



## **CHINA TURKEY MISSILE DEFENCE COOPERATION**

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An interesting development in recent times has been the nascent talks of missile defence cooperation between China and Turkey. Turkey's interest in the long range air and missile defence systems is a result of Beijing's offer of a relatively inexpensive system and also its willingness to "co-produce"<sup>1</sup> it with Ankara. The system is the FD-2000 and is reported to be of the same quality as that of its competitors, such as the Russian S-300, the French-Italian Eurosam SAMP/T, and the American Patriots.<sup>2</sup>

Ankara's efforts at closing the 'technology gap' and a desire to enhance its 'deterrence capability' made Turkey look towards China<sup>3</sup>, though it has said it could consider other bidders if the deal with China did not work out.<sup>4</sup> Turkey claimed that the decision to cooperate with China was a "national decision".<sup>5</sup> Turkey's willingness to move towards an 'anti Atlantic Trojan Horse'<sup>6</sup> has led Ankara to establish defence ties outside the United States and NATO.

However, a major cause of concern for Turkey also is that if it "buys the missiles from China, then NATO will not allow it to use the operations mapping;" This will then compel it to "buy new satellite systems and integrate it with their airborne warning and control

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system” which would “increase Turkey’s expenses and it will lose the 2.5 billion dollar advantage”.<sup>7</sup> While most believe that it is the cost of the defence systems provided by the West to Turkey which is the reason for it look beyond NATO, there is another factor which is affecting Turkey’s decision. Turkey is apprehensive about the NATO missile defence system being shared with Israel too as it considers Israel to be an adversary.

Turkey however, is justifying its purchase of Chinese missiles on the basis that several NATO countries possess Russian made missiles too. Moreover, the recent unwillingness of the United States to react militarily to the Syrian conflict has left Turkey perturbed. Turkey is also saddened by the United States’ way of handling the Egypt issue. Turkey has also been accused by the United States of disclosing vital information to Iran about the presence of Israeli intelligence officials on Iranian soil which led to the cancellation of the US drones to Turkey.

On the other hand, China has claimed that, “the cooperation between the Chinese firm and Turkey is normal military cooperation between the two countries” and that there was no need to “politicize normal commercial competition”.<sup>8</sup> Beijing has also stated that its arms export deals “do not harm peace, security and stability” and Beijing does not intend to “interfere with the internal affairs of recipient countries”.<sup>9</sup> However, befriending Turkey could be a part of Beijing’s “Assassin Mace Weapon’s Strategy whereby it is trying to befriend U.S. allies and partners.<sup>10</sup> This is not the first time that Beijing is striking a defence deal with Ankara. Sino Turkey defence relations started in the 1990s when Ankara turned to Beijing for ‘technology transfer’.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously this is a matter of concern for the USA since Turkey is a member of NATO. While Erdogan has confirmed that the missile defence system would be checked to confirm

if they were according to NATO standards, the United States has raised “serious concerns”<sup>12</sup> regarding the Chinese missile defence deals. It may also be mentioned that the China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corp. with which Turkey is striking the deal, had already been sanctioned by the United States under the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act.<sup>13</sup> There are cyber security concerns too for the US and NATO. NATO would have to share vital information regarding the missile defence system with China which could be exploited by Beijing to develop counter measures against missile defence system to the NATO. There also remains a doubt as to how Ankara would integrate the FD-2000 with NATO missile defence system which includes Theatre High Altitude Air Defence systems and AEGIS systems.

There is also a concern amongst Israelis that Hakan Fidan, Turkish intelligence chief and the man behind the Chinese missile defence deal is believed to have close ties with Iran. He is also the “mastermind of Turkey’s vibrant and pro-active foreign policy in the Middle East in the past three years”.<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt in the fact that Turkey is trying to practice an independent foreign policy which has allowed Ankara to think beyond the West and improve relations with China, Russia and Iran too.<sup>15</sup>

This is not the first time that such discontent has arisen between Turkey and the United States. In 2003, Turkey had refused to provide the United States its territories to attack Iraq while in 2010, Turkey voted against sanctions towards Iran on United Nations Security Council.<sup>16</sup> There is no doubt that Turkey has been apprehensive of a possible Iranian reaction to US missile shield in Turkey at the moment. While the NATO shield is being deployed against an Iranian threat, Turkey on the other hand would not want any such developments which could estrange its relation with Iran.<sup>17</sup>

It remains to be seen as to which missile defence system Turkey finally buys and its repercussions. Of course, at present, for Turkey, a Chinese missile defence system appears more feasible since a NATO defence system would raise the eyebrows of Russia and Iran both of whom Turkey is heavily dependent on for “natural gas” for “energy consumption”.<sup>18</sup>It also remains to be seen whether Chinese missile defence systems are able to match up with the US and Russian.

### End Notes

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6. Shannon Ramsby and Colin Andrews use this term ‘anti Atlantic Trojan Horse’ in “Turkey Deepens Strategic Relationship with China”, 2010. <<http://www.colinandrews.net/FamilyDiscussion.html>>
7. Mesut Hakki Casin, a Security and Foreign Policy Expert, is quoted in “China- Turkey missile defense deal up in the air”, November 1, 2013. <<http://english.cntv.cn/program/newsupdate/20131101/104149.shtml>>
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9. Edward Wong and Nicola Clark, "China's Arms Industry Makes Global Inroads", The New York Times, October 20, 2013.  
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10. Debalina Chatterjee, "Missile Defence in Turkey", United Services Institute, January-March-2012.
11. See Debalina Chatterjee, "Sino Turkey Defence Relations", Revue Defense Nationale, November, 2011.  
<[http://www.defnat.com/site\\_en/pdf/T145.pdf](http://www.defnat.com/site_en/pdf/T145.pdf)>
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<<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-us-hold-talks-on-china-missile-deal.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57255&NewsCatID=345>>
13. "Beijing urges parties not to politicize deal to sell Chinese missile defense system to Turkey", The Washington Post, October 25, 2013.  
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14. Mahir Zeynalov, "Israel's role in Turkey's Chinese missile deal", Al Arabia, October 13, 2013.  
<<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/world/2013/10/13/Israel-s-role-in-Turkey-s-Chinese-missile-deal.html>>
15. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif made official visit to Turkey discussing the dangers of chemical weapons in the Middle East following the Syrian conflict. However, analysts feel that it is more of a tactical move by Iran than a strategic decision.
16. Turkey has time and again wanted NATO to declare that the missile defence shield is not hinted against Iran.
17. M.K. Kaya, "How Much Security Will NATO'S Missile Defense Shield Provide For Turkey?", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, January 23, 2012.  
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