
PERCEPTIONS

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Editorial

Perceptions continue to publish special issues on critical issues of international importance. This particular special issue, a collection of six articles, examines security in the Middle East. The Middle East is at a critical juncture and is experiencing the consequences of systemic transformations at global and regional levels. The Middle East has for a long time been seen as a conflict-prone region. It has a myriad of chronic security problems, which have implications even for global security. Regional and international actors have managed to limit these problems at the regional level for the past two decades. However, it is no longer possible to contain the security issues in the confines of national and regional borders. Given the volatile political atmosphere in the global security environment, the regional problems have emerged as considerable risk factors for international security at large. The global economic crisis has also curbed the willingness of major international actors to mediate these problems.

Regional actors have to a great extent been left on their own in dealing with the crises they are currently experiencing. The Arab Spring was a result of the crisis of hegemony in that there is no hegemonic power which is able to establish an international order, while regional powers are no longer able to

dominate each other in the Middle East. It was against this backdrop that the Arab masses revolted against their rulers and have been searching for, among others, better governance, rule of law, and democratic political institutions. The Arab masses have managed to overthrow the authoritarian regimes in a number of countries. The opposition forces in these transition countries are divided in terms of representing their people while there is no charismatic figure leading these revolts. It is not certain what kind of government they eventually will establish and whether the revolutionaries will hold power in the future of these countries. Amidst all these uncertainties, regional security has become a much more complicated issue in the Middle East, a situation which begs immediate attention.

In his contribution to the current issue, Mark Fitzpatrick deals with the question of how to contain the Iranian nuclear crisis. In his view, the idea of a fuel swap is still worthwhile. Andrea Ellner focuses on the possibility of a regional approach to the Iranian nuclear programme. Ellner examines the potential role Turkey and Brazil could play for initiating a 'Nuclear Weapons Free Zone' in the Gulf region. H. Sönmez Ateşoğlu analyzes the security of Turkey with respect to Syria, Iraq and Iran. His

model relies on the realistic account of power, and military power in particular, for predicting the security of the states under scrutiny. Katarzyna Krókwoska focuses on social, economic and political factors in the period between Syria's independence in 1946 and its unification with Egypt in 1958, which led to the fall of democracy. She concludes that social conflict, institutional weakness, the rise of radical parties, the politicization of the military and the impact of an unfavorable external environment paved way for the democratic breakdown in Syria. N. Ateşoğlu Güney examines where the international community stands vis-à-vis the nuclear proliferation challenge in the Middle East. Güney assesses whether there is any chance for a nuclear cascade in the Middle East while the Iranian stalemate persists. Cengiz Dinç offers insights on Turkey's security policy in the Middle East. He traces the roots of Turkey's new policy and underlines the constitutive roles played by democratizations and economic growth at home in triggering the changes in foreign policy practices.

Perceptions is the flagship publication of the Center for Strategic Research (SAM). The editorial team and board are

continuing to work on improving the journal's coverage, and soon *Perceptions* will start to feature a book review section. The SAM also continues to develop new partnerships, organize workshops and conferences, and increasingly act as an intermediary between, on the one hand, academia, the think-tank community, and civil society, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other. The SAM's activities have become more visible to the general public since it widened its portfolio with two new series. The first is *SAM Vision Papers*, which presents ideas and perspectives of Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, on problems and issues of international politics. The second is *SAM Policy Papers*, which presents expert opinions on issues pertaining to Turkish foreign policy, neighbouring regions, and international relations at large. All publications are available on the Center's website, <http://www.sam.gov.tr>

Soon we will publish new special issues, looking at, among other issues, new developments in Turkish foreign policy, foreign policy analysis, and Turkish migration to Germany. Stay tuned for more!

Bülent ARAS
Editor-in- Chief