

Turkey's Sweet & Sour Policy Against NBC Weapons

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Abstract

Turkey's geographic location requires it to take measures against the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as ballistic missiles as their delivery vehicles in its immediate neighborhood. These measures are mainly two folds: First, to support the efforts to strengthen the international nonproliferation regimes so as to make them more effective in curbing the spread of NBC weapons; And, to build up military capabilities in close cooperation with the United States and Israel in particular to increase its deterrent capability as well as its ability to cope with the proliferating states in its surrounding, if need be. As such, Turkey pursues a realistic approach by adopting both soft and hard security approaches concomitantly.

The end of the Cold War created an enormous sense of relief regarding the threat of nuclear catastrophe. However, the threat of worldwide proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons, and ballistic missiles as their delivery vehicles, soon eradicated hopes for a more stable and peaceful world order. Unlike the bipolar international system where the threat of nuclear annihilation was menacing but stability could be maintained thanks to the virtue of nuclear deterrence, the post-Cold War era is characterized by highly destabilizing factors such as the emergence of non-state actors (i.e., terrorist and militia groups, cults etc.) as well as states with unrelenting determination to acquire all sorts of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Peace-loving countries have had to adjust themselves to this new situation and to develop effective measures to counter this threat.

Turkey is neighboring a number of states that are (or were) on the short list of most notorious proliferants in the world, namely Iran, Iraq and Syria, all of which had chemical and biological weapons stockpiles, ballistic missiles and serious development of nuclear capacity. One might therefore expect that, in the face of such a threat, Turkey would soon embark on a crash program to develop its own WMD capability. Nevertheless, relying on NBC weapons development as an effective deterrent or a countermeasure is, as has always been the case, out of the question for Turkey. Rather, Turkey has persistently pursued a policy to become state party to international non-

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proliferation agreements that sought to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles.¹ In line with this policy, Turkey upholds with great care its responsibilities stemming from international documents like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).² One particular reason that Turkey has given its utmost support to international efforts spent for strengthening the existing international non-proliferation regimes is the widespread belief among the Turkish security elite that effective verification mechanisms of NBC non-proliferation treaties may create serious impediments to aspiring states in their engagements with WMD development and thus may provide strong assurances to Turkey in its relations with its neighbors.

Nevertheless, the possibility that international agreements designed to stem the ambitions of neighboring states as well as newly emerging non-state actors, which abound in the region, will fail requires Turkey to develop certain measures in order to be able to tackle the problems emanating from these actors. The ones that can be cited here include the military doctrine that envisages combined operations of land and air units of the Turkish Armed Forces, and military cooperation with the United States and Israel.³ These measures, however, can be effective against states, but they may fall short of dealing with the threats posed by non-state actors that require a substantially different approach and adequate measures commensurate with the peculiarities of these groups. In this respect, Turkey underlines the importance of intelligence gathering and sharing, which is, however, very difficult to achieve. Turkey, thus promotes the role NATO can play in this area as an organization, which has a highly sophisticated and elaborate infrastructure.

With this as a background, it would not be wrong to argue that Turkey adopts a rather realistic attitude incorporating both soft and hard power approaches. In other words, Turkey follows both a multilateralist approach by complying fully with, as well as promoting the strengthening processes of international nonproliferation regimes, while also developing military capabilities with a view to counter the possible effects of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in its immediate neighborhood. As such, Turkey's soft and hard security measures against NBC weapons proliferation can be branded as a "sweet and sour" policy.

¹ For a detailed account of Turkey's attitude towards nuclear disarmament see, Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey," in Harald Muller (ed.), *Europe and Nuclear Disarmament: Debates and Political Attitudes in 16 European Countries* (Brussels: European Interuniversity Press, 1998), pp. 161-193; Also see Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu and Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Defence Reform in Turkey", in Istvan Gyarmati and Theodor Winkler (eds.), *Post-Cold War Defense Reforms: Lessons Learned in Europe and the United States* (New York: Brassey's, 2003), pp. 135-164.

² Turkey did not experience heated debate in the Grand National Assembly during the process of ratification of the BTWC in November 1974, NPT in April 1980, CWC in May 1997, or CTBT in November 1999.

³ Although relations with both of these countries have deteriorated to some extent in the political domain over the last couple of years because of the US war on Iraq, dramatic changes have not occurred in the field of military cooperation. See in this respect, Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey Says No," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (July, August 2003), pp. 22 - 25. The trend in Turkish-American relations is toward quick recovery in the run up to the NATO summit meeting in Istanbul in late June.

Turkey and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime

Since the revelations regarding Iraq's clandestine efforts in 1991 to build a nuclear weapons program, the nuclear non-proliferation regime has undergone a process of revision and thus strengthening with special emphasis given to the inspection and verification mechanism. Accordingly, states party to the NPT are expected to provide much more transparency in their direct and/or dual-use material transaction as well as know-how and technology exchanges. To complement this principle of greater transparency, far-reaching rights of access are being granted to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors by means of Additional Protocol (INFCIRC/540).

Turkey, as a natural result of its firm stance against proliferation⁴ and in line with joint international efforts in this respect, has been taking the necessary steps to become more active both in the initiation and the development process of tightening export control regimes and also enabling the IAEA to have wider inspector access to nuclear-related facilities (declared or undeclared), especially in the suspect countries. Turkish policy-makers have confidence in the utility and effectiveness of export control regimes and arrangements to curb weapons proliferation as they have credible information to the effect that many proliferants were frustrated by the export controls which aim at preventing the spread and accumulation of destabilizing conventional weapons by controlling their transfers and also by imposing export control measures on sensitive and dual-use equipment and technologies needed for the production of weapons of mass destruction.

This being said, Turkey has taken several steps, especially since the middle 1990's, to become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)⁵, which were successfully rewarded in June 2000. Turkey has also speeded up the process of adjusting its national export control regime (i.e., laws and regulations) to that of the NSG countries. Turkey has undertaken the same stance toward the Zangger Committee⁶ and became a member as almost an automatic outcome of the formal accession to the NSG. Turkey also became a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)⁷ in April 1997, which aims to demonstrate to the actual and potential proliferants that there is a solid

⁴ After ratifying the NPT in 1980 Turkey concluded a safeguards agreement with the IAEA in 1982.

⁵ The Nuclear Supplier Group has reproduced a set of guidelines that most of the suppliers of nuclear plants and materials agreed to in London on 21 September 1977. That's why this group is equally known as the London Club. This set of guidelines is also attached to communication addressed on 11 January 1978 to the Director-General of the IAEA. These guidelines for nuclear transfer are also labelled as INFCIRC/254. The initial signatories of the guidelines are; Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, the former German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA and the USSR.

⁶ The Zangger Committee named for its Swiss chair Prof. Claude Zangger, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group shared in common the purpose of limiting the transfer of significant material and technology to states that are suspected of being engaged in clandestine nuclear weapons manufacturing.

⁷ The Missile Technology Control Regime is an informal, non- treaty association of states that have an established policy or interest in limiting the spread of missiles and missile technology. According to the guidelines, the MTCR's original purpose was to "reduce the risks of nuclear proliferation by placing controls on equipment and technology transfers which contribute unmanned nuclear weapons delivery vehicles. The MTCR puts limitations on the member countries' export of missiles with a range of 300 km and a payload of 500 kg

block of like-minded nations, which are unified in determination to fight against proliferation.

Moreover, Turkey was one of the first signatories of the CTBT in 1996 that envisages putting a halt to tests of nuclear devices, be they for military or so-called “peaceful” purposes. Practically, there is no difference between the destructive capabilities of the devices detonated for either purpose. Hence, the difference lies in the intentions of the countries, which may develop such capabilities. Therefore, the CTBT is considered an integral part of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Turkey ratified CTBT in November 1999 as one of 44 states whose ratification was necessary for the treaty to become effective because of the two small nuclear research reactors operating in the country.⁸

Concerning the Additional Protocol that was released by the IAEA as a result of “Programme 93+2”⁹ Turkey became a state party to it by signing and then quickly ratifying the document in July 2000.¹⁰ Indeed, following the adoption of the Protocol, there existed some concerns among policy makers in Turkey about the extent of the right of access given to IAEA inspectors. It was feared to be virtually unlimited and that it might pave the way to UNSCOM-like applications in countries of choice. However, through diplomatic negotiations potential problem areas seem to have been resolved and thus ratification was granted.

Turkey and the Chemical Weapons Convention

The Turkish Grand National Assembly ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) on 12 May 1997. Seemingly, no serious debate has taken place prior to or during the voting except for that among a group of parliamentarians who suggested waiting to see the attitude of the United States with regard to the same issue on the grounds that Turkey’s ratification should be “conditional” on the ratification of the Americans. Their line of thought might have been based on the argument that “in an international agreement where the United States takes no responsibility, Turkey’s active involvement would not be necessary or imminent.”

⁸ For a comprehensive discussion on Turkey’s efforts over the last four decades to develop a peaceful nuclear program see Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Turkey’s Quest for Peaceful Nuclear Power,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring-Summer 1997), pp. 33-44.

⁹ Effective inspections carried out in Iraq under UN Security Council Resolution 687 has led to debate concerning whether the broad, but previously unexercised, rights of the IAEA under basic NPT safeguards agreements could not be used to carry out inspections beyond the routine inspections directed toward known declared activities. The Secretariat of the IAEA, after examining this issue, concluded that all along this right had indeed existed, and the Board of Governors in February 1992 agreed with this finding. Withstanding this line of thought, throughout the 1990’s, the IAEA has focused extensively on measures to make the safeguards system more effective and efficient. The major effort in this undertaking is called “Programme 93+2”, the IAEA’s program to develop and test a comprehensive set of measures to improve safeguards implementation. The formal title of the program is “Strengthening the Effectiveness and Improving the Efficiency of the Safeguards System”. The program formally began with the IAEA Board of Governors’ endorsement of the proposed effort in December 1993 and completed in December 1995.

¹⁰ The document of ratification was published in the *Official Gazette* on 16 July 2001 in its 24460th issue.

Ratification of the CWC by the Turkish Parliament did not cause any difficulty in the military sphere either. The Turkish military has never contemplated building or deploying a chemical weapons arsenal, as there were, and still are, nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey as part of the NATO strategy.¹¹ One may therefore conclude that one particular reason, among others, for the non-existence, let alone possession, of chemical weapons in Turkey is that this category of weapons were not assigned any role in NATO strategies. Banned chemicals in any of the categories that are expressed in the text of the CWC are not produced in Turkey. Or, if at all produced, none of these quantities reach the limits indicated in the Convention.

Turkey and the Biological Weapons Convention

Turkey became a state party to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) of 1972 by ratifying it on 5 November 1974 without any reservations. Turkey had also ratified the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which was the first international document that prohibited the production, stockpiling and use of bacteriological agents for weapons purposes. Turkey never had a biological weapons production program or a stockpile of biological weapons for reasons similar to the ones cited above regarding chemical weapons. No debate or any contemplation of possessing biological weapons has ever taken place in Turkey. It is evident that the present international agreements to prevent the development and spread of biological and toxin weapons are far from meeting today's requirements. Besides the obvious dangers posed by the existence of biological and chemical weapons, the possibility of exploitation by terrorist organizations is considered to be a constant threat and concern for the international community. Therefore, Turkey gives its support to the initiatives for strengthening and promoting the effectiveness of the BTWC.

The Profile of Ballistic Missile Threat to Turkey

Turkey is within the range of all sorts of weapons of mass destruction that exist in the Middle East, not to mention Russia and Israel. Especially, Iran and Syria (as well as Iraq until recently) are the countries which must be considered as possibly having WMD arsenals and their delivery vehicles. Besides Iraq, which is currently occupied by US forces and whose capabilities are not clear for the time being, Syria is believed to have an elaborate WMD development program especially in the chemical and biological fields, and Iran is highly suspected of having nuclear weapons aspirations as well. As a state party to the NPT, Iran adamantly opposes allegations of harboring a clandestine nuclear weapons program, but its nuclear reactor deal with Russia as well as China, and its existing nuclear infrastructure since the Shah period, have sufficed to fuel speculations in this regard.¹²

¹¹ See in this respect the interview with Mustafa Kibaroglu by Saadet Oruc, "Debate Over US Nuclear Arms Storage Heats up," *Turkish Daily News*, pp. A1 & A2, 23 October 1999, Ankara.

¹² With the January 1995 protocol signed between the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom) and the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran (AEOI), Russia agreed to construct two 1,000 MW(e) and two 440 MW(e) VVER light-water reactors (LWR) in the Bushehr nuclear site south of Iran by the Persian Gulf. The construction of two Siemens 1,300 MW (e) LWR on the same site were essentially undertaken by the German firm Kraftwerk Union (KWU), but then halted because of the Islamic revolution in Iran. On the other hand, China also agreed to install at least two 330 MW (e) LWR in Iran. Being one of the richest countries in proven oil and natural gas reserves, Iran's argument that it needs that much nuclear power capacity to generate electricity is unjustifiable.

When compared to the threat posed by the ambiguity surrounding the status and caliber of NBC weapons in the region, the threat of ballistic missiles whose ranges encompass Turkish territory is a more categorical one. In the open source literature there exists detailed graphic presentation of the ballistic missile arsenals in the Middle Eastern states.¹³ To date, the profile of the missile arsenals of Iran, Iraq, and Syria revealed the deployment of especially the Soviet-origin Scud missiles and North Korean Taepo Dong missiles with varying degrees of sophistication and hence varying ranges and payloads. At a glance, the profile of the missiles deployed by Turkey's neighbors can be summarized as follows.¹⁴

Syria: Operational Scud missiles have existed in the Syria's arsenal since 1975. The missiles were acquired from the Soviet Union. The first Scud-C missiles were delivered to Syria from North Korea in late 1991 and early 1992. North Korea also provided Syria with Scud-C launchers in 1993. On the other hand, China agreed to sell Syria M-9 missiles having a range of 600 km. However, partly due to the pressure applied by the United States on China to prevent the sale, apparently no missiles were sold.

Iran: Iran's first Scud missiles were gifts from Libya, which enabled the former to launch missile attacks on Baghdad beginning in 1985. During the 1988 "war of the cities" Iran received Scud missiles from North Korea. After 1992, North Korea delivered modified Scud-C missiles whose range exceeds 500 km. China and North Korea entered the picture and as a culmination of long lasting efforts Iran succeeded in developing the Shahab-3 missile which is believed to be a derivative of North Korean No-Dong missiles, which have been tested a number of times since 1998 and have flown a range of 1,350 kilometers. These missiles can carry a warhead of 700 kg, which is perfectly suitable for a nuclear weapon. Iran's efforts to develop longer-range missiles with ranges like 2000 km (Shahab-4) and 5000 km (Shahab-5) have seemingly failed but research and development are said to be continuing.

Turkey's Stance vis-à-vis the Threats Posed by NBC Weapons Proliferation

Land-Air Doctrine

In order to counter the threat posed by its Middle Eastern neighbors, Turkey believes it has a number of advantages stemming from its geopolitical and geo-strategic position. Geopolitically, Turkey has long relied on the positive security assurances provided by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as its noble member. NATO's deterrent is still considered by Turkey to be assuring with respect to the threat posed by NBC-

¹³ See for example, Yiftah Shapir, "Proliferation of Nonconventional Weapons in the Middle East," in Shlomo Gazit (ed.), *The Middle East Military Balance 1993-1994* (Tel Aviv: Westview Press, 1994), pp: 216-238. See also Ian O. Lesser & Ashley J. Tellis, *Strategic Exposure: Proliferation Around the Mediterranean* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996). For continuously updated information in this respect see the Center for Nonproliferation (CNS) Databases of the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California, USA. (<http://cns.miis.edu>).

¹⁴ Following the first Gulf War in 1991, all missile development programs of Iraq over 150 km range were cancelled by the United Nations. However, there was strong suspicion that Iraq managed to hide away some 16 missiles with strategic ranges and payloads prior to the second Gulf War in March 2003. Although Iraq has been under US occupation since then, ambiguity surrounds the current status of its missile capability.

capable states in its immediate neighborhood. Regarding the advantages of its geo-strategic location, on the other hand, Turkey is developing a new military doctrine, namely “the land-air doctrine” that is believed to provide enough credibility to deter even unconventional armed attacks from its neighbors.

The end of the Cold War, however, which literally meant the disappearance of the threat perceived from the Soviet Union caused drastic changes in the security environment of Turkey. The most striking outcome of this development is that, for the first time in the four-century-old history of Turkish-Russian relations, the two nations have been geographically set apart. Dissolution of common borders with Russia contributed greatly to the security of Turkey. Conventional force reduction levels that were achieved with the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE, 1990) improved the disproportionate situation between the two actors in that area.

On the other side, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, which soon resulted in the defeat of the former at the hands of Coalition Forces led by the United States based on a United Nations Security Council Resolution, paved the way to *de facto* partitioning of Iraqi territory. In the north, above the 36th parallel, the abolition of the central authority has complicated the security considerations of Turkey. The region then became a sanctuary for PKK terrorists that enabled them to flourish and wage more frequent attacks on targets inside Turkey.

Because of these developments the Turkish military has shifted its focus from the former Soviet border, as part of NATO’s contingency planning in the past, to the southern and the eastern borders adjacent to Syria, Iraq and Iran, and redeployed its military units accordingly. In less than a decade, Turkey’s troop deployments in this region increased almost five fold from approximately 60 thousand infantry units and gendarmerie in the early 1990s. Besides a numerical as well as qualitative increase in the number of troops (e.g., special forces), the amount and the type of military equipment poured into the region is significant. Light and heavy artilleries, armored vehicles and attack helicopters in particular enabled the Turkish military to wage *blitzkrieg*-like cross-border operations into enemy concentrated zones, especially in northern Iraq.

As such, in the second half of the 1990s, the Turkish military has become capable of launching overnight a comprehensive land operation involving some 50 thousand fully equipped troops. In addition to this, the sophisticated and advanced air power capability of the Turkish military can very ably provide troops on the ground with close air support with military aircraft capable of carrying out deep strike missions. Early warning aircraft as well as refueling aircraft that are entering the arsenal of the Turkish air forces increase both the range and the operational capability of combat aircraft involved in operations.

Hence, the overall operational capability of the ground forces in combination with the air units give Turkey the capability to exert pressure on its southern neighbors, if need be, in a considerably short time. What needs to be done at this stage is provide quantitative and qualitative improvement of the technical equipment and protective gear needed against a possible use of chemical and biological weapons in case a hot conflict

erupts. Necessary measures are seemingly being taken in this respect. Thus, the retaliation capability of Turkey is believed to constitute a credible deterrent against southern neighbors which might contemplate attacking Turkey with WMDs.

With respect to the threat posed by its eastern neighbor Iran, Turkey cannot confidently rely on its land power due to difficulties arising from the geographical conditions of the border region. However, Turkey has other leverage in its relations with Iran, its comprehensive relations with Israel in the military domain, and with the United States, with respect to establishing a missile shield in the territory of Turkey.

Relations with Israel & the US Missile Shield

Relations between Turkey and Israel have substantially improved in the second half of the 1990s, especially since bilateral diplomatic relations were restored following Israel's peace initiatives with the PLO and Jordan. Furthermore, Turkish-Israeli relations have entered a new phase with the military cooperation agreement signed in 1996 and is much improved since then. The text of the agreement does apparently include clauses for improving bilateral military cooperation. For instance, Israeli military aircraft are allowed to fly over Turkish territory for training. And, Israel, on the other hand, agreed to upgrade 54 Turkish F-4 class military aircraft and to provide the Turkish Air Force with electronic warfare equipment.

The US proposal to establish a "missile shield" in the eastern districts of Turkey either bilaterally or within the NATO framework, or trilaterally with the inclusion of Israel, may be seen as an indicator of an emerging defense bloc among the three countries. Although it is too early to call it as a formal pact, Turkey, Israel and the United States may join their forces to counter the threat of ballistic missiles that may be tipped with WMD warheads from Iran and Syria. The military exercise called the "Anatolian Eagle" that took place in central Turkey in July 2001 with the participation of air force units of Turkey, Israel and the United States and the air defense systems of these countries, simulated defense as well as combat operations against a comprehensive attack from the air.¹⁵ Such military exercises which are the result of military cooperation between Turkey, the US and Israel seem to be contrary to what Turkey long pursued during the Cold War, which was not to get involved in US plans designed specifically to back up Israel. However, the threat of WMD and ballistic missiles is becoming an issue of common concern, and it is quite normal for the Turkish security elite to seek a reliable defense posture and a credible deterrent beyond the NATO context.¹⁶

NATO's Role Against Non-State Actors

The threat posed by non-state actors is huge and real. Hopefully, terrorism with weapons of mass destruction has not happened yet, but, it is not very unlikely. Provided that NATO is both available and willing, allies should find ways to make the best use of its already existing and unmatched capabilities. NATO can adopt itself to the requirements of the fight against terrorism. Those countries that believe they are

¹⁵ See Ed Blanche, "Israel and Turkey Look to Extend their Influence into Central Asia," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (August 2001), p. 34.

¹⁶ See in this respect Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 61-65.

immune to terrorism may soon learn that this cannot be the case for anybody. The only way to be safe from terror is not being the target of terror. **In other words, one can feel safer if his country is not targeted by terrorist organizations.** However, those who have targeted the US, Britain, Turkey and Spain may very well target other members of NATO in the future. Therefore, while it is still not too late to unite against non-state actors, peace loving countries must do so at their earliest convenience and use NATO as the common platform to unite their will.

The civilized world has to defend its values to non-civilized intruders, namely non-state actors. It is hardly possible to determine who these actors are, where they are, how they communicate, and what their capabilities and objectives are. No missile shields, no nuclear weapons, no large standing armies, nor the traditional components of individual states' sophisticated warfare capabilities can properly deal with the threat posed by non-state actors. Intelligence is the most, if not the only, powerful and effective instrument that states need to defend their nations and their values. Because the threat is spread throughout the globe, the "battlefield" should be the entire globe. Hence, worldwide cooperation is needed. NATO can be an appropriate venue with its existing capabilities and it can be made available to peace loving countries the world over, while also benefiting from the intelligence that can come from these states. As such, NATO may very well assume a global role. In such a context, Turkey can contribute significantly to the new role of NATO with its outstanding capacity to collect and develop intelligence. Turkey's close links in all respect with nations in its periphery, where the fight against terror is the most heated, enable it to have timely access to strategic information about what is happening on the ground in these areas

Conclusion

Against the threat posed by the NBC weapons capabilities of its neighbors, Turkey relies on its membership in NATO, the most powerful military organization in the world; on strengthening the international non-proliferation regimes whose sanctions may create serious impediments to states aspiring to develop WMD capabilities; on its own land-air military doctrine which has given the Turkish Armed Forces a powerful invasion capability; and on its relations with Israel in the military domain which is a serious cause of concern for the rivals of both countries. All of these factors are believed, and have also proved at times, to be powerful deterrents against the threat posed by the existence of WMD capabilities in the states neighboring Turkey.