

PERCEPTIONS

JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Regional Security?

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Editorial

Perceptions continue to publish special issues on critical issues of international importance. This particular special issue, a collection of six articles, examines security in the Middle East. The Middle East is at a critical juncture and is experiencing the consequences of systemic transformations at global and regional levels. The Middle East has for a long time been seen as a conflict-prone region. It has a myriad of chronic security problems, which have implications even for global security. Regional and international actors have managed to limit these problems at the regional level for the past two decades. However, it is no longer possible to contain the security issues in the confines of national and regional borders. Given the volatile political atmosphere in the global security environment, the regional problems have emerged as considerable risk factors for international security at large. The global economic crisis has also curbed the willingness of major international actors to mediate these problems.

Regional actors have to a great extent been left on their own in dealing with the crises they are currently experiencing. The Arab Spring was a result of the crisis of hegemony in that there is no hegemonic power which is able to establish an international order, while regional powers are no longer able to

dominate each other in the Middle East. It was against this backdrop that the Arab masses revolted against their rulers and have been searching for, among others, better governance, rule of law, and democratic political institutions. The Arab masses have managed to overthrow the authoritarian regimes in a number of countries. The opposition forces in these transition countries are divided in terms of representing their people while there is no charismatic figure leading these revolts. It is not certain what kind of government they eventually will establish and whether the revolutionaries will hold power in the future of these countries. Amidst all these uncertainties, regional security has become a much more complicated issue in the Middle East, a situation which begs immediate attention.

In his contribution to the current issue, Mark Fitzpatrick deals with the question of how to contain the Iranian nuclear crisis. In his view, the idea of a fuel swap is still worthwhile. Andrea Ellner focuses on the possibility of a regional approach to the Iranian nuclear programme. Ellner examines the potential role Turkey and Brazil could play for initiating a 'Nuclear Weapons Free Zone' in the Gulf region. H. Sönmez Ateşoğlu analyzes the security of Turkey with respect to Syria, Iraq and Iran. His

model relies on the realistic account of power, and military power in particular, for predicting the security of the states under scrutiny. Katarzyna Krókwoska focuses on social, economic and political factors in the period between Syria's independence in 1946 and its unification with Egypt in 1958, which led to the fall of democracy. She concludes that social conflict, institutional weakness, the rise of radical parties, the politicization of the military and the impact of an unfavorable external environment paved way for the democratic breakdown in Syria. N. Ateşoğlu Güney examines where the international community stands vis-à-vis the nuclear proliferation challenge in the Middle East. Güney assesses whether there is any chance for a nuclear cascade in the Middle East while the Iranian stalemate persists. Cengiz Dinç offers insights on Turkey's security policy in the Middle East. He traces the roots of Turkey's new policy and underlines the constitutive roles played by democratizations and economic growth at home in triggering the changes in foreign policy practices.

Perceptions is the flagship publication of the Center for Strategic Research (SAM). The editorial team and board are

continuing to work on improving the journal's coverage, and soon *Perceptions* will start to feature a book review section. The SAM also continues to develop new partnerships, organize workshops and conferences, and increasingly act as an intermediary between, on the one hand, academia, the think-tank community, and civil society, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other. The SAM's activities have become more visible to the general public since it widened its portfolio with two new series. The first is *SAM Vision Papers*, which presents ideas and perspectives of Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, on problems and issues of international politics. The second is *SAM Policy Papers*, which presents expert opinions on issues pertaining to Turkish foreign policy, neighbouring regions, and international relations at large. All publications are available on the Center's website, <http://www.sam.gov.tr>

Soon we will publish new special issues, looking at, among other issues, new developments in Turkish foreign policy, foreign policy analysis, and Turkish migration to Germany. Stay tuned for more!

Bülent ARAS
Editor-in- Chief

Iran - Challenge or Opportunity for Regional Security?

Andrea ELLNER*

Abstract

This paper argues that the framing of Iran's policies as "the problem" for regional security and the attempts of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany (P5+1), especially the "Western" allies, to coerce Iran in negotiations over its nuclear program perpetuate not only pre-established tensions, but also the current diplomatic stalemate. The core aim of the paper is to propose an alternative, regionally led approach to Iran and its nuclear program. It argues that this could become an opportunity for regional security-building, if Iran is treated as an equal to its negotiating partners. With this aim it critically examines some core underlying causes of regional tensions and threat perceptions, seeks to identify opportunities for cooperation, and proposes treating Iran as a potential founding member of a regional framework managing and regulating the running, operational safety and proliferation

safeguards of its and other emerging regional nuclear energy programs. Such a framework could be tied to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The paper examines the role Turkey together with Brazil, which has experience in negotiating nuclear cooperation agreements under political tensions, could play in initiating the process, which could lead to a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Gulf, and what constraints it is likely to face.

Key Words

Mistrust, nuclear co-operation, Turkey, Israel, ABACC, NPT.

Introduction¹

Over the past decade Iran's nuclear policies have attracted much attention and aggravated pre-existing suspicions about its intentions and external policies. In the "West" as well as in parts of the region it has been increasingly portrayed as "the problem" for regional, or even global, security. The following analysis seeks to show that perpetuating this perception of Iran, with a focus on its nuclear program, does not adequately

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capture the underlying dynamics of regional insecurity and is detrimental to both regional security and progress in the negotiations of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) plus Germany (P5+1) on Iran's nuclear program. It critically examines some of the core causes and symptoms of mistrust and tension in the region in order to demonstrate that Iran is not the principal cause of regional insecurity, although it can be a contributor to it, and that the policies of external actors, and some of their client states, are not conducive to ameliorating existing threat perceptions or promoting regional stability. The analysis furthermore seeks to identify aspects of regional security dynamics which may offer opportunities for an alternative, regional approach to Iran, especially its nuclear program, kernel for a regional security regime based initially on nuclear regulatory cooperation.

Amongst external actors in the region, the US and its transatlantic allies have been the most prominent voices warning that the lack of transparency over Iran's nuclear program- coupled with the development of missile technology- strongly suggested that its intentions were not as peaceful as it claimed. They fear that an Iranian nuclear weapons capability would seriously threaten regional and global security as well as the future of the Nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty (NPT), since Iran is a Non-Nuclear Weapons State (NNWS) member of the NPT.

In the region, Israel has long assumed that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons, and not just a break-out capability, which is the capacity to produce nuclear weapons quickly at a later stage. It already perceived Iran's links with Hamas and Hezbollah, which Israel, the US and the EU classify as terrorist organizations, as a threat, when the provocative rhetoric of Iran's leadership under President Ahmadinejad raised the specter of Iran as an "existential threat". These fears matter to the US and Britain, France and Germany- the EU members

US and its European allies have long insisted that Iran provide verifiable assurances of the peaceful nature of its program.

prominently involved in the negotiations with Iran- as they regard Israel's security as one of their responsibilities.

They are not alone in their perceptions of Iran as a security threat. In recent years others in the region, such as the Gulf States or Turkey, and those further afield, such as Russia, China or India, have expressed more or less openly their desire not to see a nuclear armed Iran. Yet, these countries have been dealing differently with Iran. Turkey, to a degree some Gulf states, China, Russia and India have engaged and maintained, developed or expanded their economic and political ties with Iran. Their approach has been less coercive than that of the "Western" allies and Israel,

although, as members of the P5+1, China and Russia supported the tougher UNSC sanctions in 2010 and India has consented to adhering to the sanctions package.

Apart from increasing pressure on Iran and persuading others to support their coercive approach, the US and its European allies have long insisted that Iran provide verifiable assurances of the peaceful nature of its program. This includes compliance with inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), ratifying the Additional Protocol, which enhances the IAEA's powers, and ceasing uranium enrichment. They expect Iran to fulfill these preconditions before they are prepared to discuss implementing their proposed incentives for Iranian compliance and consider expanding the scope of negotiations. That approach, which has been accompanied by repeated calls for military strikes in the US, Israel and occasionally elsewhere, has produced an uneasy stalemate.

The likelihood of the US using force against Iran may be low. Arguments against such escalation have been carrying the day for years and the Obama Administration indicated its reluctance to be drawn into another war in the Middle East in early 2011, when it took a back seat during the establishment of the no-fly zone over Libya and insisted that NATO command the operations. But the repeated attempts at negotiations coupled with progressively harsher sanctions have not made a peaceful

settlement with Iran more likely. This leaves not only the problem of Iran's nuclear program unsolved, but also uncertainty over the future behavior of Israel, whose sense of insecurity has been growing even greater since the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011. Hence the current approach to Iran requires adjustment.

The following analysis proposes that, while the initial aim of an alternative approach might be to break the current stalemate, there is the potential to turn Iran's nuclear policies from a challenge into an opportunity for regional security building. In order to explain the underlying rationale for this proposal and identify some of the key challenges for its implementation, this analysis discusses a number of relevant aspects of the regional context. Is not possible within the confines of this article to examine the regional security challenges, of which many have a more immediate impact on human security than the perceived threat from Iran, as comprehensively as they deserve. The analysis focuses on the dispute with Iran, because, if unresolved, it will foil the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFFZ) in the Middle East that was agreed at the 2010 "NPT Review Conference" and may trigger a much worse security crisis in the medium term or, should Iran indeed acquire nuclear weapons, a nuclear arms race in the long term. It briefly discusses the problem of Israeli nuclear policy, but focuses on the Iranian nuclear program because there is greater scope for cooperation and

confidence-building with a chance for more immediate success which may in the long term benefit negotiations with Israel.

Repeated attempts at negotiations coupled with progressively harsher sanctions have not made a peaceful settlement with Iran more likely.

Scope for cooperation lies in the fact that a range of regional countries are planning or implementing nuclear energy infrastructures.² Especially in the Middle East, where mistrust continues to be so pervasive, it is primarily in their and their neighbors' interest that they can assure each other credibly of the peaceful purposes of these facilities and their governments' efforts to keep nuclear materials secure from illicit access by individuals, including non-state actors. Regional cooperative non-proliferation arrangements could have several desirable side-effects, especially if they ultimately become tied into the IAEA framework. They would assure the international community of the proliferation security of the nuclear energy programs and could include cooperation on regulating their operational safety. They could begin to reverse the spiral of mistrust by initiating cooperation on comparatively technical matters and open up opportunities for gradually widening the scope of cooperation.

De-politicizing initial cooperative efforts would be important because anxieties in the region are often expressed in terms that do not openly address the underlying actual causes of the tensions, which have originated from a complex set of intra-regional frictions that have often been exacerbated by the policies of external actors, especially patron states such as the US. As this analysis will show, the case of Iran illustrates this well. Regional actors publicly emphasize the presumed nuclear threat, but their reasons for fearing Iran or portraying it as a pre-eminent threat often lie elsewhere. Clients of the US may frame threat perceptions in a way that their patron perceives them as common concerns. A US response may seek to promote these presumed shared interests, but may be neither conducive to regional security, let alone the development of trust, nor in the client's long-term security interest. Not all regional states treat Iran exclusively as a negative force or pariah, but this can generate distrust on the part of their patron or Western allies. The potential merits for regional security of regional involvement, such as that of Turkey, and a less confrontational approach to Iran are thus not recognized. This analysis seeks to identify some avenues for tapping into the potential for a more constructive approach.

Trust and Regional Insecurity

It is not a particularly novel observation that trust has long been

exceedingly scarce in the Middle East. Depending on the perspective of regional actors, this lack of trust has either been the cause or consequence of tensions and conflicts, which have repeatedly escalated into violence, feeding more mistrust. Some of the roots of intra-regional tensions, such as frictions between Iran and its Arab neighbors, have a long history. After World War II more causes of tension and mistrust in the region and between regional and external actors were added during the de-colonization process and with the establishment of Israel as a sovereign state by the UN. These processes resulted in a range of territorial disputes and have strong ideational aspects. External powers, such as the US, the EU and some of its members, as well as the Soviet Union, now Russia, further added to these tensions. Their relations with regional countries have been driven by self-interest and shaped by competition with each other for influence. Over the past six decades these material and ideational conflicts have evolved into apparently irreconcilable and embedded underlying assumptions about roles, aims and behavior of state and non-state actors in the region. Overlaying these tensions today are the effects of the 2003 Iraq War, which are discussed below. Assumptions can change. They are perceptions, not fixed facts; but change will require concerted and sustained efforts by all actors involved. The modern history of the Middle East is littered with failed attempts to build confidence, trust and security. Current

conditions, exacerbated by the policies of key actors, seem markedly unfavorable to positive change. Two particularly intractable examples, which are linked and highly relevant today, are attempts to re-start the Arab-Israeli peace process and establish a WMDFZ.

Iran could make the deterrence argument and become more committed to acquiring actual nuclear weapons, thus reinforcing Israel's insistence on a NWS status.

The Israeli government has consistently refused to both change its policy of nuclear ambiguity, which maintains that it will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the region coupled with a stance of neither confirming nor denying its possession of such weapons, and contemplate negotiating a WMDFZ until it has arrived at a peace settlement with its Arab neighbors.³ However, as a former head of Israel's Atomic Energy Agency, the late Shelveth Freier, has argued, associated with this has been Israel's assumption that the Arab states were not seeking peace with Israel.⁴ Today, the prospects for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement are possibly more remote than they have been for decades, partly because current Israeli policy reinforces Arab preconceptions that Israel is not seeking a mutually agreeable peace

settlement. Even Israeli diplomats have criticized their government's foreign policy; its declaration that peace with Palestinians was impossible was one reason for Ambassador Ilan Baruch's resignation in March 2011.⁵

Yet, Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity has been tacitly accepted not only by its allies, but also in the region. Its possession of nuclear weapons is quietly assumed. When in 2006 Ehud Olmert informally called Israel a Nuclear Weapons State (NWS), he caused outrage at home.⁶ And in 2008 the members of the Arab League threatened to withdraw from the NPT should Israel announce its possession of nuclear weapons and not subsequently disarm and accede to the NPT as a NNWS.⁷ Openly admitting to its nuclear weapons status is thus only likely if Israel is prepared to relinquish its nuclear weapons or receives assurances that it will be treated like India and Pakistan, which suffered sanctions only relatively briefly before gaining US acceptance as NWS outside the NPT. From here Reuven Pedatzur developed the suggestion that Israel should consider linking concessions on peace with Palestinians to demands that the US recognize its NWS status.⁸

However, should Iran be seeking to produce nuclear weapons, it could then argue it was not the first regional nuclear proliferator. Considering Israeli threats of conventional attacks on Iran to prevent this outcome, Iran could make the deterrence argument and become more committed to acquiring

actual nuclear weapons, thus reinforcing Israel's insistence on a NWS status. The Arab League's warning suggests the latter could turn into a major regional crisis for the NPT. Should nuclear disarmament then be forced upon Israel, it would see its position *vis-a-vis* Iran weakened, insist on a NWS status and the vicious cycle would enter another round.

With regard to Iran's Arab neighbors, their suspicions of Iran's nuclear program have to be seen in a wider context. They, and Arab states amongst themselves, have long been competing over territory, political influence and regional pre-eminence; these conflicts have strong ideational elements, too. Territorial disputes have caused tensions, such as over the Abu Musa and Tunb islands between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran or over Bahrain, and war, for example Iraq's invasion of Kuwait followed by the Gulf War in 1990/1. The ideational aspects of the context are often explained through the historical divide between Shia and Sunni communities. Iraq's war against Iran in the 1980s had after all been fought, and supported by regional countries, especially Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and Western powers, in order to stem the assumed threat of Iran seeking to export its revolution into the region.⁹

Perceived to be especially vulnerable were countries such as Iraq and smaller Gulf states where Shia-majority populations were ruled by Sunni-minority governments. Such suspicions resulted in the stable assumption of Iran's

“hidden hand” threatening the internal stability of these countries and hold on power of their rulers or governments. These pre-existing thought patterns have since been reinforced. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein and the arrival of a Shia-led coalition government in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the King of Jordan have warned of the rise of a Shia crescent, a framing of the threat posed by Iran which many in the US share.¹⁰ President Ahmadinejad’s alleged appeal to the “Arab street” has been much discussed and Iran has been held responsible for the popular uprisings that began in early 2011.¹¹ The analysis will return to these issues below.

From Iran’s perspective, the support for Iraq in the 1980s, even when it used chemical weapons against Iran, reinforced both Iran’s alienation from, and distrust towards, its Arab neighbors and Western powers and the conviction that it ultimately had to fend for itself.¹² It enhanced its sense of “strategic loneliness”.¹³ Even before the revolution Iran shared this sense of isolation with Israel. It had led to both forming a clandestine strategic relationship, especially with Iran under the Shah, which lasted nearly until the 2003 Iraq War changed Iran’s strategic context; it is worth noting that Iran is home to the largest Jewish community outside Israel in the region, there are well over 200,000 Persian or Iranian-Jewish Israeli citizens, some of whom are members of the political elite.¹⁴ Thus, seemingly irreconcilable tensions, expressed also in aggressive rhetoric which in turn serves

as evidence for perceptions of hostile intent, can be and have in the past been temporarily or partially overcome by strategic or material interests. Similar examples are the brief rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the late 1990s¹⁵ and the continuing trade and economic relations between Iran and its smaller Gulf neighbors.¹⁶

The dominant regional discourse, frames Iran as a threat, often with a distinct undertone of irreconcilability.

The dominant regional discourse today, however, frames Iran as a threat, often with a distinct undertone of irreconcilability. In a somewhat ironic twist, among Arab states Iran is again cast in a light similar to Israel. They are again both outsiders or strategically lonely. Both seek recognition and, because they also feel insecure, both pursue policies that are prone to attract attention as a substitute for recognition because they are or are being perceived as threats. There are, however, two salient differences in today’s context. One, any form of strategic alliance between them is out of the question. There are even suggestions that Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, may find common strategic cause with Israel and would support an Israeli attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities.¹⁷ Two, in contrast to Iran, Israel is afforded the protection

of Western allies. Their policies have exacerbated the causes of insecurity in the Middle East as the next section will show.

External Actors and Regional Dynamics

Overlaying intra-regional differences has been the perceived immutability of the alliances of the US and other Western powers with Israel and Western interests in access to oil as well as trade and investment relations particularly with the rich Gulf states. The pre-eminent aim of external actors has been a stable Middle East without a dominant state beyond their control which might infringe on their interests. Western actors preferred to co-opt regional governments, but if a dominant power threatened to emerge they chose either containment or confrontation. The principal targets for the pursuit of each approach at different times were Iraq, Iran and arguably Egypt. Co-optation, for example of Saudi Arabia and the small Gulf states, Iran in the 1970s, Iraq in the 1980s, and Egypt after it had made peace with Israel, meant supporting autocratic regimes which served Western material and political interests while condoning their disregard for other declared Western aims, such as the promotion of democracy, human rights and economic development. This policy has been called into question twice recently, once, if briefly and ineffectually, by the Bush Administration, and, possibly more sustainably, since the beginning of

2011 during the so-called Arab Spring, which led to considerable soul-searching in the West.

Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was in part officially motivated by the aim of destroying Iraq's presumed WMD programs, the US declared its intention to reverse its former approach and create an Iraq that could be a beacon of democracy and trigger a wave of democratization across the region.¹⁸ The declared non-proliferation rationale was proven invalid and the invasion first resulted in a civil war in Iraq followed by continuing instability in the country and the region. Iraq's neighbors have suffered the consequences of its internal instability, which generated refugee flows whose initial partially positive effects on local economies have begun to fade behind the negative impact they have on social, economic and political dynamics.

The war is also perceived as the main reason for Iran's new ability to exert influence in Iraq and across a much greater part of the region than previously possible.¹⁹ It is, however, not universally seen as the main reason for the so-called Shia awakening.²⁰ Moreover, warnings of the rise of a "Shia crescent" veil such underlying causes of tensions as power struggles over regional pre-eminence and interests in preserving the status quo, including alliances with external actors, especially the US. Saudi Arabia's hostility towards Iran has a religious dimension as it involves religious leadership claims of Wahabis and the revolutionary rhetoric of Iran's leadership. However, both

resource rich countries are also motivated by aspirations to political influence and power in the region, especially in the Gulf; to some degree this is tied to the survival of their governments. Furthermore, the Shia community in the Middle East is not as unified a force as portrayed and historically rooted assumptions do not necessarily capture the full picture.

In Iraq Saddam Hussein's minority Sunni regime was replaced with a Shia-majority coalition government, which includes Kurdish parties. Iranian and Iraqi Shia do have long-standing relations, but it is not a given that they will work together for a presumed common aim of regional Shia dominance. It should be remembered that during the war in the 1980s, Iraqi and Iranian Shia fought each other. Today the Iraqi Shia community is divided on the issue of cooperation with Iran, with nationalist Shia objecting to Iran's influence.²¹ It has furthermore been argued that the main Iraqi Shia cities of Najaf and Karbala offer nationalist Iraqi Shia fora for opposing Iran's influence.²² In other words, nationalism- and tribalism- can trump sectarianism.

Likewise, smaller Gulf states hold Iran responsible for the growing Shia assertiveness. The Bahraini government is wary of Iran, because it used to have territorial claims on the island. It has accused Iran of fomenting sectarian unrest for some time.²³ However, the recent popular uprisings have not lent weight to the argument that Iran's hidden hand is solely responsible for

destabilizing the region.²⁴ Bahraini Shia have long viewed the Sunni-minority government's policies as discriminatory.²⁵ The uprisings there and elsewhere, especially in Egypt, were triggered by a singular, symbolic event in Tunisia, the self-emolition of a market trader in protest against political and economic injustices, not Iran, which has been quite unsuccessful in its attempt to claim credit for the revolutions.

In the wake of the Iraq War, particularly after the arrival of President Ahmadinejad, Iran may have jumped on the bandwagon of Shia discontent and lent support, allegedly including arms shipments.²⁶ However, while this behavior is opportunistic and potentially inflammatory in an already fraught context, casting Iran as the sole instigator of internal instability, as if no prior cause for discontent had existed, is disingenuous.²⁷ In Yemen the Northern Houthi tribe has been engaged in a violent conflict with the government for years. Both have denied that their conflict is sectarian, but interference from outside actors, especially Saudi Arabia and the US, and the conflation of this conflict with the emergence of "al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula"²⁸ have intensified the problem. Outside actors pursue their own interests, such as counter-terrorism. This can be exploited by the Yemeni government to pursue its interests in maintaining authority at home. It is then less likely to seek a resolution to the original problem, the Houthi's perceptions of discrimination against them.

Over the past decade the US and its allies have continued to view these problems through the lens of traditional balance of power models and responded with a confrontational approach, although in the case of Iraq this has arguably backfired. Isolating Iran and coercing it into complying with UNSC resolutions through sanctions has failed to achieve the desired results. As has the declared aim of establishing a WMDFZ. Rather than exploring the potential for regional actors to become actively engaged in generating security arrangements that benefit the region as a whole, external powers have been seeking to maintain control over their client states or have acted on apparently shared threat perceptions. They thus indulged their and their client's self-interests without addressing the underlying causes of insecurity in the region. Haji-Yusufi has examined these complex dynamics in his critical analysis of the idea of the Shia crescent.²⁹

Isolating Iran and coercing it into complying with UNSC resolutions through sanctions has failed to achieve the desired results.

In essence, Western involvement has perpetuated regional divisions and embedded assumptions, for example about alliances. The idea that the US will always support Israel was reinforced

when Israel successfully rejected the Obama Administration's attempts to revive Arab-Israeli negotiations in 2009 and in February 2011 the US was the only UNSC member to veto the resolution intending to stop Israel's settlement policy.³⁰ As a patron the US continues to add to regional instability. If approved by Congress, the Obama Administration's consent to a \$60 billion arms sales agreement with Saudi Arabia, the biggest in US history, is likely to exacerbate the confrontational climate in the region, a risk that has not gone unnoticed by some members of Congress.³¹ The Administration justifies the deal with a view to Yemen, specifically the dispute with the Houthis, but mainly the perceived threat from Iran.³² This is not conducive to regional security building.

The Need for a Different Approach to Regional Security and Iran

The contemporary security situation in the Middle East is especially complex because the region is going through significant strategic change while historically rooted animosities persist. This combination of change and negative stability reinforces the causes of regional insecurity. Threat perceptions form the basis of responses of regional and external actors to the changing strategic environment and are based on assumptions about the nature

of relationships within the region and between regional actors and traditional patron states. Yet, the Iraq War has limited the standing and room for maneuver of the US and its major Western allies, undermined the confidence of traditional client states in their patrons, and changed the regional security dynamics for the worse. US clients have been ultimately relying for their security on US military power. The failure to deliver stability in post-Saddam Iraq shook their confidence in the reliability of their patron's security promises; some have interpreted the planned US arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states as one symptom of these developments.³³

Salient aspects of the approach central Western actors have been pursuing thus have led to or may in future trigger further destabilization. They have framed Iran's influence in the region almost exclusively negatively. This is on the one hand unsurprising. Iran has sought to influence the political environment in Iraq as well as Afghanistan. In both countries the US and its coalition partners have a major stake. Iranian engagement there makes it more difficult for them to implement and pursue their policy preferences. On the other hand it is misguided. Iran also has a stake in a stable regional environment which does not threaten its security. Western powers recognize this. In Afghanistan they have been co-operating with Iran on counter-narcotics efforts.³⁴ However, in other areas their default position is less to explore where their and Iran's interests

meet, but to assume that Iran's influence will inevitably be destabilizing or run counter to their interests.

Iran has sought to influence the political environment in Iraq as well as Afghanistan. In both countries the US and its coalition partners have a major stake.

One reason for this is their perception of Iran's definition of its role at least in part as a revolutionary state which seeks to build alliances that can at a regional and global level act as a counterweight to the US-led highly developed part of the world. The Iranian leadership's and especially President Ahmadinejad's provocative rhetoric adds to this perception. It has also successfully provoked Israel into defining Iran as an "existential threat", a provocation to which, as Avner Cohen has argued, Israel should not have risen. Without minimizing the challenge the Iranian nuclear program poses to the nuclear non-proliferation regime, he regarded it as

a great pity that through our own conduct, and especially the irresponsibly alarmist voices emerging from among us, we have inflated a political problem into an existential threat. And it is an equally great pity that we have granted legitimacy to nuclear bombs being viewed as weapons, instead of helping to delegitimize this useless weapon.³⁵

The combination of the sense of responsibility for Israel's security and the insistence on keeping the lead in dealing with Iran has not enabled the US and its Western allies to see that the political challenge Iran poses bears the possibility of an opportunity. This is because they have ignored that Iran does also pursue its self-interests through diplomacy. Iran's alliance policies demonstrate this well. It has extended its influence into Africa and Latin America, but it is unsurprising that the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) have been particularly responsive. The Western allies do not seem to acknowledge sufficiently that one reason for Iran's success in establishing close relations with the BRICs is the shift in global economic, and consequently political, power structures. Long regarded as emerging economies, since the global economic crisis the BRICs, chiefly India and China, have become established global actors. Their agendas are, however, not automatically uniform or compatible with Western interests in the region.

The US and some of its allies view with suspicion China's and Russia's relations with Iran. They accuse them of undermining UNSC sanctions and their impact on Iran due to their trade relations and political engagement, although the US did persuade both to support the UNSC sanctions in 2010. Yet, the BRICS do not have an interest in a nuclear-armed Iran. Their close economic relations with Iran have been predominantly defined as constraints on

their willingness to put pressure on Iran, but they also give them leverage. They may require Iranian fossil fuels for their economic development, but Iran is also dependent on their payments and refined oil imports, for example from India. This has given rise to the proposal that India could facilitate rapprochement between Iran and the US, which do after all share a range of strategic interests.³⁶

For the smaller Gulf states, too, it has been difficult to balance their interests in minimizing causes of conflict with their powerful neighbor and trading partner, Iran, and their interests in maintaining good relations with the US, on whose patronage their security has long depended, Britain, with which they have close economic relations, and more recently France. However, the potential of tying them into a regional security arrangement has not been sufficiently explored, although Qatar for example "has increasingly reached out to Iran, even discussing ways to bring Tehran into regional security discussions".³⁷ With a view to regional and US national security Kinzer has argued that the US should develop a new perception of Iran as a strategic partner and enhance its relationship with Turkey.³⁸ Yet, the US has found it difficult to accommodate Turkey's and Brazil's engagement with Iran. It is said to welcome Turkey's involvement now,³⁹ but Turkey was still sidelined during the Istanbul talks in early 2011. The next section will argue that Turkey, and also Brazil, have a great

deal to offer for a solution to the dispute with Iran.

Turkey and Brazil - The Dream Team?

Greater involvement of regional actors in the negotiations with Iran is more likely to result in credible assurances about the peaceful nature of the nuclear program and can lead to a system of safeguards and Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) that have the potential to contribute to security in the wider region. This is particularly important not only for a sustainable solution to the dispute with Iran, but also for future challenges to safeguarding the emerging nuclear energy industries in the region. The following discussion is somewhat connected to ideas John C. Shenna, a serving European diplomat who wrote under a pseudonym, developed for regional engagement with Iran on the matter of its nuclear program.⁴⁰ This article agrees that Turkey can play a leading role, but is a little more cautious about two aspects of Shenna's proposals. One, he suggests that Saudi Arabia might join Turkey in setting up a tri-lateral nuclear safeguards arrangement with Iran, but the above analysis has demonstrated that this may not be an immediately available option.

Two, Shenna argues that concerns over Iran's human rights violations make it particularly difficult for Western actors to negotiate constructively with

Iran. Indeed Iran is under US and EU sanctions for the nuclear program and human rights violations. Shenna thus focuses entirely on regional dispute resolution, but the exclusion of Western actors is unlikely to be acceptable to them and Israel. If Israel did come to feel even more vulnerable and perceive an increasing threat from Iran, it would be more likely to take matters into its own hands and escalate the conflict. Preventing this outcome must be an aim of any new approach. Yet, rather than just averting the worst-case scenario, the approach should and can initiate the evolution of a sustainable solution that can generate trust on nuclear and eventually other security issues in the region.

As explained below, the core point is to refrain from singling out Iran as "the problem" and to view its nuclear program as one of the many nuclear energy programs emerging in the region. Notwithstanding the interests of external actors, regional countries have an even more immediate interest in ensuring that their neighbors perceive their nuclear programs as peaceful. Herein lies the opportunity for a regional nuclear control regime, which Turkey and Brazil are well placed to promote. In a nutshell, Turkey brings cultural sensitivity, understanding and the experience of long-standing political and economic relations with Iran. It has already demonstrated that these factors and its status as a NNWS-Iran rejects the legitimacy of the

negotiating position of the NWS- make it an acceptable negotiating partner for Iran. Although lessons are not entirely transferable, Brazil has experience in negotiating under tense political conditions CBM and a bilateral nuclear security regime with Argentina.

Turkey and Iran have in some ways parallel histories. At times Iran even sought to emulate Turkey's approach to modernization.⁴¹ Turkey has also demonstrated a great deal more sensitivity to the underlying aspirations of Iran than the P5+1, especially the Western allies, that is, Iran's desire to be recognized as an influential and potentially constructive regional actor. In other words, at the public political level it has afforded Iran what it seeks: recognition. In private, Turkey has, however, also been able to persuade Iran to agree to concessions, as the fuel-swap deal demonstrated, and it has made plain its objections to nuclear weapons in the region.

Barkey has described Turkey's role in dealing with Iran as a mediator whose core interest is in a stable Iranian regime, but who is also in competition with Iran for regional influence. He suggested that Iran would not be prepared to accept Turkish mediation because it also "perceives itself as a rising power of great significance, which ought not to need a mediator, especially by a mid-level power or neighbor".⁴² Finally, he has argued that Turkey would be able to eclipse Iran with its increasing economic and diplomatic influence in

the region, especially its burgeoning ties with Syria. Yet, seeking to eclipse Iran would not be compatible with Turkey's current foreign policy of "zero problems with neighbors", which precludes open attempts at outmaneuvering Iran as a regional power.

Turkey's role should not be confined to that of a mediator. It can play a leading role in initiating regional cooperation on nuclear safeguards and regulating the emerging nuclear energy industries.

Furthermore, Turkey's role should not be confined to that of a mediator. It can play a leading role in initiating regional cooperation on nuclear safeguards and regulating the emerging nuclear energy industries. In principle Turkey is well placed to initiate negotiations between Iran and other regional actors aimed at establishing a nuclear safeguards regime, or in the first instance a joint regulatory framework for operational safety and multilateral cooperation on fuel supply, which may be less sensitive and thus easier to negotiate. Among regional countries Turkey is least tied into the long-standing rivalries and frictions discussed above, although Saudi Arabia is skeptical of Turkish influence.⁴³ Notwithstanding the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, this lack of more recent historical baggage can work as an asset.

While Iran may be the first country to enter into negotiations, it would be important to state from the outset that the aim is ultimately to tie all regional countries with an existing or planned nuclear energy infrastructure into a future framework for managing and regulating these nuclear programs. The purpose here is to indicate to Iran that it is not being victimized, that Turkey is acting neither as an agent of, nor a mediator for, “the West”, and that Iran is being encouraged to become a founding member of a regional nuclear regulatory regime. Turkey and Iran wish to be perceived as trustworthy actors. Acknowledging their responsibility towards each other could be a basis for cooperation on running and regulating their nuclear energy sectors. They would treat each other as equals. If the aim of such cooperation were to create the kernel of a regional nuclear safeguards and operational safety regime, they would enjoy the status of founding members. Iran would not be treated as a subordinate requiring mediation in order to settle its dispute with the P5+1.

Some regional governments and the West might reject such an approach. Highlighting that the US and the international community would seek assurances and transparency, Lorenz and Kidd for example have argued that Turkish efforts at initiating multilateral cooperation on nuclear matters in the Middle East would have to fulfill three core criteria: (1) gradual thematic build-up, lest such cooperation be

perceived as proliferation sensitive; (2) involvement of the IAEA in an oversight role; and (3) full transparency of any plans for cooperation to the outside world.⁴⁴ These are important aspects of confidence-building between the region and international community and, the analysis will return to this issue later, but preconditions can be counterproductive, especially if they are expected to be formalized.

In the fraught political environment in the region and particularly within Iran these preconditions risk making the initiation of nuclear cooperation vulnerable to spoilers who are interested in maintaining friction between Iran and “the West” or invoking regional objections on grounds of discrimination by NWS against NNWS and within the NPT. Lorenz and Kidd after all emphasized that Turkey is especially concerned that multilateral nuclear fuel supply arrangements should not be perceived as discriminatory.⁴⁵ Turkey shares this conviction with others in the region who have long objected that the efforts of NWS to restrict their use of the full fuel cycle contravene NPT regulations. The same concerns had led to Brazil and Argentina rejecting IAEA safeguards and membership of the NPT before their long journey towards joining these international regimes in the late 1990s.⁴⁶

Iran’s neighbors have an even greater interest in assurances of the peaceful nature of its nuclear program than the more remote “Western” allies. They

would be more vulnerable to Iran's enhanced ability to exert political pressure, if it retained its policy of ambiguity. Furthermore, as argued above, they have an interest in communicating credibly that their own nuclear energy programs are peaceful and safe. Hence, they need to accept responsibility for their own policies and security, which includes a reputation for trustworthiness, but their Western allies need to afford them the space to do so. Considering regional suspicions of discrimination at the international level, a regional regime could fulfill these functions in the first instance. As Brazilian-Argentine cooperation has shown, this does not preclude an eventual link to the IAEA, especially as the potential cooperation partners in the Middle East are already NPT members.

The Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) could work as a model for a regional safeguards regime in the Middle East.

Brazil and Iran established relations soon after the Islamic Revolution. They have expanded to such an extent since 2000 that Brazil is now Iran's principal trading partner in Latin America.⁴⁷ Brazil has modeled its role in support of nuclear non-proliferation worldwide, and specifically with a view to Iran, on the idea

of acting as a mediator.⁴⁸ If Turkey took the lead in negotiations, Brazil would be well placed to play this role using its expertise in negotiating and running a bi-lateral regime. The Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) could work as a model for a regional safeguards regime in the Middle East, as the Agency's Secretary Antonio Oliveira has suggested. He emphasized that before the creation of the Agency both countries, which are the only two in South America to have mastered the full fuel cycle and the only neighbors in the world to have established an agency like ABACC, had conducted their nuclear research in "a climate of distrust and rivalry".⁴⁹ Not only the two countries, but also major international actors distrusted their nuclear intentions.⁵⁰

A number of other characteristics of their nuclear cooperation are relevant here. It emerged without outside interference. Their interest in addressing outside pressures on their nuclear programs together was greater than pursuing parallel, potentially confrontational, approaches.⁵¹ The negotiating process followed its own logic, described as "roughly cooperation, transparency, confidence-building, verification, in contrast to the approach advocated in international forums [sic] ... by northern countries: verification, transparency, confidence-building, cooperation".⁵² Counter-intuitively, the nuclear field was the highly symbolic starting point for cooperation whose

scope expanded quickly into other areas. This has been explained with the absence of “public and private economic and commercial interests” impeding progress in negotiating agreements.⁵³ Finally, ABACC was modeled on Euratom, the European Atomic Energy Community.⁵⁴ Mallard has argued that Euratom could, with some improvements to the original treaty, constitute a model for the Middle East in three areas: nuclear safeguards against illicit diversion by state and non-state actors, CBM, especially in the area of nuclear R&D, and fuel supply guarantees for state actors.⁵⁵ Euratom and its associated organizations also adopted roles in the promotion of cooperation on operational safety and regulation of nuclear facilities. There is thus no shortage of models or technical solutions, but Turkey and Brazil cannot quite be the dream team, at least not alone.

A Few Caveats

The aim of this paper is not to examine in detail how models from other regions might be applied in the Middle East. It thus does not seek to propose a plan in which negotiating steps or themes are laid out in sequence. It is, however, concerned with the political context in which solutions would be negotiated. It is thus necessary to address some caveats. Some have argued that only after transition to democratic governments in both countries was progress on Brazilian-Argentinean cooperation in

the nuclear field possible.⁵⁶ This could be cause for pessimism about the model’s transferability. However, when in 1980 Brazil and Argentina arrived at the initial agreement to cooperate on peaceful nuclear issues, which did not produce results, both had military governments. This is not the case in Iran or any other potential cooperation partner in the region. Furthermore, by the time they made progress they were not mature democracies.

Cooperation on nuclear regulation is a government-to-government matter. Regional governments have an interest in mutual assurances of the peaceful nature of their nuclear industries. This can include Iran, if it is afforded the recognition it seeks and does not feel threatened by its neighbors and external actors. Finally, in Iran a peaceful program has wide public support, but there is opposition to nuclear weapons even within the structures of government. There is thus at least a possibility that cooperation on the basis of shared concerns is feasible.

The core challenge for Turkey and other regional actors will be that, in order to set off a spiral of trust-building, it will be necessary for all concerned to “forward invest”. In other words, they will have to take a leap of faith and act as if trust already existed between them, which is not the same as trusting but can be sufficient for starting the iterative process which will ultimately build trust. One could argue that this is a tall order, especially in the Middle East, but Turkey

and Brazil have already built a degree of trust with Iran. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's public statement in 2010 that he believed the Iranian government's claims that its nuclear program was peaceful is an example of forward investment in trust.⁵⁷

Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's public statement in 2010 that he believed the Iranian government's claims that its nuclear program was peaceful is an example of forward investment in trust.

The smaller Gulf states are concerned about Iran's regional policies and nuclear program, but they are also keen not to spoil their relations with Iran. Maintaining trade relations requires a modicum of trust. No deal can be made without it. It is not unrealistic to assume that this kernel of trust constitutes a basis for further cooperation, for example on fuel supplies or operational safety, which is a particular concern for states that are geographically closer to the Bushehr reactor than Tehran. Turkey is expanding its relations with Gulf states, especially Kuwait and Qatar.⁵⁸ It would have to translate increasing economic ties into political relations. If it succeeds, there is scope for joining Qatar's outreach to Iran. Qatar is also planning to develop a nuclear energy sector, received approval from the IAEA in 2006, and signed a

deal for peaceful cooperation on nuclear energy with Russia in November 2010.⁵⁹ Nuclear cooperation between Turkey, Iran and Qatar is thus not out of the question.

For the process to develop momentum, the putative partners will have to experience that their initial investment in trust has paid off. The so-called Arab Spring has created uncertainty about the sustainability of existing or the nature of future governments. This may slow down negotiations on nuclear cooperation while the current period of change settles. That the Turkish model of government has found favor among protesters⁶⁰ may be viewed as fortuitous, but Nuh Yilmaz has argued that adapting its foreign policy to the new, complex dynamics will require considerable reflection on Turkey's position and its foreign policy resources.⁶¹ A leading role in trust-building on nuclear issues means that Turkey has to be able to resource substantial and sustained engagement as well as policies that are responsive to the potential opportunities arising in the rapidly changing regional climate.

Cooperation between Turkey, Iran and Qatar with Brazil as a mediator would generate a virtuous cycle and their cooperation could pay dividends for all sides. If it did, they could pave the way towards a NWFZ in the Gulf as proposed in 2004 by the Gulf Cooperation Council.⁶² This is likely to be more feasible than a WMDFZ in the entire Middle East and may assure Israel that security dynamics in its environment

are improving. This then leads to the final and most important caveat. Unlike Brazil and Argentina, regional actors in the Middle East cannot expect to negotiate cooperation agreements entirely without outside interference. Western states will seek some form of assurances that cooperation on nuclear issues does not support proliferation. In addition to its anxieties about Iran, Israel's concerns about the ramifications of popular uprisings in Arab countries were only marginally calmed by the Egyptian transition government's public commitment to their peace treaty.⁶³ It is therefore especially regrettable that Israeli-Turkish relations have deteriorated over the past years.

It is impossible to add more than some considerations about how outside actors might be assured of the peaceful aims of regional nuclear cooperation. As external actors will have to give regional actors space to explore options, they too have to make a leap of faith. However, Iran and the US have repeatedly engaged in informal contacts. The Iranian leadership has also demonstrated that it can use diplomacy in support of its political goals and national economic interests. It is neither a reckless nor an irrational actor. If Iran's core concern is recognition and the dialogue with Turkey and others on nuclear issues provides this, it is not beyond the realms

of possibility that it may tacitly tolerate "off the record" assurances from Turkey to the US. Consent to assurances from Gulf states, such as Qatar, is even more likely as they have close relations with the US.

Conclusion

This analysis has sought to demonstrate that Iran is not the pre-eminent, let alone the sole, cause for regional tensions and mistrust and that it is not beyond engagement on its nuclear program. Viewing regional hostility towards Iran exclusively through the lens of a Shia-Sunni divide has been shown to offer insufficient explanations.

The analysis has furthermore argued that the specter of Iranian nuclear weapons has been instrumentalized in order to justify perceptions of a threat whose roots lie elsewhere. Particularly important is the tendency of some client states to manipulate their patron, the US, into supporting the pursuit of their perceived self-interests, which are not necessarily beneficial to regional security as a whole or in the long-term security interest of the client. Neither the predominant discourse on Iran nor the approach of external actors have allowed for the possibility that the dispute might be resolved not only with the aim of

Viewing regional hostility towards Iran exclusively through the lens of a Shia-Sunni divide has been shown to offer insufficient explanations.

overcoming the current stalemate with the P5+1, but with a view to developing a regional regime for running, regulating the operational safety, and safeguarding against weapons or nuclear material proliferation the emerging nuclear energy industries in the region.

Not treating Iran as “the problem” but as a potential founding member of such a regime is a more constructive approach than the coercive line taken by the P5+1, especially by the Western allies and supported by some of their regional allies. It would grant Iran the recognition it seeks. If the iterative process of trust and regime-building were to succeed, it could be extended to the establishment of a NWFZ in the Gulf, which is more feasible than a WMDFZ in the Middle East. Turkey is in principle well placed to initiate such a process, particularly if it works with Brazil. It has long-standing relations with, and is an acceptable negotiation partner for, Iran. It is a neighbor and brings with it cultural sensitivity, but is not as entangled in the dynamics of mistrust as other regional actors. It has also begun to establish relations with Qatar, whose outreach to Iran and emerging nuclear industry could make it a suitable partner in an initially limited cooperative framework.

Reducing tension over nuclear issues through cooperation can generate the experience of trust and trigger a virtuous cycle leading to more cooperation and trust-building.

Brazil also has long-standing relations with Iran and experience in establishing nuclear cooperation with Argentina despite political tensions. This offers lessons that are transferable to negotiations with Iran and other states in the region. At a more technical level, the fact that ABACC has been modeled on Euratom, which has been proposed as a model for a nuclear regime in the Middle East, is significant. Also noteworthy are two other aspects of the cooperation and confidence-building process in Latin America. It began, quite counter-intuitively, in the sensitive nuclear area and followed its own logic, not that advocated by major international actors. The former suggests that reducing tension over nuclear issues through cooperation can generate the experience of trust and trigger a virtuous cycle leading to more cooperation and trust-building. The latter suggests that external actors need to allow for the possibility that the process in the Middle East might also follow its own logic.

However, another feature of the engagement between Brazil and Argentina is unlikely to be transferable: no outside interference. The P5+1, particularly the Western powers who regard themselves as partly responsible for Israel’s security and have invested considerable political capital in the dispute with Iran, will

not tolerate a regional process without assurances of its peaceful aims. Should Turkey wish to lead regional initiatives, it would not only have to mobilize considerable resources developing a sustainable foreign policy that is oriented towards conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution and can respond constructively to the very dynamic, potentially volatile regional political context. It would also have to ensure that the Western allies receive assurances. Iran would not necessarily object to providing such assurances

to the US as long as they cannot be publicly viewed as evidence of “selling out” to the West. Clearly, venturing to reverse the downward spiral of regional security dynamics and seeking to engage Iran would be a substantial challenge for Turkey and Brazil. History has amply shown that trust-building in the Middle East is an uphill struggle. However, that such endeavors have failed in the past must not foreclose renewed attempts, especially as the worst-case scenarios have become even worse than they have been in the past.

Endnotes

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Containing the Iranian Nuclear Crisis: The Useful Precedent of a Fuel Swap

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Abstract:

The nuclear fuel swap that was proposed by the USA in October 2009, accepted by Iran, then rejected, and finally accepted again under conditions rejected by the West, was never a solution to the nuclear crisis. Tangential to the main issues, the deal offered only a temporary respite from the threat posed by Iran's sensitive nuclear programs. Intended as a confidence-building measure, the deal has only sown more suspicion, and the attempt in May 2010 by Brazil and Turkey to renew the agreement served to widen the circle of distrust. Yet the precedent of sending Iranian enriched uranium out of the country and thereby reducing its stockpile still holds promise. The question is whether or not Iran is determined to have a nuclear-weapons capability. Even if it is, containment and deterrence policies may help to keep that capability latent, but unrestricted growth of Iran's enrichment program could still trigger military action.

Key Words

Iran, nuclear, proliferation, uranium enrichment, fuel swap.

Iran's Need for Reactor Fuel Creates an Opening¹

Ever since the Iranian nuclear crisis began on a date that might be fixed as 14 August 2002, when an Iranian dissident group revealed the existence of nuclear facilities under construction at Natanz and Arak that Iran had been keeping secret—earnest negotiators, mediators and outside analysts have sought a solution that would give the world confidence that the nuclear program would not be used for weapons purposes. To date, all attempts have failed.

The most recent set of diplomatic attempts have centered on a side issue that was sparked by Iran's June 2009 request to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for assistance in obtaining replacement fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). The TRR is a small facility primarily used for various research activities. Iran wants to use it to produce radioisotopes to treat

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an estimated 850,000 cancer patients per year and said the TRR would run out of fuel in late 2010. But finding an international supplier for the fuel was no simple proposition, for both political and technical reasons. Only two countries produce this kind of reactor fuel; Argentina and France. In 1993, Argentina supplied the current fuel load, after the reactor was converted from its former use of 93% highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel to run on fuel that is enriched to 19.75%, just below the 20% level that arbitrarily distinguishes HEU from low enriched uranium (LEU). The conversion of the reactor and Argentina's provision of the 115 kg fuel load was supported by the United States in line with its interest in reducing proliferation risks by eliminating the need for such high levels of enrichment.²

Washington has been discouraging most other nuclear commerce with Iran, however, and the TRR has a chequered history. Notwithstanding its civilian purposes, it was also used between 1988 and 1992 for illicit experiments in plutonium separation, although this was not revealed until several years later.³ Given the international concern about Iran's nuclear program, Argentina had little interest in potentially causing a problem with the US by offering reactor fuel to Iran. Moreover, Argentina has its own political issues with Iran, given that nation's alleged role in the 1984 bombing of a Jewish centre in Buenos Aires that resulted in 85 deaths. An Iranian intelligence officer wanted by Interpol

over the bombing, Ahmad Vahidi, was appointed Iranian defense minister in August 2009. It would appear that Iran made little effort to persuade Argentina to supply a fuel reload.

Iran had every reason to expect that its request to the IAEA for assistance in obtaining TRR fuel would not be acted upon.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad farcically suggested that America itself could provide the fuel reload.⁴ The US does not produce this kind of reactor fuel and even if it did, both legal restrictions and political realities would make this impossible. Most of the world's research reactor fuel is produced in France. Cerca, a subsidiary of nuclear-energy company Areva, manufactures several kinds of research reactor fuel as a sideline to its production of fuel for nuclear power plants. But the French government is even more strident in its opposition to Iran's nuclear program than is the United States and was not disposed to approve a TRR fuel sale either, even though it had no legal prohibitions against doing so.

Iran thus had every reason to expect that its request to the IAEA for assistance in obtaining TRR fuel would not be acted upon. It seems very likely that the request was a political ploy, in order to claim an excuse for producing 20% enriched uranium on its own, as indeed it went on to do.⁵ But this

claimed justification is false, since Iran had no means of turning the LEU into TRR fuel and as of September 2011 still did not. It would not be beyond Iran's technological capabilities to produce the fuel. Indeed, Iran has told the IAEA that equipment for one stage of the production process would be installed at the Uranium Conversion Facility in Esfahan in November 2010.⁶ The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Ali Akbar Salehi, said on 31 August 2010 that Iran would produce fuel for the TRR in one year, a deadline that has come and gone. This prediction was exaggerated from the start. Under standard safety practices, any fuel not previously certified must be tested for an extended period of time before it is used. Any production of useable fuel by Iran would thus take several years and not be ready until well after the current TRR fuel load is projected to run out. Mohammad Ghannadi, AEOI vice president, acknowledged the time problem in December 2009 when he said: "We could enrich the fuel ourselves, but there would be technical problems. Also, we'd never make it on time to help our patients".⁷

The Original Fuel Swap Plan

In the fall of 2009, Washington called Iran's bluff by proposing what soon came to be known as a "fuel swap", although more accurately it should be called a "fuel for LEU swap". Under the proposal, fuel plates for TRR use in making medical

radioisotopes would be provided, if Iran first supplied the LEU that would be used to make the fuel. The plan was for Iran to export to Russia 1,200 kg of the 1,600 kg that it had produced as of October 2009. This amount, when further enriched to 19.75% and processed into fuel pellets and then clad, can provide three reactor loads of TRR fuel. Coincidentally (or perhaps not), 1,200 kg of 3.5% LEU is approximately the amount needed to produce enough weapons-grade HEU (25kg) for a single bomb.

The fuel swap plan was significant as a confidence-building measure and offered important benefits to both sides.

The fuel swap plan was significant as a confidence-building measure and offered important benefits to both sides. By reducing Iran's stockpile below the level necessary to produce a nuclear weapon, Iran would have retained only as much LEU as it possessed in August 2008. This would have provided diplomatic breathing space for negotiations on a longer-term solution. More importantly, it would establish the principle that Iranian uranium could be enriched outside of Iran, setting an important precedent.

A one-time export of LEU is peripheral to the main problem presented by Iran's uranium enrichment program: namely, the capability it gives Iran to

produce fissile material for nuclear weapons should it chose to do so. The NPT does not prohibit enrichment or plutonium reprocessing, which is the other path to an atomic bomb, but any country that pursues these technologies without a clear economic justification will invariably raise proliferation concerns. In Iran's case, there is very little economic justification for enrichment. Unless a country has at least 10 nuclear reactors to fuel, economies of scale make it much more economical to purchase fuel on the international marketplace. Iran's only nuclear power reactor, at Bushehr, did not even come on line until September 2011 and Russia has promised a lifetime supply of fuel. Countries with extensive uranium resources might have an economic justification to produce LEU to add value to their uranium ore exports, but Iran is not blessed by nature in this regard. Its known uranium reserves are insufficient for the sale of nuclear power it plans. In light of this shortfall in uranium ore, Iran's claim that it needs to enrich uranium in order to be self sufficient is also false.

Given this economic illogic, the history of concealment and IAEA safeguards violations, and the many military links to Iran's nuclear program, including strong evidence of weapons development work at least until 2003 if not later, the Western countries have had every reason to demand that Iran cease enrichment. On the other side, however, the right to uranium enrichment has become a national pre-occupation and

is seen as a *sine qua non* of sovereignty. Given the nationalism that has come to pervade the issue, it is difficult to envision a timely solution to the crisis that would involve Iran retreating and foregoing enrichment.

Former IAEA Director General Hans Blix has suggested that foregoing enrichment could be possible as part of a wider regional deal to eschew fissile material production in all countries of the Middle East.⁸ This would require Israel to give up the plutonium reprocessing that underpins its presumed nuclear weapons program. The establishment of such a zone is a worthy ideal, and could serve as an intermediary step toward a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Given the time it would take for conditions to emerge that would allow for negotiations to ensue on a fissile material free zone, however, it is more practical for the time being to consider limitations on Iranian enrichment to reduce the proliferation risks. This can be done by increasing scrutiny by the IAEA, including but not limited to Iranian acceptance of the Additional Protocol, and by reducing the potential for Iran to divert LEU to weapons use. Shipping LEU out of the country on a continual basis for further processing elsewhere is one way of reducing the diversion risk. An agreement whereby such exports kept Iran's LEU stockpile below the amount needed for one weapon would be ideal.⁹

Envisioning such a future agreement, American officials sincerely saw the swap as a way to begin to build trust.

Anticipating that it would be the first tangible success of Obama's nine-month engagement policy, they hoped that a breakthrough here could lead to constructive dialogue on a range of other issues. IAEA Director-General Mohamed El Baradei reflected this optimism when, at the end of negotiations in Vienna on 21 October 2009, he said: "I very much hope that people see the big picture, see that this agreement could open the way for a complete normalization of relations between Iran and the international community".¹⁰

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The plan also offered strong benefits for Iran. In addition to keeping the research reactor operating, the plan was a way to show that its LEU really was being used for the civilian nuclear purposes it proclaimed, even if what came back to Iran was not actually its own uranium, which some think is contaminated with heavy metals, but cleaner uranium substituted by Russia or France along the way. The deal thus offered Iran a way to legitimize its enrichment program, a goal Tehran had long sought. In fact, this implicit legitimization is one reason why France, the UK, and, above all, Israel were skeptical about the deal. They saw a one-time fuel-swap as being of little value and were unenthusiastic

about the amendments that would have been required to UN Security Council resolutions forbidding Iranian export of LEU. Given Washington's keenness for the deal, however, the allies went along with it.

France's lack of enthusiasm for the deal was exacerbated by Washington's choreography in first consulting with Moscow, which served US interests in rebuilding ties on that front but insulted its allies. Because Russia does not produce the type of fuel required by the TRR, France's help was essential, and it was prevailed upon to allow Cerca to produce the fuel. France's reluctant agreement came with a strict condition: Iran would have to export the 1,200 kg in one batch and do so by the end of 2009. Any delay in the export would reduce the significance of exporting a fixed amount of LEU if Iran in the meantime continued to add to the stockpile, which it of course continued to do. At the production rate of about 120 kg per month, Iran would be able to replenish the 1,200 kg in 10 months. Setting an early deadline for Iran to export the LEU, however, meant that it would not receive any TRR fuel until a year later, the time it would take Cerca to manufacture each load of fuel, since this niche product is reactor-specific and is not kept on the shelf.

Iran tentatively agreed to the basic outline of this proposal when Supreme National Security Council Secretary Saeed Jalili met with US Under Secretary of State William Burns in Geneva on 1 October in the context of a larger

meeting chaired by EU foreign-policy chief Javier Solana, accompanied by representatives of the P5+1 (the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, France and Germany). In his tête-à-tête with Burns, Jalili agreed that the US proposal could be the basis for a deal, the details of which should be negotiated by a lower-level working group. All the parties, including Iran, then agreed to the statement Solana read at the end of the session, including the following line:

In consultations with the IAEA and on the margins of today's meeting, it was agreed in principle that low enriched uranium produced in Iran would be transported to third countries for further enrichment and fabrication into fuel assemblies for the Tehran Research Reactor, which produces isotopes for medical applications.¹¹

Iranian Domestic Opposition

Although Jalili had the backing of Ahmadinejad to agree to this wording, Iranian support for the Geneva deal was weak from the beginning. When officials from the IAEA, France, Russia, the United States and Iran met in Vienna on 19 October to hash out the details, Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, quickly backed away from the outlines of the deal. He insisted that any exchange of LEU for TRR fuel would have to be simultaneous, and that the LEU would be parceled out in stages. This would have meant that Iran would not part with any of its LEU for the year's time it would take to

produce a fuel load, by which time its stockpile would presumably have grown by another weapon's worth of LEU. As a confidence-building measure, such a deal held no appeal to any of Iran's negotiating partners. As US Ambassador to the IAEA Glyn Davies later put it, "Iran wants the international community to use some other country's uranium for TRR fuel while Iran keeps its own uranium for a possible weapons option. How does that increase confidence?"¹²

In Vienna, the parties agreed after three days of hard negotiations to a formulation that El Baradei then put forward in his name. Although few details were publicized, the deal was largely the same as the original plan agreed to in Geneva, under which Iran committed to exporting the bulk of its enriched uranium stockpile to Russia for further enrichment and then processing into fuel rods. Left unspecified was when the fuel assemblies would be sent to Iran. In a separate side deal with Iran, Washington reportedly agreed to supply safety equipment for the Tehran reactor, contingent on agreement over the LEU export deal.¹³ The United States, Russia and France immediately accepted El Baradei's proposal, while Iran said it was considering it "in a favorable light", but needed time to provide a response.¹⁴

The details agreed to in Vienna ran into immediate trouble in Tehran, where the deal was rejected by Ahmadinejad's rivals across the political spectrum. Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, who as Iran's previous nuclear negotiator had

repeatedly been vetoed by hardliners when he sought small elements of tactical flexibility, found revenge by castigating the Geneva plan as a Western deception. His opposition was enough to tilt the naturally suspicious Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, against the deal. Reformist presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi similarly opposed it, as did conservative presidential candidate Mohsen Rezai, secretary of the Expediency Council, who said that Iran should retain 1,100 kg of its stockpile in order to maintain negotiating leverage.¹⁵ This figure is suspiciously close to the amount necessary to produce a nuclear weapon. Conservative parliamentarian Hesmatollah Falahatpisheh said any export of Iranian LEU should be conditioned on ending the economic sanctions on Iran, particularly those affecting its ability to import raw uranium.¹⁶

Over the next few months Iran avoided a formal answer to El Baradei but offered several permutations of its counter-proposal for a series of simultaneous exchanges of LEU for TRR fuel. To explain why Iran had retreated from the outlines agreed in Geneva and elaborated upon in Vienna, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki blamed the Western press for focusing on the purpose of the deal: “We said we are in agreement on the principles of the proposal, but suddenly the Western media announced that 1,200 kilograms of uranium would be leaving Iran to delay the construction of a nuclear

bomb.”¹⁷ Iran knew all along, of course, that Washington’s purpose was to make it impossible for Iran to be able to produce a nuclear weapon in the short term. The reason for walking away from what was agreed in Vienna thus appeared to be domestic politics. Ahmadinejad’s rivals had condemned him for being willing to give up the LEU and for linking it with the issue of the TRR fuel.

On 2 January 2010, Iran gave the other parties a month to respond to its counter-proposal, after which it said it would produce 20% enriched uranium on its own. Iran’s insistence on simultaneity was briefly dropped when Ahmadinejad in a February 2 television interview said there could be a four to five month delay between LEU export and receipt of the fuel. That the hard-line president should be the only public figure in Tehran to support the Geneva deal may seem counter-intuitive but Ahmadinejad had political reasons. His political rivals, by the same token, did not want to see him capture the prize of rapprochement with the US. Because the fuel could not be produced in the four to five month period Ahmadinejad suggested, his January statement may have been an artfully constructed show of flexibility that he knew would not be persuasive to the West. In any case, his concession was immediately met by another hail of domestic opposition and was not repeated by him or any other Iranian leader. In fact, in reporting the remarks, the headline on his own website said “Gradual exchange of fuel is not

possible”, and the official transcript of his interview omitted the reference to a four to five month delay.¹⁸

Iran Raises the Stakes

Iran exacerbated the situation on February 9 when it began enrichment to 20% at a newly installed 164-machine cascade at the above-ground, pilot fuel-enrichment plant (PFEP) at Natanz. It might be argued that by beginning 20% enrichment, Tehran was seeking to force acceptance of its counter-proposal for a simultaneous exchange. But there were more important motivations for the move.

On one dimension, there was a political rationale. Ahmadinejad’s announcement on 11 February of successful 20% enrichment served as the rallying cry for his speech to the nation on the anniversary of the Iranian Revolution. In their rush to enable Ahmadinejad to announce the achievement on the anniversary, the operators at Natanz began to feed low-enriched UF_6 into the cascade before IAEA inspectors arrived, contrary to Tehran’s promise to the agency. The operators also violated Article 45 of Iran’s safeguards agreement with the IAEA, which calls for notice of major changes “sufficiently in advance for the safeguards procedures to be adjusted”.¹⁹ When notified on 8 February that the higher-level enrichment would commence, the IAEA asked Iran to wait until inspectors could adjust their monitoring procedures and obtain

further details about the enrichment plan. Iran’s decision to begin the higher-level enrichment without waiting for the IAEA to adjust procedures triggered an unusually prompt secretariat report to agency members, expressing concern about the lack of advance notice about the move.

There was also a strategic reason to enrich to 20%. Doing so puts Iran on the cusp of producing weapons-usable HEU. The move exacerbated concern that Iran’s intention is to move closer to being able to produce a nuclear weapon. By starting with 20% product of this quantity, Iran would be able to further enrich to weapons grade in a short period of time. Although 20% seems a long way from the 90% level of enrichment that is considered weapons grade, the vast majority of the effort required to enrich natural uranium to weapons grade has already been expended by the 20% level. In fact, 72% of the effort to produce weapons-grade uranium is accomplished by the time the product is enriched to 3.5%. By the time the uranium is enriched to 20%, nine-tenths of the effort to reach weapons grade has been expended. Having sought to justify enriching to 20% for the sake of TRR fuel, Iran could try to justify going to 63% as a means of producing the targets required for the production of medical radioisotopes at the reactor; in fact, Iran has already claimed it may need to do so.²⁰ It could even speciously claim a need to produce 90% HEU for the most effective functioning of these targets.²¹

Production of enriched uranium at any of these higher levels would complicate IAEA detection of clandestine HEU production because Iran could claim that any environmental samples showing signs of higher enrichment were due to contamination by the activity connected with claimed TRR fuel or target production.

The involvement of Turkey, Brazil and others in seeking to revive the fuel swap was not warmly welcomed in Western capitals.

In March 2010 Iran said it was willing to put 1,200 kg of LEU under IAEA seal on Kish Island, and to allow it to be exported upon receipt of the equivalent amount of TRR fuel.²² Tehran's offer to put the uranium under seal at Kish was presumably intended as a guarantee against further enrichment, which Iran would soon go on to do regardless. However, as long as the LEU remained on Iranian territory, whether under IAEA seal or not, it would be susceptible to seizure and diversion to weapons use. In 2003, North Korea did just that with the plutonium-bearing spent fuel that was under IAEA seal there, and Iran itself forced the IAEA to break seals on nuclear equipment when it decided to undo the 2003 and 2004 suspension agreements with France, Germany and the UK (the E3).

Although Iran's negotiating partners held to the principles of the Geneva/Vienna deal, they were not inflexible about the details. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov visited Tehran in early November to sound out possibilities, but came away empty handed and irritated at Iran's suggestion that Russia could not be trusted to uphold its part of the Geneva bargain. From a non-proliferation perspective, it did not much matter where Iran's LEU went, so long as it left Iranian territory. It could be placed in escrow in any mutually acceptable third country. Turkey offered its territory, as did Japan and Brazil. To satisfy Iranian complaints that past broken agreements had left the country skeptical about TRR fuel being provided unless the exchange were simultaneous, the IAEA agreed to take formal custody of the LEU, the other parties agreed to a legally binding supply agreement, and the United States offered substantial political assurances.²³

The Tehran Joint Declaration by Iran, Turkey and Brazil

The involvement of Turkey, Brazil and others in seeking to revive the fuel swap was not warmly welcomed in Western capitals. Iran's efforts to find other negotiating partners were seen as an obvious ploy to sidetrack the growing momentum for tough UN sanctions. The discussions were also expected to be futile; Iran was considered unlikely to meet the conditions that would be

necessary for a fuel swap to be mutually beneficial. Obama told Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as much in a meeting at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010. In a follow-up letter to Lula on April 20 that was later leaked, Obama emphasized that for a fuel swap to work, Iran would have to export the stated amount of LEU to a third country before it received (in one year's time) the TRR fuel. During this time, the LEU could be placed under IAEA "escrow", Obama said.²⁴

To the surprise of Western leaders, in a 17 May meeting with the foreign ministers of Turkey and Brazil, Iran dropped the insistence on a simultaneous exchange on Iranian soil. This time the "Joint Declaration by Iran, Turkey and Brazil on Nuclear Fuel" had the support of the rest of the regime. The agreement seemed to encompass everything Obama had asked for in his letter. As the Brazilian and Turkish negotiators emphasized afterwards, Iran had agreed on quantity, place and time of the transfer.²⁵ El Baradei said it seemed as though the West could not take yes for an answer.²⁶

Given the intense political opposition that Ahmadinejad faced when he first seemed ready to go along with a sequential exchange of LEU for TRR fuel and the similar outburst when he suggested in February that an exchange need not be simultaneous, it is curious that no political attacks at all were mounted against the deal struck

with Brazil and Turkey on 17 May that went back to the sequential exchange. In the months between October and May, any number of defenders of Iran, both inside and outside the country, had insisted that as a matter of national pride any exchange absolutely had to be simultaneous. There was also insistence, albeit with less consistency, on the principle that any exchange had to take place on Iranian soil.

Why then did the matter of the principle of a simultaneous exchange on Iranian soil evaporate once Brazil and Turkey joined the negotiations? There are several explanations. The most obvious is that Khamenei weighed in early with his support. Once the Supreme Leader had pronounced himself on the matter, there was no political room for disagreement. But why then did the cautious Khamenei, who has always been so distrustful of making a deal with the West, support a deal that was based on Obama's proposal from the previous fall. Here the explanations are more complex.

Firstly, the immediate negative reaction from the White House to the Tehran Declaration made it look very good in Iranian eyes. By contrast, the positive Western media reaction to the Geneva deal the previous October made Iranians naturally suspicious, as reflected in Mottaki's comment, noted above, about why Iran withdrew its support for the deal in October. For any deal to work, it will have to be seen as a mutual win-win solution, but the distrust that pervades Iran's relations with the West has solidified into zero-sum-game thinking.

Secondly, by offering Iran a new set of negotiating partners outside the ranks of the West and the nuclear weapons states, Brazil and Turkey gave Iran a face-saving way to make what otherwise seemed to be an unacceptable concession. The Iranian leadership and the domestic media played up the fact that these two important nations broke with the Western consensus, even voting against the looming next Security Council sanctions resolution. Breaking off Brazil and Turkey from the Western group was treated as a positive breakthrough in Iran's diplomacy.

Thirdly, Iran was on the verge of being penalized by new Security Council sanctions designed for the first time to extract a real cost. Iran sought negotiations with Brazil and Turkey in the first place in order to persuade Russia and China to hold off on sanctions to allow diplomacy more time. Only when China and Russia decided to join the P-5 in a draft sanctions resolution did Iran give up its insistence on a simultaneous exchange and strike the deal with Brazil and Turkey, although by then it was too late to forestall the new sanctions round.

Fourthly, by May Iran was in a stronger strategic position. It could export 1,200 kg of LEU and still have another 1,200kg left. Reza'i's demand in October that Iran retain what amounted to a weapon's worth was now met. In fact, the longer it would take to initiate a fuel swap, the stronger Iran's position would be. As of October 2010, for example,

1,200 kg constituted only 40% of Iran LEU stockpile, which by then totaled 3,000 kg.

Finally, Brazil and Turkey were willing to sign off on a deal that was much better for Iran than what the US, France and Russia had been demanding. From the perspective of Western capitals, these newcomers to the negotiating arena with Iran were taken to the cleaners by the wily Persians. Although Lula and Erdoğan persuaded Iran to accept the principle of a delayed fuel exchange, in almost every other aspect of the deal, the "fine print" gave the advantage to Iran. In particular, the "Tehran Joint Declaration" was silent about Iran enriching to higher levels. When Iran insisted the same day that it would continue to enrich to 20%, there was no chance of the deal being accepted by any Western capital, nor even by Moscow or Beijing. The P5+1 could hardly agree to legitimize enrichment in Iran without a limit on the level and the disposition (through export) of the accumulated 20% product enriched to date.

Other problems with the Joint Declaration included its faulty timelines: no set date for export of the LEU and an impossible one-year deadline for delivery of all TRR fuel. If this (impossible) condition was not met, the agreement gave Iran the right to demand the return of the LEU, which in any case would remain its property while in Turkey. Moreover, the deal did not specify what would become of the LEU after Iran received fuel for the TRR.

The concessions by Brazil and Turkey in the 17 May 2010 deal were all the more egregious because on their own, these two nations cannot deliver on the Tehran Declaration. They possess none of the assets that Iran seeks- neither the ability to produce fuel for the TRR nor the power to lift sanctions or to grant security guarantees. Nor can these middle powers by themselves accord Iran a right to enrichment, despite words to this effect in the Tehran Declaration.

A Fuel Swap is Still Worthwhile

One other problem with the “Tehran Joint Declaration” is that Iran did not say it was willing to meet with the P5+1 to discuss concerns about its nuclear program. Ahmadinejad has said that future talks must involve a greater variety of countries and that parties must both confirm that they seek friendship with Iran and pronounce themselves on Israel’s alleged nuclear arsenal. Iran repeatedly put off talks. When discussions finally were held in December and January, Iran was not willing to talk about its nuclear program. On 29 August 2011, Fereydoun Abbasi, head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization, said Iran was no longer interested in a nuclear fuel swap of any kind.

If Abbasi’s rejection is not Iran’s final position and fuel swap negotiations every do resume, they would have to be done by parties that can deliver. It would

also make sense to include Turkey, which is an important regional player and can play a useful role as an intermediary and as a venue for Iranian LEU to be placed in custody. A renegotiated deal should increase the amount of LEU to be exported, ideally to leave less than one weapon’s worth in Iran, and must also dispose of the stockpile and production of 20% enriched uranium. The issues involving timelines, ownership and return rights must also be addressed.

If these problems can be fixed, it still makes sense to strike a deal over the TRR fuel in order to set a precedent for capping Iran’s stockpile of LEU. This, and enhanced verification measures, could make the difference between war and peace. Otherwise, the larger the stockpile, the closer Iran will come to being able to break out of the NPT with a sizable nuclear deterrent. If Iran did not care about the international reaction, the approximately 4,500 kg of 3.5% LEU in its stockpile as of August 2011 could be theoretically further enriched to 90% to produce fissile material for at least two nuclear weapons. There are some technical challenges in producing HEU at this level, but it will be easier for Iran to overcome these challenges now that it has the experience of enriching to 20%. Having just one or two weapons’ worth of enriched uranium would not be enough to make it worthwhile for Iran in any strategic sense to go for broke and withdraw from the NPT. In North Korea’s case, after it expelled inspectors and broke out of the NPT in 2002-

2003 it was able to reprocess enough weapons-grade plutonium for six to eight nuclear weapons. The cases of Iran and North Korea are very different, of course, and it is impossible to determine at what point, if ever, in terms of bomb-making potential, Iran might think it worthwhile to break out of the NPT. What may matter more is how outside countries, particularly Israel, view Iran's weapons' potential.

Despite all the downside risks and negative consequences of military action, Israel is likely to want to take matters into its own hands if diplomatic efforts to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons fail. The deeply held view in Israel is that a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable and must be prevented by any means necessary. Whether those means include military action will depend, inter alia, on how close Iran comes to crossing the line between weapons capability- which Iran arguably already has- and weapons production.

Iran's leaders are unlikely to take the obvious step of crossing the line between capability and weapons production such as by withdrawing from the NPT, expelling inspectors, or testing a weapon. But they might be tempted to gear up to cross the line by resuming weapons development in ways that would be observable only through intelligence collection. Judgments about the strength of the intelligence would be an important factor in deciding whether to initiate a

pre-emptive military attack. They may also be tempted to get as close as possible to a weapons capability by continuing to stockpile LEU and produce 20% enriched uranium. The more LEU and the higher its concentration, the less time it would take Iran to further enrich a weapon's worth of HEU. Iran's ability to produce just one weapon should not by itself be a tripwire. But Iran's adversaries cannot allow the LEU stockpile to grow too large, to the point where Tehran could calculate that a NPT break-out was worthwhile. Just how large the stockpile could grow before Iran's adversaries would feel compelled to take action to destroy it is unclear, but Israel's threshold is undoubtedly lower than that of the United States.

The deeply held view in Israel is that a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable and must be prevented by any means necessary.

The West does not want Iran to have the capability to produce a nuclear weapon. Iran's determination not to part with the bulk of its LEU strongly suggests the opposite intention. Apparently, Iran sees the LEU as a security hedge. A misjudgment about how large the hedge will be allowed to grow could well trigger the very attack that the nuclear program may have been intended to forestall.

Endnotes

- 1 Portions of this paper draw on the author's article on "Iran: The Fragile Promise of the Fuel-Swap Plan", *Survival*, Vol.52, No. 3 (June–July 2010), pp. 67–94.
- 2 In theory, a bomb could be made using 20% HEU, but it would be impractically large, weighing at least 400kg. Weapons designers prefer to use HEU enriched to over 90%, which is considered weapons grade.
- 3 IAEA, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report by the Director General", GOV/2003/75, 10 November 2003, pp. 26–28.
- 4 "Ahmadinejad: Iran Ready to Buy N. Fuel from US", *Fars News Agency*, at <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8807151645> [last visited 13 October 2010].
- 5 Iran commonly refers to the enrichment level as 20%, which is the rounded-up figure (from 19.75%) used throughout much of the rest of this article.
- 6 IAEA, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report by the Director General", GOV/2010/46, 6 September 2010, p. 7; The equipment is for the conversion of 20% enriched UF₆ to U₃O₈.
- 7 Thomas Erdbrink and William Branigan, "In Iran, Nuclear Issue is also a Medical One", *Washington Post*, 20 December 2009.
- 8 See, Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms*, (June 2006), p. 72.
- 9 A suggestion along these lines was made in 2008 by Bruce Riedel and Gary Samore (who would soon become a special assistant to President Obama on the National Security Council staff). See, "Managing Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East", in Richard N. Haass and Martin S. Indyk (eds.), *Restoring The Balance: A Middle East Strategy For The Next President*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2008, p. 107.
- 10 Borzou Daragahi, "U.S., Iran Move Closer to Nuclear Deal", *Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 2009.
- 11 "Remarks by EUHR Solana Following Meeting with Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Jalili", at http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/fr/article_9050_fr.htm [last visited 11 October 2010].
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Is the Nuclear Cascade Story in the Middle East Real?

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Abstract

In the highly intricate conditions of current global security, the determination and assessment of where the international community is standing at the end of the NPT Review Conference related to the Middle East's nuclear realities gains importance. For this reason, this paper aims to focus on two important questions. The first is related to the highly debated issue of whether there is any chance of a nuclear cascade becoming a reality in the Middle East assuming that the Iranian nuclear crisis is not been solved and remains in stalemate. The second question tries asks whether some members of the P-5's new counter-proliferation attempts that are introduced to the Middle East region have any chance of working at all.

Key Words

Ballistic Missile, Extended Deterrence, Nuclear Proliferation, Security Guarantee, NPT, CTBT, FMCT, START, IAEA.

Introduction

In the last decade, two important issues, namely the deadlock in the Iranian nuclear crisis and the increasing demands for nuclear power reactors in the Middle East, have caused the most concern among the members of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Western powers have come to the conclusion that unless the international community finds an appropriate means of dealing with these two issues there will be a high probability of having a new wave of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. For this reason, Western capitals, so as to overcome their general non-proliferation concerns related to both the continuing Iranian crisis and the nuclear power plants demands all over the Middle East, have rapidly been trying to find ways of substituting indigenous procurement methods of the nuclear fuel that will be required for the new reactors. However, the international communities' search for finding a way of formulating a regional or international nuclear fuel bank is a contentious issue from the perspective of the non-nuclear states of the NPT. This highly controversial situation has actually come to the fore as Western

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countries have tried to convince the non-nuclear states of the Middle East of the merits of not generating the nuclear fuel themselves. The Western capitals have tried to get the Middle Eastern non-nuclear states' consent on this matter in two ways. First, Western states have encouraged the states of the Middle East to sign up to special nuclear cooperation agreements with the permanent five powers with nuclear weapons (the P5). The UAE has voluntarily decided to sign a nuclear energy exchange agreement, with the condition of not developing indigenous nuclear fuel on its territory.¹

In return, the UAE was guaranteed to have the safe and secure supply of nuclear fuel.² Second, in the face of some of the Middle Eastern non-nuclear states' insistence on preserving their

Article 4 NPT Treaty, rights of having civilian nuclear energy programs, the nuclear states have accepted this reality and they accordingly have decided to sign numerous nuclear exchange agreements with the non-nuclear states of the Middle East. However, some P5 countries have purposefully made new and strengthened measures of non-proliferation, including the well-known means in the NPT and the IAEA, compulsory in these agreements. The reason for this is of course related to the nuclear states' general concerns of

detering a new tide of expected nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Since 2005, the Western states have strongly believed that the Tehran regime can become a potential nuclear proliferation driver in the Middle East due to its continuing nuclear enrichment program. They believe that this situation can only be avoided if Iran is persuaded to reverse its decision to enrich uranium. For this reason, they have tried to search for every possible method to persuade Iran to stop its program. Therefore, the nuclear powers in the NPT have introduced new models of non-proliferation to the Middle East region. But, at the same time the US, taking the lead of the P5, has decided to show that the nuclear-armed states of the NPT are more serious about meeting their disarmament

All of the US efforts in nuclear disarmament that have been initiated so far have not dealt with the important unresolved issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

obligations under Article 6 of the treaty.³ In this regard, Washington has launched several important initiatives, such as the "US Nuclear Posture Review" of 2010 and "Quadrennial Defense Review" of 2010, where the possibility of a reduced role for US nuclear weapons is mentioned.⁴ Since then, the Obama Administration has started discussing possible ways of restructuring the US's security guarantee for the regions that are thought to be in need of it, namely the Middle East, Europe and Asia-Pacific. With this, US President Barack Obama's new nuclear

posture, symbolized by a “zero nuclear policy”,⁵ actually quite matches the current US strategy that involves both reviving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation tracks. The START treaty signed in 2010 as well as the “New York Nuclear Security Summit” of 2010 and the “NPT Review Conference” of 2010 have all strongly confirmed this US decision. However, all of the US’s efforts in nuclear disarmament that have been initiated so far have not dealt with the important unresolved issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the future of the CTBT and the FMCT among others. As a result, the challenges that lie ahead of the new START agreement are real and still need to be tackled, such as the future of missile defense and tactical nuclear weapons. All in all, the main rationale behind all of these American disarmament efforts that were launched have been related to the aim of creating a new and constructive image of a Washington government that is now sincere in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the NPT.⁶

Within the complex and changing security environment of the 21st century, the old debate that is reminiscent of the days of the Cold War, namely “extended deterrence” and “re-assurance/assurance of Washington’s allies or friends in the Middle East or elsewhere”, has certainly gained in importance.⁷ And this situation consequently introduced a new and lively debate among foreign and security policy practioners as well as among IR academics.

The Obama Administration has given serious thought about the changing dynamics of regional security since these new nuclear aspirant states have come about. While Washington assesses the new dynamics, it has to take into account its new urgent task of extended deterrence in the post-Cold War era where it has to deter the enemy as well as assure US allies as well as friends and partners. References to this challenging mission can be found in most of the important US security and defense documents, where an emphasis is placed both on attaining the conditions of a safe, secure and credible US nuclear deterrence capability as well as on strengthening the regional security architectures through available means. In this regard, the government in Washington has in particular devoted the most attention to the regions where there are new and old security concerns, including the Middle East. The main reason for the initiatives mentioned in American national security documents is actually associated with the current government’s perceived security concerns related to the changing dynamics of the 21st century. These new American security concerns, which are very clearly detailed in the “Nuclear Posture Review” of 2010,⁸ have also helped in determining the future road map of the US’s nuclear stance. Hence, it would be very beneficial at this point to highlight the Obama Administration’s four basic concerns related to regional security structures, including the Middle East, as evaluated from the perspective of the US’s nuclear posture in 2010: (i)

the first concern is regional and global nuclear proliferation and disarmament anxieties; (ii) the second concern is associated the US's aim of realizing the deterrence of potential and future nuclear rivalries at global and regional levels; (iii) the third concern is related to assuring Washington's allies, friends and partners of the US's role in extended deterrence in different regional security issues; (iv) and, finally, the last concern is related to Washington's new objective of reviving and if possibly strengthening the traditional non-proliferation regimes. Washington, so as accomplish these ambitious nuclear objectives, has highlighted the importance of attaining and maintaining different capabilities and strategies as options. Under current conditions, it has been stated that the new US nuclear posture would involve situations, such as in the Middle East, in which the US might felt obliged to use all available means of extended deterrence, while in other places there may not be such a need. The introduction of ballistic missile defense and other American non-nuclear capabilities as other countermeasures as part of the US's extended deterrence in certain regions has surely accelerated the already heated debates about the current credibility of the American security guarantees in such places as the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Europe.

Under the current global security environment, the determination and assessment of where the international community was standing at the end of the NPT Review Conference of May 2010,⁹

which was related to nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, becomes important. For this reason, this paper focuses on two very important questions. The first question is related to the highly debated issue of whether there is any chance of the so-called nuclear cascade becoming a reality within the current conditions of the Middle East assuming that the Iranian nuclear crisis is not solved or remains in stalemate. The second question looks at whether some of the P5's new counter-proliferation measures in the Middle East region have any chance of success in the light of US President Obama's "zero nuclear weapons" policy. This is why this paper focuses on the general Western concerns of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Ballistic Missile Defense: Is It the Best US Instrument for the Realization of "Extended Deterrence" and "Reassurance" in the Middle East?

In the US Nuclear Posture Review of 2010, ballistic missile defense is mentioned as an important countermeasure against present and future ballistic missile threats facing both American troops in the Middle East and also friends' and partners' territories in the region.¹⁰ At the moment it is being introduced as one of the best available instrument to strengthen the US's extended deterrence in the Middle East.

Actually, the importance given to ballistic missile defense is a bit exaggerated as it is seen as a way of achieving extended deterrence and to create stable and secure regional security complexes around the world, including the Middle East. There is a large amount of academic and technical literature that proves the contrary.¹¹ However, one should also be careful not to underestimate the increasing importance of ballistic missile defense when it is introduced together with other means of extended deterrence during the process of creating effective and credible conditions for stability in the Middle East. If ballistic missile defense were introduced to Middle East today as part of an effective extended deterrence policy, it could actually accomplish three main aims. First of all, countries in the Middle East that have the capacity for developing nuclear weapons as well as those that already possess ballistic missiles would be deterred from going nuclear or developing more capable missiles. When one focuses on the Iranian situation and raises the question of whether ballistic missile defense could be an effective deterrent against them, the answer is rather debatable. Yet, most experts on this issue agree that missile defense systems could not be expected to be 100% effective in defending against all Iranian missiles.¹² According to this view, there is always going to be the possibility that at least one or more of these Iranian missiles when launched could reach their targets. Considering the current technical deficiencies ballistic missiles defense in terms of providing

defense, other means of extended deterrence capabilities are likely to be needed to attain credible deterrent against a potential attack in the Middle East. Today, Iran, and to a certain extent Syria, are the main actors in Washington's calculations in the determination of the parameters of the new US extended deterrence for the Middle East. The second aim of providing ballistic missile defenses to some states in the Middle East is directly related to Washington's determination to provide the best available means of security assurance for its allies and friends there. The basic idea that lies behind this initiative is to prove that American extended deterrence is still valid and credible. Hence, Washington, while trying to give the message that it is serious about its allies' and friends' security concerns in the new Middle East, is actually aiming to ensure that the states of this region will not attempt to acquire nuclear capability on their own, something true even for Iran.¹³ All in all, when the US administration decided to introduce the new means of extended deterrence in the Middle East it actually hoped to both attain nuclear disarmament and to strengthen measures of non-proliferation in the region. Thirdly, when the Obama Administration decided to introduce ballistic missile defense to friendly states in the Middle East, it also hoped to dissuade potential nuclear aspirant states in this region both from procurement of improved ballistic capabilities and a nuclear capability. Accordingly, the nuclear aspirant states in the Middle East

are expected to believe that a nuclear capability will not provide them with deterrence.¹⁴ This belief is directly related with the international communities' efforts at stopping Tehran from acquiring nuclear capability. It is true that the Tehran regime might not be expected to be comfortable with an encirclement of missile defenses against its own missiles. However, due to Iran's current deficiencies in the realm of conventional weapons inventory, it is unlikely that it will be dissuaded from acquiring more advanced missiles at a time when these missiles are one of the only available means of retaliation left for the Iranian regime. Also, since the Iranian regime continues to lack the means of attaining ballistic missile capabilities on its own, the other alternative means for retaliation left for Iran for countering the growing missile defense encirclement would be to improve its chemical arsenal.¹⁵ So the US expectation that missile defense will stop Iran from procuring missiles is not correct and on the contrary it could trigger the Iranian regime's drive for accelerating both the means of acquiring better missiles capabilities and developing its chemical weapons arsenal.

The US administration under President Barack Obama has declared its new “zero nuclear policy” in order to revitalize the NPT's credibility and to keep the Middle East free from nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

These measures on the part of Iran would certainly be in contradiction with the May 2010 NPT Review Conference's aim of a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East.¹⁶

Can the New Nuclear Disarmament Initiatives Be Effective in Getting the States of the Middle East to Accept the New Non-proliferation Measures?

According to the common wisdom in the West, the deadlock between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear program has had the effect of triggering states in the Middle East to start to develop nuclear power.¹⁷ In some Western circles it is believed that unless this new growing interest in nuclear energy is somehow regulated at the beginning it is likely that nuclear proliferation will become a reality in the region.¹⁸ Therefore, the international community, due to the Iranian nuclear program, has become more concentrated in its efforts to introduce new and strengthened measures to the states of the Middle East with the hope that these non-proliferation rules can in time become applicable to the whole region or at least to certain sub-regions, such as the Gulf. The US administration, so as to realize these non-proliferation objectives in the sub-regions in the Middle East, and then hopefully in the whole region,

has preferred to pursue a political strategy that involves both global and regional initiatives. This was due to the necessity of overcoming the deteriorated credibility of the NPT's three pillars: disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and the right for the civilian use of nuclear energy. It is true that since the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the international community has started to question the validity of the NPT. So the US administration under President Barack Obama has declared its new "zero nuclear policy" in order to revitalize the NPT's credibility and to keep the Middle East free from nuclear proliferation and terrorism. Certain important efforts in this regard have already been realized since Obama's Prague address last year.¹⁹ In this regard, the new START, the declarations at the "New York Security Summit" in 2010 as well as the May 2010 "NPT Review Conference" declarations are important milestones showing that the five nuclear states are now determined and serious in meeting their obligations in nuclear disarmament. As was known, since the 2005 NPT Review conference, the non-nuclear weapon states of the NPT have been rightfully accusing the five nuclear-armed states of not meeting their obligations under Article 6 of the NPT.

All in all, the disarmament initiatives that have been taken both by the US and other members of the P-5 on the global stage have the objective of assuring the nuclear have-nots of the merits of accepting and implementing

strengthened nuclear non-proliferation measures at the regional level, in this case the Middle East. According to the 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review, the American government wants to prevent the rise of new nuclear states anywhere in the world. Washington has sped up all its efforts in this regard and has tried with every means to reassure friendly regimes in the Middle East to remain non-nuclear. That is why after the new START agreement was signed, the Obama Administration has put major emphasis on its ratification.²⁰ In this way the Obama Administration has hoped to guarantee that Washington's newly gained record in disarmament would continue for some time in the future. With this determination, the US has decided to take the lead of the P-5 in both reassuring the nuclear have-nots of the NPT that they are not only taking initiatives launched at the global stage related to the field of nuclear disarmament but also strengthening US security guarantees to the states of the Middle East, including the Gulf. All in all, Washington feels obliged to give assurance to friends and partners in the region as the current Iranian nuclear crisis remains in impasse and as the Middle East still lacks the means for a comprehensive regional security system. In this regard, the US government has taken every opportunity to prove its sincerity in both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite this, Washington seems to fall short in assuring most of the non-nuclear states in the Middle East about its current

initiatives. In this regard, among the Gulf States, the UAE continues to be the only exception, as shown by Dubai's acceptance of the new non-proliferation measures stated in the 123 Agreement.

New Nuclear Power Reactors in the Middle East and Current Western Non-proliferation Concerns: How Serious is the Problem at Hand?

Actually, both the US's and European's anxiety over Middle Eastern states' renewed interest in civilian nuclear power has been evident since 2006 and stems from the West's previous negative experiences with non-proliferation in this region and elsewhere. The first incidence of this was the IAEA's discovery of Iraq's clandestine nuclear program in 1991, continued with North Korea going nuclear in 2006, and includes the current unresolved Iranian nuclear crisis.²¹ The current situation in the Middle East, where most states lack nuclear (uranium) enrichment and plutonium reprocessing capabilities, creates a suitable environment for the P5 states to construct new and strengthened non-proliferation norms²² applicable to the region. The nuclear states seem to prefer to achieve this aim either within the NPT or outside it. In this regard some European states, such as France, and the US have already put forward new non-

proliferation initiatives in the hope that these will convince the nuclear-aspirant states not to have indigenous nuclear fuel cycle development. Since most of the states in the Middle East are at the initial stages of attaining nuclear power, the US authorities believe that the implementation of new non-proliferation measures has greater chance in some of the sub-regions, like Gulf, than in other regions that have political and security problems. The main expectation of the West is based on the idea that since the UAE has voluntarily accepted new non-proliferation measures it will act as precedent in the Gulf and lead the way in the Middle East region and ensure that the whole region is free of uranium enrichment and processing.²³ Western powers hope to overcome the current nuclear proliferation problem of the Middle East in the future, but till then they hope at best to manage this situation.²⁴

In general, some Western capitals and P5 countries have chosen two related methods to achieve the new strengthened non-proliferation objectives. Firstly, Western actors have tried to gain the assurance of the non-nuclear countries' agreement to not indigenously produce nuclear fuel, which is allowed according to Article 4 of the NPT, through the signing of nuclear energy cooperation treaties with them. Secondly, the West in general and some of the members of P5 in particular have already signed or hope to sign agreements to establish a secure, safe and constant supply of the fuel

through the establishment of fuel banks. However, the debate over the various fuel bank schemes between the two sides of the NPT Treaty- namely among the nuclear-haves and have-nots- has become contentious. As can be assumed, there remains important concerns behind these debates: (i) first of all, some of these non-nuclear countries are opposed to a fuel bank as they are concerned that it might somehow undermine their right of acquiring nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, though this has already been denied by the IAEA; (ii) moreover, some of these non-nuclear countries are starting to worry about the possibility that some P5 countries may attempt to use the political and economic power that will result from their grip on the control of the supply of fuel for their own future political purposes; and (iii) most important of all, some of these non-nuclear states are convinced that in the case of them choosing the fuel bank option there would always be the possibility of risks. For instance, by accepting the use of a nuclear fuel bank, these countries are actually accepting becoming dependent on others for their supply nuclear fuel. This opens them to certain risks related to fluctuating market prices together with other negative effects. Consequently, some of the non-nuclear states have come to the conclusion that unless the conditions related to the proposed fuel banks remain unchanged, their efforts of overcoming the negative effects of being an petroleum and natural gas dependent country through nuclear energy will not work.

In reality, some of the P5 countries hope to realize three aims by finding an acceptable solution to the current fuel cycle problem of the states in the Middle East region: (i) first, the nuclear-have states hope to strengthen the already weakened credibility of the non-proliferation regime by proposing this new nuclear fuel bank option, which aims to ensure a reliable and secure supply of fuel; (ii) secondly, some members of the P5 are also hoping to become one of the main nuclear fuel suppliers to the Middle East through the regional nuclear fuel banks; (iii) and lastly, the nuclear-haves are again hoping to bring forth a legitimate alternative way of acquiring nuclear fuel with the creation of these fuel banks, in contrast to the current illegitimate Iranian option.

The Role of the US Extended Deterrence²⁵ Strategy in the Current American Non-proliferation Policy in the Middle East

Western powers are in fact trying to persuade the countries in the Middle East to accept the terms of a new deal that involves strengthening the non-proliferation measures in the 1970s-era NPT by offering the non-nuclear Middle Eastern powers reasons to not take advantage of their right to indigenously produce the nuclear fuel cycle. This is why the US administration

has tried to present more incentive-based strengthened non-proliferation measures in the Middle East region in general and the Gulf region in particular. In this regard, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's remarks in her Bangkok speech is a good example of this new US policy. In this speech, Clinton, when talking about the trustworthiness about the US's deterrence and security commitments²⁶ in the Middle East region, gave two important messages. First, she warned potential adversaries of the US in the Middle East about acquiring nuclear capability. The American administration made it clear that these nuclear aspirant states will never be allowed to acquire regional dominance. Secondly, US wanted to assure its allies and friends in the Middle East that the US will continue with its security commitments in the region and not allow them to become subject to potential coercive influence from regional adversaries. Actually, the US administration, by re-announcing the continuing credibility of its security commitments to the states in the Middle East, also aimed to prevent these states' preferences to quickly go nuclear. Moreover, when the new Nuclear Posture Review was declared in 2010, the US accordingly declared that it will not resort to the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states that are parties to the NPT. But an important exception

was made for those states that have violated or breached the NPT, namely Iran and North Korea. What is strikingly important is that the US, while deciding to give new negative security assurances to states that signed the NPT, in the 2010 Nuclear Posture simultaneously issued a "warning" that included the threat of force against potential nuclear aspirant states.

If one summarizes the US's objective for its extended deterrence and assurance policy in the Middle East, on the one hand the US has intended to send a clear message to potential adversarial states

What is strikingly important is that the US, in the 2010 Nuclear Posture issued a "warning" that included the threat of force against potential nuclear aspirant states.

that Washington will never allow conditions to develop in which benefits would be expected to be gained by potential nuclear-aspirant states. In this regard, another important message

for the states in the Middle East is that there is no rational reason for them to develop their own nuclear deterrent capability against Iran as they would be well protected by the US security umbrella. So far, these messages do not seem to have been accepted by the states in the Middle East region, with the exception of some states in the Gulf region. In this regard, the recently signed 123 Agreement with the UAE, for instance, can be seen as a sign of success for the Western nuclear non-proliferation policies in the Gulf sub-

region. But, on the other hand, some states in the Middle East like Egypt have stood against these kinds of deals, although the UAE voluntarily signed it, stating that they are in violation of the nuclear have-nots inalienable rights under Article 4 of the NPT.

Despite some criticism about the new non-proliferation initiatives in the Middle East in general, some countries have already preferred to sign nuclear cooperation agreements with different members of the P5 countries under the condition that their rights under Article 4 of the NPT remain. Moreover, some of these non-nuclear states have brought up a new proposal that aims to avoid the likely negative proliferation side effect of the plans to build new nuclear power plants around the world, including the Middle East. According to this new proposal, Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) members would place requirements on states before the transfer of nuclear technology. The main prerequisite would be that the non-nuclear states of the NPT would be expected to implement the Additional Protocol.²⁷ In this way, the possibility of these non-nuclear states using their civilian nuclear energy programs to develop nuclear weapons capability would be constrained if not totally prevented.²⁸

All in all, with all these new preemptive precaution strategies, the international community is hoping to avoid one of the basic problems of the NPT that has been resulting from the “loophole” present under Article 4 of the

treaty. The P5 countries especially want to ensure some means of control over the highly problematic issue of compliance. Yet, all of these measures so far do not seem to be enough to overcome the important problem of non-compliance with the NPT.

Conclusion

Today the already deteriorated trust relationship that was embodied in the 1970 bargain in the NPT is affecting the current and changing dynamics of the nuclear situation in the Middle East. Since the 1990s, the NPT has come under heavy strain. Since its inception, the main problem with the NPT has been related to the question of whether the treaty’s ultimate goal was disarmament or not. Once again this important and contentious issue has gained importance due to new arguments related to the future of both the NPT and the entire non-proliferation regime.²⁹ Furthermore, the new Western concern over the unregulated spread of civilian nuclear fuel cycle programs in the Middle East and the existing weaponization risks that are associated with them has naturally hastened the deteriorating trust between the two different status states in the NPT. What is more important is that within this context, the free-riding status of some of the non-signatories states of the NPT has created problems for the current fragile situation in the Middle East.

Before the NPT May 2010 Review Conference, all of these developments led

the international community to further question the credibility of the NPT in terms of whether it would be a reliable non-proliferation tool in the future. That is why the Americans, knowing the difficulty of persuading non-nuclear states to accept strengthened non-proliferation measures without building trust between the two sides, has decided to accelerate the implementation of President Obama's "zero nuclear policy". In this regard, the new START, the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit in New York, as well as the decision to convene a conference in 2012 on a "Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone" and a call for Israel to become a party to the NPT were all efforts to give the image that the West is now taking serious its Article 6 responsibilities under the NPT.³⁰ It is true that following the May 2010 "NPT Review Conference", there was a growing awareness of the need to maintain the deal made in the 1970s among the nuclear and non-nuclear states in relation to Articles 4 and 6 of the NPT. However, developments in other important areas related to creating a stable and secure nuclear situation in the Middle East are lagging, such as in universalizing the Additional Protocol, improving the IAEA safeguards agreement, creating binding enforcement rules for the violations of the NPT, meeting the demand for fuel supply clarifying the terms under which

a state may withdraw from the NPT,³¹ and, most important of all, creating conditions suitable for the development of regional arms-control mechanisms.

Today, the nuclear states of the NPT, and especially the US through its ambitious "zero nuclear policy", is actually aiming to send an important message to the states of the Middle East that Washington and some of its allies are now ready and in favor of cooperating with them in the area of nuclear energy as long as it is based on transparency and verification, which is in direct contrast with the current Iranian example. So today, the international

Since its inception, the main problem with the NPT has been related to the question of whether the treaty's ultimate goal was disarmament or not.

community, having recognized the NPT's loss of credibility, is trying to revitalize the treaty in the face of newly rising nuclear security threats both in the Middle East

and beyond. As a result, it is clear that today the international community is once again about to go through a bargaining process to create new norms of behavior, a process similar to that in the 1970s when the NPT was agreed. In this new norm re-building process, the states of the Middle East, in addition to states in Asia as well as those that did not sign the NPT, will be involved. During this new bargaining process, the two sides should be very careful when they are dealing with the delicate balance that was once built into the NPT under Articles 4 and 6.

Since the inception of the NPT, the main argument has been about whether the non-nuclear states of the NPT are equal with the five nuclear-armed states. Hence, in this new norm-building process in the NPT, a great deal of attention should first of all be given to the issue of the nuclear fuel cycle. During this process, the nuclear armed states should be careful to take the other states' legitimate concerns into account so that they will not feel inferior. Another issue that is related with how nuclear fuel will be supplied, an issue that directly affects all the states of the Middle East region.

Additionally, if one tries to assess the nuclear disarmament steps that have been accomplished so far by the nuclear-armed states under the NPT, it is clear

that these steps are still at the preliminary stage. In view of the fact that all of the five nuclear-armed countries still continue to rely on nuclear deterrence as part of their national security doctrines, the new disarmament initiatives that have been launched both at the sub-regional level as well as at the global level do not seem to be enough to persuade the non-nuclear states to accept further strengthened non-proliferation measures. For this reason, the future of both the CTBT and FMCT agreements are important not only from a psychological stand point, as it could help mend the deteriorated trust relationship between the two sides of the NPT, but also in laying out the most suitable conditions for furthering nuclear cooperation between the two sides.

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- 25 Extended Deterrence consists in extending the logic of deterrence to a third party, that is, persuading a potential adversary that the cost of attacking a protected country would exceed its benefits through a ‘security guarantee’ given to the protected party. See, Bruno Tertrais, “The Future of Extended Deterrence: A Brainstorming Paper”, *Perspectives on Extended Deterrence Recherches & Documents*, at http://www.frstrategie.org/barreFRS/publications/rd/2010/RD_211003.pdf [last visited 25 January 2011].
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- 28 The United States and other states and entities do care about realizing non-proliferation in our time, and hence that is why International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) major programs aims to reduce nuclear proliferation risks all over the world. As it is known, the IAEA is charged with ensuring that nuclear materials and related activities are used for exclusively peaceful purposes. However, after the discovery of Iraq’s clandestine nuclear weapons efforts in the early 1990s, the institution has compelled the 40-plus states on the IAEA’s board of governors to acknowledge that its safeguards system needed to be strengthened. Finally, after years of negotiations the 1977 the Additional Protocol was accepted, which required states to notify the IAEA of plans to build new nuclear facilities, to provide blue prints in advance, to declare nuclear fuel-cycle-related research and development activities, and to inform the IAEA of all trade in sensitive nuclear technology and material. Moreover, the Additional Protocol also grants IAEA inspectors greater access to nuclear facilities on short notice and allows them to take environmental samples to better detect possible violations. Unfortunately, 104 (of the 194) states still have not implemented this protocol. Among them are Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United States, Venezuela, and Vietnam. However, these states, as all others, are entitled to nuclear cooperation as long as they remain compliant with safeguards and

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- 31 Article X of the NPT permits a state to withdraw “if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interest of its country”. See, “Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Powers (NPT)”, at <http://www.armscontrol.org/documents/npt> [last visited 01 September 2010]. When it was negotiated back in 1968, the authors of the treaty did not specify what sort of events and interests would justify withdrawal or how the treaty’s ultimate enforcement body, the United Nations Security Council, should treat a bid to withdraw. In 2003 North Korea exercised this option and is the only state that has done so far. See Darly Kimball, “The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) at a Glance”, *Arms Control Today*, at <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nptfact> [last visited 6 August 2010].

Turkey as a New Security Actor in the Middle East: Beyond the Slogans

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Abstract

The article argues that Turkish foreign policy has moved beyond slogans. An overview of Turkey's relations with Syria, Iraq, Iran and Israel shows that Turkey is increasingly more relaxed, mature and flexible in its foreign policy, and is constantly enhancing its repertoire of policy tools. As far as security is concerned, relying mainly on soft power, Turkish strategy is closer to the European strategy in that it tries to look to the security of whole population groups and their general welfare. Turkey's domestic transformation, consolidation of democracy and economic growth have been major factors in the formulation of this new foreign policy and in the emergence of Turkey as a trading power, stabilizing force and peace-promoter in the region. Nevertheless, it is also seen that Turkey is now mature enough to employ different strategies in its relations with regional actors and in dealing with security issues.

Key Words

Turkey, Turkish foreign policy, Middle East, Security, Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Introduction

The Middle East now occupies a central place in Turkish foreign policy (TFP). This is a result of a number of remarkable internal and external processes. Based upon the accomplishments of previous governments, such as the rapprochement with Syria, the decline of the PKK's activities after Öcalan's arrest, relatively better relations with Iraq, the rapprochement with Greece after the 1999 earthquake, and the EU's granting of candidacy status in 1999, consecutive AK Party governments have embarked upon an accelerating democratization and rapid economic growth process.

Thus within a decade, Turkey has transformed itself into one of the most important players in the region at the economic, political and discursive levels through the strengthening of relations with Syria, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other actors, along with strong relations with Israel (until recently). As a result, Turkey has been very active in the Middle East and North Africa in the last decade, trying to be among the top actors in every important regional issue. In this article, I will try to show that current policymakers are trying to move

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TFP beyond such slogans or catchphrases as ‘neo-Ottomanism’, ‘bridge’, or even ‘zero problems’. An overview of Turkey’s relations with Syria, Iraq, Iran and Israel, which are chosen for the purpose of this article, show that Turkey is increasingly more relaxed, mature and flexible in its foreign policy, constantly enhancing its repertoire of tools without any obsession with slogans that might restrict its manoeuvring.

Within a decade, Turkey has transformed itself into one of the most important players in the region.

Two internal processes will be emphasized as crucial factors in changing the character of Turkey as a regional actor: democratization and economic growth. It can be observed that while Turkey was and is much more direct with Syria and openly criticises the regime when necessary, it is more pragmatic with Iran and advocates a policy of mutual non-interference. Turkey has promoted relations with Iraq to a considerable extent and tries to have mutually beneficial relations with the local government in northern Iraq (the KRG). For Turkey, this relationship depends mainly on the issue of PKK terrorist activities. Its ties with Israel have deteriorated to almost beyond repair and currently give the impression that relations with Israel will not be mended

no matter what happens in the foreseeable future. It will be seen that such a flexible foreign policy is necessary to serve the rising constituency of the AK Party. As far as security is concerned, the new TFP is closer to the European strategy than the American approach. The impact of Turkey’s new approach to security has been particularly visible in recent years. However, this convergence with Europe has mainly taken place through the application of *universal* values rather than deliberate harmonization with the EU, as this link has grown weaker in the last five to six years.

The New Foreign Policy as a Reflection of Internal Change: Democratization and Economic Growth

In this section it will be argued that Turkey’s domestic transformation, specifically the consolidation of democracy and economic growth, is the background to the new foreign policy. Turkey’s domestic reforms have enabled the new ruling elite to implement political views that are radically differentiated from the previous era, and, along with rapid economic growth, has increased the power of the country and been the main factor in the emergence of Turkey as a stabilizing force and peace-promoter in the region. In this process, the AK Party has branded itself a conservative democratic party that favours a vibrant market economy and close ties with

the West, particularly the European Union. International dynamics have also helped. The reforms, required by the EU membership process, have consolidated democracy further and brought, *inter alia*, a gradual ‘normalization’ of civilian-military relations which has greatly contributed to Turkey’s ability and desire to be relatively an island of stability within the Middle East which is often described as being in turmoil.¹

Rising conservative business circles want to deepen Turkey’s integration into the global economic system as the previous closed economy of Turkey was not big enough. They have naturally encouraged the AK Party to pursue a pragmatic, economics-based multi-directional/multi-dimensional foreign policy which means increasing economic ties with different regions of the world.² The Middle East has become one of the most important economic areas for Turkey and it hopes to benefit further from increasing economic relationships with the Arab Gulf states by attracting a higher percentage of their funds for trade and investment.³ In addition, democratization has brought the supremacy of the civilian mindset to state affairs including foreign policy. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s remark that “what makes your borders safe is not the number of your tanks, [but] is the volume of mutual trade and investment with your neighbours” is very similar to Özal’s emphasis on the importance of economic ties and people-to-people contact with neighbours (e.g.

Greece) for regional stability. Intensifying a peaceful regional web of ties suits Turkey as it has a comparative economic advantage.

Previously a more security-oriented outlook to foreign policy often made Turkey a destabilizing force (a *loose cannon*) in the region. The Turkish elite saw the ‘Kurdish question’ and Islamism as the main threats with strong foreign connections. Thus, domestic problems led to tense relations with regional and extra-regional actors.⁴ For example, Şükrü Elekdağ, the former Turkish ambassador to Washington, when referring to a defence-cooperation agreement concluded between Greece and Syria in 1996, argued that Turkey in response had to prepare for “two and a half wars” (i.e., full-scale wars against Syria and Greece, along with the already ongoing low intensity war with the PKK).⁵ As Dağlı argues, for decades TFP was directed by a “siege mentality” according to which Turkey was surrounded by enemies; a description which was also convenient for domestic purposes as external ‘threats’ justified the authoritarian regime inside. “A liberal turn in Turkish foreign policy”, as Dağlı calls it, rescued Turkey from these past fears and insecurities and has enabled Turkey to look at foreign policy issues and regional affairs from different angles.⁶

Naturally, TFP is firmly dependent on the dynamics of internal politics: the attitudes of opposition parties and the nature of the regime and personalities of key individuals. It should also be

pointed out that there have emerged broadly two political camps in Turkey. The first, the relatively larger group, includes centre-right politicians, liberals, and the religious-conservatives who generally support the AK Party and the few other ideologically closer smaller parties. This camp struggles with the 'old elite' who generally control the military and judiciary. The other camp, which is composed of secularists, the military and civilian bureaucratic elites as well as various groups of nationalists who generally support the Republican People's Party, Nationalist Movement Party and the Workers' Party, accuses the AK Party leadership of being mere instruments or subcontractors of the US and the EU.⁷

A stable, peaceful region is now considered essential for Turkey to deepen its democracy, sustain its economic growth and possibly secure its accession to the EU.

The change in TFP is in part a reflection of the emergence of a new elite with considerably different views on foreign policy. For example, according to Davutoğlu's intellectual framework, Turkey's new foreign policy approach should be based on the following five principles: 1) there should be "a balance between security and democracy" in Turkey; 2) Turkey should have a "zero problems with neighbours" policy; 3) Turkey should "develop relations with

the neighbouring regions and beyond"; 4) it should pursue "a multi-dimensional foreign policy" and its relations with global actors should be complementary, not competitive; and 5) Turkey should conduct a "rhythmic" (sustained and active) diplomacy. According to this new thinking, Turkey has a unique geography and has influence in a large neighbourhood: Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea country in terms of influence.⁸ Turkey, with a much better geographical reach than most, should break away from a 'static and single-parameter policy' and become a 'problem solver' by contributing to 'global and regional peace'. Turkey needs to play a more effective role as an 'order-instituting country' in its regional hinterlands, the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.⁹

The fact that Turkey also had a helpful external environment during the period under discussion has been a crucial boost for the country. For example, the EU's 1999 decision to grant Turkey candidacy status not only marked the beginning of an EU-stimulated process of domestic reform but also the Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy. A stable, peaceful region is now considered essential for Turkey to deepen its democracy, sustain its economic growth and possibly secure its accession to the EU. Being part of conflicts or wars in the region will increase the power of the authoritarian elements in Turkey. Establishing regional peace, security

and stability is also a means to foster Turkish democracy and hence secure the supremacy of civilian governments.¹⁰ The decline of the military's influence in Turkey has facilitated both a broadening and a 'softening' of Turkish foreign policy. Whereas in the past, Turkey had tended to rely heavily on hard power, it has been increasingly seeking diplomatic solutions to problems, especially with its neighbours in the last few years. Ankara has also sought to act as a broker or mediator in regional disputes. For example, Turkey persuaded the Iraqi Sunnis not to boycott the elections and when Turkish authorities visited countries such as Lebanon, Pakistan or Afghanistan, all factions wanted to meet with them.¹¹

Democratization and the need to ensure the continuation of economic growth made the AK Party governments more pragmatic, as compared to the more ideological stances of governments in the past. This pragmatism shows itself frequently in dealings with the Middle East. For example, although the AK Party elite see the Muslim and Ottoman dimension as positive factors for its rapprochement with the Middle East, one prominent AK Party member argues that Turkey has no ambition of being a model for the Islamic world: "Such a move may hurt feelings of Muslim countries. Turkey successfully combined Islamic culture with democracy. It can only be related to this debate in this framework".¹² AK Party members argue that Turkey is not seeking to revive the Ottoman Empire but its reintegration

into its surroundings, thereby correcting an anomaly of the Cold War years, by deepening political dialogue, increasing trade, and multiplying people-to-people contacts with neighbours through tourism, trade, and cultural and educational activities.¹³ This means restoring geographical continuity and enabling the free flow of people, goods and services.

Turkey successfully sought increased access to Middle Eastern investors and markets. As a result nearly 20 percent of Turkey's exports went to the Middle East in 2009, some \$19.2 billion worth of goods, compared with 12.5% in 2004. For example, Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have the same objectives in many fields, according to Davutoğlu. Trade between the GCC and Turkey grew from \$1.5 billion in 1999 to \$17.5 billion in 2008; imports from Turkey increased 15-fold.¹⁴ This economic strategy has served the party constituency who expect the government to provide necessary base, for sustained growth, which requires an open market with strong economic ties abroad.

It should be pointed out that the recent Turkish reliance on non-confrontational means has not been because Turkey lacks 'hard-power' instruments. On the contrary, Turkey has an impressive conventional force. For example, it has the second largest inventory of F-16 fighters in the world (about 240) and is capable of regional strikes (deep battle).¹⁵ It does not prefer to use it as military operations weak

havoc in the region and adversely affect the Turkish economy. Nevertheless, if needed, Turkish hard power can serve its foreign policy principles and interests. For example, air strikes have been used against PKK strongholds in northern Iraq. These moves are in line with the AK Party philosophy that the Turkish state must have both might (*kudret*) and compassion (*şefkat*).¹⁶

Turkey's activism and relying mainly on soft power in the region have been building for more than a decade. The new generation of businessmen, diplomats and television stars are all making connections in the region that will construct deep and enduring

relations. However, as one Turkish official puts it, "If some say the economy is the main goal of our expansion, I could easily counter that security is equally important". In other words, the security dimension of foreign policy initiatives is always considered. Turkey decided to be more active in the region because, as another official said, Turkey wants stability as a country which has suffered most from regional turmoil and which was "importing lots of security problems from the Middle East, arms, terrorist training".¹⁷ Thus, Turkey seeks stability and a more prominent role among the influential regional actors whose populations and economic power is shown at Figure 1.

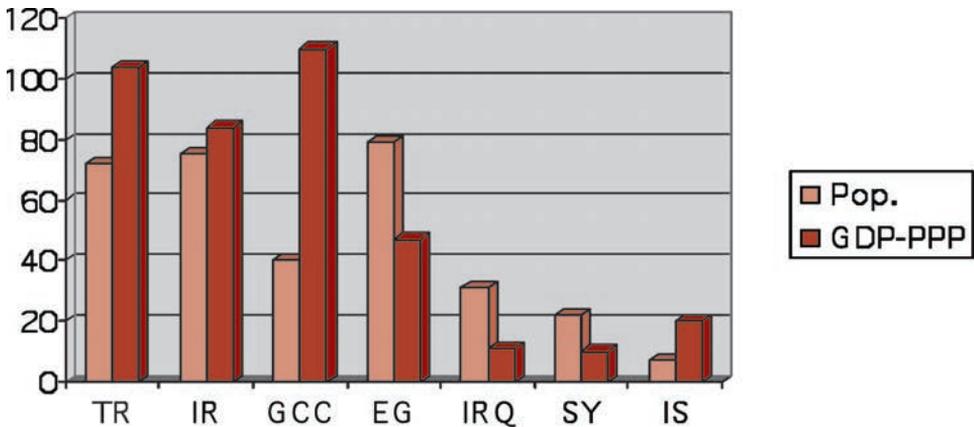


Figure 1: Comparison of Turkey, Iran, Gulf Cooperation Countries, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Israel in terms of population (millions) and GDP (PPP in \$10 billion in 2009).¹⁸

Security through European Ways

While Fuller argued that an economically more vibrant “Turkey has strategically become part of the Middle East with a role of regional economic model”,¹⁹ for many observers and Turkish leaders Turkey is also firmly within Europe. Its candidacy and accession process to the EU clearly shows this. Just by its existence, the EU provides a unique paradigm for Turks and Kurds. The EU is seen as a project of progressively abolishing all borders and overcoming deep historical animosities. The EU has attained peace, stability and prosperity; a similar transformation can be accomplished in the Middle East, too, if the actors cooperate. While Turkey has attained the status of a major trading power and is less dependent on the US or EU market, its approach to the region through engagement and mediation in order to attain stability and prosperity through free travel, economic integration, and policy coordination looks more like the EU’s recipe for conflict resolution in the last 60 years.

Turkey’s position in the Middle East must rest on four main principles (as formulated by Davutoğlu): security for everyone; priority for dialogue as a means of solving crises; economic interdependence as “order in the Middle East cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of isolated economies”; and cultural coexistence and plurality.²⁰ According to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan, the destinies of the countries in the region are intertwined.²¹ Erdoğan has argued that Turkey’s growing influence in its south and east is actually “taking the burden off the shoulders of the EU”.²² Indeed, an intense economic, political and cultural relationship is the basis for creating a zone of stability and prosperity (and eventually perhaps freedom) in the southern neighbours. This strategy is also much like the EU’s aim of promoting a ‘ring of friends’.²³

Thus, Turkey has been launching initiative after initiative aimed at stabilizing the Middle East. It has been facilitating efforts to reduce conflicts, expand visa-free travel, increase trade and integrate infrastructure.²⁴ It has been actively trying to cooperate with regional countries in multiple areas including banking, telecommunications, construction and security. These initiatives, which show that Turkey’s role as a regional security actor is changing through, *inter alia*, Europeanization, and that Turkey can also contribute to European energy security as a transit country. For example, with the Nabucco pipeline project, signed in July 2009, Turkey will help to diversify energy sources to southeast and central Europe.²⁵ Thus, Turkey aims to satisfy its own energy requirements and collect transit revenues by serving as an energy hub.

Turkey has rather successfully acted as a facilitator in trying to help solving problems between regional actors. It has pursued and pursues ‘positive neutrality’ in the region. Turkish involvement in

regional issues has ranged from efforts to mediate between the Arabs/Palestinians and Israelis, between the Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and between Bosnia and Serbia. Even though not all of these mediation efforts have been successful, they have helped Turkey gain visibility and prestige.²⁶ It has become clear that in recent years Turkey has taken the view that a new and better order in the region can ideally be established by institutionalizing ‘representative democracy’ across the area. Yet, Turkey is realistic enough to also maintain good relations with non-democratic regimes (e.g. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council members) and major powers.

Turkey has taken the view that a new and better order in the region can ideally be established by institutionalizing ‘representative democracy’ across the area.

Turkey’s ties to Europe and the US may have become less visible but that doesn’t mean Turkey has changed its fundamental direction. As the Turkish President Abdullah Gül said, “What Turkey is doing is clear. Turkey, surely, is moving simultaneously in every direction, towards East and West, North and South” but “the important point is to which direction its values are moving”. He defined that “direction” as

“democratic values, supremacy of law, respect of human rights, transparency, gender equality, and a functioning free market economy”, which could be interpreted as a reconfirmation of Turkey’s EU membership goal.²⁷ Turkey has been arguing that the Islamic world needs to radically transform itself in the fields of economics, politics, culture and education, as Abdullah Gül declared, “put the house in order”, to meet global challenges. Thus, Turkey’s security strategy in the Middle East does not undermine its NATO status or desire to join the EU. Rather, by becoming an ‘exporter’ of security rather than a consumer in the region, the Turkish strategy is winning more praise from the US and Europe than it receives from the authoritarian regimes in the area.

Turkey’s move towards a more developed democratic system and free market has also had a regional impact. In recent years, prominent personalities in the Middle East have discussed the importance of Turkey as a model or example for the transformation of the Arab world. Turkey’s credentials are based on it being a democratic (secular) Muslim country with a successful liberal economy. Turkey provides an attractive political and economic model for both secularists and Islamists in the region. In fact, as the prime minister of a secular country and thanks to his own religious credentials as a pious Muslim, Erdoğan comfortably speaks about the dangers of sectarianism in the region and advises

peaceful coexistence despite ethnic, sectarian cultural differences.²⁸ As Kirişci argues, Turkey has a “demonstrative effect” in the region despite its shortcomings. A survey conducted in seven Arab countries reveals that 61 percent of the respondents considered Turkey to be a model for Arab countries, with 63 percent of the respondents agreeing that “Turkey constituted a successful example of coexistence of democracy and Islam”. Kirişci points out that the “Trading State” (defined as “a state whose foreign policy becomes increasingly shaped by economic consideration and a country in whose GNP foreign trade acquires an important place”) dimension is important for Turkey’s image. It also provides an economic dimension to the demonstrative effect. It is seen that Turkish democracy is flourishing with the growth of its economy; as per capita income rises, individuals become more self-confident and open to the world. Per capita income in Turkey increased from just around \$1,300 in 1985 to \$2,773 in 1995 and almost \$11,000 in 2008. Kirişci also reminds us that Turkey’s visa-free travel policy and popular Turkish TV series reinforce the positive image of the country in the Arab world.²⁹

As many commentators agree, Turkey is perhaps the only country in the entire Middle East that has integrated with modernity. It has a functional and democratic political system, a productive economy, and has found a workable balance between religion and secularism.

For example, Pope argues that Turkey, with its “robust” democracy, “genuinely elected leader”, and products that are “popular from Afghanistan to Morocco” (including dozens of TV series), is “the envy of the Arab world”. Salem argues that Turkey is well placed to make a bid for a leadership role. Çandar points out that the emergence of Turkey in the international arena as an autonomous regional power has been due to the decline or at least the suspension of American influence in the region, the ineffectiveness of EU policy in the region, and the destruction of the Sunni dominance in Iraq following the war in 2003, leaving the space open for Shiite Iran’s influence.³⁰ In this view, Turkey is entering the Middle East vacated by traditional Sunni powers, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as the new ‘central power’. While there have been many commentators from the Arab world that supports the views above, such claims, especially if they come from officials, are counterproductive; Turkish leaders often refuse to say that Turkey aims for leadership or is a model in the region. This move seems prudent as Cairo, for example, was anxious about Turkish involvement in ‘Arab affairs’ in ways that might shift the geopolitical balance. Turkey’s activism could overshadow its role in the Palestinian issue. After realizing Egypt’s concerns, Turkey was careful to argue that its role was complementary to that of Egypt. Turkey was not trying to steal a role from Egypt.³¹

Relations with Syria: Ups and Downs

The Turkish-Syrian relationship today is the best example of how the regional political landscape can quickly change and change again. Within 10-12 years, Turkey's relations with Syria evolved from the brink of war to "full harmony", according to Davutoğlu, just before the Arab Spring came to Syria. Syria, which is ruled by a Shiite minority and has been traditionally close to Iran, was under intense American pressure as a 'rogue' state. Nevertheless, Turkey had a constructive policy toward Syria because, as Davutoğlu stated, "There are two visions regarding the region. One vision is the mission of building welfare, peace and stability" and "the other vision is based on creating disputes and uneasiness [...] the first vision will narrow the zone of the second vision". It must be a common aim, he added, "to get out of the vicious circle and turn the region an area of stability and prosperity".³²

During this time, Turkish-Syrian relations progressed to an unprecedented level. There were joint cabinet meetings and relations improved in many areas, from security, energy, and banking to higher education. Turkey's great contribution to the ongoing process of reintegrating Syria into the international system despite the punitive agenda of the Western powers has also helped to promote its own constructive and peaceful image in the Arab world. Turkey's Syria policy produced 'unthinkably'

good results. For example, the Syrian government was closely following the Turkish government with regard to the PKK issue so much so that it declared, in support of a solution, that it might grant amnesty to some 1,500 Syrian nationals within the PKK if the organization laid down its arms. On lifting visas in 2010, Davutoğlu's words show a glimpse of the new thinking on Turkey's part: "I would like to address the Syrian people. Turkey is your second country [...] we are lifting the borders which were artificially put and becoming the people of one hinterland. We are turning the economic cooperation to an economic unity. We are hoping that this will be a model for all our neighbours."³³

The low institutionalization of cooperation with authoritarian regimes because of their personal character showed its face also in Turco-Syrian relations.

However, the low institutionalization of cooperation with authoritarian regimes because of their personal character showed its face also in Turco-Syrian relations. While Turkey had been advising and hoping that the Assad regime could manage a gradual and peaceful transition to a more democratic structure, the Syrian government seemed to be unwilling or unable to enact the necessary reforms required for the transition of the country to normalcy. For example, according to Erdoğan,

Assad could use the fact that he is a Nusayri while his wife is a Sunni to promote sectarian tolerance in the Syria. However, as the wave of the Arab Spring hit Syria in March 2011, the opposition in Syria seemed to prefer to clash with the regime rather than wait for state-initiated reforms that might never come. As experts pointed out the risks a state collapse would pose for Turkey, especially the possibility of an influx of refugees across the lengthy border, the Turkish government immediately said that Turkey would not to put a limit on the number of refugees and would welcome all who seek safety across the border. It did not hesitate this time to put an authoritarian regime under the spotlight by drawing attention to the possible refugee influx.³⁴

Relations with Iraq and the Issue of PKK Terrorism

Relations with Iraq have a critical importance for Turkey, partly because events in northern Iraq could be expected to have serious effects on Turkey's internal Kurdish problem, and partly because of the substantial interdependence of the Turkish and Iraqi economies. Previously, Turkey had refrained from having contacts with Kurdish authorities in Northern Iraq, but in order to achieve its foreign policy aims, Ankara has started to act in line with the new realities in Iraq. Instead of relying on military means to overcome the threat of terrorism from northern Iraq, Turkey has

lately increased its contacts with Arab and Kurdish authorities in the country and tried to convince them to cooperate more in the fight against the PKK. In this respect, Turkey's new stance became obvious after 2007.³⁵

As Akyol argues, "Turkey's decades-old 'Kurdophobia' and the old paradigm based on a 'paranoid mindset that saw the world as full of enemies' might be passing".³⁶ The intertwining of PKK terrorism with the Kurdish question has been the most important thorn in Turkey's relations with some of its Middle Eastern neighbours. Less fixation with the Kurdish question is necessary for Turkey to engage with the region more effectively. Thus, Turkish policymakers in recent years admitted that the PKK should be tackled by instruments other than militarily. This has become synonymous with a softening approach to the Kurdish question in Turkey and a new policy of rapprochement and cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).³⁷

Prior to 2008, the Erdoğan government, and especially the Turkish military, had been wary of establishing direct contacts with KRG authorities, fearing that this would strengthen the KRG's drive for independence. In 2007, then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül cancelled the scheduled visit to Turkey of KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani when the chief of the Turkish general staff announced his opposition to such contacts. Only after Gül became president did he invite Jalal Talabani

to make an official visit in 2008. This positive development led Talabani to openly advise Kurdish politicians and the PKK to make most of “the opportunity” and intensify dialogue with the AK Party government for a solution to the Kurdish problem.

An economically prosperous Northern Iraq will continue to be a valuable market for Turkey.

Overall, the AK Party is more willing to co-opt the Kurds and play “big brother” to them in line with the more accommodative character of its conservative ideology. Since late 2008, however, the Erdoğan government has begun to intensify such contacts.³⁸ It has become clear that there should also be a ‘zero-problems with Kurds’ policy.³⁹ This also makes economic sense as Turkey benefits from expanding trade with northern Iraq. For example, according to a newly renewed contract, Turkey will receive \$450 million per year from the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık pipeline. Better relations with the KRG and Iraqi government would also allow Turkey to protect the interests of the Turcoman in Iraq.⁴⁰ Normalization serves both sides. As the KRG has oil reserves, it needs to be able to extract and transport it to Western markets. Oil pipelines from northern Iraq already flow into Turkish ports on the Mediterranean and they provide the most efficient and cost-effective means of getting Iraqi oil to

international markets. An economically prosperous Northern Iraq will continue to be a valuable market for Turkey. The long-standing strategy of allowing its businessmen to bind the Iraqi Kurdish economy tightly into Turkey acquired a real political dimension as dialogue with Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government began. In March 2010, this reached a high point with the arrival of a Turkish consul-general in Arbil, the seat of the Iraqi Kurdish administration.⁴¹

A solution to PKK terrorist activities, mainly through political reforms regarding the Kurdish minority in Turkey, is perhaps the most important agenda item for Turkey. The AK Party’s popularity in both Turkish and Kurdish constituencies has raised the optimism for a settlement. Although the government’s ‘Kurdish Opening’ is aimed at the disbandment and disarming of the PKK through solving the more general problem of the Kurdish question, the initiative has faced strong nationalist opposition from the National Action Party (MHP) and parts of the Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP). The initiative has also been unpopular with the Turkish public which has become more nationalistic in recent decades. Nevertheless, having strong enough political support from the electorate, the government is trying to solve the deepest domestic problem of the country, integrating the Kurds, through a basic human rights perspective.⁴² It could be seen that the AK Party’s more overall liberal approach to the Kurdish question is praised by many commentators from

different ideological backgrounds. In the long run it is expected that the recent reforms would undermine the public base of the PKK and considerably reduce its capacity. A PKK under pressure will be less able to sabotage a peace process in Turkey.⁴³ As Turkey needs the support of Iraqi authorities against the PKK, the remarks by Iraqi Kurdish leaders that they could put pressure on the organization if a comprehensive democratic solution is reached within Turkey can be seen as a positive step. In a broad sense, in recent years Turkey has understood that it needs to help the smooth functioning of a strong and unifying government in Iraq, which is vital to preserve the regional balance of power.⁴⁴ Ankara has also realized that the support and cooperation of the KRG government in eradicating the PKK is critical, which in return requires more positive engagement with the regional authority.

Relations with Iran: A Delicate Balance

As Turkey and Iran show similarities in terms of their size, industrial base, population and (conventional) military powers, competition between them seems natural. However, for Turkey, Iran, unlike most other Middle Eastern countries, is a large and important neighbour and hence has to be managed, not confronted. As Turkey imports around 93 percent of its oil and gas needs, and its demand for energy continues to increase, it also wants to be an energy corridor; Iran is

crucial to this strategy. Naturally Turkey prefers the rehabilitation of Iran with its reintegration into the international system and as a fully cooperative player in the global energy market. Turkey has been opposing the American pressure against energy deals and investment in Iran since the last Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan was prime minister. This position was recently reiterated by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who said that “as a growing economy and surrounded by energy resources, Turkey needs Iranian energy as a natural extension of its national interests. Therefore, Turkey’s energy agreements with Iran cannot be dependent upon its relationships with other countries.”⁴⁵ As Iran is expected to provide a significant portion of the gas supply for the Nabucco project, its position is also crucial for European energy security. Since the Ankara-Tehran rapprochement is mainly a pragmatic policy based on mutual national interests, Turkey has been busy further developing trade relations, which has reached \$10 billion per year.⁴⁶

Turkey prefers the rehabilitation of Iran with its reintegration into the international system.

However, in the last few years, Turkey’s position has become more delicate with the acceleration of the Iranian nuclear program. Turkey has supported the idea of making the Middle East a nuclear weapons free zone.

Unlike many other actors, Erdoğan did not hesitate to criticise Israel's assumed nuclear arsenal. Turkey is also a principled advocate of the peaceful use of nuclear energy as the AK Party government plans to construct nuclear power stations despite the opposition of environmental groups. In fact, it could be argued that the Turkish government, similar to American policy, has been trying to balance Iranian influence in the region. However, as Yetkin observes, the Turkish Prime Minister has tried to say to the West "let's prevent the nuclearization of Iran but if we do this by force, the whole world will be a zone of war".⁴⁷ Akgün argues that nothing in the world is more natural than Turkey saying to the US to "consult me too if you are planning an embargo or a bombing for my neighbours".⁴⁸

As President Gül explained, Turkey got involved in the issue because it would be among the biggest losers in case of a major war. To the surprise of the world, Turkey together with Brazil brokered the 17 May 2010 nuclear swap deal under which Iran agreed to ship 1,200 kilograms of low enriched uranium to Turkey, and in turn would receive 120 kilograms of nuclear fuel for its reactor in Tehran. Thus, Brazil and Turkey have showed that they too have the ability to influence global affairs. This move was snubbed by the United States and other big powers, although the content of the deal was what the US had earlier sought

from Iran as the leaked letter of Obama to da Silva clearly showed. The US and the other Western powers preferred to impose further sanctions on Iran in the UN Security Council, which was passed by a vote of 12 to 2, with Turkey and Brazil voting against and Lebanon abstaining.⁴⁹ Turkey was heavily criticized in some Western circles for protecting Iran and opposing the US more than even Russia or China did on this issue. However, it should not be forgotten that while Iran clashes with Israel and the West, takes an aggressive stance militarily towards the West in Iraq, in Gaza and in Lebanon through its ties with Iraqi Shiites, Hamas or Hezbollah respectively, Turkey provides almost a completely opposite picture in all of the issues above by trying to promote democracy and stability in these areas.

Thus many critics find Turkey's Iranian policy risky and difficult to maintain as Turkey also wants to have good relations with the Gulf countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia) and Egypt which all fear a nuclear-armed Iran.⁵⁰ As Turkey generally tries to strike a balance in regional affairs, the government declared that Turkey would naturally comply with the resolution. There are some signs that Turkish leaders are also uncomfortable with Iran acquiring nuclear weapons as nobody can guarantee that Iran would not use the issue against Turkish interests in the region.⁵¹ Turkey prefers that Iran, too, gives priority to regional

economic relations and rely on soft-power instruments. However, Iranian strategy seems focused on emerging as a more dominant hard-power player in the region, especially in the Gulf.

Relations with Israel: The Odd One Out?

In line with its new strategy of dealing with the important issues of the region, Turkey has been involved in the Palestinian question. Having already established ties with Israel, Turkey has also enhanced its dialogue with the Palestinians, including with Hamas which is considered an illegitimate entity by Israel. On a related chapter in Arab-Israeli relations, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu made it clear that the Israeli government led them to believe that Turkey had brought Israel and Syria to the brink of face-to-face talks or even a peace deal. Yet with no warning, Israel launched “Operation Cast Lead” in Gaza which moved Turkish public opinion further towards the Palestinians and galvanized the perception that grave injustice is being done to the Palestinians. It seems that the Turkish side took a strategic decision that Israel, with its current policies toward the Palestinians, toward Syria, toward Iran and with its image among the Arab public, was the odd one out in the region. Thus, the operation was presented as the turning point for relations. Just a few weeks later, in January

2009 at the Davos Forum, Erdoğan, repeatedly demanded “one minute” more from the moderator, and shouted to President Peres that “you know well how to kill people”. According to Birand, by taking up the cause of Palestinians, Erdoğan brought about a peace between Turkey and the Arab street which used to see secular Turkey as no more than an obedient servant to the West.⁵²

Turkey is acting as an ‘aspirant’ power whereas Israel is a staunch ‘supporter of the status quo’.

The lowest point in the relations came with the *Mavi Marmara* Incident of 31 May 2010 when Israeli Defence Force commandos killed nine Turkish citizens in international waters. After the incident, Davutoğlu said that unless there is an Israeli apology and compensation, Turkey will try to isolate Israel in every international platform. Turkish attitude vis-à-vis Israel might seem over-confident; yet, according to commentators like Çandar, it must be preferred to the usual “inferiority complex” that marked the previous periods.⁵³ With hindsight, commentators point out that the golden age in Turkish-Israeli relations in the 1990s was exceptional.⁵⁴ The relations between the two countries did not run deep. Israel has not been as open to Turkish technology and business deals as would

be needed to foster stronger financial ties between businesses and corporations. The relationship has been largely limited to the military realm.⁵⁵ It appears that Turkey is acting as an ‘aspirant’ power whereas Israel is a staunch ‘supporter of the status quo’. Israel does not seem to want a lasting agreement for peace but prefers a continuation of the situation with its currently superior military position. Overall, Turkish perception shifted toward the views that rather than helping, Israel was resisting the rise of Turkey. Israel now seems to be the odd one out both in the region and in the foreign policy strategy of Turkey.

Both democratization and the desire to promote intensive economic ties with the countries in the region require stability.

Turkey’s attempts at establishing a new order in the Middle East mean that Israel can no longer act as a *sui generis* actor in the area above other regional actors without risking further frictions with Turkey. By drawing attention to the plight of the Palestinians and by describing Gaza as an open prison, Turkey has become the most vocal and persistent critic of Israel. With his daring criticism of Israel, Erdoğan became a ‘hero’ for the Arab street, which in many countries became full of Turkish flags and Erdoğan posters.⁵⁶ Thus, the Turkish Prime Minister can address the Muslim

populations in the region directly, which in the long run will make Turkey more influential in the region.

As the *Mavi Marmara* Incident put the Turkish government in a very difficult position in the eyes of the Turkish public, Turkey still waits for an apology from Israel by constantly emphasizing that failure to do so would result in further measures against Israel. Turkey also implied that it would support Palestinian statehood. Thus, it is difficult to argue that Turkey provides any space for a face-saving apology from Israel. On the contrary, it is clear that that Turkey will not shy away from taking part in Middle Eastern issues, even though Israel is on the opposite front in some issues.

Conclusion

It has been argued that in the formulation of TFP, Turkish leaders have increasingly gone beyond the slogans and refrained from presenting Turkey as the new leader or model for the region. Two processes have been particularly important in shaping this new policy: democratization and economic growth. The constituency of the AK Party naturally demands a continuation of these processes which have also been effective in transforming Turkey’s stance in the region as a security actor. Both democratization and the desire to promote intensive economic ties with the countries in the region require

stability. This encourages Turkey to pursue a moderate foreign policy. Thus, Turkey's approach to regional security is getting closer to the European style of constructing regional stability through economic interdependence and the application of universal values such as democracy, human rights and the rule

of law. Although to a great extent the Turkish reliance on soft power and its efforts to promote peace and stability are the attitudes the region exactly needs, it is also seen that as the Turkey becomes more self-confident, relaxed and flexible, the possibility of using hard power has not been completely ruled out.

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The Fall of Democracy in Syria

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Abstract

This paper analyses social, economic and political factors during the years between Syria's independence (1946) and its unification with Egypt (1958) that led to the fall of democracy. Despite the achievements of hard-won sovereignty and the establishment of liberal institutions following 1946, the country faced numerous obstacles to democratic consolidation. Bitter social conflicts, aggravated by a deep sense of insecurity among the Syrian population, in combination with economic disparities and military intervention, led to the destabilization of the state. During its formative years, the country was not immune to anti-colonial and social unrest and Cold War rivalries. As a means to overcome these challenges, the young democracy embarked on a path of defensive modernization elevating the army to political power.

In order to identify the reasons behind the fall of Syria's democracy, this paper analyses factors such as: social conflict, institutional weakness, the rise of radical parties, the politicization of the military and the role of an unfavorable external environment. The essay draws attention to changes in class such as the weakening of Syria's liberal elites whose legitimacy diminished as they failed to meet the

challenges posed by late industrialization and foreign competition. Particular importance is attributed to the birth of a new middle class, radicalized by political parties directed against oligarchy and imperialism. This paper assumes that the democratic breakdown in Syria can be seen as a consequence of both internal developments and external pressures.

Key Words

Democratic breakdown, post-independence Syria, United Arab Republic, defensive modernization, political legitimacy.

Introduction

In the late 1940s, Syria's newly gained independence showed that establishing a viable state is an enormous challenge. After centuries of colonial domination, the government was expected to efficiently perform its function of providing territorial and social security. As Linz and Stepan point out:¹ a democratic system, in order to be sustainable, has to provide a minimum provision of economic resources. Foreign economic competition, regional conflicts

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and Cold War rivalry added further strain to the already arduous task of forming a stable and responsive government. Bitter conflicts provoked by social disparities led to the destabilization of the state. Diverse concepts of the shape of the country caused rivalry among authority representatives in Syria's definition process. Post-independence elites, pan-Arabs, Nasserists and socialist parties – all competed to shape the pathway of Syrian political and economic development.

Arab unity was seen as a way to secure social and economic development.

This paper will examine the factors that led to the undermining of Syria's democratic system and caused the transition to authoritarian rule. After a brief introduction to the question of identity in the newly created state, the paper will analyze the determinants that allowed the disintegration of democratic structures, such as the crumbling of Syria's liberal elites, social conflict, and the radicalization of a new class, the rise of radical parties and the influence of external factors and defensive modernization. It will concentrate on the external threat and intense social conflict that preceded the United Arab Republic (UAR).

There are various interpretations of the reasons behind the democratic breakdown in Syria. Moubayed² claims that attempts to overthrow the government led by Cold War rivals

sympathizing with either of the two sides destroyed Syria's chances for a stable democracy. Such focus on international conspiracies is criticized by Heydemann.³ Heydemann contradicts Moubayed in saying that the collapse of democracy in Syria was not caused "by intrigues of foreign powers but by the dynamics of Syria's political economy"⁴. Against this theoretical background, this paper reflects a dual preoccupation with both the endogenous and exogenous factors that caused Syria's democratic breakdown. It argues that a simultaneous calculus of external threats and internal division brought the regime down. A combination of social factors and an unfavorable external environment had a determining role in the failure of Syria's democratic consolidation.

Its long history of colonialism, and the evidence of foreign meddling in its internal affairs, including support for military coups, shows that Syria's domestic policies were influenced not only by internal power struggles, but also by inter-Arab relations and Cold War competition. After the West supported the formation of Israel and the Suez war, Syrian enmity towards the West became even stronger and the Soviet Union gradually began to counter Western influence in Syria. Arms deals and other forms of economic cooperation strengthened Syria's left-wing elements and violently brought social issues back on the agenda.

In this paper I concentrate on the period before Syria's union with Nasserist Egypt, which practically brought an end

to the brief democratic interval, rather than on the events directly preceding the 1963 Ba'ath coup. Instead, I analyze the factors that allowed for the coup to occur and that led indirectly to authoritarianism.

Question of Identity

The particular historic context is crucial to understanding Syria's democratic interlude. The birth of the Syrian state ensued as a result of the nationalist struggle against imperialism, which radicalised nationalist sentiments in Syria.⁵ An arbitrary delineation of borders by the colonial powers and the resulting territorial losses of historic Syria - Palestine, Alexandretta, the Bequa valley and parts of the Mediterranean coast - left ambitions for Greater Syria unfulfilled. The historic, cultural and political bonds among the divided states paved the way for radical movements; Pan-Arabist, Islamist and nationalist ideologies were so deeply rooted in Syrian minds that public opinion would not tolerate divergence from Arab nationalism.⁶ Although since 1946 the focus of Syrian political life has shifted from the nationalist struggle to the challenge of constructing a viable state, nationalism has remained a dominant current in Syrian politics. The main objective of Arab nationalism was to compensate for colonial humiliation by reuniting divided Arab territories. This mindset provided ideological support for the union with Egypt. In

a burst of Pan-Arab euphoria, control of liberal institutions was ceded to authoritarian Egypt. Arab unity was seen as a way to secure social and economic development. The minorities in Syria were particularly susceptible to the Pan-Arab ideology, as a way of safeguarding their status and security. They radicalised because of a "double vulnerability": the threat of foreign invasion and danger to their domestic position from the Sunni majority.

Weakness of Liberal Elites

In the 1940s, Syria was dominated by a group of fifty prominent families of landed aristocracy, who had unrivalled power both in economic and political terms derived from owning land in the country and holding important public offices in the cities. Nevertheless, the aforementioned social tensions, lack of reforms and marginalization of some social groups led to the "explosive disintegration of the oligarchic order."⁷

For the most part absentee landlords, they did not develop a sense of social and political responsibility toward the countryside.

The veteran nationalists lacked popular support from the very beginning. The leadership of the members of the National Bloc was questioned due to

unsuccessful treaty negotiations with the French which failed to prevent losses of Syria's historic territory and left the country with a currency still attached to the franc.

In terms of Max Weber's criteria for political legitimacy,⁸ the notables lacked traditional authority for their position. They had acquired land in the later phase of Ottoman rule and became enriched through trade opportunities brought about by World War II. For the most part absentee landlords, they did not develop a sense of social and political responsibility toward the countryside. The leading parties were elitist, had little contact with the masses, and were not representative of a nation composed of almost two thirds peasants.

The post-independence government did not live up to various political pressures, such as long term and unsuccessful involvement in regional conflicts, the failure of a state-led economic development project, bureaucratic corruption, rising foreign debt and high inflation, unemployment and high levels of domestic repression.⁹ Syria's National Bloc was a broad, heterogeneous grouping united against a common enemy - the French. After fulfilling the task of negotiating independence and drafting a constitution, the divergence of opinions and projects for the future of a Syrian state within the bloc became apparent. In Michael Aflaq's words:

To understand the bankruptcy of the Bloc one must appreciate that the men

of whom it was composed had no overall view; their ambition was restricted to their own political survival and a limited degree of independence for the country. They lagged a long way behind public opinion, particularly to the young, who had for several years been subject to Ba'ath and Communist ideas. The Ba'ath gave the public wider ambitions, on both the social and national plan.¹⁰

The People's Party represented no real alternative to the National Bloc— it was compromised in the public eye by its link with Iraq and ties with feudal interests. Public discourse focused on progress rather than democracy. Of major concern was defense of class and national interests, and not the protection of a democratic regime.¹¹

The Ba'athists and Communists began to succeed in gaining more control over the National Front and People's Party.

The divided parties were unable to undertake the far-reaching reforms that were needed to improve Syria's social, economic, and political structure. The National and People's Party offered a vague political program that concentrated mostly on "reminding the public of its patriotic achievements under the Mandate"¹². The common opponent shared a mutual interest in the maintenance of the old order and did not encourage conservative minded notables to cooperate to counter the radicals. The Ba'athists and Communists began to succeed in gaining more control over

the National Front and People's Party. A constitutional amendment, permitting Quwatli's re-election for a second five-year term, not only undermined their 'rational legal authority' belief in the importance of democratic norms, which could be amended just to keep someone in power, but also obstructed the reform process. Lack of reforms in due time conducted to the democratic breakdown fourteen months later.¹³

The elections of 1954, reformed by the introduction of a secret ballot, represented Syria's return to parliamentary rule after a period of military dictatorship.

The elections of 1954, reformed by the introduction of a secret ballot, represented Syria's return to parliamentary rule after a period of military dictatorship. A comparison of Syria's free, democratic elections shows the significance of the socio-political change. 1949 brought the success of the conservatives: out of the 114 seats, most seats were won by the People's Party, but the National Party with far fewer deputies formed a coalition with the independents. Very few seats were allocated to radical parties. In 1954 the balance began to swing in favor of leftwing elements, notably the Ba'ath Party with 22 seats, compared to only one five years earlier. A shift in power was visible from a class perspective: in 1949

six out of seven deputies from Hama were landlords, while at the election of 1954, only one landowner won, with six representatives coming from the peasant opposition.¹⁴ Despite the radical parties' relative success, the People's Party still managed to win the most votes and the National Party scored 19 seats.

A large number of independent Members of Parliament with unclear political affinities decried the weakness of the political party system – family, religion, or place of birth were the decisive factors in electing a representative, rather than a common ideology.¹⁵ With only a loose party discipline and large numbers of independents, the parliament's decisions were prone to variations. It became obvious that numerous non-allied MPs could play a powerful, but at the same time an unpredictable role in the Parliament. The large number of independent deputies is indicative of trust not being put mainly in institutions or even groups, but in individuals, proving Huntington's theory that the main problem in democratic consolidations lies not in introducing an electoral process, but in advancing loyalty to the institutions.

An analysis of the elections shows that both in 1949 and 1954 the Chamber was weak, sharply divided and lacking leadership. There was no clear majority or even a possibility of achieving a workable coalition. Syria's divided parliament could not aspire to presidential leadership. Quwatli, re-elected in 1955, was seen as a weak

politician, unable to give the country a sense of direction, and he had been unpopular with the army since 1948. The multiparty cabinet of Sabri Al-Asali, consisting of two Ba'athists, three Populists, two members of the Liberal Democratic Bloc, two from the Constitutional Bloc and two Nationalists, failed to cooperate and led to a yet another parliamentary crisis. Between 1946 and 1956 Syria had twenty different cabinets and drafted four separate constitutions which destabilized the democratic system.

Social Conflict

Sharp social conflict can be regarded as a major source of instability and a factor leading to regime change. In the period between 1946 and 1958 Syria was a country of vast disparities, with one of the lowest development levels in the region and a backward economy primarily based on agriculture. Its rural and urban areas contrasted in extreme terms. Post-war prosperity did not alleviate deep economic inequality. Only the upper and middle classes stood to benefit from wider access to education, urbanization and modernization, which did not reach the workers or peasants, further widening the gap between the rich and the poor.¹⁶

Linz and Stepan draw attention to economy as a key factor in preserving democracy, stating that tensions associated with economic conditions such as unemployment, high inflation and lags in the reorganization of industry

often trigger democratic breakdown and political transition.¹⁷ This was partly the case in Syria, where the advantages of democracy and independence were questioned in the absence of economic improvements, for lack of which politicians and economists were blamed.¹⁸ The Government was heavily criticized for poor economic conditions, such as overcrowded villages lacking the basic amenities of modern life and a higher cost of living than in neighboring countries. And although Syria had considerable economic potential, praised by a World Bank report, its lack of improvements in working conditions with frequent wage cuts and high unemployment rates became a source of a socio-political conflict.¹⁹

The main problem in democratic consolidations lies not in introducing an electoral process, but in advancing loyalty to the institutions.

The Government was seen as unable to provide neither protection from external threats nor even a minimum provision of social security. High taxation and exorbitant prices led to pervasive social discontent. Many investors chose to conduct their enterprises in Lebanon, due to Syria's administrative lag, high tariffs and poor infrastructure.²⁰ Moreover, the Syrian leadership was questioned about its spending. Ten large development projects that started out

without expertise were overcapitalized and did not influence competitiveness of Syria's nascent industry.²¹

The 1948 Arab-Israeli war had serious repercussions for Syria's internal affairs. It exposed the state's weaknesses and lack of preparation, and the disjuncture between a political discourse promising early victory and the harsh reality that ensued. The misled public felt bitter disappointment with their leaders. The war discredited Quwatli, who had shown himself indecisive in times of crisis and unable to form a strong Government. Voices of concern were raised that the democratic system was losing credibility, and the real cause for the mobilization of the masses was not Palestine but rather ineffective governance.²² After the 1948 war, the domestic situation in Syria worsened, as prices shot up and finances based on an unstable currency still tied to the French franc passed into a disastrous condition.

Radicalization of a New Class

Peasants politicized by the desire to obtain land and disheartened by the lack of the landlord class' authority demanded broader and more radical reforms.²³ They could not, however, produce lasting, radical change on their own. The main revolutionary force was an alliance between the middle class and peasants who gave support to radical parties.²⁴ Under the rule of the urban notables, other classes were denied social

ascend and political leverage. Only a few representatives of the new class managed to gain a seat in parliament or other political institutions, overcoming nepotism, corruption, and "a nearly invincible network of coalitions between the notable families"²⁵. As formal channels of influencing politics were closed, the new middle class yearned for a revolution that would give them access to power. In the landlord-peasant conflict, the new middle class was the force that tipped the balance in favor of the latter.

The new middle class consisted of public sector workers, soldiers, teachers, technicians, journalists, lawyers and others. Between the years of 1939 and 1947 the number of civil servants had increased threefold, making salaries the biggest area of state spending, constituting more than a half of the budget.²⁶ Mainly salaried by the state, the new class was not self-reliant and needed a strong government as main broker.²⁷ Heavy dependency on the state was assumed to hinder the functioning of stable democracy which requires a strong, independent civil society, principally based on the middle class.

Rise of Radical Parties: Nationalism and Pan-Arabism

A decline in the influence of the conservatives left the political scene open for progressive parties to emerge. From the beginning of the late forties, radical

parties began to establish their influence across a wide spectrum of Syrian society. Ideological parties included the Ba'ath Party, the Syrian Communist Party (SCP), the People's Party, the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Youth Party. These parties found support among classes which contested the oligarchic order and sought to restructure Syrian society. Radical parties mobilized peasants and workers, but it was the radicalization of the new middle classes that brought them to power. Ideological parties benefited from the conflicts among diverse political elements of the country, promising Syrian development through Arab political and economic unity. Radical change was seen as a way of modernizing the country so that it could compete with the West.²⁸ The Pan-Arab nationalist ideology adopted by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party fell on fertile ground after the creation of the state of Israel. Moreover, condemnation of sectarian and confessional cleavages made the Ba'ath Party particularly popular among the minorities who hoped for social ascent. Party supporters were recruited through two cross-sectarian institutions: education and the military. Most cadets from the 'generation of high expectations' were completely politicized by the time they entered the military academy.²⁹

In the landlord-peasant conflict, the new middle class was the force that tipped the balance in favor of the latter.

Although the radical groups were very active and increasingly influential, they still could not gain power through democratic means. Even at the height of its electoral success in 1955, the Ba'ath party controlled only 19 of the 142 seats in the Parliament. Not finding any way to preserve its position through domestic manipulation, the party turned to Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser for help.

Defensive Modernization

Syria embraced modernization mainly as a way of improving its military position in the Middle East. The theory of 'defensive modernization'³⁰ is based on economic, political and military competition between states for positions in the international arena. The shock of a military defeat in the 1948 war triggered a modernization process in the military, as well as development in economic policy in order to finance and to organize the army. National defense went up in the Syrian budget and the number of military forces increased from 25,000 in 1949 to 60,000 in 1963.³¹ External threats urged intensified military preparedness. Plans for building air-raid shelters, extending military education and strengthening border defenses were ardently carried out. In 1956, a nationwide draft of civilians, including women, was announced. This kind of nationalist modernization favored stability over broad democratic participation.

Defensive modernization encouraged a move towards the extreme centralization

of Syrian state power.³² Such a creation of the infrastructure for state intervention facilitated the introduction of authoritarianism. Sadowski,³³ Chaitani³⁴ and Seale³⁵ prove that calls for a more interventionist role for the state in Syria's economy were universal in Syrian society. Centralized, authoritative government was seen as the only force capable of generating capital, developing industry and protecting the borders. The strengthening of the state was initially supported by liberal elites, who maintained control of the institutions, and by entrepreneurs, whose actions would fail without state support. As Sadowski³⁶ points out expansion of the state's influence over the economy has been a prevailing trend in Syria since 1946. Just after independence the state, exercised little leverage on the economy through its control on tariffs (roads, schools and telecommunications), but within twenty years the state had developed into the single most powerful economic institution in the country. "In 1950, the state controlled about 8.3% of the national income, which more than tripled to 27.9% by 1965."³⁷

Radical change was seen as a way of modernizing the country so that it could compete with the West.

As the 1948 crisis emerged, the Syrian government was neither able to guarantee external security, nor internal safety for the civilians. Strikes and acts of violence,

including the killing of 76 Damascene Jews, forced the civilian administration to announce a state of emergency and seek the army's help to maintain order. Ironically, as the population revolted, the politicized military became the vehicle for transmitting deep dissatisfaction, instead of repressing it. The army started presenting itself as the only body able to preserve nation's independence. Given the weakness of the post-independence civilian institutions, the army appeared as "the most organized, nationally-oriented social force with the largest stake in the state and the best equipped to impose order."³⁸ Troupes Spéciales and Sûreté Générale - military during the French mandate were the last directorates to be transferred from the French under Syrian control and they rose to a symbol of national unity and strength. This reinforced the link between the army and independence, emphasizing the role of the military as a guardian of sovereignty.³⁹

The Palestinian War brought hostility between the Government and the military, each blaming the other for the defeat. While officers complained about the poverty of provisions, and of defective and insufficient equipment, the Government accused the military of bribery and poor command. The cooking fat scandal, that charged Colonel Antoine Bustani, appointed by General Husni Al-Zaim, with profiteering at the army's expense, turned the army against the politicians, who were accused of meddling in the army's internal affairs

and not holding their own corrupted superiors accountable. The military, as well as the Syrian press, held Bey and Quwatli responsible for the lost war and demanded their resignation. Misgovernance and the humiliation of the defeat were used by colonel Al-Zaim as a moral justification for the coup. Al-Zaim, secretly backed by the US,⁴⁰ managed to convince the nationalist officers that a military rule could win the war. The word 'Palestine' became the slogan that brought the army to his side.⁴¹ On April 11, 1949, Al Zaim seized power, supported by urban masses dissatisfied with high prices and an inept bureaucracy. The press approved of the coup stating that, "there is no doubt that Syria will lose a little of its freedom, but nascent states' need for discipline is greater than the need for freedom."⁴²

Although brief, Al Zaim's rule was rich in consequences for Syria's democracy. The first putsch in the Middle East dismantled the traditional system and provided the model for future coups. Successive military dictators accomplished turning the army into a political instrument: Al Zaim reinforced and re-equipped his troops and brought the police and gendarmerie under their control. General Adib Shishakli built up the army's numbers and political role by promoting young, nationalist officers into political functions. His ambition was that Syria become "the 'Prussia of Arab states,' 'the fortress of steel' from which the spark of liberation would fly to the whole Arab world."⁴³ In 1954 Shishakli

was removed, but his political legacy of blurring the boundaries between military and civilian authorities remained. The army held all the cards - no government could introduce a policy that the army did not approve. The threat of military intervention was a factor sufficiently disruptive for the government to take heed of the army's opinion. The internal leverage of the military made it the most powerful single force in Syrian politics.⁴⁴

In spite of all this, however, the strength of Syria's army was quite relative. First, the military forces were not strong enough to defend Syria against her neighbors; second, they were too divided to maintain domestic power over a long period of time. The rapid changes in military rule from General Husni Al-Zaim to Colonel Sami Hinnawi to Colonel Fawzi Silu to Colonel Adib Shishakli and the early collapse of military power proved that the army could not rule on its own.⁴⁵

Even the radical parties that claimed freedom from all foreign influences came to terms with the necessity of defense treaties.

Norton classifies Syria's military as a peasant and minority-dominated military model, where control of the military becomes an existential imperative to minorities and socially privileged groups.⁴⁶ The army becomes a springboard for social ascent and thus encourages the lower

classes to join. But the disadvantage of this trend was that the army reflected society's fragmentation based on family, ethnicity and – increasingly – ideology, and produced constant, internal power struggles.⁴⁷

External Factors

Post-war competition for regional supremacy between Iraq and Egypt was intermingled in Syrian policy through foreign support for various political groups. As the 1948 war and the Syro-Egyptian union showed, Syria's internal politics were entangled with inter-Arab competition and the Great Powers struggle. A fight for domination in Syria was led not only by countries aspiring to the role of regional powers, but also by the Cold War rivals.

The intensity of regional conflicts and rivalries made Syria “prickly, defensive, ultra-nationalistic and intensely anti-French.”⁴⁸ Hostile to Israel, unfriendly towards Turkey, alienated from Lebanon and from Iraq, it felt isolated and vulnerable.⁴⁹ An effort to create a form of collective security failed, as the Middle East Defense Organization was considered to place Syria in the British sphere of influence.

Syria's perennial security problem created a dilemma in regard to external alignments. Even the radical parties that claimed freedom from all foreign influences came to terms with the necessity of defense treaties. In February

1958, the merger of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic (UAR), with President Nasser as its head, was proclaimed at Cairo. The new UAR was principally of a defensive nature.

The UAR showed the weakness of the Syrian government, too divided to form a coherent policy. Conservatives, although not approving of the merger, did not object, because the union was seen as the only way to eliminate communist influence. The merger was regarded by the Ba'ath party as a way to increase its leverage, by exporting its main Arab solidarity policy. Even though all the Syrian party leaders claimed to be in favor of the Union it was the Ba'ath party that took serious steps to implement it.⁵⁰ The fragmentation of the political system gave the army officers the casting vote. The project of the union was seen positively by the officers as a way to establish their supremacy over the political parties.

For a strategic country like Syria, the neutrality proclaimed at the Bandung conference of 1955 became nearly impossible. The Cold War was not just about fulfilling geopolitical ambitions; it was a conflict of two paths to modernization: capitalist and socialist. Superpower rivalry negatively affected the process of economic and political modernization as the two camps tried to impose their own model of socio-economic and political development. According to Moubayed,⁵¹ the prerequisite of maintaining a democratic system was to accept a set of rules imposed by

the West - accepting Israel, being more responsive to American needs.

Syria's colonial past; the West's recognition of and financial, political, and military support for Israel; Secretary of State Dulles' refusal to finance the Aswan Dam; the Suez crisis and the subsequent war created a climate of distrust towards the West. The Syrians had "no wish to fight side by side with their executioners"⁵². The West, in demanding active Arab support for their side in the Cold War conflict, made a strategic error of framing the 'either with or against us' attitude. Syria's gradual rapprochement to the Soviets was not a result of shared ideology, but rather stemmed from public resentment towards the West. By ignoring the fierce anti-Communism of Nasser and the Ba'th party, the Americans overestimated the risk of Syria becoming a satellite of Moscow. Russian diplomacy skillfully used people's increasing hostility towards 'imperialist' treaties and presented itself as an alternative that offers help with no strings attached. In contrast to the West, it recognized Syria's strong sense of Arab nationalism. Since the overthrow of Shishakli in February 1954, both Egypt and the USSR aimed at influencing Syria. Both countries chose the right moment, when widespread apprehension of an external threat from Israel sparked demand for a powerful protector. A pro-Soviet propaganda campaign in the press, the Soviet Cultural Centre, trade, but most of all military protection, strengthened Syria's ties with the Soviet

bloc. This does not mean, however, that the informed public welcomed Russian engagement. A fall into communism was equally threatening to the conservatives as to the Ba'ths who competed with the SCP for influence over the electorate. They were concerned that an electoral victory or a Communist-led coup would provoke right-wing counter-measures and western backlash.

Liberal democracy was not a common denominator for the post-war period, never 'the only game in town'.

Nevertheless, in addition to its military benefits, cooperation with the Soviets seemed practical on purely economic grounds as well. It provided arms without restrictions and purchased Syria's surplus of agricultural produce. A turning point was the Czech arms deal – due to its military purchases, Syria found itself in opposition to the West, together with Nasser. As late as the autumn of 1957 President al-Quwatli was still declaring: "Had it not been for Israel, we would not have felt the need for new weapons; and were it not for the unrelenting preferential treatment of Israel by the United States, we would not have been introduced to new Russians."⁵³

Security and stability turned out to be more important than democracy. An Israeli attack on Arab villages north-east of Lake Tiberias in December 1955, and border clashes with Turkey during

the Baghdad pact crisis, confirmed the seriousness of the threat of foreign attack and accelerated Syria's rapprochement with the East. The Soviet Union voiced military support for the Syrian side and Syria, desperate for security, had no choice but to welcome its new, powerful allies. The alliance with Egypt and the USSR had two serious repercussions: Syria was shifting into Egypt's sphere of influence and joining the Cold War conflict.

The nation was not able to cope successfully with rapid social changes and was defenseless in the face of external threats.

Another event, illustrative of Syria's conflicted socio-political scene, was the 'Malki affair.' Adnan al-Malki, a charismatic officer and a supporter of Ba'ath Party was assassinated by a sergeant who belonged to the pro-Western Syrian Social National Party (SSNP). An official investigation identified the US as a major financier of the SSNP and accused US officials of complicity in Malki's murder. The consequences of the affair were far-reaching. It was used to get rid of right-wing rivals and to advance Ba'ath party popularity by gaining public sympathy. The media coverage of the murder strengthened the position of the left and of the army.⁵⁴ It also "gave the Syrian public an insight into the magnitude and the violence of the international contest in which Syria was a pawn and,

by injecting an element of hysteria into Syrian public life, encouraged her to run for safety to the arms of her new protectors".⁵⁵

Malki became a martyr for the values he stood for – Syrian independence, neutralism, militant Arabism and pro-Egyptian sentiments. The Malki affair sharpened the internal divisions of the army; following his death no officer could establish supremacy. "The unity of the army was destroyed as each political party and each neighboring state scrambled for military allies: secret subsidies flowed in from Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, as well as from Great Powers farther afield... thoroughly politicized, with its own budget and secret funds, the army became a jungle of intrigue, sometimes matching civilian factionalism, sometimes rent by its own indigenous rivalries."⁵⁶ During the turbulent period after Malki's murder, both the Parliament and the army were fragmented so it was difficult to establish who governed Syria. The competing factions feared each other more than any outside force⁵⁷ while the public found in Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser the leader they had been hoping for. The Suez crisis elevated him to a symbol of resistance to Western aggression and an ardent supporter of the Pan-Arab cause. Nasser gained mass popularity among Syrians through radio broadcasts, press releases, inflammatory speeches and nationalist songs.⁵⁸ Great public support of the idea of Arab unity and centering on the figure of a strong leader ignored the nature of Nasser's regime.⁵⁹

Conclusion

One of the most striking paradoxes in the analysis of the 1946 -1958 period is that Syrians, who fiercely fought to uphold their sovereignty, ultimately handed it voluntarily to Egypt. It shows the unprecedented scale of the pressures faced by the young democracy. The Syrian political scene was an interaction of complex social, military and foreign forces. Corruption and external pressures undermined the values of Syria's parliamentary system, and propaganda drove the public "to near hysteria by plots, coups d'état, and threats of invasion. These were not ideal conditions for the flowering of civic virtues or the proper functioning of elective democratic institutions."⁶⁰

Liberal democracy was not a common denominator for the post-war period, never 'the only game in town.' Indeed, Syrian society was deeply divided in regard to their identity and the shape the country should take. Neither independence nor liberal democracy offered a clear-cut solution to the problems that persisted in post-war Syria. These nascent institutions did not deal with the problems of distribution of wealth, the identity crisis, or foreign military and economic competition. The nation was not able to cope successfully with rapid social changes and was defenseless in the face of external threats.

The weakness of Syria's leaders and their corruption contributed to the collapse of Syria's regime.⁶¹ The

Damascene government had little experience and lacked sufficient funds to implement the necessary reforms of state services. It was too weak to ensure the survival of liberal institutions. Divided parties could not keep the army subordinate to civilian administration, nor provide efficient bureaucracy and accountability.⁶²

After 1948, the potential threats against the integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian state became reality and Syria's modernization took on a defensive character.

The basic task assigned to the Syrian state was creating a 'rich nation, strong army' in order to meet the national security challenge posed by foreign threat. After the disastrous defeat by Israel, radical changes were made in order to speed recovery from the humiliation and to prevent its repetition by organizing a political system that would support development most efficiently.⁶³ There was a general consensus regarding the need to strengthen the state, and stability was more important than democracy. After 1948, the potential threats against the integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian state became reality and Syria's modernization took on a defensive character. Military coups and defensive modernization came as a reaction against the foreign threat coming from various

sources - Israel, Turkey, the Hashemites, and the Cold War powers. The push towards advancing Syria's economic and military power was supported by the public as a way of introducing stability.

Overwhelming military influence was another reason for Syria's democratic breakdown. Because the army appeared to be the only force strong enough to protect Syria's sovereignty, loyalty shifted from the civilian government to the military. As the population revolted, instead of upholding the existing system of authority, a radicalized military became the vehicle for transmitting the population's deep dissatisfaction with the system. This paradox was defined by Peter Feaver: "The very institution created to protect the polity [i.e. the military] is given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity."⁶⁴

The central questions tackled in the paper are specific to the Syrian case but they simultaneously open a topic of a more general nature: why do policy

failures lead to governmental change in some democracies, but result in the very breakdown of democracy in others? The theory of democratic breakdowns is one of the subjects that could benefit from further research. This in-depth single-country analysis can serve as a starting point for a comparative study of the breakdown of liberal parliamentary systems. In the light of a new wave of democratization, it is pertinent to find the answer to Juan J. Linz's⁶⁵ question about the existence of a common pattern in the changes of regime processes. The paper sheds light on the possible obstacles to democratic consolidation. Highlighting the experience of democratic institutions between 1949 and 1958 is significant for modern civil society reformers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It can contribute to a better understanding of causes and processes that can lead democracies to collapse and to their replacement by highly illiberal regimes.

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Security of Turkey with Respect to the Middle East

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Abstract

In this paper the security of Turkey with respect to Syria, Iraq and Iran is examined. A theoretical model is presented for analyzing the security of Turkey. This model emphasizes the power and in particular the military power for interpreting and predicting the security of a state. Consistent with the theoretical framework that the security model provides, developments in the military power, population and economic power of Turkey in relation to Syria, Iraq, and Iran are discussed.

Key Words

Security, Turkey, Middle East, military power, economic power, population.

Introduction

The security of Turkey with respect to Syria, Iraq and Iran is examined in this paper. No attempt is made to assess the security of Turkey with respect to other

states in the Middle East. The reason for concentrating on Syria, Iraq and Iran is the fact that these states share a common border with Turkey and security developments in these neighboring states can have immediate and direct effect on Turkey's security.

Although in recent years Turkey had stable and fruitful security relations with Syria, Iraq and Iran, the conditions in the Middle East can change rapidly and accordingly there is a need for assessing the security of Turkey with respect to its three Middle Eastern neighbors. The developments in the Middle East during recent years have demonstrated how quickly security conditions in this volatile and unpredictable part of the world can change.

For example, there was a shift in the alliance structure of the Middle East. In recent years Syria, Iraq, and Iran are pursuing accommodative policies towards Turkey's objective of eliminating the PKK. This has led Turkey to move away from the alliance with Israel and closer to its southern neighbors. The cooperation of Syria, Iraq, and

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Iran against the PKK appears to be more beneficial to Turkey compared to sacrifices of political support and military-technology-intelligence benefits they were getting from Israel while being allies.

Planned departure of US forces from Iraq is likely to result in a security vacuum and an armed conflict may develop between the Arabs and the Kurds in Northern Iraq.

In recent years Syria is cooperating with Turkey against the PKK and no longer makes territorial claims from Turkey. But, as recently as in 1998, Turkey threatened Syria with war. Syria accommodated the Turkish demands requiring the expulsion of the PKK leader and the liquidation of PKK training camps after the Turkish threat of military invasion. Despite the recent influx of refugees to Turkey as a result of instability in Syria, there is no fundamental security issue with Syria.

The security challenge from Iraq concerns the integrity of Iraq as a state. Planned departure of US forces from Iraq is likely to result in a security vacuum and an armed conflict may develop between the Arabs and the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Instability could reduce the security of Turkey, especially if the PKK can take advantage of the security vacuum and project terrorist attacks against Turkey from its bases in Northern Iraq.

Turkey benefits from cooperation with Iran in diffusing and eliminating PKK threats and importing energy products from Iran. But, if Iran is to succeed in developing nuclear weapon systems, this development will lead to a decline in the security of Turkey by raising the military power of Iran with respect to Turkey. This adverse security development would result in a nuclear security gap favoring Iran and may lead to a nuclear security dilemma.

The theoretical model used for analyzing the security of Turkey with regard to Syria, Iraq and Iran is presented in the following section. This model emphasizes the power and in particular the military power for interpreting and predicting the security of a state.

In the subsequent section, consistent with the theoretical framework that the security model provides, developments in military power, population and economic power of Turkey with respect to Syria, Iraq, and Iran will be discussed.¹ How effectively Turkey may be able to respond to future security threats that may originate from its Middle Eastern neighbors will be examined in the conclusion of this article.

A Model of International Security for Turkey

The security of a state depends foremost on its military power. A state has a direct control over its military force and can employ it, as it deems

appropriate. The security of a state also depends adversely on the military power of its competition. The more militarily intense the competition is, the less secure a state will be. A state's military power and the military power of the competition are the primary determinants of security.

The more militarily powerful the competition is, the less secure a state will be.

In addition to these variables, other factors such as the military power of allies or diplomacy can be a significant determinant of the security of a state during certain periods. However, compared to the military power and the military power of the competition, these variables do not have general validity, i.e., they don't hold true for most states most of the time as determinants of security.

The security of a state can be threatened by non-state actors such as militant groups and terrorists. However, a state with strong military power is better endowed with instruments for eliminating these asymmetric threats. A state with a powerful military would pose professional special forces trained for defusing asymmetric threats such as terrorists, rely on superior intelligence based on advanced technology, and can project force rapidly and effectively for this purpose.

The security of a state ultimately depends on the size of its population and its economic power, since the

military power of a state is constrained by these two factors. Factors other than population and economic power, such as intensity of security competition, can affect the military power of a state. But, these factors do not have general relevance for the majority of states as determinants of military power and thereby of their security.

The security model presented in detail below is a general model designed for interpreting and predicting the security of Turkey with respect to other states. In this paper it is applied to Syria, Iraq, and Iran. However, it can be applied for assessing developments in the security of Turkey with regard to Greece, Russia, or others.²

First, the basic form of the security model is discussed. The basic model is detailed below in *Equation (1)*. In this basic model, security is assumed to depend on military power and the military power of the competition, and other factors that may be significant during certain periods;

$$(1) S = f[M, M^C, X],$$

Here S is for security, M is for military power, M^C is the military power of another state in the security competition, and X is for other factors which could affect security. It is assumed that security is a positive function of military power and a negative function of military power of the competition, and security can be a positive or a negative function of other factors. In the basic model, the

military power of allies, diplomacy, and asymmetric threats such as terrorism are represented by variable X .

The key variable in the basic security model is military power. Military power should be taken as an all encompassing concept including various aspects. These elements of military power are: conventional military power, nuclear military power, military intelligence, and the combat effectiveness of the military forces and other dimensions of military power such as leadership, training and military tradition.

The basic security model is simple, yet yields interesting predictions, and is also helpful for recognizing the relative nature of security. For example, if there is an increase in M , and if M^C and X are constant, then S will increase, the security of the state will improve. However, if the increase in M is matched by an increase in M^C , there will be no improvement in the security of the state, S .

In addition to the above predictions, the model predicts a “security dilemma” if a state and its competition systematically react to each other. If there is an increase in M and if this is matched by an increase in M^C there will be no change in S , the security of the state. If the state further increases M and this is again matched by an increase in M^C , the state and the competition are joined in an unproductive security competition that does not improve the security of the state or of the competition.

The basic security model, *Equation (1)*, provides an explanation of security and yields predictions indicating changes in security with respect to changes in M , M^C , and X . It should be noted that in the basic model values of M and M^C are determined exogenously. The model does not provide an explanation of changes in the military power of the state or its competition. The complete security model detailed below provides an explanation for changes in M and M^C .

Equation (2) is a component of the complete model of international security, it is a model of the military power of a state, and gives an account of military power;

$$(2) M = f[E, P, Z]$$

where E is for economic power, P is for population, and Z is for other factors that can affect military power. It is assumed that the military power is a positive function of economic power and population, and it can be a positive or a negative function of other factors.

In the complete model of security, economic power is presented as an encompassing variable. It represents various dimensions of economic power: wealth-stock of capital such as buildings, roads, non-renewable resources such as oil, international monetary reserves-quantity and quality of the labor force, technological know-how, and productivity of the state. The population variable is also an encompassing variable. In addition to representing the size of the population, it includes other aspects of

population, such as age distribution—a proportionately younger population is a more suitable source for a military force compared to an aging population.

Equation (3) below is similar to *Equation (2)*; it is another component of the complete security model. *Equation (3)* is a model of the military power of the competition;

$$(3) M^C = f[E^C, P^C, Z^C],$$

here, M^C is for the military power of the competition, E^C is for its economic power, P^C is for the competition's population, and Z^C is for other variables that can affect the military power of the competition. It is assumed that the military power of the competition is a positive function of economic power and population, and their military power can be a positive or a negative function of other factors.

In the military power models, *Equations (2) and (3)*, economic power and population are the main determinants of military power. Other factors such as intensity of security competition, represented by Z and Z^C , can be important for a particular nation at times but they do not have general validity.

Equations (1) to (3) constitute the complete security model, combining the basic security model with models of military power. This international security model yields interesting predictions. For example, a decrease in P^C , the population of the competition, will lead to an improvement in the

security of a state (S) by lowering the military power of the competition, M^C . Another interesting prediction is the effect of a rise in the economic growth of the competition. An increase in economic growth will result in a rise in E^C , thereby raising the military power of the competition, and will result in a decline of S . These examples explain and demonstrate the interdependence of a state's security to its competition's economic power and population in addition to its own economic power and population.

Security of Turkey with Respect to Syria, Iraq and Iran

The basic security model, *Equation (1)*, suggests examination of the military power of Turkey with regard to the military power of Syria, Iraq and Iran for assessing the security of Turkey. A widely used measure of military power is military expenditure. Annual data in coherent form for recent years is available for military spending for those states under consideration in this paper. However, it should be noted that military power is a stock variable whereas military spending is a flow variable. For measuring the stock of military power at a given time, military spending as a flow variable measured per unit of time can be considered only as a crude proxy variable. Considering that a weapons system is usually employed for many years after it is acquired, it could

be suggested that cumulative military spending is a more appropriate proxy measure of military power.³ Specifically, a useful proxy variable for military power is the cumulative value of military spending over a long period of time such as a decade

or preferably two decades. Accordingly, in this paper cumulative military spending during the last two decades, for which data is available, is used as a proxy measure of military power.

Table 1: Military spending of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran (Total for the period)

Period	<u>Billions of US Dollars</u>				<u>Ratio of TRM to</u>		
	TRM	SYRM	IRQM*	IRNM	SYRM	IRQM	IRNM
1989-1998	118.66	42.49	NA	17.21	2.79	NA	6.89
1999-2008	136.99	60.79	7.10	55.09	2.25	19.29	2.49
1989-2008	255.65	103.28	7.10	72.30	2.48	36.00	3.54

Note: Military Spending, in US dollars, at constant (2005) prices and exchange rates, source: *SIPRI Military Expenditures Database. March 2010*. TRM: Military Spending of Turkey; SYRM: Military Spending of Syria; IRQM: Military Spending of Iraq; IRNM: Military Spending of Iran. *Figures for Iraq are for 2005-2008.

In Table 1 the cumulative military spending for Turkey and Syria, Iraq, and Iran are presented for the 1989-1998, 1999-2008, and 1989-2008 periods. During the last two decades, Turkey spent about 250 billion US Dollars while Syria spent about \$100 billion and Iran about \$70 billion US Dollars. Iraq’s military spending of about \$7 billion covers only the 2005-2008 period due to the unavailability of data for earlier years.

A comparison of Turkish military spending during each decade, the 1989-1998 and 1999-2008 periods, with those

of Syria and Iran indicate that there has been a relative gain in the military spending of Syria and Iran, as measured by ratios for each decade. This gain is especially pronounced in the case of Iran. Nevertheless, for the 1989-2008 period Turkish military spending was nearly two and a half times greater than Syria’s and about three and a half times larger than that of Iran. These observations on the two decades suggest that Turkish military power remains significantly superior to that of Syria and Iran and the security of Turkey with regard to these states has been maintained.

The observation for Turkey and Iraq in Table 1 indicates that Turkish military power is substantially larger than that of Iraq. However it should be noted that the observations for Iraq are only for the last few years and Iraq's military is in its early development stage.

The complete security model suggests examination of the population and economic power of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. According to the complete model, and in particular *Equations (2) and (3)*, the developments in population and economic power could lead to changes in the military power of Turkey and its neighbors and thereby, through *Equation (1)*, in the security of Turkey.

In Table 2, the population for each state is tabulated for periods comparable to those in Table 1 above. In 2008 Turkey's population was about seventy

million, compared to Syria (19.88 million), Iraq (30.41 million), and Iran (72.87 million).

Although the Turkish population has increased by about ten million in each decade, the ratio of Turkish to Syrian population declined in 1999 and 2008 compared to the 1989 level. The ratio of Turkish population with respect to Iran has been stable. Despite favorable developments in the population of Syria, the Turkish population in 2008 is still three and a half times larger than that of Syria. The population of Turkey and Iran are about the same size in 2008 while it is more than two times larger than that of Iraq. The observations in Table 2 do not indicate any large structural changes in population among Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, and thereby do not suggest a change in the military power of Turkey.

Table 2: Population of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran

Year	Millions				Ratio of TRP to		
	TRP	SYRP	IRQP*	IRNP	SYRP	IRQP	IRNP
1989	51.25	11.72	NA	53.19	4.37	NA	0.96
1999	59.91	16.11	NA	62.51	3.01	NA	0.96
2008	69.64	19.88	30.41	72.87	3.50	2.29	0.96

Note: TRP: Population of Turkey; SYRP: Population of Syria; IRQP: Population of Iraq; IRNP: Population of Iran. *Figures for Iraq are for 2004-2008. Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Data Base, March 2010.

In order to examine the economic power of Turkey with regard to its neighbors, two economic indicators are analyzed, namely; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and GDP per capita.

In Table 3, cumulative GDP for the 1989-1998, 1999-2008, and 1989-2008 periods are presented. Cumulative rather than annual GDP values are detailed for each period. This approach avoids misleading signals that can be generated by fluctuations in the annual flow of goods and services produced. The cumulative GDP values are a better proxy for economic power, a stock variable measuring accumulated goods and services produced not only in a year but also in earlier years.

Two decades considered together, the 1989-2008 period, indicate that the Turkish GDP was about nine times larger than Syria's, and slightly larger than that of Iran. The figures for Iraq are for the 2004-2008 period and not readily comparable to that of Turkey. The GDP observations for each decade indicate that there has been a small rise in the economic power of Turkey relative to that of Syria. The observations with respect to Iran for each decade indicate a slight fall in the economic power of Turkey with regard to Iran. However, relative developments in GDP among Turkey and its southern neighbors over two decades are not substantial and do not predict a change in the military power of Turkey.

Table 3: Gross Domestic Product of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran (Total for the period)

Period	<u>Billions of US Dollars</u>				<u>Ratio of TRE to</u>		
	TRE	SYRE	IRQE*	IRNE	SYRE	IRQE	IRNE
1989-1998	3644.07	408.13	NA	3096.54	8.93	NA	1.18
1999-2008	6618.17	702.75	440.43	5838.58	9.42	15.03	1.13
1989-2008	10262.24	1110.88	440.43	8935.12	9.24	23.30	1.15

Note: Gross Domestic Product based on purchasing-power-parity, current international US Dollar. Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Data Base, March 2010. TRE: Gross Domestic Product of Turkey; SYRE: Gross Domestic Product of Syria; IRQE: Gross Domestic Product of Iraq; IRNE: Gross Domestic Product of Iran. *Figures for Iraq are for 2004-2008.

While the GDP observations discussed above can be taken as a measure of the absolute economic powers of a state, GDP Per Capita values reflect economic productivity and efficiency of a state and provide useful additional information about the economic power of a state. GDP per capita data for Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran are presented In Table 4; GDP per capita observations are average values for the 1989-1998, 1999-2008, and 1989-2008 periods in this table. For each period the average values rather than annual GDP per capita values are reported in order to filter misleading signals annual fluctuations in GDP per capita figures can indicate. The average values of it for long periods of time are more reliable proxy variables for measuring economic power.

During the last two decades, the 1989-2008 period, the GDP per capita

of Turkey was about two and a half times larger than that of Syria and slightly larger than that of Iran. The observations for Iraq are only for the 2004-2008 period, and not directly comparable to those of Turkey. The relative developments in GDP per capita across two decades, 1989-1998 and 1999-2008, suggest that the economic power of Turkey has improved compared to that of Syria and has declined slightly with regard to Iran. The decline however is not due to a fall in Turkish performance but rather due to the significant rise in GDP per capita of Iran during the latter decade. It should be noted that the developments across decades in GDP per capita among Turkey, Syria, and Iran are not significant and do not predict a change in the military power of Turkey.

Table 4: GDP Per Capita, of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran (Average for the Period)

Period	US Dollars				Ratio of TREP to		
	TREP	SYREP	IRQEP*	IRNEP	SYREP	IRQEP	IRNEP
1989-1998	6501.48	2963.99	NA	5154.89	2.19	NA	1.26
1999-2008	9967.72	3906.23	3050.73	8588.34	2.55	3.26	1.16
1989-2008	8234.60	3435.11	3050.73	6871.62	2.40	2.70	1.20

Note: Gross domestic product Based on purchasing-power-parity, Current international dollar, source: IMF World Economic Outlook Data Base, March 2010. TREP: Per Capita Gross Domestic Product of Turkey; SYREP: Per Capita Gross Domestic Product of Syria; IRQEP: Per Capita Gross Domestic Product of Iraq; IRNEP: Per Capita Gross Domestic Product of Iran. Figures for Iraq are for 2004-2008.

The GDP and GDP per capita observations listed in Tables 3 and 4, suggest that the economic power of Turkey is substantially larger than Syria and Iraq, and slightly larger than Iran. However, the economic power of Turkey may be significantly larger than that of Iran due to the fact that a significant portion of Iran's GDP, unlike Turkey's, originates from oil production.

Conclusion

Examination of the fundamental determinants of security-military power of Turkey relative to Syria, Iraq, and Iran-revealed that Turkey is secure with respect to its Middle Eastern neighbors. The revealed superior economic power of Turkey compared to these states indicates that, if necessary, Turkey can augment its military power rapidly and more effectively. Analysis of the developments in population and economic power of Turkey and its neighbors in the Middle East does not suggest changes in distribution of military power among Turkey and its neighbors, and thereby the security of Turkey. However, there are potential security developments that may prove to be difficult to resolve despite the revealed superiority of Turkey relative to its Middle Eastern neighbors.

Although there is no fundamental security issue with Syria, recent instability in Syria may prove to be persistent and develop into a security challenge for Turkey. Further undesirable developments and the influx of refugees may force Turkey to intervene and project force into northern Syria in order to stabilize the border area. A limited Turkish military intervention, however, may not contribute to the improvement of stability in Syria.

A potential and difficult security challenge from Iraq concerns the planned departure of US forces from the country.

The departure of US forces is likely to result in a security vacuum, which could lead to an armed conflict between the Arabs and the Kurds in Northern Iraq.⁴ The resulting instability would reduce the security of Turkey and allow the PKK to conduct terrorist attacks against Turkey from their bases in Northern Iraq. This development could force Turkey to invade northern Iraq to eradicate the PKK elements. Turkey, with its superior military power, is well equipped with special instruments to counter asymmetric threats resulting from Iraq.

Another potential difficult security challenge is the possibility of Iran to develop nuclear weapon systems. If Iran develops a nuclear weapons system,

this would result in a nuclear security gap in favour of Iran. Superior military and economic power of Turkey with respect to Iran should enable Turkey to offset the nuclear security gap. There are various policy options available to Turkey for deterring a potential nuclear threat. One is to enlarge and enhance NATO/US nuclear deterrent deployed in Turkey and increase significantly the Turkish participation in the NATO/US deterrent.⁵ This policy would be consistent with the Turkish strategy of refraining from developing nuclear

weapons systems. The enhanced NATO/US deterrent system for Turkey could be configured around F-35 fighter aircrafts that will be acquired by the Turkish Air Force.⁶ However, for this option to succeed, the resulting enhanced NATO/US deterrent should be considered as credible and reliable by Turkey as a nuclear deterrent against nuclear powers in the region. If an effective and dependable NATO/US deterrent is not available, Turkish nuclear strategy may change and Turkey may choose to develop its own nuclear weapons system.

Endnotes

- 1 The model can be considered as a realist type. For a discussion of realism, see, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2001. The model is consistent with the traditional rather than the expanded approaches to security. For a discussion of alternative security concepts, see, Benjamin Miller, “The Concept of Security: Should it be Redefined?”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.24, No.2 (June 2001), pp.11-42.
- 2 For a discussion of security of Turkey with respect to Greece, see, H. Sönmez Ateşoğlu, “Mediterranean Fault Line- The Future of Greece and Turkey”, in Nurşin Ateşoğlu Güney (ed.), *Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Turkey*, Aldershot Burlington VT, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007, pp. 151-158; with respect to Russia, see, H. Sönmez Ateşoğlu, “National Power of Turkey and Other Powers in the Region”, *European Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 33-45. For a discussion on the evaluation of Turkish national security strategy in recent years, see, H. Sönmez Ateşoğlu, “Turkish National Security Strategy and Military Modernization”, *Strategic Review*, Vol.29, No.1 (Winter 2001), pp.26-32; Edward, J. Erickson, “Turkey as Regional Hegemon 2014: Strategic Implications for the United States”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol.5, No.3 (Autumn 2004), pp. 25-45.
- 3 Although useful cumulative measure remains a proxy variable for military power-it has various limitations as a measure of military power. For example it includes annual operational expenses and salaries that are not passed from one year to the next like weapons and ordnance and buildings. It also does not measure differences among each states military power due to differences in leadership, military tradition and training. The significant differences that these factors can make in measuring military power are discussed by James F. Dunning, *How to Make War*, New York, William Morrow and Co., 1993. A RAND study provides a detailed and realistic approach for assessing military power, however application of this approach to a particular state is not readily feasible due extensive data and resources requirements, see; *Measuring National Power of Nations*, Santa Monica, CA, RAND, 2000.
- 4 See, Stephen F. Larrabee, *Troubled Partnership, U.S. – Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change*, Santa Monica, CA., RAND, 2010; a further discussion of this view available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG899/> [last visited 25 April 2011].
- 5 Following Kristensen, it is assumed that there is a NATO/US nuclear deterrent deployed in Turkey, see, Hans Kristensen, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe”, *The Nuclear Information Project*, at <http://www.nukestrat.com/pubs/EuroBombs.pdf> [last visited 12 March 2011]; Hans Kristensen, “United States Removes Nuclear Weapons from German Base, Documents Indicate”, *Strategic Security Blog*, at http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2007/07/united_states_removes_nuclear.php [last visited 12 February 2011]; Hans Kristensen, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons Withdrawn From the United Kingdom”, *Strategic Security Blog*, at <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2008/06/us-nuclear-weapons-withdrawn-from-the-united-kingdom.php> and http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/_images/EuroNukes.pdf [last visited 5 January 2011]; Hans Kristensen, “The Nuclear Posture Review”, *Strategic Security Blog*, at <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2010/04/npr2010.php#more-2908> [last visited 10 January 2011].
- 6 For the potential role of the F-35 for the NATO/US deterrent, see, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, US Department of Defense, (April 2010).

Style and Format

Articles submitted to the journal should be original contributions. If another version of the article is under consideration by another publication, or has been or will be published elsewhere, authors should clearly indicate this at the time of submission. Manuscripts should be submitted to perceptions@mfa.gov.tr

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John Smith, *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, p. 100.

John E. Smith (ed.), *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, pp. 100-102.

John Smith and Mary Jones, *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, p. 100.

Subsequent references should appear as: Smith, *The Book Title*, p. 100.

In footnotes 'Ibid' should be used where possible, but it should not be used where the previous note contains more than one source.

Articles in Journals

John Smith, "Article Title", *Journal Name*, Vol. #, No. # (Month Year), p. #.

Subsequent references should appear as: Smith, "Article Title", p. #.

Articles in Edited Books

John Smith, "Article Title", in Mary Jones (ed.), *Book Title*. New York, New York Publishing Company, 1999, p.100.

Official Papers

Parliamentary Papers: Select Committee on Manufacturers (Parl. Papers, 1833, VI), 0.456. Subsequent references as:

SC on ... (PP, 1839, VII), 00.2347.

Hansard (Commons), 4th ser. XXXVI, 641-2, 22 Aug. 1895.

Theses

For titles of published and unpublished theses use italics:

John E. Smith, *Title of Thesis*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Name of the University, Year, Chapter #, p. #

Internet References

Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "A Global Spring- Why NATO needs to go Global", at <http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/volume13/autumn/DustinDehEz.pdf> [last visited 21 October 09]

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All diagrams, charts and graphs should be referred to as figures and consecutively numbered. Tables should be kept to a minimum and contain only essential data.

Numbers

Numbers under 10 should be spelled out.

Use numerical values (14, 233) to express numbers 10 and above.

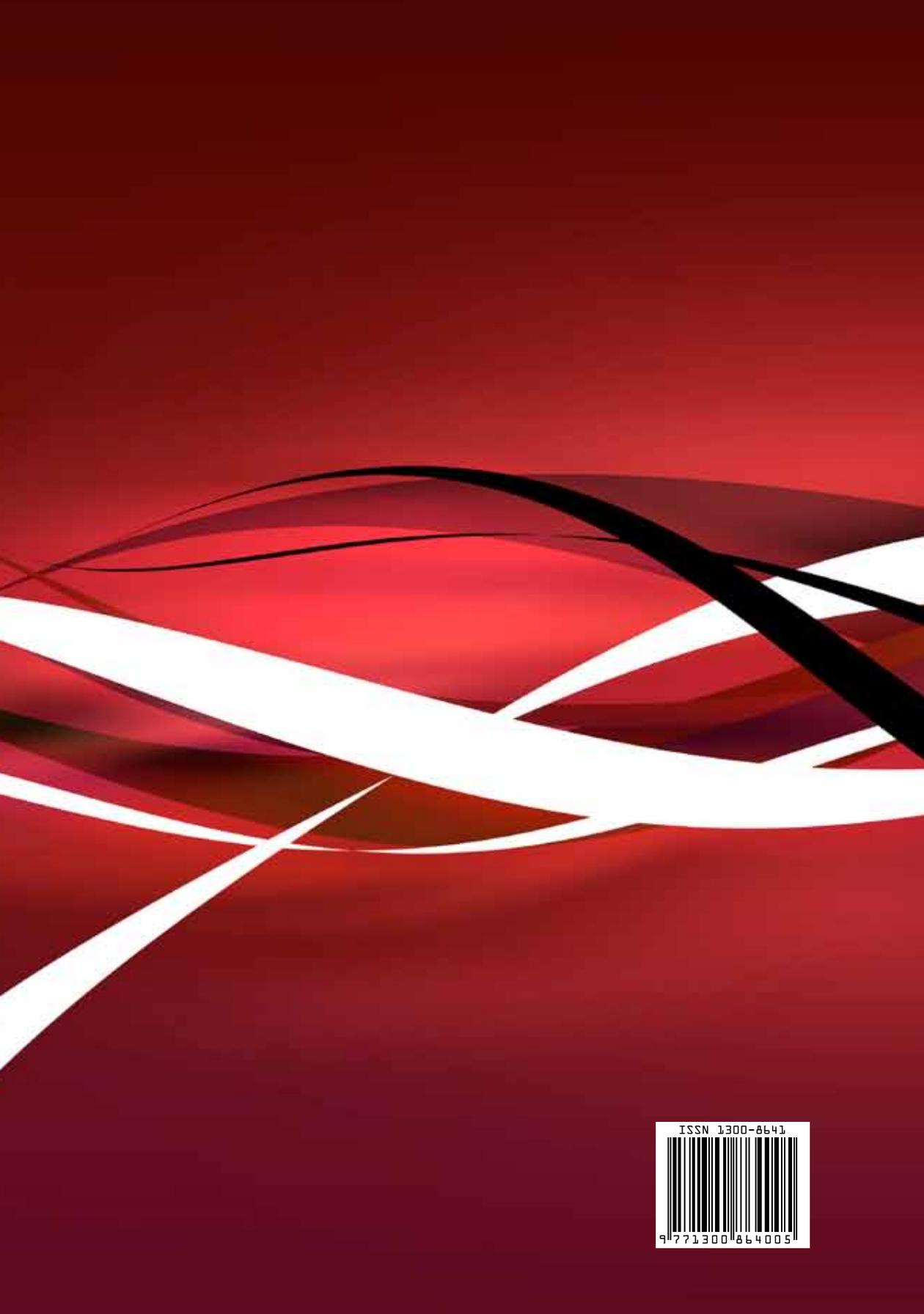
Figures should be used to express numbers under 10 that are grouped for comparison with figures 10 and above: *The results showed that 2 out of 20 recipients disagreed with the proposal.*

Use figures and the percentage sign to represent percentages: *A significant majority, 62%, said they would support the fundraising campaign.*

Use the word "percentage" when a number is not given: *Researchers determined the percentage of rats...*

Dates, ages, and money should be represented by figures: *2 weeks ago, She was a 2-year old, The workers were paid \$5 each.*

Common fractions should be written out: *One fifth of the respondents...*



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