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Dalmut, Hanne

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U.S.-Turkey Strategic Dialogue

Hanne Dalmut, USIP
Sinan Ulgen, EDAM
Daniel Brumberg, USIP
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Hanne Dalmut
U.S. Institute of Peace

and

Sinan Ulgen
Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies

Daniel Brumberg, Executive Editor and Project Lead
U.S. Institute of Peace

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U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP)

Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies, Istanbul (EDAM)

Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD (PASCC)

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List of Abbreviations

United Nations Security Council Resolution	UNSCR
Build-own-operate	BOO
Chemical, biological, and radiological	CBR
Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear	CBRN
Defense Threat Reduction Agency	DTRA
International Atomic Energy Agency	IAEA
Korea Electric Power Corp.	KEPCO
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	NATO
Non-Proliferation Treaty	NPT
Nuclear, biological, and chemical	NBC
Nuclear Suppliers Group	NSG
Preparatory committee	PrepCom
Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD	PASCC
Turkish Disaster and Management Agency	AFAD
Turkish Undersecretariat for Defense Industries	SSM
United States Institute of Peace	USIP
Weapons of mass destruction	WMD

Introduction

This report summarizes a track II U.S.-Turkish dialogue organized by the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) in Istanbul, Turkey, on February 26–27, 2015. While addressing a range of issues affecting U.S.-Turkish strategic cooperation and the role of Turkey in NATO, the discussions focused on the challenges and opportunities that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the dynamics of nuclear weapons proliferation pose to U.S.-Turkish strategic cooperation.

The dialogue was supported by the Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (PASCC) of the Naval Postgraduate School's Center on Contemporary Conflict. PASCC is sponsored by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).¹ The dialogue was co-chaired by Ms. Jessica Varnum and Mr. Sinan Ulgen. Dialogue participants included sixteen leading subject matter experts from the nongovernmental community, eight American and eight Turkish. The two-day dialogue was structured to be discussion-centric and action-oriented. Breakout working groups on the second day were tasked with identifying specific short- and long-term steps that could address challenges identified, or otherwise strengthen the state of the relationship. All participants operated under the Chatham House Rule.

This track II dialogue was the second iteration of a 2012 U.S.-Turkish strategic dialogue, also sponsored by PASCC and carried out by the Naval Postgraduate School with USIP participation. Building on this first initiative, the 2015 Istanbul dialogue goal was to further broaden—and to begin to institutionalize—a nongovernmental exchange between the two countries on matters related to global security, nonproliferation, and nuclear security in order to achieve a more stable, resilient, and transparent strategic relationship. Several of the participants and observers attended the 2012 talks in various capacities; they were joined on this occasion by subject matter experts new to the forum who could speak to different dimensions of the always evolving U.S.-Turkish strategic relationship.

This summary of the 2015 dialogue is organized to closely and faithfully convey the flow of the discussions and the key topics that the participants addressed at each session. Cutting across all of these discussions was a common theme the participants raised in different ways and at different moments, and which thus bears emphasis before a more detailed narrative of the discussions is provided. That theme is simply this: the United States and Turkey are nearing a pivotal point in their security relationship. The alliance between the United States and Turkey faces serious structural challenges. Left unattended, these problems could weaken the capacity of Turkey, the United States, and the North Atlantic Treaty

¹ See the website <http://www.dtra.mil/About.aspx>.

Organization (NATO) to tackle a myriad of growing security and nuclear weapons proliferation challenges in the Middle East. Participants noted that in the two years between the 2012 and 2014 dialogues, the geostrategic U.S.-Turkish relationship and the overall nonproliferation context had dramatically evolved. Today, the important bilateral relationship is colored by regional security dynamics, such as the civil war in Syria and the spread of the Daesh terror group (also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL; and simply the Islamic State, IS) across the Levant, Iran's growing regional activism, and the efforts of the international community to reach an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program, and by a more assertive Turkish foreign policy that mirrors important domestic dynamics in that country. With U.S. economic and military resources increasingly stretched and a U.S. domestic arena that may be less supportive of U.S. military engagement abroad, the United States faces challenges in meeting its commitments to its friends in general and its NATO allies in particular. This reality has clearly affected the U.S.-Turkish relationship as much as Turkey's own evolving domestic politics are now shaping its increasingly complicated relationship with the United States.

The dialogue included forthright exchanges by both sides regarding how to meet these various challenges, the contemporary strengths and challenges in the relationship, the threat perception commonalities and divergences and the implications of both for the U.S.-Turkish relationship, and the development of possible actionable items and areas for formal and informal collaboration. The following narrative highlights the key follow-up and action-oriented ideas and recommendations that emerged, particularly during the concluding after-discussion. At the core of all these proposals was the recognition that it is crucial for the United States and Turkey to enhance existing mechanisms of cooperation and dialogue, and to create new avenues by which experts from the two countries can enter into a partnership dedicated to addressing security and weapons proliferation needs in a region that is increasingly unstable and facing new and even unprecedented security challenges. The 2015 Istanbul dialogue, if it is to have any lasting strategic value, must set the stage for a longer and more institutionalized effort to enhance U.S.-Turkish strategic problem solving in a manner that meets regional challenges even as it reflects the particular sensitivities and concerns of both countries.

The Proliferation Context: Regional NBC and Missile Capabilities

Turkey's volatile geographic location and its domestic and allied defense capabilities have major implications for the U.S.-Turkish relationship. In discussing regional nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) threats, participants—particularly those from Turkey—emphasized that the threat of a biological or chemical attack on Turkish soil is real. There is regional precedence for the use of such agents: Egypt, Syria, and Iraq have all used chemical weapons in the past quarter century. Syria presents an overt

chemical weapons threat even if it has disarmed in accordance with UNSCR 2118. There is concern about latent biological weapon capabilities throughout the region. A radiological threat exists, but it is modest and relates mostly to the transshipment of delivery system materials. Despite recognition of the threat, Turkish and U.S. participants believed that Turkey lacks some of the military doctrine, strategy, technical concepts, and equipment to prevent or adequately respond to an NBC attack.

Turkey is increasingly pursuing a chemical, biological, and radiological (CBR) response capability, a development that partly reflects its concerns over security along its borders with Syria. Yet this is a nascent issue for Turkey. Indeed, Turkish participants indicated that despite the possibility of a regional CBR threat, for the time being—and in the coming years as well—the relevant academic and strategic communities will lean toward enhancing nuclear expertise rather than addressing the CBR challenge. This posture influences not only Turkish budgeting priorities and procurement choices but also military preparation. A coherent process of equipment procurement and training is lacking. For example, while there is a new Air and Missile Concept command established under the Turkish Air Force, there is no chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) school under the Air Force. Training for this threat is housed under the Land Forces (the Turkish Army). Those tasked with preventing a threat are in a different force from those being trained to respond to it.

On the consequence-management side, no single agency possesses the full mandate and capabilities to handle the response comprehensively. There was some agreement among participants that this is a public health issue, to be led by Turkey's Disaster and Management Agency (AFAD). However, Turkey remains beleaguered by interagency coordination challenges that result in no small part from an ongoing process of new institution building within the government. These challenges are exacerbated by the fluid face of Turkish politics and multiple varying talking points, making it difficult for Turks and Americans alike to identify the specific agency, office, or individual who can speak with authority or implement change on the matter.

Given these characteristics in their response planning, Turkish civilian agencies would benefit from CBRN training and policy assistance, possibly complemented by capacity-building efforts, to the benefit of AFAD, either through bilateral U.S.-Turkey channels or through NATO. While participants agreed both channels would be appropriate, and noted the role of a formal alliance on CBRN issues, they also noted that Turkey is politically sensitive to direct U.S. involvement. Broadly speaking, such training and policy guidance could address incident response and consequence management from a civilian rather than military perspective. A more narrowed U.S.-Turkey collaboration could center on designing an interagency process in which Turkey could address such issues, drawing on Turkish requirements and past Turkish and U.S. interagency experiences and practices. A dialogue or joint study of the medical and health challenges associated with a CBR threat was also raised, with some participants noting the

particular assets and resources that NGOs could bring to bear in mitigating and managing the aftermath of a CBR attack. For example, the United States has built up the dual-use nature of its existing medical infrastructure and considered ways to optimally employ it in the event of a biological weapon attack. This approach could prove useful for Turkey as it considers its own consequence-management options. Indeed, dialogue participants emphasized that the very real and looming CBR threat in the region offers an additional and compelling reason to create a more effective and enduring mechanism for U.S.-Turkish dialogue and partnership.

Attitudes toward the Nonproliferation Regime

The United States and Turkey agree that international collaboration forms the cornerstone of nuclear nonproliferation efforts. As such, tending to the health of nonproliferation treaties and organizations is an important theme in the bilateral relationship. The discussion yielded several areas of converging attitudes about nonproliferation while also uncovering points of divergence that cannot be resolved in a strictly nongovernmental forum. However, validating the concerns and frustrations associated with varying nonproliferation mechanisms can be beneficial, both in terms of the substantive information gained and in terms of the relationship management.

One such government forum in which to address differences is the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference (currently under way at the time of writing of this report), or through the alternate cycle preparatory committee (PrepCom) tasked with the “preparation for the Review Conference in terms of assessing the implementation of each article of the NPT and facilitating discussion among States with a view to making recommendations to the Review Conference,”² as part of the run-up to the 2020 Review Conference. Turkish participants informed the group that the PrepCom Turkish position stated that deterrence should no longer be the foundation of the nuclear relationship. The Turkish perspective is that nuclear deterrence efforts are inadequate for confronting the asymmetrical warfare threats facing global security today, and that NATO must revisit what deterrence means today in a non-Cold War global order. Further, while many participants argued that Turkey was pleased in an overall political sense with the past NPT outcomes, there is growing concern that the implementation of key resolutions had been delayed or drawn out in a manner frustrating to the country.

Another major point of contention was Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) membership. With respect to the NSG, Turkey maintains that special accommodations of membership requirements should not be instated. The United States, however, has supported India’s bid for inclusion regardless of its non-NPT status. The Turkish participants stated that Turkey’s stance is not influenced by politics or by its

² See the website <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT2015/PrepCom2014/>.

special relationship with Pakistan but rather is based on a basic commitment to upholding the principles and the prestige of the NPT regime. Arguments for India's membership, if realized in a manner inconsistent with NSG membership requirements, may be interpreted internationally as a further marginalization of Pakistan and could destabilize relationships and security. With regard to group dynamics, the NSG bases many of its rulings on the NPT as a reference point. The inclusion of a non-NPT group in a rule-by-consensus body such as the NSG could generate intergroup conflict or freeze decision making. Finally, providing benefits associated with NSG membership in the absence of compliance with the NPT erodes the draw and the authority of the NPT. Both U.S. and Turkish participants agreed that expanding the NPT to include both India and Pakistan is in the best interest of nonproliferation, though it was acknowledged that significant work will be required to realize this goal.

Shifting from Turkey's southern border to its neighbor to the east, the discussion of nonproliferation and regional security could not ignore Iran. Iran ranks high on both Turkish and American nonproliferation agendas, though for different reasons. There are important differences in the two countries' attitudes toward nonproliferation, differences that largely stem from their disparate interpretations of "intent" and "capability." The U.S. view of Iran's nuclear program reflects an abiding concern that Iran desires, or intends to develop, nuclear weapons, and that without substantial constraints on "breakout," Iran will pose a threat to the vital security interests of the United States. Turkey, however, sees Iran's quest for an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle through a larger geostrategic lens, as Turkey believes that if Iran acquires a nuclear capacity, it will use this advantage to project great regional power in ways that will pose challenges for regional stability and interwar deterrence. As one participant noted, Turkey views Iran as more of a long-term political and geostrategic interest priority than a short-term security threat. At the same time, other Turkish participants did note that Iran's strategic weapons systems, and particularly the country's development of medium-range deployable missiles, demonstrate capability and possible intent. Therefore, while threat perceptions may be shared within the bilateral relationship regarding Iran, there are varying degrees of urgency, and Turkish participants emphasized that directly naming Iran as a threat is undesirable politically.

Turkish participants highlighted Ankara's support for the efforts of the P5+1 states to reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear program. The negotiations, it was argued, confirm Turkey's belief in—and commitment to—the NPT, and to the rights and obligations it establishes in regard to the peaceful use of nuclear technology in particular. While some participants wondered whether a U.S.-Iran rapprochement could affect the regional balance of power dynamics in ways that could prove worrisome to Turkey, Turkish participants largely argued that any agreement that might help normalize Iran's relations with the region—and with the wider international community—would greatly benefit Turkey economically.

If a nuclear deal cannot be reached, some participants suggested, Turkey's confidence in the NPT regime will erode. They doubted, however, that a failure to reach a deal would create a watershed moment in the region. Turkey, for instance, would not rush to arm. Instead, it would probably abide by UN sanctions on Iran while not imposing its own bilateral sanctions. On the other hand, if an agreement were reached but Iran subsequently used the NPT to secure technological advances that would effectively have it breaking out of the treaty, far greater damage would be done to the NPT in terms of its credibility and its capacity to manage or limit nuclear proliferation.

Finally, it should be noted that the discussion of Iran, the P5+1 talks, and the fate of the NPT echoed more fundamental and wider challenges to the U.S.-Turkish relationship, many of which were sounded throughout the dialogue. Paradoxically, it seems that a belligerent Iran has often received far more U.S. attention than Turkey, a U.S. ally and a partner. Indeed, some Turkish participants added that they often feel dictated to by U.S. policymakers, who seem ready to go their own way, with or without Turkish support or consultation. That Iran often appears to be the only regional power that has benefited from escalating turmoil in the Middle East seems especially paradoxical, given that, by design or default, U.S. policies have contributed to the region's chaos.

The Role of NATO

The United States and Turkey are both key NATO players that must contend with the changing face and pace of post-Cold War alliance threats. They are not always on the same page, however. Debates about deterrence throughout the discussion culminated in the articulation of a shared view, namely, that while deterrence has often proved ineffective with respect to the lower-level threats destabilizing the region, it has worked reasonably well when it comes to maintaining state-state order and restricting conflict between nuclear states. In fact, because there has not been a major state-led attack on a NATO member, the Turkish participants largely believed that the government would not lobby for the removal of the forward-deployed weapons from NATO member-states. They saw the deployment of Patriot missiles along the border with Syria as clear proof of NATO's enduring treaty commitments to Ankara. However, if the alliance moved to remove nuclear weapons from NATO, Turkey would not block a consensus on this issue. At the same time, participants raised other scenarios, including a reposturing of NATO that might leave Turkey as the lone NATO member with forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons. While some argued that such a scenario would strengthen U.S.-Turkish relations, as the strategic importance of Turkey's role would proportionally increase, others saw such a situation as undesirable from Turkey's perspective as it could weaken NATO members' solidarity and burden sharing.

Turkey wishes to become a major defense industry player, as evidenced by the recently increased staff, budget, and physical headquarters of the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), an

appendage of the Turkish Ministry of National Defense.³ This ambition drives the current tender for missile defense capabilities, a major contemporary issue in the U.S.-Turkish relationship. Turkey is currently considering bids by Raytheon (the U.S. maker of the Patriot missile defense system), Eurosam (a French-Italian consortium), and Precision Machinery (a Chinese missile maker currently under U.S. sanctions).

Turkish participants listed stringent laws restricting technology transfers and high cost as reasons the U.S. bid would likely not be accepted. American participants countered that businesses in America operate independently of the government and thus the legal obstacles to transfers were daunting. Further, the U.S. industry has operated under a “once burned, twice shy” attitude toward Turkish tenders. There wasn’t a desire to aggressively pursue tenders, especially as the industry functions outside U.S. government influence and political considerations are not decision drivers. One participant said that “Ankara has a terrible reputation” with regard to tenders, source codes, intellectual property, and export controls. Turkish participants suggested that there have been instances of relaxed export control laws with some of America’s strategic partners, such as Qatar and Israel, but neither side was able to offer evidence either refuting or adding credence to this commonly held Turkish assumption. Ultimately, U.S. participants emphasized that Turkey was asking for things from the U.S. private sector that the private sector could not give.

One option possible for this particular tender is the adoption of a hybrid strategy combining bids from Raytheon and Eurosam. Europeans have demonstrated more flexibility than Americans with regard to technology transfer in the past. The group also thought a U.S. or European subsidy of a hybrid solution might offset the price of a Western-produced system and ease public pressure. Any decision made by Turkey will be equal parts economic and political, however, and there are other influencing factors than Western preferences for Turkey’s purchase of an allied-produced system.

Beyond the narrow issues related to technology transfers, many participants argued that if Turkey develops its program independently of NATO, there could be serious consequences for the NATO alliance. Particularly if the missile defense system is procured from a non-NATO ally, such as China, or from a firm on a Western-backed sanctions list, such as Precision Machinery, for security reasons it will

³ According to the Turkish news source Anadolu Agency, Turkey’s defense industry achieved high growth rates in recent years, with more than \$5 billion in 2013, including \$1.5 billion in exports. Exports to the United States reached \$680 million in 2013 and \$336 million to EU member countries (Anadolu Agency, “Turkey Eyes Defense Industry Cooperation with Europe,” 3 Dec. 2014, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/430188--turkey-eyes-defense-industry-cooperation-with-europe>). Production for domestic purposes is also on the rise. According to the SSM, Turkey imported only 10 percent of its equipment in 2014, compared to 40 percent in 2012 and 75 percent in 2003 (Grant Turnbull, “Turkey’s Formidable Defense Industry: Rising Star or NATO’s Unruly Ally?,” 2 Apr. 2014; <http://www.army-technology.com/features/featureturkeys-formidable-defence-industry-rising-star-or-natos-unruly-ally-4207115/>).

not be interoperable with the radar based in Turkey as part of NATO's system. Such a situation would be difficult and possibly even untenable, as it would render Turkey vulnerable in ways that would vastly increase strains on the NATO relationship. This could in turn create a watershed moment in the bilateral relationship between Turkey and China, leading to future procurements and Turkish-Chinese military trainings and exchanges, all of which would jeopardize other military technology cooperation with NATO. Precision Machinery's sanctioned status also could not be ignored as a major security and political hurdle. It is worth noting that a number of the Turkish participants expressed skepticism as to whether Turkey would actually move forward with the Chinese bid. At the same time, they laid out the strategic justifications given by the Turkish government for such a decision, in so doing indicating that a tender was not driven by purely economic considerations. Participants agreed that no decision has been made as to which missile system Turkey would procure, and that it would likely happen after Turkey's elections in June 2015. With that timeline in place, they further agreed that the decision window—and with it the opportunity to influence that decision—is closing.

A NATO-led approach communicating the possible consequences of Turkey procuring a Chinese-made missile system that prevents interoperability with NATO systems was repeatedly called for. Participants believed communications helmed by NATO would achieve better results than communications taking place through bilateral channels. A NATO-led approach could include the production of a white paper by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's Defence and Security Committee laying out the first- and second-degree impacts of such a purchase, and the United States convening a North Atlantic Council meeting to address the issue, followed by a press conference convened by NATO's Secretary General. Conversely, the NATO Parliament could convene, which would bring in Turkish Parliament members, who could then carry the message back to their domestic base. There is also a role for nongovernmental actors in augmenting communication. A joint op-ed or report on the potential consequences for the NATO relationship and Turkey's place in the West, if published in strategic international newspapers, could influence Turkish attitudes in ways that might be beneficial for all concerned parties.

Turkey believes the U.S.-led coalition campaign against Daesh fails to address the roots of extremism. In the absence of a plan to remove Syria's president Bashar al-Assad from power, Turkey will remain vulnerable to the Syrian threat on its border. Participants determined that NATO, which has not officially joined the coalition, has a limited role in this matter. However, a Turkish-led, NATO-supported intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission along the Turkish-Syrian border could provide appropriate political cover, domestically and globally, for Turkey to play a larger role in efforts to combat Daesh. This kind of joint mission would help Turkey's efforts to avoid directly confronting Daesh in light of the group's geographic proximity while also responding to domestic pressures for Turkey to assert

leadership in the foreign policy arena. NATO could also work to develop an allied plan for managing the return of foreign terrorist fighters, given the large number of fighters from member-states.

Civil Nuclear Technology

The unlocking of nuclear energy would fulfill a growing energy demand as Turkey's economy and population both expand. U.S. and Turkish participants affirmed that under the NPT, states in compliance with their treaty obligations have the legitimate right to pursue nuclear enrichment and reprocessing capabilities for energy reasons. However, some participants noted that the U.S. security priority to rank nonproliferation over access (or as a prerequisite to access) to nuclear power creates a tension in the relationship. U.S. concerns were underlined, as one participant noted, by the fact that in the next ten to twenty years, the Middle East civilian nuclear landscape is expected to change dramatically. Just five years ago, there were no operational nuclear power reactors in the region.

In light of these developments, Turkey's path to civilian nuclear capability is paved with uncertainty that both Americans and Turks are eager to manage. Turkey has entered into an agreement with Russia's Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Agency to build the Akkuyu nuclear power plant under a build-own-operate (BOO) model. Under such a model, Russia would provide the bulk of financing and technical expertise, build and operate the power plant, and handle the disposal of spent nuclear fuel. In return, Turkey has agreed to purchase 70 percent of the electricity output at an average fixed price of 12.35 cents per kilowatt-hour.⁴

Akkuyu is to be the first ever nuclear power plant built using the BOO model.⁵ Surmounting the formidable obstacle of obtaining upfront funding comes at other costs, however. A regulatory and operating history for the reactors being built does not exist. Turkey will face unique obstacles in ensuring on-site and off-site security. In case of disaster management, Turkey's AFAD will lead the response, in coordination with the Rosatom operators. Yet assurances that operators would speak Turkish, or even remain on the scene in the case of a nuclear disaster, are nominal at best. The regulatory system in Turkey lacks independence from the government, challenging the regulator's ability to compel the operator to

⁴ See the website <http://www.iaea.org/NuclearPower/Downloadable/Meetings/2013/2013-02-11-02-14-TM-INIG/20.smirnov.pdf>.

⁵ While Akkuyu is the first nuclear power plant that will be built according to the BOO model, Russia has entered into eighteen other similar contracts— some of which will involve the BOO model—outside Russia, according to the World Nuclear Association. Akkuyu will be the first nuclear power plant built under current timelines. This model has the ability to drastically change the landscape of nuclear power plant construction. For many states seeking to build an initial nuclear program, the huge market advantage that states experience in securing funding and the benefit of Russia managing the disposal of spent nuclear fuel make the model lucrative for the host state. Participants indicated that such a model is already forcing traditional suppliers to restructure.

follow regulations. As one participant said, “What leverage does the regulator have? The answer may be ‘nyet.’”

Turkey is a newcomer to nuclear energy and lacks the depth of expertise, training, and systems accrued over time necessary to address the myriad challenges it faces. The IAEA has created a BOO unit to assist in addressing challenges associated with this increasingly popular model. Participants grappled with whether there was an additional role for the United States to play in this development as part of the bilateral relationship. Such a role may in fact be limited to training aimed at expanding Turkey’s pool of regulatory expertise or to sharing safety and security best practices.

Examples of this kind of cooperation may be drawn from past U.S.-U.A.E. engagement on this matter, especially in light of the strong parallels between the four U.A.E. plants currently under construction in cooperation with the Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO) and the Turkish projects.⁶ In that instance, the United States (and former U.S. regulatory officials in particular) played a significant role in partnering with the U.A.E. to develop its regulatory, safety, and security programs. Similarly, various U.S. experts and organizations could be useful partners for sharing peer-to-peer best practices on how to handle regulation, safety, and security issues in a situation in which a foreign country and foreign nationals are responsible for building and operating reactors. Such practices could include conversations and planning around what qualifies as a severe accident scenario, the identification of who vets and provides security clearances for foreign personnel to ensure nuclear security standards are being met, and consideration of how the host nation’s Design Basis Threat can be properly developed while respecting the intellectual property concerns of the foreign company. The differences between a nationally operated reactor and one managed by a foreign entity must be identified and planned for at all levels, and the U.A.E.’s experience presents an initial baseline for Turkey to work from.

The challenges arising from this BOO model and contract with Russia extend beyond the operational arena into the political sphere. Turkey is in an awkward position between its NATO allies, who are alarmed by Russian aggression, and the pragmatic recognition that Russia incurs zero penalties under contract if it reneges on its commitments. Adding further pressure to Turkey’s relationship with Russia is Russia’s current state of finances, given that Moscow has expanded this model into other countries, thus further squeezing funds available for the Akkuyu project. Thus Turkey has financial reasons to accommodate Russia, domestically⁷ and internationally. In short, geopolitics matter greatly to

⁶ The U.A.E.’s nuclear power plant is being built and will be operated by South Korea’s state-owned utility KEPCO, although the deal’s structure is not directly analogous to the BOO model, .

⁷ An example of how Turkey’s domestic appeasement of Russia plays out is an allegedly deeply flawed environmental assessment that was accepted by Turkey under dubious conditions, out of an interest in sticking to Russia’s timeline. Many experts believe the environmental impact assessment submitted by Russia’s JSC Akkuyu NPP and approved by the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning was not transparent. There has also

Turkey. Echoing this point, several Turkish participants argued that there was no role for the United States in shaping Turkey's relationship with Russia in regard to building a nuclear reactor.

Turkey is pursuing a second reactor, to be built by a Japanese-French joint venture. While not a BOO model, it too represents a deviation from conventional approaches and will pose challenges of its own. The construction of the Sinop reactor, named after its Black Sea coastal city location, is scheduled to begin in 2017, providing a longer timeline to work out many of the anticipated challenges.

For Turkey, setting up an engagement between the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the appropriate agencies in Turkey, such as the Turkish Atomic Energy Agency, could be very useful. Such cooperation could be enhanced by interaction between the civilian nuclear industries in the United States and Turkey, starting perhaps with the United States' Nuclear Energy Institute in Washington, D.C., and expanding to leading university programs. Turkey still lacks the critical national infrastructure necessary for such a project, and these industry discussions could address the larger infrastructure needed to support the reactors that will be coming online in the next ten to fifteen years. Some participants further posited that enhancing the level of public debate and subsequent political pressure to enact necessary reforms could be useful, but they noted that this kind of approach is—once again—most successful when the regulatory system operates independently of the government. A third area in the bilateral relationship with the United States is the implementation of peer-to-peer best practice sharing in the field of civilian nuclear power acquisition. This kind of cooperation could be initiated by identifying governmental and nongovernmental resources that the United States could offer in this area.

The U.S.-Turkey Relationship

In addition to identifying many areas of convergence and divergence on matters central to the U.S.-Turkish nonproliferation relationship, the conference also advanced important insights into the state of the bilateral relationship in general. Overall, participants believed that the U.S.-Turkish relationship is one of great and growing importance to both nation-states. Nevertheless, all admitted that there are political, security, and economic hurdles that need to be overcome for the relationship to reach its full potential. Indeed, there was broad agreement that the alliance between the United States and Turkey faces serious structural challenges and that, if left unattended, these problems could weaken the capacity of Turkey, the United States, and NATO to cooperate. One participant noted that the relationship was “rocky, abrasive and complicated,” and that many things work reasonably well but are much more difficult than they ought to be. Others argued that the difficulties that the United States and Turkey have encountered are not

been public speculation that the report's approval was more diplomatic than substantive, for it was passed one day in advance of a 2014 visit by Russian president Vladimir Putin to Turkey.

unique to the current moment: rooted in deeper historical and structural factors, they transcend the challenges of the moment or any particular configuration of leaders.

Efforts to address these various challenges must include both initiatives pursued over a short time horizon and the development and implementation of longer-term institutional mechanisms for managing strains in U.S.-Turkish and Turkish-NATO relationships. Participants did note that there are steps both governments can take to reduce tensions. Among these steps, the most important is creating a more collaborative relationship based on a spirit of equality, partnership, and pragmatic problem solving. This would require enhancing existing mechanisms of bilateral communication and creating new avenues for cooperation, particularly in light of the Turkish perception that to date, American-driven communication in the form of diplomatic demarches, briefings, and requests has marginalized Turkey in the decision-making process. The United States is seen to cooperate with other NATO allies or to fall back on unilateral actions, thus further complicating U.S.-Turkish relations.

If enhancing mechanisms of cooperation and communication is essential, all participants recognized that social, political, and economic changes in Turkey have reshaped popular and elite perceptions of Turkey's foreign relations, and its relationship with the United States in particular. This dynamic has fostered an abiding desire that cuts across the Turkish political spectrum for a more "balanced" and "mutual partnership." The challenge is to address these expectations in ways that strengthen rather than complicate (much less undermine) the U.S.-Turkish partnership. But to achieve this balance, Turkey also needs to match its foreign policy aspirations with its capabilities. Turkey desires to be a principal interlocutor on regional issues. However, its current capacity and its resource level—which is especially pronounced when it comes to expertise in a number of relevant fields—do not match these aspirations. Thus, it was suggested, Turkey should engage more with NATO allies through diverse initiatives, including peer-to-peer best practice sharing exchanges.

Conclusion

The U.S. Institute of Peace organized the two-day track II dialogue to advance the relationships and understanding of both American and Turkish participants regarding the timely and important NBC and missile nonproliferation challenges in ways that would strengthen overall U.S.-Turkish and Turkish-NATO relations. The good news is that such a goal certainly remains in reach, insofar as Turkey's support for NATO and its reliance on alliance deterrence remain strong and constant. At the same time, however, a shift in the American paradigm regarding Turkey could help create the conditions for the genuine and lasting U.S.-Turkish partnership to which both countries aspire. As developments in Turkey and the wider Middle East have become increasingly complicated, at times straining Ankara's relations with both the United States and NATO, this quest for a true and lasting partnership is even more important today.

To strengthen these vital relationships in a spirit of trust and mutual cooperation, Turkey and the United States should consider a range of steps, including the following:

1. Create a permanent and dedicated institutional mechanism that would provide a forum for pragmatic problem solving by Turkish and U.S. leaders and policymakers.
2. Support this official effort by creating a parallel U.S.-Turkish Strategic Dialogue Group consisting of Turkish and U.S. policy experts drawn from NGOs and think tanks.
3. Build on the progress made at the February 2015 Istanbul track II meeting by planning for regular track II meetings to be held in 2015 and beyond.

None of these recommendations constitutes a panacea. But absent a genuine effort to consider these or other similar initiatives, rifts in the relationship as highlighted in the preceding dialogue summary will likely continue to widen, with possibly serious negative consequences.