozen conflict between India and Pakistan, the tensions in Pakistan, the events in Africa, in Congo and Sudan, the tensions in Venezuela, Colombia and surrounding areas, the Israel-Iran conflict. Furthermore, although a climate of peace seems to have emerged after the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, we need to consider how stable this will be.

British historian Thomas Fuller says, "Peace is determined by war, and war by ammunition." We saw the truth of this statement once again in the Ukraine-Russia War. Currently, we see that the 155mm artillery shells produced by all of Europe's manufacturing capacity are

insufficient to meet the demand. Yet, when the war began, the general concern in Türkiye was that NATO would no longer need artillery weapons. So, it was stated that long-range systems needed to be established by integrating artillery weapons with missile systems. But the Russo-Ukrainian War once again demonstrated how important and effective artillery (especially 155mm) is. We witnessed a conflict environment where more advanced and sophisticated systems were used on one hand, and conventional systems continued on the other.

World War II was a critical turning point in human history. On one side were the Axis Powers, and on the other, the Allied Powers. Look at the sides in World War II and now look at the sides the world has come together to face in anticipation of a Third World War. Five states were together as the Allied Powers. What happened now? Russia and China, established in place of the Soviet Union, are on one side, and the US and others are on the other. This is the most important indicator of the uncertainty and instability in the world, as I mentioned earlier. The sides are constantly shifting.

Therefore, World War II never brought peace to the world. We can understand from current developments how inadequate the institutions established were, and that they reflected the interests of their founders. We are talking about a war in which more than 60 million people lost their lives. After the war in which nuclear weapons were first used, Germany and Japan faced serious restrictions. So what happened?

Last week, Germany proposed a bill to increase its military strength from 180,000 to 260,000 by 2035. Wasn't Germany the main cause of the two previous world wars? Wasn't the purpose of the United Nations to address this? Weren't these decisions made? Germany is seeking to regain power by using the excuse that Russia will attack. Because Germans will never give up their living space, the concept we call "Lebensraum." The German Defense Minister once said, "Germany's security begins in Tibet." This is not without reason. I don't think the Germans have any intention of defending themselves or of Russia attacking here.

And is that all? Japan is a victim of nuclear weapons. A country that used two nuclear weapons in World War II. It will not manufacture nuclear weapons. It is a country that has gifted the principle of "nuclear non-militarization" to the whole world, setting an example for others. The dead are being commemorated with ceremonies. What happened? They are rapidly seeking ways to regain nuclear weapons to further nuclearize. They are seeking approval from the United States. To this end, they are also engaging in aggressive behavior towards those around them. For example, they occasionally raise their voices, so to speak, against China. They

provide a base for the USS George Washington. And they are rapidly transitioning from passive to active defense.

Why Germany and Japan? Are these merely moves aimed at stopping Russia and stopping China? It's clear that this is the case within the context of the United States. The American troops in Stuttgart and other bases need to be added to Germany's 260,000-strong army. This creates an army of approximately 400,000 soldiers in Europe. But what was the European Union saying? It was trying to create a European Union army. France and Germany were leading the way. What happened to the European Union army? France is arming itself, while Germany is arming itself. Is this sustainable for the European Union? This issue needs to be examined more closely.

Japan's armament (not in the classical sense) has gone beyond national defense. So how did this begin? Four years ago, Japanese soldiers went to peacekeeping operations in Africa with only pistols. After a possible deliberate scenario resulted in the deaths and injuries of several Japanese soldiers, the Japanese government publicly stated, "We are there for peace, but we were attacked, so let's arm our soldiers and go there." Initially, the Japanese media opposed this, saying, "Never, don't go if necessary. But this would be contrary to your peacekeeping mission." However, the relevant law was passed by parliament, and Japanese soldiers began to arm themselves. The rest followed step by step. Within three years, armored vehicles were added to infantry rifles. Tanks and then helicopters were added to armored vehicles. Ultimately, Japan reached this point.

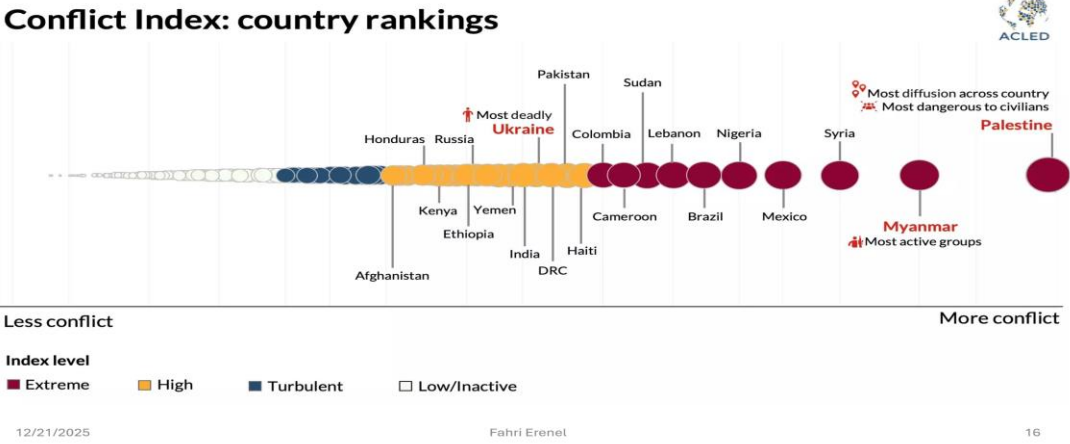
We are now talking about a Japan that is making incredible investments in its already existing technologies, such as short- and medium-range surface-to-air missiles, global missile air defense systems, cyberspace, and space. Who benefits from this? Of course, all these developments, the emergence of threats like China and Russia for countries arming themselves like Germany and Japan, opens up opportunities for arms dealers.

American economists revealed this three days before the recent conflict between Gaza and Israel began. There was an incredible rise in the stock prices of American arms companies. The same thing was observed in Israeli companies. Israel launched a major investigation into this. Four days before Hamas attacked Israel, two prominent professors from the US investigated the stock prices of the largest US and Israeli arms suppliers. This was published in open sources; you can see it clearly there. He says, "At the same time, the stocks of major Israeli arms and ammunition manufacturing companies are also rising; how is that possible?"

Notice the incredible Bitcoin movements. Actually, this is a method most often used by terrorist organizations. These movements show us that something is coming. When we ask "where are we?", we used to say a unipolar world (USA), a bipolar world (Soviet Union and USA), and a multipolar world. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established. Besides that, there are other formations. We are moving towards a multipolar world. But we also occasionally ask ourselves, "Is this a return to unipolarity?"

Trump's recent moves seem aimed at leading the world back to unipolarity. His self-proclaimed role in ending conflicts, economic sanctions, etc. Should these really be called "unipolarity" moves, or "the last desperate attempts of a US in its exhaustion"?

There is a website that keeps track of the death toll from conflicts around the world. ACLED is a fantastic organization that tracks conflicts around the world, minute by minute, day by day. I recommend that those interested in the subject follow it. It lists the countries with the highest casualties, starting with Palestine. But do we know about Myanmar? An incredible number of people lose their lives every day (as you know, there are serious massacres against Muslims there; it occasionally makes headlines in our media, then disappears). This list shows us what is happening where.



From Colombia to Pakistan, the daily death toll from conflicts around the world is quite high. Looking at this in terms of conflict index levels, Turkey naturally appears as "turbulent/low/none," with the end of terrorism. Blue and dark colors indicate "turbulent/low/none," but the others show regions with extreme conflict. The Central and South American region is particularly noteworthy. Approximately 230,000 people have lost their lives due to these conflicts in the first 10 months of 2025.



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We define the concept of a "multiple crisis" as the intertwining of multiple crises, where processes are linked together, creating combined effects. In fact, that's exactly what we mean by "multiple crisis," because they are all interconnected crises. What are the political implications of this? We are experiencing a period where social reactions are increasing alongside crises worldwide. In its reflection, we can see where the strongest political voices are coming from: Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East, with a growing social reaction against violence.

Regarding rare earth elements; Trump seized and gained control of Ukraine's rare earth resources for years to come. Until recently, our Eskişehir-Sivrihisar region was in the news. What is the fundamental reason? Rare earth elements contain 17 extremely important and critical elements. It's now possible to consider them among the potential causes of future global wars.

The manufacture of a single American F-35 fighter jet requires 427 kilograms of rare earth elements. A Virginia-class nuclear submarine uses approximately 4.2 tons. We can understand why Trump is pursuing rare earth elements for global hegemony simply by looking at these two current tools. 38% of the world's total rare earth element reserves are in China (this percentage explains why the US is trying to stop China), and 19% are in Vietnam. Why is Trump trying to broker a ceasefire between Vietnam and Cambodia? Wasn't it the US that tried to invade Vietnam in the past to exploit it? Why did they go there then?

answers, wondering what was happening. No one stopped giving Ukraine weapons, etc. Zelensky is constantly visiting the capitals of EU members. Countries are now seeking solutions to strengthen themselves instead of giving. Ukraine is showing us the latest example of the desperation caused by relying on others.

Germany, in this desperation, is trying to increase the size of its army. What else is happening? The arms race... The amount of arms sales in the world reached \$2.7 trillion in the first quarter of 2025. Wars seem to have triggered this increase. A trend of increased arms sales, reminiscent of pre-war periods, is being observed again in the world. There is no country that doesn't buy weapons. The Greek Cypriot Administration and Armenia are among the top arms buyers in the world. Azerbaijan is in fourth place.

We are living in a period where nuclear balances are tending towards disruption. Russia has moved away from nuclear testing. Then, Trump in the US gave instructions to "renew nuclear weapons," and said, "I am sending a nuclear submarine to Russia." Japan said, "I am nuclearizing." The underlying reason for the attack on Iran is the neutralization of its nuclear facilities. The United Arab Emirates wants to acquire a nuclear power plant. Saudi Arabia is also moving in the same direction.

But what about the nuclear balance? While Israel doesn't comply with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (even though it's not a part of the treaty), nobody is talking about an Israel possessing 90 nuclear weapons. Therefore, the tendency for the nuclear balance to deteriorate is increasing. START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) II is expiring soon. Trump didn't sign the agreement for extension during his first term; Biden did. Trump, along with Putin, withdrew from the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) treaty. START wasn't extended; Biden extended it.

We are witnessing new forms of warfare. We will examine the impact of the 6th Military Revolution, which I mentioned earlier, on the conceptual and strategic restructuring processes. The risk of wars spreading to space and the poles is also increasing every day. Dominance in space could mean dominance in global warfare. I believe that countries that control space and underwater cables will have a head start in future wars.

The same applies to the poles. In 1932, there were calls to review the Antarctic Treaty due to the melting ice. Currently, no country claims ownership; every country conducts scientific research. But there are also very significant rare earth elements there. It is also claimed that

there is natural gas and other gases, and therefore, a struggle for control will begin there as well. They have slowly started saying, "Let's review this agreement."

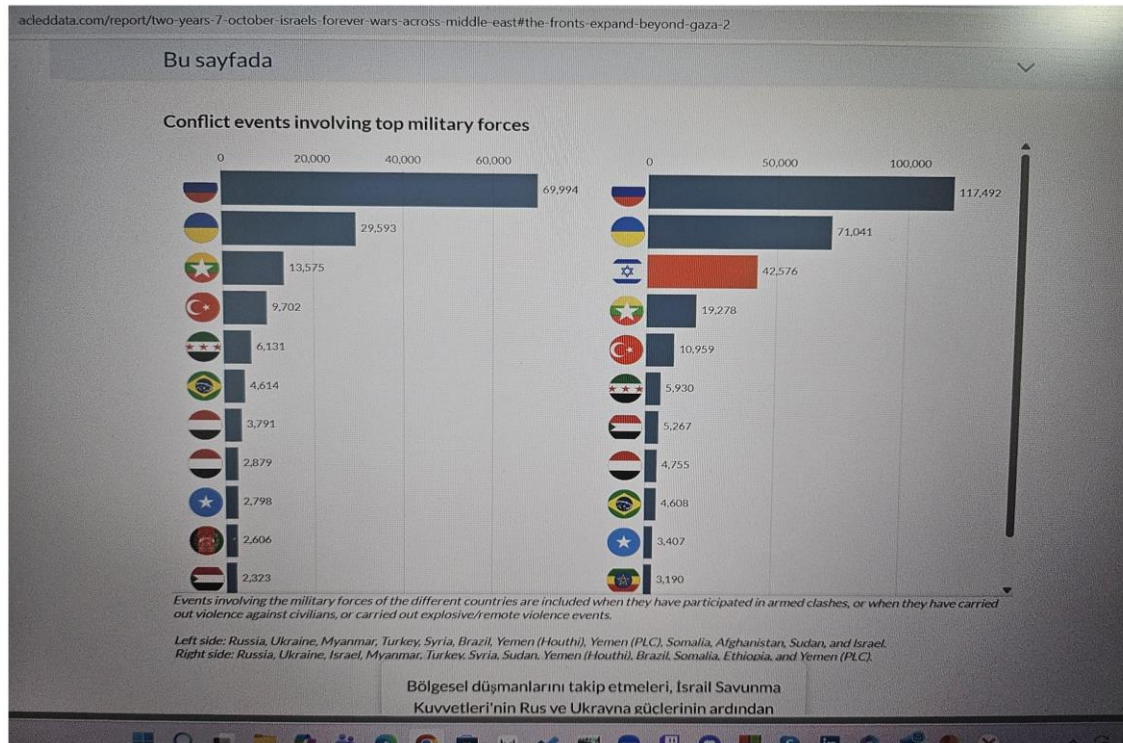
So, is religion turning into geopolitics? The Pope is in Türkiye today; is this a routine visit or is it solely for the 107th anniversary ceremony of the Nicene Creed? A new geopolitics, a religious geopolitics, is beginning. Orthodox and Catholics had excommunicated each other. Now the Pope wants to unite Christians under a single faith. He is trying to restore the "ecumenical" title to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. It is very important that the holiest clergyman of Christians grants this title and holds this meeting. What is the fundamental reason for this? Russia is an Orthodox country. The Pope says that it's not enough for Catholics to be alone; their unity must be ensured. That's why he's coming to Türkiye. Otherwise, visiting Nicaea in a place where there's no unified creed or council wouldn't make much sense. It needs to be evaluated in a purely geopolitical sense. This needs to be thoroughly examined in conjunction with the "rivalry theory" and other theories. This isn't a standalone move; it's a very significant one.

Yes, religion is becoming increasingly politicized. But why? Socioeconomic problems are at their peak in all countries. Income inequality... From the deterioration of the state's health and education services to the decline of liberalism and the decrease in trade union and social rights, unionization has fallen to around 10% globally, and in Türkiye it hovers around 2.5% to 3%. Marx said, "Religion is the opium of the people." He later said he was misunderstood. He was heavily criticized at the time, but perhaps we are returning to a period that could prove Marx right again.

To understand this, one should look at Professor Dr. Şule Albayrak's newly published book, "Christian Zionism." Christian Zionism is a deeply rooted form of the Evangelical project that envisions the reunification of Jews with Catholic and Orthodox Christian communities to re-dominate the world. Christian Zionism asserts that all articles of the Old Testament form the basis of Christianity; therefore, Jews are sacred, and Trump is currently sent to the world as an arm of God for this purpose.

The US is experiencing increasing debt, social polarization, and weakness in production. There is a war going on for the financial capitalist oligarchy. The cycle of credit, borrowing, and arms sales, a vital tool, is being shaken. The reckoning is effectively underway. And we can now say that the West is losing this war. "Weakening Russia and settling accounts with China"; all moves are based on this. Developments show that the plan to weaken Russia and prevent it from aligning with China has failed.

We can list Ukraine, Iran, Gaza, Taiwan, the South China Sea, the Red Sea, and Venezuela as battlegrounds for Western hegemony. Of course, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS are also increasingly important structures. Look at Israel's power four years ago and its current position. You can clearly see the level the Israeli Armed Forces have reached in the last three years through the restructuring of their armed forces, even without a direct threat. Their score surpasses even Turkey's. There is no country left untouched. There is an interesting scientific method for calculating this. Naturally, Russia and Ukraine are at the top of the list. The assessment that evaluates Türkiye on a scale of 10,000 points takes into account its influence abroad, particularly in Syria and Iraq. We can clearly see this when we look at the situation in Gaza.



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In this context, let me briefly mention technological advancements. As you know, Ukraine neutralized strategic aircraft with a drone attack in the Ivanovo region, 2,200 km from the Russian border. The concepts of time and distance no longer exist here. You can place them underground or above ground. It is said that the Chinese currently possess around 500-750 nuclear warheads. They produce everything underground. But these regions are also under threat.

The Ukrainian Air Force can use drones to photograph tanks and armored vehicles of Russian divisions. Everything is clearly visible. There are no secrets anymore. So, when we talk about

an intelligence revolution, what are we going to follow? What kind of revolution are we going to make? There is no such revolution. This is a period of minds fighting minds. We had a target of 600 tanks. Then we reduced it to 250. Why? Because there is no longer tank warfare in the operational area as there used to be. The era of tank warfare, like in World War II, is over. Otherwise, you end up in a tank graveyard. Therefore, we have reached a point where we need to utilize our concepts and available defense resources very effectively.

Another issue is smart munitions. Both Russia and Ukraine use them. You launch the munition, it circulates in the air. As soon as it finds a defined target, it goes after it. You don't need to track it, there's no guidance system, you don't need to monitor it, it can find its target on its own. These are now frequently used in the field. You need to organize accordingly. They can carry chemical substances or gases. They go over positions and spray or leave substances that will put the soldiers to sleep or disturb them. It's very small, but it puts the soldiers to sleep in the positions. And an offensive operation is carried out in that area where the soldiers are located. Both the Russians and the Ukrainians have successfully implemented this in several areas.

The Ukrainians also use improvised munition. A small drone is attached to a munition consisting of C-4 explosive material and detonated over enemy positions.

UAVs pose a serious threat to tanks. So do US-made Javelin anti-tank missiles. We see that active protection systems are being developed and used to protect tanks from these threats. These systems have also been installed on our country's Altay tanks. During the Afrin operation, the vulnerability of our Leopard tanks to missile attacks from the top, the tank's weakest point, became apparent. The weakest part of a tank, by its design, is the turret and hull top; attacks are expected from the front. The strongest parts of Merkava tanks are the front section covered with reactive armor. The sides, gears, and engine compartment are extremely weak. American Javelin missiles began hitting tanks from the weakest point: the top. The Russians and Ukrainians also developed similar missiles. Now, tanks need to be strong and protected from all sides.

However, active protection systems made the already heavy tanks even more immobile and made them targets for the Ukrainians. If you're using something, you need to look for a countermeasure. So what was installed on the tanks? Warning systems against drones. You need to constantly monitor developments in the field. This is the GIS ARTA system supported by Starlink. The commander in the field sees it, and receives satellite support from Starlink. The leader on the ground no longer needs to receive orders from the superior commander.

That connection is gone. They make decisions and implement them on their own initiative, using the resources at their disposal. Speed has become a crucial factor in operations. The probability of finding your identified target in the same location after a short period is very low.

On the other hand, thanks to unmanned naval vessels, we can say that Russia no longer has any power in the Black Sea. Where did they go? The entire navy was moved from one place to another, and a large part of it was damaged. This was made possible by unmanned naval vessels. There is no Russian naval force left in Sevastopol and other regions. Due to the Montreux Convention, there is no possibility of transferring forces from other regions, from the north. They had already moved the naval vessels from the Caspian Flotilla to the Black Sea. The Black Sea is now completely under the sovereignty and control of the Turkish navy.

Today, it is also possible to interfere with the algorithms and movement systems of drones from the outside. This is what we call the battle of minds. Fiber optic drones have also begun to be used in the operational area.

Turkey also uses kamikaze drones. How is their range increased? A second UAV takes over the role, thus increasing their range. Where are these used? Developments achieved in a war environment; test immediately, evaluate, and implement in the field.

However, conventional systems are not being abandoned. Currently, many European countries are conscripting young people during summer holidays. They don't provide formal weapons training, but military-related training is gaining momentum. Bunkers are being checked. The same is happening in Türkiye. Letters have been sent to all public institutions and organizations. Bunkers are being checked/prepared again. The whole world is returning to pre-World War II conditions. Things are changing. National Security lessons are being redesigned, young people are receiving training. Military mobilization systems are being reorganized. Motorcycles, which were heavily used by the British and Germans during World War II, are returning to the battlefields after approximately 40-50 years. Why? Because of their speed. You can hit a tank the moment you see it from above. But motorcycles have superior maneuverability. Before that, pickup-style or similar vehicles were used, and they still exist. If you go to the IDEF International Defence Industry Fair, you can see the systems developed by Türkiye. Also, in Ukraine, everyone was taught how to make Molotov cocktails. Many tanks and armored vehicles have been neutralized with these.

And models... In the Gulf War, the Americans used them to neutralize the Iraqi Republican Guard. Models, frequently used by the Russians, seriously deceived drones. These are inflatable tanks, inflatable planes, Russian SUVs. The drones come and perceive these targets as real, hit them, and leave.

The Chinese-developed "Sky Hawk" is also amazing. It flies around for hours without anyone noticing, and no radar system can detect it. No other country has anything like this system. It's powered by solar energy and has a very long range. It's the drone system that Americans fear most.

The Israelis have developed various intelligence systems. Their "Ghost Hawk" drone system, used in Gaza, immediately detects and intercepts drones launched from the perceived enemy side, neutralizing them instantly. On the other hand, quadcopter drones, designed to look like helicopters, are attacking Hamas militants. It should also be noted that the Israeli Air Force has conducted over 400,000 sorties, the highest number of air operations a country has carried out since World War II.

Therefore, there is uncertainty in defense planning. Developing, procuring, and deploying defense systems are both lengthy and costly processes. In the face of these developments, the security dilemma emerges as a major problem that needs to be overcome. This is true for all countries. Ten-year supply programs and five-year strategic plans are now a thing of the past. We need to revise them.

We also conducted a study on this topic; called "Strategic Foresight." There was a gap in this area, and we started working to fill it. As a result, I believe we can overcome these challenges and find solutions through strategic foresight. By taking information from the past and present and generating alternative scenarios, we can plan for the future. For this, we need more active think tanks focused on strategic foresight. I think we need to monitor and track the present not just from a certain perspective, but from different angles, based on different scenarios. Otherwise, we may find ourselves in a difficult situation.

We are entering a period where we will see more soldiers encountering robots in conflict zones. China has already implemented this by deploying robot border guards on its border with Vietnam. We are also rapidly moving towards robotic healthcare professionals who can provide first aid to injured soldiers in conflict zones and instantly transmit their health status to a central location for medical treatment.

I wish the conference a successful outcome and I offer my respects.

(General [Ret.] Prof. Dr. Fahri ERENEL | Keynote Address at the 11th Istanbul Security Conference | 27 November 2025)