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Turkish Nuclear Security after Iranian Nuclearization
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If the international community cannot dissuade Iran from becoming either a nuclear threshold country or an explicit nuclear power, then the manner in which deterrence is extended is of utmost importance to Turkish security. Turkish security will ultimately be damaged by Iranian attempts to acquire a nuclear bomb. The credibility of extended deterrence will surely be the key factor in averting regional decisions to opt for nuclear status in the face of a likely threshold nuclear Tehran. Current proposals regarding missile defence and precision guided weapons as optimum tools of deterrence fall short as alternatives compared with a credible reliable nuclear deterrence. So as long as NATO maintains a credible mix of nuclear and conventional means of deterrence, and guarantees allied security via strengthened extended assurance, Turkey will be comfortable when confronted with new nuclear states in its region. Ankara’s likely response is expected to favour strengthening security relations with the Euro-Atlantic community and seeking to bolster the American/NATO security guarantee, rather than decoupling from the alliance. As long as American/NATO extended deterrence is adapted to the new conditions and continuity is assured, a Turkish decision to decouple from the Western alliance or opt for its own individual nuclear capability remains only a distant possibility.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the P5 + 1 negotiations in 2005, bringing Iran together with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, United States) and Germany, a stalemate was reached with Tehran. Since then the international community has witnessed a series of worrying developments in the Iranian uranium enrichment programme. Fears of Iranian nuclear break-out capability escalated in February 2012 when diplomatic negotiations over fuel swap proposals failed to prevent Tehran’s achievement of 20 per cent-enriched uranium. In the aftermath of the fourth round of United Nations sanctions, the European Union and the United States led global cooperation on new sanctions, including worldwide cooperation to ban or reduce purchases of Iranian petroleum, pressing Iran to curb its nuclear programme. Though Iran returned to subsequent P5 + 1 negotiations in Istanbul, Baghdad, and Moscow, no substantial achievements were recorded.

If Iran does not halt its nuclear programme, or goes further to actually test nuclear weapons, the implications for neighbouring countries are immense. Will Turkey, along with other states of the Middle East, decide to go nuclear? Will Iran ignite a
new tide of proliferation in the region? Recent waves of instability from the unfinished democratic revolts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region add further complexity to the evolution of the Iranian nuclear crisis. Under the well-known geopolitical conditions in the Middle East, the traditional ‘peace first’ versus ‘disarmament first’ viewpoints are further exacerbating existing regional security dilemmas. In this regard, the continuing ambiguity over recent developments in the Iranian nuclear programme is an impediment to cooperative security means which could enhance the existing balance of power mind-set in the region. Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive regional security institution in the Middle East naturally continues to challenge most efforts to find a just and satisfying answer to the problem of horizontal nuclear proliferation in an era in which the future trajectory of the Iranian nuclear programme plays a central role.

The complex situation of the current Iranian case is much related to the radically changed systemic dimensions of the international system. The first sign of change in this regard was observed in the aftermath of the Cold War, which witnessed a notable proliferation in the number of state and non-state actors. This situation was of course the natural result of the evaporation of the super power overlay that was present in many of the regional constellations around the globe during the Cold War years. In the 21st century, due to the existence of both traditional and new, non-traditional threats on a regional level, the influence of regions, state, and non-state actors has begun to attract attention in the international relations community’s security calculations. The second crucial change is directly related to the distribution of power in the current international system. Because of this radical power change, international relations scholars continue to debate among themselves whether the structure of the international system is unipolar, multipolar, or an informal empire, the latter one in which the preponderance of American military might is beyond any doubt.

What is more interesting is that in today’s conditions, though relations among the P5 countries are relatively stable, asymmetric challenges are emerging elsewhere, including the Middle East. Under the current prevailing conditions, states with inferior capabilities in the system hope and know they cannot overcome American military power, especially American precision-guided warfare capability. Some Middle East states, such as Iran and, to a certain extent, Iraq before March 2003 and Syria before March 2011, sought asymmetric capabilities – nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons – and delivery systems to balance this intricate situation. Some of the states in the MENA region today, especially Iran, are trying, via the nuclearization, to obtain minimum conditions of existential deterrence to guarantee their regime survival. The reality of North Korean nuclearization is in direct contrast to the Iraqi and Libyan cases; two states which could not immune themselves from regime change after relinquishing their WMD capabilities.

All in all, the radical changes that took place at the international system level led to the creation of awareness amongst the Western nuclear powers (especially the United States) about the importance of the regional nuclear aspirant countries. This new situation has given way to the creation of new interpretations and debates vis-à-vis Cold War deterrence theory. Cold War deterrence theory was based on the perception of the vertical nuclear proliferation between the two super powers
and its practices on the ground in the Middle East; the fundamental question now is whether the traditional practice of deterrence can be successful in the face of newly rising nuclear security challenges in the face of horizontal nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. In current debates about American/NATO extended deterrence, another related question is to what extent nuclear weapons can make sense within the structure of extended American/NATO deterrence? In this regard, Iran’s contentious nuclear programme, with its uncertain future evolution, has until now continued to arouse utmost attention among international relations practitioners and scholars debating the future composition of complex deterrence. Unless it is solved via diplomatic means and placed under a legitimate course of action, the Iranian nuclear issue will continue to be a great concern among the members of the international community in the future.6

Since the stalemate between Iran and international community was reached in the P5 + 1 negotiations to dissuade Tehran from developing its uranium enrichment, international relations scholars have examined the implications of an Iranian nuclear state and its ramifications for the security of the Middle East.7 Potential scenarios have been posited. Iran’s nuclear capability might trigger countries in the Middle East such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, to obtain their own nuclear capability, which could give way to yet another wave of nuclear escalation in the Middle East. Alternatively, eventually the United States may adjust to the reality of a nuclear Iran.8 Proponents of this last view place their trust in the credibility of deterrence as the flawless balancer in the event of Tehran obtaining a nuclear capability. In the light of these debates, deterrence has again gained vital importance among international relations scholars. Hence, once again the future American stand on the exercise of extended deterrence becomes crucial for its effect on Washington’s allies and partners, determining whether they stay within the limits of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); in other words, whether they maintain their non-nuclear status or not. Thus, the credibility of American extended deterrence in the new, volatile conditions of the Middle East has become an important matter especially for Washington in terms of ensuring the states of this region do not develop their own means of counter proliferation, especially in the face of the newly ascendant WMD states.

The relevance of the nuclear deterrence, especially extended deterrence, is central to contemporary relations. The aim of this analysis is to examine the conditions that would determine Turkey’s decision to either preserve its non-nuclear status or develop its own nuclear capability. Turkey’s security, it is concluded here, will ultimately be damaged by Iranian attempts to acquire a nuclear bomb. As long as the validity of the American/NATO extended deterrence is adapted to the new conditions and continuity is guaranteed, then a Turkish decision to decouple from the Western alliance or opt instead for an individual nuclear capability will only be a distant possibility.

The Impact of Iranian Nuclearization

For some time, and especially after US President Barack Obama’s Prague address, the world has confronted debates of whether we are on the eve of a world free of nuclear
weapons, a debate encouraged by initiatives, like the Nuclear Security summits of 2010–2012, the 2010 Review Conference of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and of course the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 2010. On the other hand, despite nuclear non-proliferation success stories, the world has experienced NPT failures as well. The North Korean and Iranian experiences are the most important negative cases. For these reasons the Treaty’s credibility had been seriously questioned due to mounting problems at three levels: disarmament; non-proliferation; and the right to civil nuclear energy in non-nuclear states.

The current stalemate accelerated general concerns about nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Interest in new nuclear reactors in the Middle East adds to concern that the region might be entering a nuclear renaissance. The common perception of the United States and Europe is that the new nuclear facilities should, from their inception, be under strict international regulation; otherwise, the quest of the MENA region for civil nuclear energy has the capacity to prompt a future nuclear cascade. In this regard, numerous proposals have been tabled, a multinational nuclear fuel bank being among the most prominent. Via these non-proliferation initiatives, the nuclear weapons states hope to obtain the consent of the non-nuclear weapons states party to the NPT so that more problematic cases like Iran can be averted. At this juncture, while Iran can be accused of not reneging on its obligations during the exercise of its inherent right to enrich uranium, a right stemming from Article 4 of NPT, the five nuclear states on the other hand can also be accused of not exercising due diligence regarding the legitimate rights of non-nuclear states’ efforts to obtain civil nuclear energy. Today, both Iran and the West, after squandering several opportunities, like the various swap agreements – the 2009 American-led initiative and the Turkish–Brazilian effort – which may have made concrete strides to consensus, the current nuclear impasse between the two sides now seems to have reached a real deadlock. Moreover, the heavy sanctions that have been imposed on the Tehran regime so far have proved to be ineffective from swaying Iran in its efforts to enrich uranium.

In the case of the continuation of deadlock between Washington and Iran, it is believed that some Middle Eastern states, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, may, as a response, also decide to acquire a nuclear capability. In the case of such a scenario becoming a ground reality, an outbreak of nuclear proliferation in the region is forecast. Before such nuclear arms becomes a reality on the ground, there is the also the possibility of either an American or Israeli attack on Iran with the aim of preventing the regime from developing a nuclear capability. However, today it is evident that the opposing sides of the Iranian nuclear crisis find themselves in a deadlock; both American use of force and a display of the restraint by the West are doomed to bring unwelcome outcomes. In his article, ‘Damned if you do, damned if you don’t’, Emanuel Adler describes this stalemate situation as a social trap in which Western powers currently find themselves. Adler goes on to state that solutions through new means other than force or restraint strategies need to be found to prevent the entire MENA region from being negatively affected.

Actually, at this moment when matters are still uncertain, forecasting the future evolution of the Iranian nuclear issue remains problematic. Yet, what is certain is
that Iran’s final decision at the end of her nuclear trajectory will have a profound impact on individual states’ decisions regarding their own nuclear status. For this reason, at present the importance of American/NATO extended deterrence and how it will be displayed takes on further significance in the security calculations of other countries like Turkey and those of the Middle East.

Depending on the international community’s future choice of strategy or strategies towards the Tehran regime – coercive means versus diplomatic engagement; force versus restraint, sanctions versus inducements, or both and others – Iran’s preferences over its nuclear programme in return are naturally expected to vary. Hence, Iran, is more than likely to adapt alternative options: it may remain a nuclear threshold state within the limits of NPT; it may develop a breakout capability and leave the NPT; it could follow the Israeli model of that of an opaque nuclear state; or it could adapt either the Indian or the Pakistani models for explicit nuclearization by testing a nuclear weapon or an alleged peaceful nuclear device. The international community’s efforts are focused on finding effective strategies so that Iran’s nuclear programme does not become weaponized. This would be ideal to prevent further nuclear proliferation in the MENA region. Thus, the P5+1 process, to ensure Iran stays in the NPT and simultaneously ensure the Tehran regime continues only civilian nuclear procurement; a ‘win–win’ offer. 13

If diplomacy is judged to have failed, then Iran’s approach to the question of how it will cross the nuclear threshold – opaquely or transparently – will have the greatest impact on the Middle East’s individual states’ likely responses. This situation will not only create new political alignments in the new Middle East but also throw the existing security structures into flux and hence push some states, like Turkey, into seeking a more credible NATO security umbrella. 14 In this picture, the alternatives before Turkey are limited. The spectrum of Turkish behaviour will depend on how domestic and – principally – external factors evolve. According to some expectations, Ankara will develop either a denial strategy towards Iran’s evolving nuclear/ballistic missiles capability, or choose between a decoupling and strengthened alignment strategy with the West. 15

The possibility Ankara chooses depends on a number of factors. A denial strategy for Ankara seems the least applicable, due to Iran’s WMD capabilities and their delivery systems. This is because, after 1993, when Tehran began to improve its missiles, with most of Turkey within range, Ankara could not avoid recognizing the evolving threat stemming from it. 16 Today, future forecasts for the Turkish stance in the light of drastic changes in external factors stress either decoupling or a strengthened realignment with NATO. Turkey’s security will ultimately be damaged by Iranian attempts to acquire a nuclear bomb. However, as long as the validity of the American/NATO extended deterrence is adapted to the new conditions and continuity is guaranteed, then Turkey’s decision to decouple from the Western security alliance and opt instead for an individual nuclear capability will only be a distant possibility.

The contours of any Turkish decision to act unilaterally in the acquisition of nuclear capability will, first and foremost, depend on the development of several important internal and external factors. Turkish public opinion, together with the current Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP)
government and the Turkish military evaluation of the Iranian threat, are amongst the crucial internal factors. In the last decade, the negative threat perception of Iran has drastically changed both in the Turkish public and amongst members of the AKP government. Especially after the Iraq intervention of 2003, this sudden positive change in Iranian–Turkish relations gained substantial momentum, while Ankara’s relations both with the United States and Israel simultaneously deteriorated. Hence, in the aftermath of the American-led intervention in Iraq, Tehran and Ankara found themselves cooperating on various important issues, such as energy, security, trade, and so forth. Since then, Turkey has preferred to view the evolution of the Iranian nuclear problem not as an imminent concern for Turkish foreign policy, but rather as an issue which needs to be dealt with within the parameters of the NPT.

Moreover, the reluctance displayed by certain European powers during the Gulf War of 1991 and the Iraq War of 2003 in response to Turkish demands to activate Article 4 of the Washington Treaty naturally exacerbated the widespread worry over the credibility of the alliance’s security guarantee both amongst the Turkish public and the military. The ensuing unilateralism vis-à-vis the nuclear option that was favoured by at least some members of the Turkish military naturally stemmed from this experience. Unsurprisingly, Turkish civil and military elites’ negative perceptions of the American/NATO security guarantee continued until the downed jet crisis between Turkey and Syria. On this occasion, the more constructive approach of the Alliance’s 28 members over the initiation of Article 4 of the Washington Treaty – which emphasizes the indivisibility of the security of the Alliance – worked as a catalyst in overcoming negative views about NATO in Turkey. Today, relations between Ankara and Tehran are experiencing difficulties due to events such as the missile defence issue and the Syrian crisis. Thus, Turkey’s present stand on Middle East and NATO issues can be taken as a real indication of how far Ankara is from adapting a nuclear capability of its own and in its place prepared to strengthen its alignment with the West.

Under the current circumstances, unless there is a radical change in both domestic and external conditions, any major change in Ankara’s current nuclear policy implication is not anticipated. For instance, in the realm of domestic affairs, today a retreat back from its secular and democratic practice is not expected in Turkey. Moreover, various external changes, like the collapse of the American nuclear security guarantee, a dead-end in Turkey’s EU candidacy, the existence of one or more nuclear armed states, and the collapse of the NPT regime, can influence and determine Turkey’s future policy regarding going nuclear. Among these factors, Turkey’s EU membership bid has reached a real stalemate, but the two sides’ current unhurried efforts to reinvigorate this stalled process are a sign of constructive cooperation. However, neither Brussels nor Ankara expects a rapid improvement in relations any time soon.

On the other hand, although the credibility of the NPT just before the 2010 review conference was in jeopardy, subsequent measures, especially by the nuclear powers, though welcomed fell short of assuring the non-nuclear members’ about their legitimate right of developing civil nuclear energy. Despite the existence of divergent view points within the signatories to the NPT, today the various parties to the
agreement have not yet elected to leave the Treaty. Likewise, the conversion of present nuclear hopefuls into nuclear or near-nuclear states has not become a reality on the ground in the Middle East. This holds true for Iran, too. As stated by Alon Ben Meir, the international community will still have time to continue diplomatic negotiations for at least a few more years. Yet, it is not easy from this point to accurately predict the results of these negotiations. Thus, since uncertainty about the Iranian uranium enrichment programme remains, the most appropriate option for Turkey would be to abide by the conditions of a bolstered American/NATO nuclear security guarantees.

For Turkey, the prospect of any detachment from extended deterrence and simultaneous unilateralism can only be a rational option if the above-mentioned drastic external changes are realized. But even then, a Turkish quest for a unilateral nuclear deterrent would be very challenging, due to the diplomatic, economic, and political costs. For a democratic Turkish government with a transparent record of meeting obligations under the current non-proliferation regime, it would be very difficult to act in a clandestine way to procure nuclear energy. In today’s circumstances, the transfer of civil nuclear energy is to be closely monitored. Besides, the lack of a substantial civil nuclear infrastructure – needed to develop a nuclear bomb – is an important political and material challenge to any Turkish attempt to acquire a nuclear bomb. Moreover, isolation and vulnerability to all manner of international coercive pressures – such as sanctions – are the likely consequence of a possible Turkish decision to surreptitiously gain nuclear energy.

Consequently, in today’s volatile conditions in the Middle East, where there is still the possibility of nuclear hopefuls turning into real or near-nuclear states, the unilateral acquisition of a nuclear capability is an unlikely option for Ankara as long as the extended deterrence is adapted and maintains its credibility in today’s complex deterrence conditions.

Turkey Debates Extended Deterrence

The present uncertainty in the Middle East continues to fuel current debates about the credibility of deterrence theory and its practice in the face of both old and newly emerging security challenges, which is why some international relations (IR) scholars prefer to explain today’s deterrence relationship not in terms of the previous major power rivalry, which was based on a vertical nuclear deterrence relationship, but instead opt to describe the concept as a complex one which rests on several types of relationships. In response to the current conditions in the Middle East, in the face of newly emerging nuclear hopefuls, both missile defence mechanisms as well as conventional precision guided systems have been presented as new and effective means of maintaining American/NATO extended deterrence in American national security documents. What is more striking is that, during the Iraq War, the Bush administration operationalized the preventive strike/preventive war concept for the first time. Since then the debate moved on to whether nuclear deterrence might be a better strategy to deal with regional nuclear proliferators, rather than preventive or pre-emptive attack. Of course, the military success of these new American
capabilities in the armed conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo as well as in the Gulf War was a central element in these debates. However, the military option, which includes an overwhelmingly superior American capability to launch preventive strikes deep into Iran, has thus far failed to stay the Tehran regime in its determination to develop a valid nuclear programme. This is why, in the face of the uncertainty of the Iranian nuclear programme, some NATO allies and American partners in the Middle East have felt the need to re-evaluate their own security needs in the light of the promised American extended security strategy.

So long as she has been assured about its security by its western allies, there are several rational reasons why Turkey may not decide to go nuclear in the face of a nuclear or near-nuclear Iran. However, in the volatile conditions of today’s Middle East, the weight of importance of extended deterrence gains further importance in Ankara’s security calculations.

Despite current predictions by scholars that, with the prospect of Iran becoming a nuclear power, Turkey, along with other Middle Eastern states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, would go nuclear is not a rational outcome. What is more important, the existence of several crucial factors continues to hold Ankara back from such a radical re-orientation. First of all, Turkey, as a responsible and credible actor in the international system, made its future decision clear back in the 1970s by becoming a non-nuclear member of NPT. With the passage of time, the Ankara government further strengthened its stand in this regard both by accepting the IAEA’s additional safeguard measures and by ratifying other related agreements.

When Turkey became a member of NATO back in 1952, she accepted non-nuclear status within the Alliance in return for extended deterrent guarantees. This non-nuclear status of Turkey was than shared with other NATO members. The only exceptions in NATO were the Britain, France, and the United States. Within the parameters of the Cold War, it was natural for the Ankara government to accept the general terms of NATO’s nuclear non-proliferation rules of engagement as part of the extended deterrence deal. Under Cold War conditions, the stationing of tactical nuclear weapons in several NATO countries – including Turkey – was a necessity in meeting the requirements of coupling between the two sides of the Atlantic and to make sure that the nuclear deterrence remained credible. The nuclear sharing arrangements that merged from the Cold War period were a crucial deterrence in the face of any potential threat directed at Turkey. With this arrangement, in the likelihood of a war situation, Turkey, under the nuclear sharing agreement, has acquired access to some of these weapons via the transference of weapons to its dual capable aircraft, though today the Turkish Air Force does not have any operational link with the remaining tactical weapons deployed at Incirlik.

More importantly, however, Turkey’s official stance regarding tactical nuclear weapons on its territory has not changed since their initial deployment in 1959. This is said to be due to the continuously evolving uncertainty about the international security environment around Turkey. Hence, even in the absence of an imminent nuclear threat at today’s complex security conditions, both the civilian and military elites in Turkey prefer to maintain American tactical nuclear weapons on their soil for security reasons. The new AKP government, however, has said it is in favour...
of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; yet despite its new reformist stand on the implication of many foreign policy issues, on this matter it doesn’t seem to have retreated from the traditional course navigated by previous governments.\textsuperscript{25} Thus, unlike the discussion regarding NATO’s deployment of missile defence radar at Malatya, the issue of tactical nuclear weapons in today’s democratic, open, and transparent Turkey is still a matter for concern for civilian and military elites and is consequently not debated before the public. Moreover, as a result of viewing the issue as a national security matter, both the government and the opposition continue to display an encouraging attitude towards the idea of hosting these defence systems on Turkish territory. Similarly, there is no present opposition among the Turkish public; likewise in other NATO countries in Europe.

Moreover, the shooting down of a Turkish jet by Syrian forces in June 2012 demonstrated once again the fragility of the security conditions in Turkey’s immediate neighbourhood. This recent event further strengthened Ankara’s call to keep these weapons for psychological deterrence purposes, at least until extended deterrence is adapted to meet current security conditions and hence fully meet Turkey’s security concerns regarding new nuclear hopefuls and their evolving delivery means. Without doubt, extended deterrence is a complex concept subject to constant recalculation; its importance and efficiency cannot therefore be explained simply by the existence of small numbers of tactical nuclear weapons on a few allied countries’ territories. However, according to Ankara’s perspective, this weaponry’s current importance is twofold: first, due to NATO’s coupling mechanism, they still stand as an accurate means of political symbolism between Ankara and the Alliance; second, Turkey’s security elite still considers them a credible means of deterrence against current Middle East-based WMD aspirants. Thus, the security elites of Turkey do not seem to have retreated from the notion of hosting tactical nuclear weapons on Turkish territory until Ankara has been guaranteed adequate and credible alternative means of extending the American/NATO commitment. Of course, this does not mean that they have disregarded evaluating possible alternatives that may suit Turkey’s security needs. A variety of assessments in this regard have already been implemented. On the other hand, Turkey’s current stand in this matter does not seem to be freeing Ankara from pressures related to NATO’s tactical weapons present among some of the allies in NATO.

**Extended Deterrence at Lisbon**

Just before the Lisbon Summit of 2010, NATO’s disarmament proponents criticized the alliance’s nuclear strategy – which still permits the stationing of tactical nuclear weapons on the soil of a number of member countries – as being a relic of the Cold War days. In their view, the Alliance’s nuclear strategy needs to be modified, and this change should be compatible with the basic parameters of US President Obama’s proclaimed ‘zero nuclear policy’ of 2009. In the run up to the adaption of the Strategic Concept, it is true that the allies engaged in controversial debate about the future of tactical nuclear weapons before they gathered for the Lisbon Summit in 2010. However, the Strategic Concept that was adopted in Lisbon made it clear that
'deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities, remains the element of the alliance’s overall strategy.'

This satisfied Turkey’s security expectations for the time being. It is true that, in the face of the rapidly changing security conditions, the alliance has, at present, decided to avoid a fundamental re-evaluation of the Alliance’s role in tactical nuclear weapons – this holds true for its members’ conventional forces as well.

The 2010 Strategic Concept keeps the option of nuclear first use against potential non-nuclear attacks, a relieving factor for some allies that are already face or about to face WMD capabilities in their neighbourhood and beyond.

At this point, the debate about whether NATO’s extended deterrence nuclear capability should be extended via sea-based capabilities rather than a land-based format is a matter for future discussion. Due to certain allies’ security concerns, this issue at the moment remains a political decision, but in time it is expected to be solved in tandem with certain weapons – for instance, sea- and air-based conventional precision guided systems.

To accelerate NATO’s decision on this matter, some allies proposed a missile defence mechanism as a partial substitute transcending the current problem of allied nuclear-sharing arrangements. However, in the aftermath of Lisbon the alliance continues to give importance to the principle of maintaining a credible deterrence, which is a mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities; hence the Alliance sees its nuclear potential as one of its main pillars.

For this reason, NATO is currently trying to improve and update its armament procurement in line with the rapidly changing needs of the new insecure environment in which it finds itself. Thus, at the Lisbon Summit, NATO decided ‘to develop a missile defence capability to protect all NATO European populations, territory and forces’ as one important means of deterrence capability.

This decision came about after the grave discussions that took place among the allies, which included Turkey. Of course, the Obama administration’s new initiative is to initiate a comprehensive evaluation and re-assessment of the current global and regional missile threat. This examination, in reference to the relevance of the Bush administration’s plans about ballistic missile developments, has surely played a major role in the conclusion of NATO’s last resolution about a European Phased Adaptive Missile Defence capability.

When the Obama administration, at the end of this investigation, came up with a changed threat perception regarding Iran’s development of ballistic missile capabilities, it then decided to cancel the Bush administration’s plans for a radar station in Czech Republic as well as ground-based interceptors in Poland, and instead gave the green light to the installation of a European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) as the new NATO project. According to the new American perception, the imminent threat to allied and American bases in Europe and the Middle East are expected to come from the current Iranian short- and medium-range missiles, rather than from Tehran’s intercontinental missiles, previously viewed as a primary threat to American territory. Iran’s development of long-range ballistic missiles is expected to take years, if not decades, because of shortages in related technical developments.

Thus, NATO decided at Lisbon to station the Aegis system as the Alliance’s new ballistic missile defence (BMD) component against expected short- and medium-
range missiles coming from the Alliance’s immediate vicinity and beyond. NATO’s missile defence mechanism, based on fourth round of deployments, is a work in progress and is not expected to be finalized before 2020. During this time span, NATO’s missile defence programme must adapt itself to the emergent ballistic missile threats via technological advancement. According to Missile Defense Agency statements, the Aegis BDM system of SM-3 interceptors realized 17 hits in 21 tests since 2002.34 However, it is known that these tests were conducted under unrealistic conditions. What is more important is that these tests were proved to be successful against short-range missiles but fell short against medium-range missiles and their individual warheads.35 Furthermore, there is always the possibility of adversaries attempting to initiate counter measures that mislead NATO’s current record of BMD systems, which is why the allies at the Lisbon summit mentioned the Alliance’s newly accepted ballistic missile program as one of the core elements in the Alliance’s collective defence capability. However, the BMD has also been seen as a supplementary capability which will strengthen the Alliance’s nuclear deterrent capacity. Only after her security concerns had been taken into account at Lisbon did Turkey agree to host NATO’s missile defence radar on its territory.36 All in all, Turkey’s final decision about the stationing of the BMD radar was the result of its evaluation of current and future threats in which the Ankara government regarded the BMD issue as evidence of the Alliance’s continued determination to uphold its Article 5 responsibilities towards its members, including Turkey.37

Turkish Calculations after Lisbon

Turkey continues to rely on allied deterrence while simultaneously expanding the scale and qualification of its conventional forces to meet the developing security challenges in its neighbourhood. In this regard, although Ankara in the last decade considered developing longer range missiles as counter measures against the new WMD hopefuls, it rescinded on this option and instead concentrated primarily on increasing the Turkish army’s conventional presence, such as in regional power projection, etc. According to Ian Lesser, any nuclear or near-nuclear country in the Middle East needs to think twice before attempting an offensive move against Turkey due to both Ankara’s substantial conventional capabilities and NATO’s current extended deterrence means.38 In theory this may sound appropriate; however, due to the changing security conditions in the Middle East, the deterrence extended to Ankara to meet Turkey’s security concerns needs to be bolstered via new means in tandem with the changing circumstances.

Consequently, the future pace of the evolution of extended deterrence in the face of nuclear aspirants will be of great significance in terms of reassurance for Turkey and the other Alliance members. In this regard, the future development of NATO missile defence systems is going to be a result of both technological developments as well as by political decisions made by the Alliance at the time. The Alliance, depending on future strategic threat perceptions, will decide how to respond in kind. Likewise, the future of tactical nuclear capabilities also will be a strategically crucial matter for determining the future of the Alliance’s extended deterrence.
This would also be another important factor in the process of assurance of the NATO allies. After examining the future developments of NATO adapting itself to the complex security needs of the 21st century, Turkey is expected to act appropriately with regard to any decision regarding tactical nuclear weapons. Turkey in this regard is already said to be engaged in evaluating alternative plans that would be suited to its security needs within the Alliance. The final outcome of how NATO’s missile defence and tactical nuclear weapons issues are going to be handled will surely have the greatest repercussions not only for the individual Allies but also for other actors beyond the Alliance.

More importantly, in the post-Cold War period, via the help of the new and changing dynamics of regional security, Turkey has given importance to developing constructive relations with its neighbours. This continued until the outbreak of the Arab Spring, after which matters became more complex. However, the Ankara government, despite the enduring uncertainty in this MENA region, still believes in the merits of diplomatic engagement as the best way of solving the problematic issue of WMD proliferation and their means of delivery. Turkey is encouraged to bring constructive solutions to both the old and new problems of the Middle East, and in this regard has underlined the benefits of cooperative security. The conflict-breeding Middle East region still continues to lack a proper regional security structure or a forum where states can cooperate in tackling the transnational security threats of the 21st Century – including the proliferation of WMDs; the merits of diplomacy rather than coercive measures stands as the most suitable approach. Moreover, the past and recent record of coercive methods in this region towards WMD hopefuls has proved to be counterproductive.

In view of the fact that Turkey continues to attach itself to diplomatic engagement as the appropriate foreign policy tool in countering WMD proliferation in the Middle East, it would be unrealistic to expect Ankara to join any American or Israeli attack aimed at preventing Iran from developing its nuclear capability. The reasons behind Ankara’s predictable restraint in this situation are related to various factors. According to one strategic evaluation carried out in Ankara, such a military assault on Iran would strengthen the hands of hardliners and grant them the upper hand. Moreover, this situation will result in an alignment between the Iranian people and the regime’s nuclear policies. Secondly, in case of a military assault on Iran, there is the possibility that Ankara may be a target of an Iranian retaliation attack – the Tehran authorities have already threatened to do so. Lastly, there is always the possibility that, due to the expected retaliation, the whole region would be subject to a complex flux that would have serious economic and security consequences.

The existence of both traditional and newly emerging threats in the Middle East together with the unknown repercussions of the Arab Spring have already complicated the region’s security. The states of this region as well as the external powers now seem to be more inclined to use coercive rather than cooperative methods. Despite this fact, it is certain that the multifaceted WMD problems of this region can only be expected to be solved via confidence building measures (CBMs). In this respect, the initiation of all kinds of mitigators is greatly needed.39 Turkey for her part gives utmost importance to supporting the mitigating efforts launched by various groups at certain forums
aimed at making the region free of certain WMD weapons. Naturally, having a Middle East free of nuclear weapons is in Ankara’s interest; Turkey’s support for the 2012 Conference on a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free-Zone in the Middle East (MEC conference) is thus rational and understandable.

The establishment of a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone (WMDFZ) has been supported by nearly most of the states in the Middle East since 1974, but due to the existence of divergent views on this matter it has not been realized. Since the outbreak of the Iranian nuclear crisis, the realization of a WMDFZ in the Middle East has become even more complex. Turkey in this regard has continued to make calls for the creation of a WMDFZ in the Middle East, which is in support of both the 1995 NPT Review Conference decisions as well as the 2010 NPT Review Conference’s final document. In accord with other members of the non-nuclear states of the NPT, Turkey at various platforms, both at the presidency/prime ministry and ministry of foreign affairs levels, has stated that the Iranian nuclear crisis can only be solved in conformity with IAEA norms and NPT obligations. But at the same time, Ankara has directed attention to one important point: that the nuclear have-nots have the right to nuclear energy for peaceful civilian ends and that this right is to be respected. Turkey currently believes in the merits of CBMs at the inception of a WMD-related crisis as tools which can be utilized to overcome current and future security issues of the Middle East. It is clear that the existence of a new nuclear state would disturb the existing fragile military balance of the Middle East. Thus, Turkey proposes the necessity of cooperative security – all kinds of CBMS similar to the Brazilian–Turkish swap deal – in solving the current Iranian nuclear crisis. There are academics like Pierre Goldschmidt who also support the view that P5 + 1 and Turkey, which he sees as a stakeholder country in the crisis, together should explore ways of assuring Iran via diplomatic means fully cooperates with the IAEA. According to Goldschmidt, if the Tehran regime’s real intention is not to become a nuclear or a nuclear threshold country but only to develop its legitimate right to civilian nuclear energy, then via logical win–win proposals it could be dissuaded from withdrawing from the NPT and manufacturing or testing a nuclear weapon. He further specifies the kinds of CBMs that could be used in the process of convincing Iran of the merits of cooperating with the international community and the IAEA. However, he also draws attention to the necessity of issuing UN Security Council measures that will guarantee Iran does not withdraw from the NPT.

All in all, so long as the impediments to the realization of a WMDFZ continue to exist, Turkey’s association with the extended deterrence will continue to carry weight in Ankara’s security calculations regarding newly emerging WMD hopefuls in the MENA region.

Conclusion

Since the IAEA declared Iran in violation of its safeguards agreement in 2003, the international community has worked to restrain or control Iran’s indigenous uranium enrichment. The spectrum of international responses to Iranian nuclearization varied. American-led strategies were based on supply-side denial. European
approaches gave precedence to political engagement focusing on the demand side of the equation.\textsuperscript{44} The initiation of European-led talks was evidence of an approach highlighting inducements for dealing with the crisis. The Americans, on the other hand, believing that engagement with Iran is doomed, stressed sanctions in the face of Tehran’s developing nuclear programme. The American government gradually persuaded its partners about the necessity of sanctions together, while accepting political engagement and policy-oriented inducements.\textsuperscript{45}

A radical change of approach towards Iran was observed for a brief period under Obama in 2008 when, as a candidate, he proposed a new engagement of Tehran. The Obama administration sought to overcome the impasse in the P5 + 1 process. During these times, military force was an ever-present option. However, the discovery of the secretly constructed underground enrichment facility at Fordow, near Qum, became a turning point for the American administration in its relations with Iran. Since then, Washington prefers a more pressured track.\textsuperscript{46} Today, in the aftermath of the fourth round of United Nations sanctions, both the United States and Europe have decided to intensify sanctions while simultaneously keeping the option of force relevant. Both Europeans and Americans believe that coercive methods, such as strengthened sanctions and keeping the threat of force relevant, are the only way of bringing Iran back to the negotiating table. Talk of military attack has not declined, particularly in Israeli and among its most stalwart American supporters, a possibility that cannot be disregarded.\textsuperscript{47}

Yet, even in today’s Middle East, dialogue and diplomacy are worth a try in countering a crisis which has the capacity to escalate into uncharted territory. If Iran can be persuaded to stay within the limits of NPT with a guarantee it will not attempt to acquire a nuclear bomb, Turkish leaders will breathe a sigh of relief. But there also is the possibility that the international negotiations will fail. In such a scenario, numerous options exist should Tehran decide to go nuclear. Iran may choose not to weaponize its nuclear programme but instead to stay at threshold status. The international community will be pushed to coexist with the Iranian threshold challenge and will feel the need to ensure Tehran stays within the limits of the NPT. In this case, there is always the possibility that Iran may abrogate the NPT. It is of some value that the international community has yet to arrive at this stage. There is still time for diplomacy to ensure the nascent Iranian nuclear programme is not weaponized or remains at the threshold.

Nevertheless, when one considers the possibility of diplomatic collapse, pressure to reinforce the trustworthiness of the allied security guarantee to Turkey builds. The view from Ankara is that bolstering the extended deterrence commitment should be practical rather than doctrinal in nature. In this regard the stationing of missile defence capabilities can be considered a healthy start but cannot be considered sufficient since their current credibility against proliferant states’ long and short-range missiles is not yet absolute. Aware of the developing missile threat, Turkey is working to acquire missile defence. Various bids have been considered since 2008, welcomed by the Turkish military. However, if these efforts are not fruitful, subsequent Turkish authorities may decide to join the NATO project with the conviction that the country would not be in need of another missile defence system.\textsuperscript{48}
In spite of the Lisbon decision to install missile defence radars in Turkey, Ankara still needs the means of deterring the threat of regionally launched missiles and nuclear weapons. Although Turkey maintains the second-largest conventional army in NATO, it lacks a much-needed Patriot-type missile defence capability against its eastern and southern neighbours’ WMD capabilities. Ankara’s allies’ display of solidarity, invoking Article 4 of the NATO Treaty for consultation after the June 2012 Syrian shooting of the Turkish jet, was important, relieving pessimistic fears in Turkey’s views about NATO security guarantees and the suspicion lingering from the 1990-91 and 2003 Gulf Wars. Indeed, throughout the Syrian crisis there was possibility that NATO’s nascent missile defences would face a real-time test, possibly in response to Scud missiles fired against Turkish targets, such as the cities of Iskenderun and Adana.

Freeing the Middle East from nuclear weapons and Iranian retreat from developing a threshold nuclear capability would be ideal scenarios for Ankara. However, the current stalemate does not promise a smooth exit, although there is still time and the international community may find opportunities to reach a deal with the Tehran regime on the problematic issue of nuclear enrichment. If, at the end of the road, the international community cannot dissuade Iran from becoming either a nuclear threshold country or a nuclear state free of the NPT, then the manner in which deterrence is extended is of utmost important and will be of crucial importance in Ankara’s security calculations.

Living with a nuclear- or near-nuclear-armed Iran will not be easy for neighbouring states like Turkey. In this regard, when one takes Iran’s worrying record of non-compliance with its non-proliferation responsibilities into account, it would be natural for the countries of the MENA region to search for ways to balance the threat. Hence, the credibility of extended deterrence will surely be the key factor in averting this region’s states opting for nuclear status in the face of a likely threshold-nuclear Tehran. In this regard, the current proposals regarding missile defence systems and conventional precision guided weapons as the optimum tools of deterrence continue to fall short as valid alternatives when compared with a credible reliable nuclear deterrence. So, as long as NATO maintains a credible mix of nuclear and conventional means of deterrence and guarantees allied security via strengthened extended assurance, Turkey would then be comfortable when confronted with rising new nuclear hopefuls.

If radical changes do occur in Turkey’s immediate environs, the result of Iranian nuclearization, Ankara’s likely response is expected to favour strengthening security relations with the Euro-Atlantic community, seeking to bolster the American/NATO security guarantee, rather than decoupling from the alliance.

NOTES

2. Middle East countries tend to deal with their rivals by focusing on areas of weaponry where the adversary is the strongest. Egypt always tries to divert discussions to the nuclear arena, whereas Israel
prefers a broader approach to arms control which includes conventional capabilities, chemical and biological weapons, and long-range missiles. However, the Egyptian authorities’ announcement that they are no longer focused only on eliminating Israel’s nuclear capabilities but also on comprehensive arms control efforts is an opportunity to begin the process of eliminating all WMD from the Middle East at forthcoming conferences.


16. Ibid.

17. Based on the author’s conversations with military experts. Moreover, among Turkish elites one can trace proponents of a Turkish nuclear capability among those who considered Iranian nuclear weapons capability a serious security concern for Turkey. The statements of Cüneyt Ülser, Doğan Heper and Ümit Özdağ are noteworthy in this respect. Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Barış Çağlar, ‘Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey’, Middle East Policy, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter 2008), pp.70–2.

18. Fadime Özkan interview with Nurşin Ateşoğlu Güney, ‘NATO’s Decission on Syria is the Success of Turkey’, Star, 2 July 2012 [in Turkish].

19. These views are more or less shared by Turkish scholars, among them Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Sinan Ulgen, specializing in nuclear issues related to Turkey.


21. Thus far, Turkey has invested in a number of technologies that are needed to form the basis of its own civilian nuclear energy programme, but currently lacks the relevant infrastructure needed to produce fissile material or to enrich uranium. Besides, Turkey also lacks the reprocessing mechanism that is required for the spent fuel process. This situation makes any attempt by Ankara to obtain a bomb problematic. S. Ulgen, ‘Turkey and the Bomb’, The Carnegie Papers (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Brussels, 15 February 2012).

22. Turkey joined the IAEA in 1957 and signed the NPT in 1969, although it did not ratify until 1980. Ankara IAEA Safeguards Agreement was implemented in 1981, Turkey has worked with the United States to install nuclear detectors at its borders. Additionally, Turkey emphasized export-control standards similar to those of the European Union. Turkey has a transparent record of strong and loyal non-proliferation credentials. In this regard, she has assisted in the realization of indefinite Central Asian extension of the NPT and ratified the IAEA Additional Protocol in 2000. Turkey also is party to other WMD-related nonproliferation regimes, including Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Zanger Committee on Export Controls, the Convention on Physical.

23. Tactical nuclear weapons assigned to NATO remain under American control during peace time. However, under the nuclear sharing arrangements, in the event of war control over some of these weapons can be transferred to allies who possess nuclear weapons-capable delivery systems (dual-capable aircraft). See Michael Brzoska, Anne Finger, Oliver Meimer, Götzt Neuneck and Wolfgang Zellner, *Prospects for Arms Control in Europe* (Hamburg: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2011), pp. 1–36. Despite this fact, it is asserted that the 20 of the 60–70 American tactical nuclear weapons – the exact number is not known – based at Incirlik can be delivered (under war conditions) by Turkish Air Force F-16 A/B fighters. Currently, the Turkish air force does not have a nuclear strike role in NATO; rather it provides non-nuclear air defense escort. *Milliyet*, 6 February 2012 [in Turkish].


25. Kibaroğlu, *Turkey, NATO and Nuclear Sharing*, *ibid*.


28. *ibid*.

29. *ibid*.

30. NATO, *Strategic Concept* (note 26), para. 18.


36. Turkey, during the discussions before and during the Lisbon Summit meetings, stated that NATO’s missile defence system should cover all the territories and people of the Alliance members and should avoid mentioning any specific country as the potential target.

37. Criticism of the NATO decision to station radar at Kürekçik, Malatya, came mainly from opposition parties in Turkey such as the Nationalist Party (MHP) and the Peace and Democratic Party (BDP), and to a certain extent from the Republican People’s Party (CHP). Though these critics did conflict with Turkey’s previous efforts to obtain deterrent capabilities against the evolving WMD capabilities in the Middle East, these allegations were made against the present government with the aim of making gains in domestic politics. ‘Turkish Opposition Protest NATO Radar’, *Trend*, 12 March 2012; Furuk Loloğlu, ‘CHP on Turkey and NATO’, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Fall 2011), pp. 37–42.


40. ‘Speech Delivered by H.E. Mr Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey to the General Debate of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly’, New York, 23 September 2010.


42. Turkey’s efforts, together with Brazil, at getting Tehran to sign the 17 May 2010 swap agreement would have been of crucial importance, potentially paving the way for Iran to accept for the first time the exchange of certain amounts of low enriched uranium (LEU) in return for enriched nuclear fuel for medical purposes. The Turkish–Brazilian swap proposal was an important confidence-building measure as well as an important nuclear non-proliferation tool. See Alastair Crooke, ‘Secretary Clinton’s Cold Shoulder on the Iranian Fuel-Swap Deal’, *The Middle East Channel*, 26 May 2010. Istvan Balogh, Andreas Auer, Gülden S. Ayman, Gawdat Bahgat, Carolin Goerzig, Nurşin A Güney, Bernd W Kubbig, Judith P. Harik, Erzsébet N. Rózs and Omar Shaban ‘Building on the Experiences of Mediation in the Arab World: Assessing Positive Conditions for the Middle East Conference’, Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East Policy Brief 4 (Frankfurt: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, December 2011).


45. Ibid.

