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Koordinationsgruppe: Dr. Bernd W. Kubbig, Martina Glebocki, Alexander Wicker und Rachel Adam

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Isil Kazan

Turkey Between National and Theater Missile Defense

1. Introduction

The reactivation of the National Missile Defense (NMD) program by the US presents a dilemma for Turkey. On the one hand there is great concern about the negative effects on international security settings, such as sparking an arms race and increasing polarization, but on the other hand Turkey is also worried about instability in the surrounding regions. This is especially true about the increased efforts of its southern and south-eastern neighbors to develop WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction), and long-range ballistic missiles as the means of delivering them.

Compared with many other security issues it can be said that the issue of NMD has not been debated on the same scale in Turkey. Section 2 presents the limited debate on, and the concerns of the Turkish authorities towards the NMD project. The new security settings posed by the end of the Cold War provides a framework for understanding and explaining Ankara's dilemma and difficulties concerning the issue of missile defense, as elaborated in section 3. Geographical proximity still makes a difference in security thinking. Turkey shares borders with Iraq and Iran, the two key proliferant states, which influences Turkish security calculations as shown in section 4. The concluding scenarios and recommendations are presented in sections 5 and 6.

2. The Missing Debate

There has been an unusual 'silence' shown by the Turkish political elite about President George Bush's plan to reactivate the so-called National Missile Defense. The visit to Turkey by US Assistant Secretary of State, Marc Grossman in May 2001, part of a shuttle tour to consult American allies, provided a good opportunity for Turkish attitudes on the issue to be debated. The Turkish press covered the visit, the issues, and the statements made by

Grossman, but there was no open public statement made by the Turkish authorities. This 'silence' has not passed without comment: "our heroic politicians, who talk all the time about 'national pride' and 'national interests' [...], I.K.] do not utter a peep".¹

Turkey's role within the missile defense system proposed by the US is to deploy interceptor missiles, intended to destroy ballistic missiles from Iraq and Iran in the air soon after being launched, in the eastern and southern regions of Turkey.² Ankara is reported to be in agreement with the US in principle, but is also concerned about some unintended consequences of the plan. The Turkish concerns center on two main issues. Firstly, the NMD strategy could spark new global and regional tensions and conflicts, including polarization and arms escalation, which would create significant security problems for Turkey, particularly since this country shares borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria, all of which receive technical and material support from Russia in their efforts towards nuclear armament, according to government sources reported in the Turkish press. Therefore, from the Turkish point of view, the missile defense strategy must not be allowed to spark new global tensions, especially with Russia and China. Secondly, Ankara insisted that the proposed missile defense system must not be a cause a division within NATO, and the project must be one which involves the whole of NATO, with the consent of all its members.³

While Turkish officials and politicians have remained silent, some Turkish press commentators have already raised questions about the issue generally, Ankara's role in it, and the consequences it may have. What is striking is that they are basically in agreement with the official position regarding the danger of initiating a new round of global polarization and arms escalation, and especially, in the case of Turkey's participation, an escalation in tension in its relations with Iran, Iraq and Russia.⁴ Even the Islamists share these global level concerns even though they reject the existence of any threat from Iran and Iraq,⁵ thus placing themselves in a substantially different position from the other political factions, who see the Iranian and Iraqi missile- and WMD programs as a potential threat .

A reading through the Turkish newspapers reveals that this limited public debate on the NMD in Turkey during the summer of 2001 has not continued, and has been replaced by the issues of the events of September 11, and the subsequent military operation in Afghanistan. While the Turkish debate on the NMD has been limited, Turkish public concerns about the missiles, and the WMD possessed by its neighbors, and Iraq in particular, have been going on since the Second Gulf War, and intensified on the eve of a possible pre-emptive operation against Iraq in the autumn of 2002.

In other words, even though a public debate on the missile-defense systems is absent in Turkey, there is feeling amongst the public of a potential threat from the missiles, which could

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¹ Aydin Engin, Kilic Kalkan ve Fuzelere Kalkan, Cumhuriyet, May 6, 2001 (electronic edition), translation by the author.

² Cf. Türkiye füze kalkanina istekli, Cumhuriyet, May 4, 2001; Dogu'ya yeni füze rampalari, Türkiye, June 4, 2001; U.S. Defence Secretary begins visit to Turkey, Turkish Daily News, June 4, 2001 (electronic editions).

³ Cf. Füze kalkanı kaygı yarattı, Cumhuriyet, May 12, 2001 (electronic edition).

⁴ See for example: Erol Manisali, Füze kalkanı yeni Soguk Savas politikası mi?, Cumhuriyet, May 21, 2001; Ferai Tinc, Yeni savunma mimarisinde Türkiye'nin rolü, Hürriyet, June 4, 2001; Sami Kohen, Bir güvenlik sorunu daha..., Milliyet, June 1, 2001; Yasemin Congar, Nükleer yaris yeniden baslamasin, Milliyet, May 14, 2001 (electronic editions).

⁵ For example: Akif Emre, Rumsfeld'in ve F.Hüseyini'nin Türkiye'si, Yeni Safak, June 5, 2001 (electronic edition).

partly explain why there has been no debate or any strong opposition to the deployment of such systems. This public sense of fear is a result of many events close to the everyday life of the Turkish people. One example is the Greek-Cypriot announcement that they would be deploying Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missiles on the island in January 1997. Ankara's response was to threaten to destroy the missiles if the deployment took place. The missile-crisis between Ankara and Athens ended in January 1999 when the Greeks decided to deploy the S-300 missiles on Crete instead, a result of pressure from the US and the EU. Another example is Iran's development and testing of the Shahab-missiles. But perhaps the most important factor behind the creation of a feeling of fear among the public is the unsolved situation with Iraq. Since the Second Gulf War the Turks have been whipped into a panic every time the tension between Baghdad and Washington escalated. The Incirlik Air Base, situated in the south-east of Turkey, constitutes a target for missile attack from Iraq and it causes fear among the Turkish people. Although Ankara did not participate actively in the war, Incirlik was used to launch attacks against Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991. Since then the base has hosted U.S. and British aircraft used to monitor the no-fly zone in northern Iraq, and continues to be a source of fear.⁶

In the context of Turkish political conditions, perhaps the silence is understandable. Neither the scale of arms build-up, nor the kind of military equipment needed have ever been questioned seriously among the Turkish political elite. A significant point is the firm political consensus on maintaining and developing a strong military. Even the Islamic party representatives give their full support⁷, in spite of the tension between the military and the Islamists, and the exclusion of Islamic businessmen from the defense industries and military procurement process.⁸ Thus, an issue as important as the missiles is left to be decided by the military authorities alone. Yet, because of the far-reaching political and strategic consequences, the 'silence' on this issue is interesting in itself, and reveals something of the difficulties and dilemmas that Turkey faces not only in this regard, but also towards the post-Cold War security environment.

3. The Turkish perceptions of the post-bipolar security environment

By 1989, with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the big question for the government in Ankara was that of the future strategic importance of the country for the West. The break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia has created a host of new, more or less unstable states around Turkey, in particular a range of Muslim and Turkish states with strong connections to Turkey. The awakening of ethnic and religious consciousness in the region has strengthened the Islamic, Kurdish and Turkish movements even in Turkey itself. These crucial developments have affected the Turkish security debates deeply. Turkish attention has been drawn more and more towards the regional security environment in parallel with the acceleration of the conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and with the Kurdish conflict on both sides of the Turkish Southern border. With the change in focus from global to regional level, the discourse of the 'Bermuda Triangle' has become the definition of Turkey's security environment during the 1990s:

Geographic destiny placed Turkey at the virtual epicentre of a "Bermuda Triangle" of post-Cold War volatility and uncertainty, with the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Mid-

⁶ See for example: Brief false missile alert at Incirlik Base, [Turkish Daily News](#) and Incirlik'te Scud panigi, [Aksam](#), January 29, 1998 (electronic editions).

⁷ For example: Cevat Ayhan, Tutanak (The Minutes of the Turkish National Grand Assembly), June 26, 1999, p. 285-287.

⁸ Cf. Hikmet Cicek, *Irticaya Karsi Genel Kurmay Belgeleri*, Istanbul 1997, p. 93-94.

dle East encircling us.⁹

The Turkish civil-military authorities' perceptions of the 'geography of the threats' has shifted dramatically away from the North, towards the South and South-east. The post-Cold War defense concept assessed the internal threat, Kurdish separatism, as the primary danger, and identified Syria, Iraq and Iran as the origins of that perceived internal threat in 1992. The danger of Islamic fundamentalism was also identified as a primary internal threat, and added to the so-called National Security Policy Document (NSPD) in 1997. These twin internal threats of Kurdish separatism and Islamic fundamentalism, and the risks emanating from Turkey's South-eastern neighbors have not changed since, and reportedly retained in the NSPD of August 2001. This document also pointed out the improvement in relations with its southern and South-eastern neighbors, but also emphasized the continuation of close military ties with Israel.¹⁰ The NSPD reportedly changed again in August 2002. It was reported that Kurdish separatism and Islamic fundamentalism remained the equal rank internal threats in the document. On the list of external threats the ranking of Greece and Syria decreased, whereas the risks emanating from Iraq was placed at the top as the most dangerous foreign threat.¹¹

Regionalization of Turkish security is also mirrored in Ankara's worries about its position in, and importance for the 'West'. Seen from Turkey, the term 'West' has been replaced by two different units, the US and the EU, in the post-bipolar security environment. The Turkish authorities, addressing the issue of post-Cold War regional conflicts and instability, have perceived the US as their most important ally in the new security environment. Already at the beginning of the 1990s the Turkish Foreign Minister declared:

The Cold War is over, but it has left us with a range of conflicts, tensions, and problems caused by restructuring, difficulties and instabilities which require a solution [..., I.K.]. Western Europe is not able to solve these conflicts alone [..., I.K.] It is clear that in the light of recent events it is the US alone which has the potential to exercise power in any corner of the globe [..., I.K.] Bosnia-Herzegovina is the most concrete example of this.¹²

A new strategic partnership between Turkey and the US has developed since the beginning of the 1990s, based primarily on the post-Cold War value of Turkey's position on the periphery of several strategically important regions.

On the other hand Turkey's relationship with the EU, and the prospect of Turkish membership of the EU has become more problematic, in spite of the restoration of the relationship by the acceptance of Turkey's candidacy for membership by the European Union at the Helsinki summit of 1999. The rapprochement between Turkey and the US was also influenced by Turkey's exclusion from the EU. Besides the shortcomings in Turkey's economic standards, it is precisely these Turkish security concerns, especially internal ones, which hinder the Turkish political elite from hastening the democratic reforms that are necessary to become a member of the EU. This dilemma has been defined by Mesut Yilmaz, the Deputy Prime Min-

⁹ Speech by H.S. Turk, the former minister of defense, at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 3, 1999.

¹⁰ Cf. Mahmut Bali Aykan, *Türkiye'nin Kuveyt Krizi (1990-1991) Politikası*, Ankara 1998, p. 10; Gencer Özcan, *Doksanlı Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Değişen Güvenlik Ortamı*. In: Gencer Özcan/Sule Kut (eds.), *En Uzun On Yıl. Türkiye'nin Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dis Politika Gündeminde Doksanlı Yıllar*, İstanbul 1998, p. 18-19; *Iste o belge, Hürriyet*, August 9, 2001; Lale Sariibrahimoglu, *Military prepares a new Security Policy document, Turkish Daily News*, August 8, 2001 (electronic editions).

¹¹ Cf. New NSPD: Iraq, the most important foreign threat, *Turkish Daily News*; Atina ve Sam artık tehdit değil, *Radikal*, August 2, 2002 (electronic editions).

¹² Hikmet Cetin, Tutanak (The Minutes of the Turkish National Grand Assembly), December 21, 1992, p. 176-177, translation by the author.

ister, as “national security syndrome”, and precipitated a harsh response from the military, starting a wide-ranging debate in Turkey during the second part of 2001.¹³ Nevertheless, the Turkish Parliament unexpectedly adopted a major EU-reform package on August 3, 2002, including the abolishment of the death penalty in peacetime. As a result of this, Ankara looked forward to the EU to setting a date for the start of accession talks no later than at the EU Copenhagen-summit on December 12-13, 2002. However, the initial response of the EU was to praise the Turkish reforms, but avoid giving a date. Even though the decisions of the coming Copenhagen summit has yet to be seen, it is generally expected that the EU will only give “a date for the talks for a date for a start to accession talks” as it is put by the Turkish press. Ankara’s relationship with EU-Europe is more troublesome from the security standpoint. In this context, the main point of controversy between Turkey and the EU has been the EU’s determination to forge a common European Security and Defence Policy, as well as an independent European defense capability, separate from NATO. Turkey, as a non-member of the EU, is consequently excluded from this process.

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent emergence of the Eurasian geopolitical space have also changed Turkey’s relationship with Russia and China. The economic and political relations have developed and improved generally. The post-Cold War relationship between Ankara and Moscow has been marked by both competition and co-operation. Despite the asymmetric power capabilities, there has been competition for influence over the post-Soviet Turkish republics,¹⁴ in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Caspian oil- and gas projects constitute another field of competition. On the other hand, Turkey’s sensitivities about ethnic separatism and religious extremism operate in such a way as to make it easier to co-operate not only with Russia, but also with China on these issues. In particular, Turkey’s search for support for its Cyprus-policy within the framework of the UN Security Council has played an important role in its new relationship with China.

It seems that the calculations of capabilities, and monitoring of the policies of the US, the EU, Russia and China inform Ankara’s security policies. In this context Ankara’s reluctance to agree to the NMD project, as a global level issue, is understandable. On the other hand Ankara’s regional level security concerns cause a more active and assertive regional security policy, including regional co-operation, armament and alignments. It seems that the Turkish regional security strategy is a dual-strategy. On the one hand, Ankara initiates and actively participates in regional co-operation organizations such as the Black Sea Economic Co-operation and Economic Co-operation Organisation, and improves its bilateral relations. On the other hand Ankara has increased its efforts in favor of an arms build-up, of which missile defense systems are a part, and has become involved in military co-operation, within which the Turkish-Israeli alignment has a special status.

The Turkish-Israeli military co-operation agreement of 1996 was one of the most important developments since the end of the Cold War. This new development in the region has produced a strong reaction from the Arab world and Iran, who have claimed that it was a military alliance against them. Subsequent denials by Turkey and Israel have not changed their neighbors’ view of the situation, and this alignment has become one of the main features of the Middle Eastern post-bipolar regional order. The Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership increased significantly the deterrent power and maneuverability of both Turkey and Israel.¹⁵ This rapprochement in the security field was thus unique in the history of the two countries in terms of its depth, variety and intensity, and this is why it has attracted so much interest. The

¹³ Cf. Turkish newspapers, August 8-9, 2001 (electronic editions).

¹⁴ That are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁵ See for example: Michael Eisenstadt, Turkish-Israeli military co-operation: an assessment. In: Policywatch, No. 262, July 24, 1997; (Retired) Gen. Cevik Bir, Reflections on Turkish-Israeli relations and Turkish security. In: Policywatch, No. 422, November 5, 1999.

agreements included semi-annual strategic dialogue meetings between high ranking officers to discuss and co-ordinate positions on regional threats.¹⁶ Another dimension of this alignment has been co-operation between the defense industries, including modernization of Turkish warplanes and tanks.¹⁷ In this context the annual trilateral naval exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean between Turkey, Israel and the US have become an institution since 1998. During the summer of 2001 a trilateral air-exercise was staged in Turkey for the first time,¹⁸ and a decision has reportedly been made to start joint land-force exercises between Turkey and Israel.¹⁹ It seems that Turkish-Israeli military co-operation is continuing and deepening, despite the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2002, and criticism by Turkish political authorities and columnists of the Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. For example, in the middle of increased criticism of Israel in the Turkish press, Ankara made a deal with Israel for the modernization of Turkey's M-60 tanks.²⁰ The importance of Turkey's relationship with Israel in the new regional security environment also manifests itself with regard to the missile defense issue, which will be dealt in the next section.

4. Turkish threat perceptions and reactions

Turkey has always had security concerns in regard to the build-up of armaments, including WMD, in the Middle East. However, the issue was regarded as mainly of concern to the players in the Arab-Israeli and the Gulf conflicts. The attitude of cautious indifference shown by the government in Ankara – based on its membership of NATO, and its non-involvement policy in regard to Middle Eastern issues – began to be deeply questioned at the end of the Cold War. On the eve of, and during the Second Gulf War, the Turkish authorities became worried for first time about the direct military threat from its southern neighbors, who had been involved in an arms race, including WMD, since the 1950s. The Turkish view was that its position in the Western Alliance, and NATO's commitment to Turkey, was being weakened at a time when the future of NATO was being brought into question after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.²¹

Many articles written immediately after the Second Gulf War also mirrored the increased level of Turkish concern. In these analyses it was emphasized that even though other states like Israel have WMD and tactical ballistic missile capabilities in the region, there was not likely to be any serious conflict with those states in the future. But hot conflicts between Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbors, Syria, Iraq and Iran, were much more likely. Because these neighbor states have mainly based their military strategies on the use of WMD, these weapons constitute a real and serious threat to Turkey in the coming years. After elaborating on the three neighbors' capacities, the analyses have all come to similar conclusions: These states still lack the means to deliver these weapons, such as missiles, which they cannot develop before the end of the century. However, it was deemed advisable to acquire an anti-

¹⁶ Cf. Gencer Ozcan and Ofra Bengio, Changing Relations: Turkish-Israeli-Arab Triangle. In: Perceptions, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2000; Alan Makovsky, Israeli-Turkish Relations. A Turkish Periphery strategy? In: Henri J. Barkey, Reluctant Neighbor. Turkey's role in the Middle East, Washington, D.C. 1966.

¹⁷ Cf. Hot summer ahead with Turkish-Israeli Ties, [Turkish Daily News](#), April 26, 1998 (electronic edition).

¹⁸ Cf. Konya'da Türkiye, ABD, İsrail tatbikati, [Hürriyet](#), Juni 4, 2001 (electronic edition).

¹⁹ Cf. Türkiye-İsrail tam gaz, [Cumhuriyet](#), July 11, 2001 (electronic edition).

²⁰ Cf. Will Turkey put Israel aside?, [Turkish Daily News](#), April 7, 2002; Sedat Ergin, Ankara'nin İsrail cikmazi, [Hürriyet](#), M. Ali Birand, İsrail ile bu anlaşmayı imzalamak sart miydi?, [Milliyet](#), M. Ali Kislali, İsrail'in onemi, [Radikal](#), April 2, 2002, (electronic editions).

²¹ Cf. Mahmut Bali Aykan, Türkiye'nin, p. 12.

missile system in the near future.²²

In the meantime, it seems that Turkey has been continuously engaged in modernizing and developing its defensive missile capability. According to the Turkish press, in late 1998, Turkey started talks with the British authorities on joint production of short-range surface-to-air Rapiers-2 missiles, and modernizing the 72 Rapiers-1 in the Turkish arsenal.²³ It was also reported that Turkey was interested in obtaining Patriot missiles.²⁴ Within the framework of the Turkish-Israeli military agreement of 1996, Turkey decided to purchase Popeye-1 missiles, and signed a memorandum of understanding for the joint production of Popeye-2 missiles.²⁵ However, Turkey has been more interested in participation in the US-Israeli joint production of Arrow missiles. First it was reported that Turkey and Israel had agreed in principle. Then, because of American disapproval with reference to the Missile Technology Control Regime, Ankara and Tel Aviv reportedly agreed on a new project, which would resemble Arrow, but its name and specifications would be different.²⁶ However, recent developments have shown that the approval of the US is important in any of these projects, and perhaps that is why Ankara is more interested in acquiring developed Patriot systems and/or participating into the Arrow project.

In the late 1990s it appears that there was a series of talks between Turkey, Israel and the US. For example the 'rising missile threat in the Middle East' was on the agenda of the semi-annual strategic dialogue meeting between Turkey and Israel of May 1998.²⁷ In February 1999 Israel's defense minister announced that they were considering a region-wide missile defense system, which would provide protection also for Turkey, Jordan and Palestinians.²⁸ It has also been reported that Ankara and Washington have had differences on the issue. Turkey preferred a missile defense system project developed within the framework of NATO, whereas the US wanted a project in a bilateral framework addressing the threats originating from the Middle East.²⁹

While the establishment of an US-Turkish bilateral working group on the TMD (Theater Missile Defense), and training of the Turkish officers under its auspices have been the concrete outcomes of this process, there were also differences among the senior officers in the Turkish Armed Forces on what kind of ballistic missile strategy they should be pursuing. Reportedly, there were three groups. One group preferred to go with the NATO missile project, which was proceeding slowly. Another group thought Turkey should secure an offensive missile system in order to provide a deterrent, which would be in contravention of the international anti-proliferation agreements, of which Turkey is a signatory. The third, and prevailing, group favored obtaining defensive systems as soon as possible, and in co-operation with the US and Israel.³⁰ That this third view has won out over the other two is borne out by Turkish activities in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Another divergence of opinion existed between

²² Cf. Sitki Egeli, Suriye ve Ortadoğu'da NBC/Balistik Füze Tırmanması. In: Dis Politika Bulteni, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1992, p. 76-77; Cemal Acar, Degismenle olan Dunyada Silahsızlanma ve Turkiye. In: Sabahattin Sen (ed.), Yeni Dunya Düzeni ve Turkiye, Istanbul 1992, p. 259-270; Muammer Simsek, Defense Industry in Turkey. In: Foreign Policy, Ankara, Vol. XV, No. 1-2, 1990.

²³ Cf. Cumhuriyet, August 10, November 4, 1998 (electronic edition).

²⁴ Cf. Cumhuriyet, May 10, 1999 (electronic edition).

²⁵ Cf. Cumhuriyet, January 31, June 9, September 30, 1999 (electronic edition).

²⁶ Cf. Turkish Daily News, December 23, 1997, April 20 and 24, 1998 (electronic edition).

²⁷ Cf. Turkish Daily News, April 22, 1998 (electronic edition).

²⁸ Cf. Turkish Daily News, May 2, 1999 (electronic edition).

²⁹ Cf. ABD'den NATO önerisine hayir, Cumhuriyet, November 25, 1999 (electronic edition).

³⁰ Cf. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, Turkish military splits on ballistic missile defense, Turkish Daily News, January 19, 2000 (electronic edition).

the Foreign Ministry and the General Staff, where Turkish diplomats were worried about cooperation with Israel, which would cause annoyance among Turkey's Muslim neighbors, with whom the Ankara government has been seeking better relations. This divergence has disappeared in parallel with the neighboring states' increased efforts to develop long-range missiles, especially Iran.³¹ In July 2000 Iran tested its Shahab-3 missile for the second time, and thereby provided confirmation of the Turkish concerns. The United States and Israel were the first to react to the missile test. Turkey's reaction came later and was expressed in cautious terms.³²

The new analyses on the issue point out that Turkish territory is under a potential missile threat, given the current capabilities of Iran. The conclusions reached in these analyses are similar to those reached in the early 1990s, that in order to be ready for the 2000s a defense system should be obtained, despite the fact that it could take another decade for Iran to develop nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.³³ The Turkish military authorities' increased interest in anti-ballistic missile defense systems has also been revealed through rare comments on the issue in the Turkish press. For example:

It is obvious that Turkey needs just such a defense system when one looks at the surrounding countries. We are a country encircled by missiles [...], I.K.]. Besides our three southern neighbors, there are missiles also in Armenia and in the Greek part of Cyprus, and these missiles apparently are not directed towards other places (but Turkey).³⁴

The summer of 2001 witnessed high-ranking Israeli visits to Turkey. Among other issues, the Arrow missiles were on the agenda again. It was reported that the two countries had agreed to develop the Arrow anti-ballistic missile system, and they were trying to obtain US approval.³⁵ There was also speculation in the Turkish press about possible Turkish participation in the NMD in order to get US approval to obtain the Arrow and/or Patriot missile defense systems.³⁶

Besides this series of bilateral talks between Turkey, the US and Israel, a trilateral cooperation between these states has also emerged over the Middle East. For example, it is reported that the second TMD meeting between these states was going to be held during the summer of 2001, as the regional dimension of the NMD program.³⁷ In the summer of 2002 the Turkish press reported the progress of the NATO-wide TMD project and the Turkish authorities' positive attitude towards this development.³⁸

Despite the Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, visiting Ankara in October 2002, when he

³¹ Cf. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, Israel to host Turkey and U.S. for second missile meeting. Cooperation represents regional dimension of missile defence system, Turkish Daily News, June 5, 2001 (electronic edition).

³² Quoted in: Ankara'da Sahab-3 Kaygisi, Cumhuriyet, July 21, 2000 (electronic edition), translation by the author.

³³ For example: Prof. Dr. Hasan Koni, Iran'in Nukleer programi ve Füze Sistemleri. In: Savunma ve Havacilik (Defence and Aerospace), Vol. 14, No. 80, 2000, p. 56-57; (Retired) Gen. Ahmet Corekci, Fuze Meraklisi Komsu. In: Ulusal Strateji (National Strategy), Vol. 2, No. 15, 2000, p. 22-27.

³⁴ The Office of the General Staff, quoted in: Sedat Sertoglu, Washington dedi ki..., Sabah, May 18, 2001 (electronic edition), translation by the author.

³⁵ Cf. Türkiye-İsrail tam gaz, Cumhuriyet, July 11, 2001; İsrail'le Arrow pazarligi, Cumhuriyet, July 28, 2001; Israeli Defense Minister visits Ankara, Turkish Daily News, July 10, 2001 (electronic editions).

³⁶ Cf. Kalkan karsilik Arrow, Cumhuriyet, July 23, 2001; Lale Sariibrahimoglu, Israel to host Turkey and U.S. for second missile meeting. Cooperation represents regional dimension of missile defence system, Turkish Daily News, June 5 2001 (electronic editions).

³⁷ Cf. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, Israel to host.

³⁸ Cf. Kalkan geliyor, Aksam; Ankara Kalkan talebine sicak bakiyor, Radikal, August 28, 2002 (electronic editions).

gave the assurance that they “are not going to retaliate against anybody in the region except American aggressors,”³⁹ the issue of acquiring anti-missile defense systems with regard to an eventual operation against Iraq appeared again in the Turkish press during the summer and autumn of 2002. For example, the newspapers reported that the US was sending Patriot missile systems to the region, to be deployed in southern Turkey.⁴⁰ The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) reportedly were preparing for the worst consequences of an eventual operation against Iraq, and also seeking to introduce a missile defense system into its arsenal. According to the Turkish press, the TAF were negotiating with the US for the purchase of the latest Patriot PAC-3 systems, and the US had reportedly softened its attitude regarding Turkey’s participation in the joint Israeli-American Arrow missile defense project.⁴¹

An interesting factor in Turkish calculations relates to Russia. The Turkish post-bipolar policy towards Moscow has been ‘co-operation and competition’ with regard to the Caucasus and Central Asia. In this framework, Russia has also been in competition with the US for Turkey’s defense procurements, offering a cheaper alternative, and without the reluctance to allow technology transfer to Turkey. The last example relates to the ballistic missile defense issue, where Russia has offered its S-300 long-range missiles to Turkey in the context of US disapproval of Turkey’s Arrow-project.⁴² Almost a year later, in spring 2001, the US reportedly proposed the purchase from Russia of S-300 missiles and deployment of them in ally countries such as Turkey, all part of seeking Russia’s approval of the NMD project.⁴³ This last point makes it clearer why Turkey was concerned by Russian reactions to the NMD project. At the global level, negotiations between the US and Russia could cause, for example, a change in the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty (CFE) of 1990. Russia has long sought to change the treaty in its favor with reference to its Caucasian backyard, while Turkey wants it to remain as it is. The CFE treaty, implicitly acknowledging Turkey’s stake in Middle Eastern security, also granted Turkey, at its own request, a so-called exclusion zone in the South-eastern area of the country that borders Syria, Iraq and Iran. Within this zone there are no limits on the number of troops and equipment that Turkey is allowed to deploy.⁴⁴

While the Turkish defense authorities have remained silent about the NMD, they seem to be already seeking to acquire missile defense systems as a measure against the capabilities of its neighbors. On the one hand the Turkish policy is still based on being part of global and regional anti-proliferation agreements and efforts.⁴⁵ On the other hand acquiring ‘Air/missile defense capability against the WMD’ constitutes the other pillar of the Turkish policy in a world described as following:

New politico-military strategic environment [..., I.K.] dominated by instabilities and uncertainties in the Caucasus, Middle East and Balkans, (render) it necessary for the Turkish Armed Forces to prepare themselves for an unforeseeable future [..., I.K.] In the current political military strategic environment where the global and regional bal-

³⁹ Aziz warns Turkey would disintegrate if Iraq does, Turkish Daily News, October 3, 2002 (electronic edition).

⁴⁰ Cf. GAP’a fuze kalkani, Aksam, August 3, 2002; Patriotlar geldi, Aksam; ABD Patriot yolluyor, Radikal, August 17, 2002 (electronic editions).

⁴¹ Cf. Ankara fuze ariyor, Aksam; Israil’le proje yururlukte, Radikal, October 9, 2002 (electronic editions).

⁴² Cf. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, Russia offers Turkey upgraded, longer-range S-300s, Turkish Daily News, March 4, 2000 (electronic edition).

⁴³ Cf. Türkiye’ye S-300, Milliyet, May 31, 2001 (electronic edition).

⁴⁴ Cf. Alan Makovsky, Israeli-Turkish Relations. A Turkish ‘Periphery Strategy’? In: Henry J. Barkey (ed.), *Reluctant Neighbor. Turkey’s role in the Middle East*, Washington 1996, p. 158; Yavuz G. Yildiz, *Ortadogu’da Silahlanma ve Militarizm*. In: Sabahattin Sen (ed.), *Su Sorunu, Turkiye ve Ortadogu*, Istanbul 1993, p. 168.

⁴⁵ Cf. WMD, http://www.tsk.mil.tr/genelkurmay/digerkonular/kitleimhasilahlari_eng.htm [6. 8. 2001].

ances have not yet been fully formed, the Turkish Armed Forces (must be) capable of ensuring the security of Turkey, as well as contributing to regional and global peace and stability [..., I.K.].⁴⁶

5. Concluding scenarios

Turkey's membership of the EU, which could change the Turkish security perceptions, is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future. The Turkish-EU relationship has been marked by a slowness since Turkey first applied for membership, and that is perhaps not such a bad thing. After all it provides a framework for the relationship, and also keeps Turkey's efforts towards democratization on track. On the other hand it also allows a number of issues to continue to create tensions, such as Cyprus, and Turkey's concern about being excluded from the European Security and Defence Policy.

The most likely scenario then, is that the current trends will continue as they are. Turkey, staying outside of the European Union, would continue to define its security concerns differently and separately from the EU. In this context NATO becomes more important for Turkey, also with regard to its security relations with the EU-Europe. Indeed, Ankara seems to be tied to its new strategic partnerships with Israel and the US in order to counter its perceived regional threats, including WMD and ballistic missiles. This will mean continuing Turkish efforts to obtain anti-ballistic missile defense systems. Turkey's regional security concerns, and dependency on the US –which is partly a result of Turkey's exclusion from European integration- also provides the leverage for American pressure on Turkey to participate in the NMD program.

The big question then is about the NMD, and its drastic and unpredictable global consequences. If the project were abandoned by the US, which is highly unlikely, it is more likely that Turkey's regional level efforts (Theater Missile Defense, TMD) would continue, as would the European efforts at the TMD level, though more slowly. As the US continues with the project, which it will, there will be hard times for both policy makers and the globe ahead. However, one thing is clear. The issue of ballistic missile defense, both NMD and TMD, constitutes a common security issue, and is therefore a co-operation opportunity for Turkey and the EU, and closes the gap between the differentiated security agendas of these actors since the end of the Cold War. The issue of NMD, with its attendant global consequences is of special importance. The European reluctance concerning NMD further expands Turkey's room for maneuver, caught as it is between TMD (regional concerns) and NMD (global concerns).

6. Recommendations

Both Turkey and the European Union share concerns about the dangers of the NMD project to international security, and these concerns provide a common ground for co-operation. Nevertheless, there are many problems which serve to increase tensions between the EU and Turkey, and push Ankara closer to the US and Israel. In a world marked by uncertainty, instability and more room for maneuver of units and regional security dynamics, it is time to reconsider Turkey's role in European security, also taking into account NMD and TMD. As the EU Helsinki-summit of 1999 wisely put the Turkish-European relationship back on its usual track, it would be wise not to allow the problems to reach a point of no return, and keep Ankara on the path towards membership.

On the other hand it is time for the Turkish authorities to realize that to become a member of

⁴⁶ Mission, http://www.tsk.mil.tr/genelkurmay/genel%20konular/gorevi_eng.htm [5. 9. 2001].

the European Union represents an alternative strategy in the struggle to overcome the perceived post-bipolar security concerns, as expressed by many in Turkey. At least, pragmatically, the EU connection provides more room for maneuver with regard to the Turkish dilemma between National Missile Defense and Theater Missile Defense created by dependence on the United States.