

NATO's Missile Defense Shield: Turkey's Western Preferences

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ABSTRACT *As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Turkey agreed to deploy a missile defense radar system in its southern region of Malatya in 2011. In the context of geopolitical developments before and after this pivotal year -namely, Turkey's reorientation towards the Middle East, the Arab Awakening, and most recently, the Iranian nuclear deal of 2013- Turkey's decision had far-reaching regional effects. To offer policy implications surrounding this decision, this paper analyzes the interaction between such political developments and the existence of this shield system within Turkey's borders.*

Turkey's decision to allow installation of the NATO defense shield came amid Western suspicions of Iran's growing military might, nuclear program, and missile technology. Since Turkish foreign policy ever since the turn of the 21st century has shifted increasingly towards its neighbors in the Middle East, the installation and its hostile reception in Iran seemed out of sync with its foreign policy shift. Subsequently, examining the Turkish decision in light of recent regional developments provides insight about Turkey's increasingly proactive role as not only a regional, but a global actor.

Such examination includes an analysis of Turkey's global environment through a foreign policy lens both before and after its decision to host the NATO defense shield. Paired with the technical reasons why Iran feels threatened by the missile deployment, such analysis shows that despite the growing polarity in Turkey's neighborhood, Turkey's NATO membership and nuanced view of international affairs makes it an important mediator moving forward in Iranian rapprochement with the West.

Keywords: NATO, Turkey, Iran, Missile, Rapprochement

Introduction

Recent political developments fundamentally challenged the existing regimes, as well as their existing alliances and power network in the Middle East. One of the most important countries and major leaders in the region, Turkey faces its own constraints in dealing with the new political landscape shaped by newly formed alliances, the effect the so-called Arab Spring had on the existing governments, new governments that seek legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents, and an ongoing civil war in neighbor Syria. Middle East has been an important venue for political, military struggle throughout the 20th century into the 21st, and the political picture is further complicated due to recent developments in the region. Thus, the actors in the region face dilemmas and delicately steer the course of their policies according to finely calculated risks and opportunities.

Stable for much of the twentieth century and especially during the Cold War, Turkey's foreign policy orientation is said to have undergone some shift during the 2000s, sometimes dubbed as an "axis shift".¹ Nevertheless, the aforementioned difficulties, combined with Turkey's already strained relations with the European Union due to stalled negotiations and occasional ups and downs with the U.S., pushed Turkey as far as considering purchasing a missile defense system from China, and more importantly, accepting to host NATO-owned Missile Defense Shield in Kürecik in the Malatya province, one of Turkey's eastern provinces as a defensive measure, against a threat likely to occur from its south and/or east. The former was an unseen move since the foundation of the Republic, a move that has not been concluded yet, but already stirred up considerable debate and controversy among the foreign policy circles, while the latter partially negated recent Turkish discourse vis-à-vis the Middle East and especially Turkey's neighbors.

The United States has been Turkey's globally most important ally, since the beginning of the Cold War. Despite the end of the Cold War and a major restructuring taking place on a global scale, the relationship between the two countries remained active and cordial, nevertheless possessing its own difficulties. This last development can be regarded as the one single event that best illustrates the difficulties faced by Turkey in bridging its existing alliances and new geo-political as well as economic considerations, summarizing the complexity of the current situation for Turkey, in an age where the existing balance of powers and alliances are shaken by the developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, starting from late 2010, and still continuing in Syria and, to a lesser degree, in other countries.

This paper deals with the ongoing developments, focusing on the case of Turkey's deployment of a NATO Missile Defense Shield in its Eastern part. It will thus explain the changing landscape surrounding Turkey that ensued in the light of the new political setting

¹See Öniş, Z., (2010). Multiple Faces of the "New" Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique. *GLODEM Working Paper Series* (pp. 1-23); Kirişçi, K. (2006, September). Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times. *Institute for Security Studies*; Kirişçi, K. (2009). The transformation of Turkish foreign policy: The rise of the trading state. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, p. 29-57; Yeşilyurt, N., & Akdevelioğlu, A. (2009). Turkey's Middle East Policy under the JDP Rule. *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, pp. 39-69; Babacan, M. (2011). Whither An Axis Shift: A Perspective From Turkey's Foreign Trade. *Insight Turkey*, 129-157.

influenced by the Arab Spring. This research agenda is appropriate because the recent developments in the region transformed the political landscape, and brought in new actors and political agendas.

Political developments since the 2000s caused Turkey to restructure its policies towards the region² and this work is aimed to explaining these efforts to restructure in the case of one of Turkey's most important defensive military decisions in recent history, namely, the purchase of Patriot missiles and their installment in Kürecik in the province of Malatya, the city which is also hosting one of the biggest military airports in Turkey.

Therefore, it is important to examine the current situation to consider the capabilities of these actors, the course and the potential outcomes of the political struggle. Turkey's reorientation of its foreign policy, its causes, expectations it fostered will be presented, followed by the assessment of its actual status in order to evaluate to which degree the initial response and expectations were correct, in the light of the Missile system issue.

Thus, the article will consist of three sections. First, the so-called shift in Turkish foreign policy will be briefly explained, relying on existing literature. Secondly, a technical analysis of Turkey's deployment of NATO Missile Defense Shield missiles will be made, along with political implications of such a move for Turkey, its allies, neighbors and potential rivals. The final part will draw conclusions and policy implications regarding the topic, as well as including commentaries on the future of the West and its potential rivals in the region in general, and the future of Turkey's foreign policy in particular.

Axis Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy

Turkish foreign policy has gone through important changes since 2002, the first term of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, JDP) government. Even though the major orientations can be said to have remained the same, the combination of transformation of the global balance of power and a transformation in the ideological inclinations and interpretations of the government officials in Turkey had impacts over the Turkish diplomacy and foreign policy. However, that change in Turkish foreign policy can also be attributed do the requirements set by Turkey's growing economy, its need for new markets for exports and its energy needs.³ Mainly influenced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu's geopolitical approach, some of the steps taken were subject to considerable criticism, and the results of the many moves made –some of them were rather bold- are yet to be seen. The issue is still hotly debated and it will be important to understand to which extent the political ideology of a government or the economic

² See Sözen, A. (2010). A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges. *Turkish Studies*, pp. 103-123; Ünay, S. (2010). Economic Diplomacy for Competitiveness: Globalization and Turkey's New Foreign Policy. *Perceptions*, pp. 21-48; Turan, K. (2010), Axis Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy. *Ortadoğu Analiz*, pp. 52-58; Kanat, K. B. (2010). AK Party's Foreign Policy: Is Turkey Turning Away From The West? *Insight Turkey*, 205-225.

³ Kirişçi, K. (2009). The transformation of Turkish foreign policy: The rise of the trading state presents ample detail on the use of economy in the "new" Turkish foreign policy.

necessities can dictate the conduct of the foreign policy conduct of a middle-sized power like Turkey.

The gradual shift occurring in Turkish foreign policy starting with the collapse of the Soviet Union further accelerated with the JDP's coming to power in 2002, which continues rule as of 2013. Much debate has been going on whether the axis shift in Turkish foreign policy is a reality or perception of the ongoing developments.

Proponents of this claim raised their voices further into the 2010s, as Turkey conducted certain moves which looked in line with the changing Foreign Policy preferences and orientation in general. However, the governments and decision-makers are sometimes pressed between their existing alliances and commitments and the necessities of the new conditions contradict with each other. New political developments in the Middle East caused two of the most important regional countries, namely Turkey and Egypt to restructure their policies *vis-à-vis* the region.

In the case of Turkey, this was most evident when Turkey's hosting of a NATO Missile Defense Shield, despite strong protests from Iran and Russia, which evoked considerable tension with especially the country's eastern neighbor, Iran.

Turkey has emerged as a regional actor with clear interests in Middle Eastern politics in the past decade since the foundation of the republic. Traditionally, Turkish foreign policy was somewhat distanced from the Middle East, but its interest increased gradually, in line with domestic political developments and now it enjoys strong historical, religious, cultural ties with the region, particularly after the JDP's rise in power.

There are various causes for of the change that occurred in Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, such as the easing of political and military tension in Europe, the resurfacing of ethnic and political conflicts in Caucasia, the Middle East and the Balkans. Also, the developments that resulted in the change in Turkey's domestic politics had a role in changing foreign policy making Turkey's higher economic growth based on an export-oriented economic system, the decreasing role of the military, and democratization. Some of these changes, especially the change in the role of the military, and a visible economic growth, are the products of JDP era, while the others started from 1980s onwards. Before, the army, through the National Security Council had more saying in those affairs whereas now civilians design and implement foreign policy almost entirely. One of the biggest changes made by JDP is to weaken the military and bring in the civil servants and increasing their role and effectiveness in foreign policy making. Those civilians are officials coming from different backgrounds than traditional foreign policy elites, as well as scholars and think tanks. Thus, "Foreign policy in Turkey is no longer in the monopoly of politicians and the diplomats".⁴ The trend is also helped by the EU process, as the EU reform packages "did considerably increase the say of civilians in the process of defining 'national security'".⁵ While some argue that the change is mainly due to domestic factors, it is also been argued

⁴ Öniş, Z. (2010). Multiple Faces of the "New" Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique.

⁵ Kirişçi, K. (2006). Turkey's Foreign Policy In Turbulent Times.

that the so-called axis shift in the foreign policy was mainly a result of environmental factors,⁶ such as the transformation of the US Middle East policy, which is considered as being a “very significant factor while analyzing Turkey's recent activism in the Middle East”.⁷

Contrary to this, the JDP government claims that “the change that the JDP has brought into the foreign policy vision of Turkey constitutes the principal reason of Middle East's increasing significance in Turkey's foreign policy, rather than the international environment and its reflections on Turkey”.⁸ Broadly, academic literature offers a few plausible explanations to Turkey's change: Firstly, The EU effect and more democratization, linked also to the -at least attempt of- de-securitization of long-standing issues. Secondly, the competition and tension between Kemalist and Islamist visions of politics. This explanation mostly asserts that more than the addition of Islamists under JDP to the political arena, the removal of certain powerful and traditionally Kemalist actors paved the way for change in Turkish foreign policy.

In addition to civilians, business associations more and more play an important role in Turkey's growing trade-led policy-making processes. The liberal market reforms undertaken in 1980s eventually led to a growing number of business associations lobbying for their interests in the domestic and foreign markets. These interest groups, as Kirişçi points out, “not only interact with various government agencies, but also have direct access to the government itself and are capable of shaping public opinion”. He also cites the turning away from the traditional securitization policy over Cyprus as a case where TÜSİAD, the leading industrial bourgeoisie, was highly effective in shaping public opinion. He cites numerous examples illustrating how trade became the major goal and concern of diplomatic activities, of which TOBB and DEİK's organization of a gathering of Turkish ambassadors was one of the most important.⁹ Also, frequent participation of business people to major state visits –a practice that started in Özal era- is significant. The JDP government increased and made this practice more commonplace. Turkish public is transformed, too and now is more interested in foreign policy issues.¹⁰ Similarly, NGOs became more active recently, though some of them are too big to be called NGOs, nevertheless, they are having an impact on foreign policy making. ASAM, USAK, SETA, ODAM, TUSAM, are among them. The business associations such as TOBB, TUSKON, MÜSİAD, etc. also played a large role, especially with regard to increasing relations with the Middle Eastern and African countries.¹¹ So much so that, “Since the early 1990s, the emerging business groups can be described as the economic face of Turkey's changing political environment.”¹² These institutions engaged themselves into coordinated regional and international activities, and others also played an important role in preparing the Turkish population for the changes expected during the membership

⁶ Turan, K. (2010). Axis Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy.

⁷ Yeşilyurt, N., & Akdevelioğlu, A. (2009). Turkey's Middle East Policy under the JDP Rule.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kirişçi, K. (2009). The Transformation Of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise Of The Trading State.

¹⁰ Kanat, K. B. (2010). AK Party's Foreign Policy: Is Turkey Turning Away From The West?

¹¹ Öniş, Z. (2010). Multiple Faces of the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique.

¹² Babacan, M. (2011). Whither An Axis Shift: A Perspective From Turkey's Foreign Trade.

talks with the EU.¹³ The role played by these institutions in different regions is also important and can be indicative of the early examples of institutionalization of trade efforts in coordination between the business associations and the government. For instance, while TUSKON is more active in Africa and East Asia, MÜSİAD is active in Gulf countries, while TÜSİAD, the traditional business elite, has been in favor of more integration with the EU. However, Sadık Ünay points out to the reluctance of traditional business elites, represented by TÜSİAD, to join the efforts at increasing trade with the Middle East and other areas where Turkey quickly expanded its trade. He argues that it is a combination of the differences in adaptation capability –which is in favor of small to medium sized companies- as well as ideological differences.¹⁴ A similar point was made by Babacan: “Turkey’s emerging trade destinations provide a relative advantage for the smaller size entrepreneurs due to their firm size while yielding significant amounts of positive externalities for the conglomerates in their increased bilateral economic ties as well”.¹⁵ Also, good coordination between Turkish Airlines, TKA and the Foreign Affairs bureaucracy in undertaking the expansion towards new regions such as Latin America and Africa is mentioned frequently.¹⁶ Between 2002 and 2010, Turkish Airlines opened 58 new routes, of which only 14 are in Europe.¹⁷ This is also showing the degree of broadening in Turkey’s foreign relations. As a result, relationships are not restricted to bureaucratic state-state relations anymore”.¹⁸

To summarize, the change is a combination of more democratization of Turkey, the advance in EU process, and the change in the structure of officials and policy making. JDP only increased the effect, adopting a more inclusive approach, in the process strengthening its own position and pursuing its agenda, which can be considered only normal.

In light of the points made above, an analysis of the deployment of NATO Missile Defense Shield to Turkey will be made to clarify the ongoing situation. Such an analysis of the political situation in Turkey and in the Middle East region is important to clarify the situation, revealing the likelihood of the political developments in the near future, and current economic conditions, and to define their potential to claim or fulfill leadership role in the Middle East.

History of Missile Defense Systems

Missile defense systems first emerged onto the world stage in the midst of the Cold War. The struggle for technological and military superiority stirred a harsh rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. An impending nuclear attack would be delivered via intercontinental missiles armed with a nuclear warhead. The threat literally forged a need to create a new defense system against these new threats. Thus, the missile defense system was

¹³ Sözen, A. (2010). A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges.

¹⁴ Ünay, S. (2010) Economic Diplomacy for Competitiveness: Globalization and Turkey’s New Foreign Policy.

¹⁵ Babacan, M. (2011). Whither An Axis Shift: A Perspective From Turkey’s Foreign Trade.

¹⁶ Ünay, S. (2010). Economic Diplomacy for Competitiveness: Globalization and Turkey’s New Foreign Policy.

¹⁷ Babacan, M. (2011). Whither An Axis Shift: A Perspective From Turkey’s Foreign Trade.

¹⁸ Kutlay, M. (2011). Economy as the ‘Practical Hand’ of ‘New Turkish Foreign Policy’: A Political Economy Explanation. *Insight Turkey*, pp. 67-88.

created by the United States Army. In the middle twentieth century, the United States Air Force separated from the army; however the Army still maintained control for ground-based missile defense systems.¹⁹

Project Nike-Zeus emerged in the 1950s. The initiative gave way to intercept long-range missiles against Soviet Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. Geographically, the closest possible range for a Soviet-American attack would require a trajectory over the Arctic polar cap. The Nike warhead was designed to detonate at an altitude of over 100km over the Polar Regions nearby the vicinity of incoming Soviet missiles. However, due to complexities of positively identifying incoming enemy weapons, the Nike-Zeus project was suspended and later cancelled in 1961.



Figure 1 Polar-Centered map demonstrating the closest trajectory for an American-Soviet attack.

Currently, the United States has a National Missile Defense system that is built up from several components. Ground-based interceptor missiles have the power to intercept incoming missiles from space. These ground-based interceptors are scattered over various bases throughout the continental United States and Alaska.²⁰ Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense

¹⁹ Thompson, L. (2011, March 21). Missile Defense Becomes A Navy Mission. *Forbes*.

²⁰ Bradner, T., (2009, June 5). Begich, Gates visit Alaska missile defense base. *Alaska Journal of Commerce*, retrieved October 18, 2013 from http://classic.alaskajournal.com/stories/060509/loc_img2_001.shtml

Systems are primarily ship-based and several Navy ships were fitted to fire SM-3 missiles in addition to the Patriot missile systems which are already in use.²¹

In addition to the NATO Missile Defense Shield system whose details will be briefly mentioned below, Turkey considered the purchase of a defensive missile system from China. Turkish officials maintain their intention with the defense system is to provide protection against ballistic missile threats from the Middle East, specifically from Iran.²² The system would be strategically located at a Turkish installation approximately 435 miles from Iran. There is already a similar American missile-defense radar in Israel currently in operation.²³ Initially, the Turkish government leaned towards the Chinese CPMIEC FD-2000 missile system over the American Patriot. Other systems under consideration by Ankara were the French and Italian joint venture Eurosam Aster 30 SAMP/T and Russia's S-300. In the conditions for the \$3.4 billion bid, CPMIEC will provide four batteries capable of firing up to 288 surface-to-air FD-2000 missiles.²⁴ Interestingly so, CPMIEC is currently under American sanctions for supplying military technology to Iran, North Korea and Syria.²⁵

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan has defended the decision to lean towards the Chinese system despite receiving criticism from the United States and NATO. He maintained that the Chinese HongQi 9 is the system that would best suits Turkish interests; however this line of argument was somewhat dubious as military technicality was probably not the major point for the decision-makers, in the wake of such an important strategic and military purchase. Turkey also maintains that the decision to use the Chinese version of the Patriot missiles was due to the competitive price offered by China. The United States Department of State believes that Turkey ought to choose a missile system that is compatible with other systems used by NATO allies.²⁶

Nevertheless, NATO Missile Defense Shield is a more critical component of Turkey's broader military strategy to defend itself and the interests of its long-term Western Allies; therefore it is worth a more detailed scrutiny.

²¹ McMichael, W. H., (2009, September 17). Obama Sharply Alters Missile Defense Plans. Retrieved October 14, 2013 from <http://www.navytimes.com/article/20090917/NEWS/909170334/Obama-sharply-alters-missile-defense-plans>

²² Shanker, T., (2011, September 15). U.S. Hails Deal With Turkey on Missile Shield. *New York Times*, retrieved October 19, 2013 from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/world/europe/turkey-accepts-missile-radar-for-nato-defense-against-iran.html?_r=0

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Weitz, R. (2013, November 05). Global Insights: Money, Not Realignment, Drives China-Turkey Missile Defense Deal. *World Politics Review*, retrieved October 22, 2013 from <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13351/global-insights-money-not-realignment-drives-china-turkey-missile-defense-deal>

²⁵ Idiz, S. (2013 October). Turkey's Choice: Chinese Missile Defense or NATO? *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved October 14, 2013 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/missile-nato-turkey-china-defense.html#>

²⁶ Want China Times (2013, October 26). NATO, US Urge Turkey Not To Buy China's HQ-9 Missile System. *Want China Times*. Retrieved 3 November, 2013 from <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20131026000016&cid=1101>

NATO Shield in Turkey

Turkey is hosting the NATO Missile Defense Shield in the southeastern region in Kürecik in the Malatya province approximately 435 miles west of the Iranian border. Turkey believes that the system will give strength to both national and NATO defense. The Patriot PAC-3 batteries deployed at the Turkish-Syrian border have been on alert status ever since the United States confirmed that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons earlier this summer.²⁷ Despite the Syrian conflict, the missiles are intended for all-around defense in the event that any of Turkey's neighbors demonstrates hostile aggression.

Turkey is NATO's second-largest military force and has a geo-strategic advantage in the alliance dating back towards the Cold War period. Turkey's importance in the world and especially to NATO has increased in recent times when more and more Middle East states are increasing their anti-Western policies and rhetoric. Iran, for instance, still appears as a major threat given their ongoing research in developing nuclear powers and their advancement with missile capabilities.²⁸

The following are components of the NATO Missile Defense Shield in Turkey:

1. The American Patriot System

The American MIM-104 Patriot system is a surface-to-air missile system and is used by the United States and her allies. Patriot derives its name from 'Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept on Target'. The Patriot missile system has been deployed in many situations because it is able to shoot down enemy missiles while protect soldiers and civilians from incoming missile attacks. Patriot missile batteries were activated several times in the Iraq war and were used extensively in the 1991 Gulf war.

The Patriot missile system is designed to identify, target and strike at an incoming missile. The targeted missiles may be no more than 3 to 6 meters long and they are typically flying around Mach 3 to Mach 5. Unlike simpler missile systems, Patriot uses ground-based radar to identify, track then destroy its target. The systems are expensive and extremely complex on account that a missile traveling at five times the speed of sound is covering a distance of approximately one mile every second; therefore it is critical that the missile is intelligent enough to make precise calculations within a fraction of a second. Like most conventional rocket technology, the Patriot uses solid fuel to propel itself up to Mach 5 within three seconds of launch.

²⁷ Gören, N. (2013, October 23). Turkey's Air and Missile Defense Journey Continues. *Arms Control and Regional Security for The Middle East*. Retrieved 15 October, 2013 from <http://www.middleeast-armscontrol.com/2013/10/23/turkeys-air-and-missile-defense-journey-continues/>

²⁸ The Telegraph. Turkey Backs Nato Missile Defence Shield Against Iran. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved 10 November, 2013 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/8737158/Turkey-backs-Nato-missile-defence-shield-against-Iran.html>

Per unit, the system has a cost of approximately \$2-3 million and there are currently over one thousand launchers in American service with over 170 units exported to allies.²⁹ Patriot missiles have a weight of 700 kg, and the missiles alone, without the launch platform, range in cost from \$1-6 million.³⁰ Altitude ranges on the missile from 24 kilometers to 84 kilometers depending on where it is launched from.

The typical Patriot missile battery may consist of up to 16 launchers. The launchers in the battery all simultaneously communicate through either fiber-optic and/or radio links. Launchers are approximately the size of a large tractor-trailer. In a combative situation, efficient reloading after firing its missiles is a crucial necessity. To reload the battery, a supply truck with a crane pulls up next to the launcher to install it with new missiles.

The Patriot Missile currently has two forms. The first and older version is the PAC-2 missile. The newer version is known as the PAC-3, which emerged in 2002, and is smaller and more effective than its predecessor. PAC-2 was designed to fly directly at an incoming missile and then detonate nearby. The explosion was meant to destroy the oncoming bogey or knock it severely off course causing it to miss its intended target. PAC-3 missiles are just as long as the PAC-2 at 5.2 meters; however it weighs approximately 300 kilograms, as opposed to the PAC-2's weight at 900 kilograms. The PAC-3 Also has a smaller diameter of 25 centimeters, as opposed to the PAC-2's diameter of 41 centimeters; this allows more missiles to fit onto a launcher.

PAC-3 missiles are designed not just to distort the incoming bogey's trajectory, but rather precisely hit the incoming target so that both missiles are completely destroyed. What makes this possible is that the PAC-3 has a built-in radar and guidance computer. The on-board system combined with ground radar and support allows for greater precision in navigating at supersonic speeds.³¹

2. Aegis RIM 161 SM-3 Missiles

The Aegis RIM 161 SM-3 missiles are ship-based missile and they are used by the American Navy to intercept short to intermediate range ballistic missiles. These missiles are supplementary to the Patriot missiles in Turkey protecting the NATO radar. The program is a part of the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System.³² These missiles weigh approximately 1.5 tons; have a length of 6.55 meters, and a diameter of 0.34 meters. They have an operational

²⁹ Isby, D. C. (2013, November 27) NATO to extend Patriot deployments in Turkey. Retrieved August 26, 2013 from <http://www.janes.com/article/30906/nato-to-extend-patriot-deployments-in-turkey>

³⁰ US Department of Defense (2010, November 15). Agency Financial Report. Retrieved 8 October, 2013 from http://comptroller.defense.gov/cfs/fy2010/01_DoD_Agency-Wide/Fiscal_Year_2010_DoD_Agencywide_Agency%20Financial%20Report.pdf

³¹ Brain, M. How Patriot Missiles Work. *How Stuff Works*. Retrieved October 11, 2013 from <http://science.howstuffworks.com/patriot-missile1.htm>

³² Raytheon. (2011, April 15). Raytheon Completes SM-3 Test Flight Against Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile. *Raytheon Company*, retrieved November 06, 2013 from <http://www.raytheon.com/capabilities/products/sm-3/press/index.html>

ranging from 700 km to 2500 kilometers depending on the booster stages propelling the missile.³³

3. AN/SPY-1 Radar

The AN/SPY-Radar is the most crucial part of the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System. The system is manufactured by Lockheed Martin. The scanning system is fully controlled by computer and uses four antennas to provide a full coverage of 360 degrees. The system is phased-array radar which makes it capable to search for and automatically detect air and surface targets. These radars are meant to track the trajectories of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. This data is then reported back to the defense system at lightning speeds so that defensive maneuvers can be taken without hesitation. Currently, there are twenty-one Aegis Cruisers and Destroyers in the Navy which have been upgraded with these capabilities. Tests have proven positive that the radar system has the advantage to flawlessly track ICBMs across up to nine time zones without any delay in transmitting data.³⁴

Iranian Points of Geopolitical Contention

The U.S. and its allies have been historically suspicious about the intentions of Iran's nuclear program. On the other hand, Tehran insisted that it is enriching uranium to foster nuclear energy for its people. In 2011, Iranian defense minister Ahmad Vahidi criticized the coming installation of a NATO early-warning system in Turkey, saying that "The West claims the radar system is to confront Iranian missiles but they should be aware that we will not tolerate any aggression against our national interests."³⁵ Indeed, the U.S. and Turkey insisted that the radar system's purpose was to identify missile threats coming from outside of Europe, an area that includes Iran.

Vahidi warned Turkey, "We regard the presence of America and the West as a troublesome and harmful presence for the Islamic countries."³⁶ Before 2011, Turkey had been seeking stronger ties with Muslim Middle East countries such as Iran, using its unique position as a Muslim country, militarily strong NATO member, and economic success story to forge influence in the region. The Syrian crisis has complicated this effort, however, given that Turkey opposes the Assad regime's bloody crackdown on civil unrest, while Iran supports it.

Like the Syrian crisis, the NATO Missile Defense Shield also adversely affects Turkey's relationship not only Iran, but also Russia. While the Russian NATO envoy said that the particular radar system installed in Turkey is not an immediate threat, Russian officials have

³³ Global Security, RIM-161 SM-3 Upgrades. *Global Security*, retrieved August 11, 2013 from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/systems/sm3-upgrades.htm>

³⁴ MDAA. AN/SPY-1 Radar, retrieved November 27, 2013 from <http://www.missiledefenseadvocacy.org/web/page/939/sectionid/557/pagelevel/3/interior.aspx>

³⁵ Hafezi, P. (2011, September 06). Iran Warns over NATO's Anti-missile Radar in Turkey. *Reuters*. Retrieved 09 January, 2013 from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/06/oukwd-uk-iran-turkey-radar-idAFTRE7851IV20110906>

³⁶ Ibid.

emphasized if a missile defense system is able to down Russian nuclear missiles, it would in fact constitute a security threat.

However, such alliances are not set in stone—Moscow unilaterally suspended its delivery of S-300 missiles to Iran, responding to U.S. and Israeli concern that the Iranian government could use the missiles to protect its nuclear facilities.

Israel and the U.S. have considered striking Iran if diplomatic efforts fail and Iran continues its nuclear program unmonitored. The Iranian-Israeli relationship is non-existent at best; Iran refuses to recognize the state of Israel, and Iranian officials have emphasized that Iranian military retaliation would be “painful.”³⁷ Iranian missiles can reach U.S. Gulf bases and Israel, according to these officials.³⁸

Meanwhile, Turkey’s policy towards Iran has differed from that of the West. The U.S., for example, believes in sanctions backed by the threat of military force to prevent a nuclear Iran. Turkey, on the other hand, does not view the Iranian nuclear threat as urgent. Officials in Ankara tend to take a more cautious and nuanced approach, emphasizing that the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is not definite.

In this context, Turkey has used its mediator position to constructively utilize Iran’s recent, liberalized change in power. Its efforts came to fruition with the recent nuclear deal this year between Iran and six Western powers. Iran has agreed to limit its nuclear program in exchange for an easing of tough international sanctions, in a historic deal aimed at preventing Tehran from acquiring atomic weapons. In a major concession, the six powers agreed that Iran could continue to enrich uranium up to the level of 5 per cent required for generating power from a nuclear reactor.

The agreement is also in Turkey’s interest. As Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, declared: “It is now time for co-operation, the dialogue between Iran and Turkey is the most important in the region.” Taner Yıldız, Turkey’s energy minister predicted that if sanctions were dropped, Turkey would be able to increase Iranian oil imports from 105,000 barrels per day to between 130,000 and 140,000.³⁹

Concluding Remarks: Turkey’s Role in the Iranian Missile Shield Crisis

Like its place in the international arena, Turkey’s role in this crisis has been complex. Compared to its Western allies, Turkey has been constructive in its Iranian engagement efforts. May 2010 represented a Turkish diplomatic success (Iran agreed to switch enrich nuclear fuel for fuel rods), and Turkey established measures to build confidence from Iran

³⁷ International Crisis Group. (2012, March 15). Iran's Nuclear Program, the Risk of War and Lessons from Turkey. *International Crisis Group*. Retrieved 16 October 2013 from http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/multimedia/~link.aspx?_id=90F5AC96CAC34D59977338AF170B6692

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Hürriyet Daily News (2013, November 26). Turkey to Hike Iran Oil Imports After Nuke Deal. *Hürriyet Daily News*. Retrieved December 04, 2013 from <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-hike-iran-oil-imports-after-nuke-deal.aspx?pageID=238&nID=58520&NewsCatID=345>

and the West. However, Turkey's 2011 decision to host NATO's early warning radar system in Malatya complicated such efforts. In fact, a U.S. official described the move as one of the "biggest strategic decisions taken between Turkey and the United States in the last 15 to 20 years."⁴⁰

This decision definitely had costs for the Turkey-Iran relationship, causing analysts to speculate that Turkey was shifting closer to the U.S. view that Iran's military assertiveness threatens global stability. At the time, Turkey's Foreign Ministry made a statement that "hosting... this element will constitute our country's contribution to the defense system being developed in the framework of NATO's new strategic concept" and will "strengthen NATO's defense capacity and our national defense system."⁴¹

Remarkably, no Turkish official statements surrounding the announcement mentioned Iran explicitly, and Iran state-run news media barely mentioned the decision. On the other hand, U.S. and NATO officials have made evident the missile shield's purpose of deterring Iran, in response to not only missile technology, but also its nuclear program. Leading up to Turkey's agreement to host the system, Iran repeated that it has increased its enriched uranium production and advanced its missile technology.⁴²

In 2010, the year before Turkey's agreement to host the radar system, the International Institute for Strategic Studies made salient findings in terms of Iran's nuclear and missile programs. It said it found "emerging evidence" of Iran's ability to fire missiles at Iraq, Israel, Turkey, and Gulf countries. Such findings came amid Turkey's improving relations with Iran and increasing efforts to mediate between Iran and the West regarding the Iranian nuclear program. The 2013 nuclear deal between Iran and Western countries comes at a surprising time; since 2011, Turkey's relationship with Iran has decreased over the Syrian crisis and Turkey's slowly cooling tensions with Israel, Iran's longtime adversary.⁴³ During Turkey's reorientation away from the West under the Ak Party prior to 2011, Turkey vetoed sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council, hurting Turkey-U.S. relations. Thus, 2011 represented a new foreign policy era for Turkey as it turned away from Arab autocrats, and, in the same year, agreed to station the NATO radar system. Importantly, Ankara established important conditions for the system's implementation: Iran was not officially mentioned as a threat, and any obtained intelligence was not to be share with non-NATO members. These conditions, along with Turkey's insistence that Iran not be identified as the primary target of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), highlight the "constructive ambiguity" that Ankara has employed.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ BBC Monitoring European (2012, August 30). Turkish Column Views Regional Implications of NATO's Anti-Missile System. *BBC Monitoring European*. Retrieved December 16, 2013.

⁴¹ Gladstone, R. (2011, September 02). Turkey to Install U.S.-Designed Radar, in a Move seen as Blunting Iran's Missiles. *New York Times*. Retrieved December 16, 2013 from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/03/world/europe/03missile.html?_r=0

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ BBC Monitoring European (2012, August 30). Turkish Column Views Regional Implications of NATO's Anti-Missile System.

The implications have broadened after the Arab Awakening, as Iranian has stepped up its public condemnation of Turkey's stance towards the Assad regime in Syria. The crisis has reached new heights in terms of chaos, fractured groups, and volatility. Meanwhile, Turkey has taken a more aggressive stance towards Shi'a opposition policies in Iran, Iraq, and Syria, as well as Assad's grave human rights violations.⁴⁵ In this volatile geopolitical environment, Turkey's agreement to station the radar system confirmed Turkey's status quo approach towards NATO and its desire to benefit from the protection that accompanies membership in the organization.

While Turkey's decision is consistent with Turkey's previous policy towards NATO, many Western countries were surprised by Turkey's complicity. Turkey's agreement took on a life of its own given its previous reorientation towards the Middle East, its polarized shift during the Arab Spring especially towards Syria, and the "Kurdish Opening" that began in 2009. Turkey today remains oriented towards Western-oriented security alliance through its hosting of NATO's Missile Defense Shield, but it is also tied to its Middle Eastern neighbors culturally, geographically, and economically. In light of the Iran-U.S. rapprochement, Turkey may not have to choose a side after all.

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⁴⁵ Ibid.

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