

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: ASSESSMENT OF TURKEY'S ROLE

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ABSTRACT

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: ASSESSMENT OF TURKEY'S ROLE

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This thesis assesses the role of Turkey in the diplomatic process towards resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue within the context of its improving bilateral relations with Iran and analyzes the motives behind increasing Turkish involvement in this issue. Firstly, this thesis will present a historical overview of Iran's nuclear program and the dispute arising from this program. Secondly, the attitudes of the major stakeholders who have been dealing with this issue since the inception will be put under spotlight. Thirdly, Turkish-Iranian relations will be examined with particular emphasis on the last two decades. Lastly, within the context of the attitudes of the major stakeholders and improving Turkish-Iranian relations Turkey's active role in the diplomatic process will be analyzed. In this regard, Turkey's active role in this process will be explained on the basis of some pragmatic reasons and rational factors.

Keywords: Iranian nuclear issue, nuclear program, Turkey, P5+1, Turkish-Iranian relations, diplomatic efforts.

ÖZ

İRAN NÜKLEER SORUNU: TÜRKİYE’NİN ROLÜNÜN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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Bu çalışma, İran nükleer sorunun çözümüne yönelik olarak yürütülen diplomatik süreçte Türkiye’nin rolünü İran ile gelişmekte olan ikili ilişkileri çerçevesinde değerlendirmekte, bu konuya Türkiye’nin gittikçe daha fazla müdahil olmasının nedenlerini analiz etmektedir. İlk olarak İran’ın nükleer programının ve bu programla bağlantılı anlaşmazlığını tarihsel arka planı ele alınacaktır. İkinci olarak, İran nükleer sorunun başlangıcından bu yana sorunu ele alan temel aktörlerin tutumları irdelenecektir. Üçüncü olarak, son yirmi yıla ağırlık verilmek üzere Türk-İran ilişkileri üzerinde durulacaktır. Son olarak, temel aktörlerin İran nükleer sorununa ilişkin tutumları ve gelişen Türk-İran ilişkileri çerçevesinde Türkiye’nin sorunun çözümüne yönelik diplomatik süreçte aktif rolü analiz edilecektir. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye’nin bu süreçteki aktif rolü birtakım pragmatik nedenler ve rasyonel faktörler temelinde açıklanacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İnan nkleer sorunu, nkleer program, Trkiye, P5+1, Trk-İnan iliřkileri, diplomatik abalar.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
US	United States
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
EU	European Union
UN	United Nations
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
AP	Additional Protocol
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
AKP	Justice and Development Party
WP	Welfare Party
VG	Vienna Group
TRR	Tehran Research Reactor
LEU	Low-Enriched Uranium
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
FFEP	Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant
MEK	Mujahadeen-e-Khalq
NCRI	National Council of Resistance of Iran
AEOI	Atomic Energy Organization of Iran
CSA	Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Iranian nuclear issue constitutes one of the unique cases demonstrating how mixture of legal and political factors complicates the problems and makes resolution of them even more difficult. After the revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities namely the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and heavy water reactor in Arak in 2002, this country's nuclear program has occupied international community's agenda as one of the issues of primary concern. Whether the Western countries in particular the United States (US) would give same reaction if this revelation had occurred before the September 11 terrorist attacks to the World Trade Center or such event had never taken place is question that has no exact answer but one can argue that these attacks changed the way how the international community perceives the threat of international terrorism or similar destructive menace such as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Namely, the psychological damage made by the September 11 terrorist attacks affected the tone of reaction of the West to revelation of Iran's secret nuclear activities and its nuclear program.

Considering the Iranian nuclear issue as a legal problem would be quite optimistic. Indeed, the legal problem, namely Iran's failure to inform the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about its nuclear program in timely fashion and establish full cooperation with the IAEA turned in the mean time into a political problem between Iran and the international community with various dimensions. The US-Iranian

relations which is shadowed by the memories of hostage crisis and antagonistic nature of these relations gained another dimension with revelation of Iran's nuclear facilities. Today resolution of the issue is connected to possible change in the nature of two countries' relations because of two reasons. Firstly, the confidence gap between US-and the Western allies- and Iran lies at the core of the problem. It is difficult to build confidence between Iran and the West without softening in the US-Iranian relations. Secondly, the US retains the capability of mobilizing support of other major powers to pressure and isolate Iran. As such, US position remains as one of the important determinants of international community's reaction to Iran.

Turkey, on the other hand, has emerged as an important actor with regard to Iranian nuclear issue. Peculiarity of Turkey is that unlike any other European country it can reach out to Iranian leadership at the highest level give direct message to them. Therefore, its unique position vis-à-vis Iran and alliance with the West at the same time put it in a privileged position to play more active role in quest for a resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. This is indeed what happened in recent years as Turkey casted itself as facilitator and conveyed messages between Iran and relevant actors. Of course, Turkey's role sometimes went beyond facilitation but because of the complexity of the issue obviously much more than Turkey's efforts is needed to pave the way for comprehensive solution.

This thesis aims at defining Turkey's role in the international effort towards resolving Iranian nuclear issue within the context of improving bilateral relations with Iran and analyzing the motives behind increasing Turkish involvement in this issue. Before dwelling upon Turkey's role, an analysis of Iran's nuclear program in historical

context will provide understanding about nature of the Iranian nuclear issue is and how it came to that point. At the same time, Turkey's ambitions to make more contribution to the international efforts cannot be understood without having knowledge about attitude of major actors namely the P5+1.¹ Analysis of how these actors have reacted to Iran's nuclear program so far will shed light on Turkey's efforts. In this respect, this thesis seeks answers to the following questions;

- How did the nuclear program of Iran transform since late 1950s? Iran's nuclear program was commenced in 1950s with the support and encouragement of the US within the framework of Atom for Peace Program. A number of countries also supported the nuclear program and sometimes even competed among themselves to take bigger share in Iran's nuclear market. However, the Islamic Revolution in 1979 dramatically changed this situation. Although the new regime suspended the nuclear program for a period of nearly ten years this decision was reviewed because of both domestic and external factors. Since the Western countries rejected to resume the nuclear projects they assumed before the Islamic revolution, Iran sought for new partners and consequently Russia accepted to complete unfinished projects. The revelation of Iran's clandestine facilities, however, in 2002 triggered harsh international reaction. Since then Iran's nuclear program remained on the agenda of international community pending for solution.

¹ The P5+1 consist of five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany. In EU circles, in particular Germany, this group is referred as E3+3 in order not to single out Germany. Indeed, the diplomatic efforts towards resolving the Iranian nuclear issue was first initiated by the EU-3 (France, Britain and Germany) on behalf of the EU and their efforts were approved by other members of the Union and supported by the US. After the initiatives of the EU-3 failed Russia, China and the US joined them in pursuing the diplomatic process by 2006. Since then they conducted negotiations with and offered proposals to Iran on behalf of the International community.

- Why did the attitude of the West toward Iran's nuclear program change after the Islamic revolution? The Islamic Revolution ruined Iran's relations with the West. The hostage crisis between Iran and the US which lasted for 444 days and led to broke of diplomatic relations of two countries changed image of Iran dramatically in the West. Iran's disintegration form the Western alliance and declaration of its non-aligned status compounded with the anti-Western and anti-US protest after the overthrown of Shah also indicated that Iran was no longer strategic partner of the United States. Therefore, in addition to halting its technical, technological and financial support to Iran's nuclear program, the US also exerted pressure on Iran's possible new directions. The US's efforts to convince other countries possessing nuclear technology not to share this technology with Iran intensified in 1990s on the basis of Washington's allegation that Tehran had been supporting the terrorist groups and seeking nuclear weapon capability. The US efforts to this end peaked after the revelation of secret facilities and it achieved mobilizing international support.

- Why did Iran pursue secret nuclear activities until 2002? This question indeed has no exact answer. Iranians rejected that they breached their Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) obligations and claimed that Iran's nuclear program has been developed in conformity with the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) which was signed with the IAEA. Iranians' belief that US would not allow them to master nuclear capability might be one reason for pursuing nuclear activities secretly. Another reason, as the Iranian officials put forward, may be the bureaucratic structure of Iran which might have made it

impossible to establish transparent cooperation with the IAEA. According to US, on the other hand, the secret facilities revealed that Iran has actually sought nuclear weapons capability.

- Why is Iran's nuclear program perceived as security challenge? In Western capitals proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in general and Iran's nuclear program in particular are assessed as one of the leading challenge to international security. According to the Western approach, built of clandestine facilities, allegations with regard to possible military dimension of Iran's nuclear program and its ambitions to possess enrichment and fuel cycle capability indicate that Iran's nuclear program is not of exclusively peaceful nature. The US and its European partners are also of the view that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons capability would trigger nuclear arms race in the Middle East which would undermine the international non-proliferation regime. Their assessment that after manufacturing nuclear weapons Iran would pursue more assertive role in the Middle East to torpedo the peace efforts also constitutes another reason for containing Iran's nuclear ambitions.

- Do the major actors have a uniform approach towards Iran's nuclear program? The United States gave the toughest reaction to Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities. Since the revelation of these facilities it insisted that Iran's nuclear dossier must have referred to the UN Security Council unless this country suspends uranium enrichment related activities and displays full transparency to prove that its nuclear program is of exclusively peaceful nature. The Europeans, however, reacted moderately and led the diplomatic efforts between 2003 and

2006 towards finding negotiated solution to the issue. Namely, they did not share the assessments of the US regarding the Iranian nuclear issue and give support to Washington's harsh position in the initial years of the crisis. Nevertheless, today, there are little nuances between the US and its European partners on Iran. Russia and China, other permanent members of UN Security Council, neither perceived a serious threat from Iran's development of nuclear program nor did they believed in the merit of aggravated punitive measures against Iran. However, they have not been eager to enter into a direct confrontation with the US on that issue and therefore they supported all of the Security Council resolutions on Iran. Today, so long as Iranian nuclear issue remains unresolved and Iran continues its enrichment program these countries seem to be more unified in countering Iran's nuclear ambitions.

- What has been the Western Strategy since the revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities? Although the revelation of Iran's nuclear facilities triggered initial reaction of major stake holders (the US, EU-3, Russia and China), when the dust settled, points of disagreement among them as to how to address this issue surfaced. While the US called for referral of Iran's nuclear file to the UN Security Council without delay, its European partners insisted that such action would be premature and initiated a diplomatic process to tackle the issue. China and Russia also supported European countries' diplomatic efforts. This has been the dominant approach until 2006 when the diplomatic process progressed by first the EU-3 and then by Russia came to point of halt. This impasse emboldened the US to seek an UN Security Council resolution on Iran since it

already secured the support of the EU-3. At the same time, China and Russia reluctantly approved the sanctions resolution also emphasizing that continuation of diplomatic process is priority for them. Indeed neither the US nor the EU-3 withdrew their support from the negotiations with Iran but they believed that the sanctions would force Iran to display more cooperative and constructive approach. Therefore, since the Iranian nuclear issue was referred to the Security Council major stake holders followed a “dual-track strategy” on Iran which includes both “carrots” and “sticks”.

- What are the main parameters of Turkey’s policy towards the Iranian nuclear issue? Today, some statements by the Turkish foreign policy makers are interpreted in the Western capital as unconditional support to Iran. However, it can be argued that Turkey follows a principled policy towards the nuclear issue based on three main pillars. Firstly, Turkish foreign policy makers state in clarity that Turkey is against Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons if Iran decides to do so. According to them nuclear Iran would be detrimental to not only Turkey’s security but also stability of entire region. Secondly, Turkey emphasizes states right to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination while urging Iran to address the outstanding issue with regard to its nuclear program. Lastly, Turkey supports the efforts toward finding negotiated solution to the issue and, in any case, opposes possible military operation against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

- What is the role of Turkey in the efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue? Turkey’s increasing involvement in the Iranian nuclear issue can be better

understood within the context of its improving bilateral relations. Although Turkey has approached the issue as an outsider in the initial years, its enhanced political dialogue and good neighborly relations with Iran, which also increased its interest with regard to the nuclear issue. After the diplomatic initiatives of the EU-3 and Russia remained inconclusive Turkey emerged as an actor promoting the diplomatic solution and casting itself as mediator between the West and Iran. Neither Iran nor the Western countries, however were ready to recognize Turkey as mediator. Therefore, Turkey defined its role as facilitator conveying the messages of each side to the other. Sometimes Turkey's role went beyond facilitating the process and this was welcomed by the parties on case-by-case basis. This is also valid today given that Turkey strives to keep the diplomatic track alive and takes initiatives to this end. The Joint Declaration signed between Turkey, Brazil and Iran on 17 May 2010 is case in point.

- What are main factors behind Turkey's foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear issue? Turkey's policy toward Iranian nuclear issue is sometimes explained by some circles on the basis of alleged foreign policy reorientation under the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) government. This approach, however, overlooks the real factors behind Turkey's Iran policy and thereby puts forward a narrow minded explanation. Turkey's attitude with regard to Iran's nuclear program is based on pragmatic factors related to economic and political elements, regional security and stability and Turkey's international stance.

This thesis consists of four chapters which will provide extensive discussion on abovementioned questions. In the first chapter, history of Iran's nuclear program will be examined with a view to put forward how Iran's nuclear program developed and why it became one of the primary security concerns to the international community. This chapter will make an overview of Iran's nuclear program with a view to explain the factors that constitutes the core of the issue. It is important to demonstrate how combination of complex factors and different elements made negotiated solution of the Iranian nuclear issue harder to achieve. Firstly, absence of diplomatic ties between the US and Iran together with confrontational nature of their relations constitutes one dimension of the problem. Secondly, the US and its European allies accuse Iran of supporting the terrorist groups in the Middle East and destabilizing the region through undermining the international efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thirdly, despite the multilateral UN sanctions and other unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran by the US and the EU, some European countries maintain their commercial ties with Iran. These countries also do not avoid harshly criticizing Iran for pursuing uranium enrichment program. Fourthly, Iran does not want to give up its right emanating from the NPT despite the rounds of sanctions, international pressure and isolation. Lastly, it is a fact that Iran has serious concerns about regional security and seeks to obtain security guarantees from the Western countries. The US presence in the Middle East, in particular in Afghanistan and Iraq, Israel's threats to destroy its nuclear facilities, other threat to the Islamic regime and some other sources of instability in the region affects Iran's security forming the basis for Iran's concerns. In addition, Iran is aware that some of its Arab neighbors also worries Iran's nuclear program and supports Washington's tough Iran policy. When all of these factors come together resolution of Iranian nuclear

issue becomes even harder. So, this chapter is set to demonstrate how different positions and expectations related to abovementioned factors could not be bridged so far.

Second chapter will present a discussion on attitudes of the major actors such as the US, EU, Russia and China, which are in one way or another party to this crisis. Each of these actors has different concerns, expectations and national interest which determine their approach towards the Iranian nuclear issue. These factors made them adopt different approaches towards Iran's nuclear program, although they try to give the impression that they are united against Iran in the negotiations. Firstly, US policy towards Iranian nuclear issue has three dimensions, namely, the US-Iranian relations, proliferation concerns and security of Israel. Current state of the US-Iran relations is the main source of the confidence gap that makes it difficult to commence comprehensive negotiations. As long as the nonexistence of direct contact between two countries continues they will hardly understand each other's concerns and expectations. The meeting between Iran's chief negotiator Jalili and head of US delegation Burns in Geneva in October 2009 on the margins of P5+1-Iran negotiations was a right step to create favorable ground for direct dialogue but there has been no follow up to this meeting. Other factor that sharpens the US attitude is the concern that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons will create a "domino effect" in the Middle East, namely such consequence will lead to a nuclear arms race among the major countries in the region. The last factor defining Washington's policy towards the issue is the US commitment to protect Israel which perceives existential threat from Iran and insist that this country seeks to manufacture nuclear weapons. Indeed, the speeches given by the President

Ahmedinejad that target Israel exacerbates these concerns and this country urges US to stop Iran's nuclear program by any means.

The EU-3, on the other hand, pursued more moderate policy towards Iranian nuclear issue until the recent years. Although there are certain differences among the positions of these three EU countries their overall approach has been in compliance with policy US policy towards the nuclear issue particularly in the last few years. Between 2003 and 2006 the EU-3 strived to reach a deal with Iran on the nuclear issue to prevent escalation of the crisis and they succeeded to some extent. In this period, they not only opposed referral of the dossier to the UN Security Council but also they believed that imposition of UN sanctions would be premature. Nevertheless, after no breakthrough happened as result of the diplomatic initiatives the EU-3 shifted closer to the US position and supported the sanctions resolution in the Security Council. Today, there are less difference between the US and these countries' approaches. France, for example, goes even beyond the United States by adopting the toughest approach among the major countries and supporting crippling sanctions against Iran. This policy shift has important implications in terms of escalation of the nuclear crisis between the West and Iran because until 2006 the EU-3 played a balancing role vis-à-vis the US policies favoring tough measures.

As far as Russia and China is concerned it can be asserted that their approach to this issue has evolved over the time. Although these countries explicitly opposed sanctioning Iran at the beginning, they supported all of the sanctions resolutions adopted in the UN Security Council. They always sought a delicate balance between their national interests namely their commercial relations with Iran and support they gave to

the Western efforts. In this regard, although both Russia and China questioned the rational of imposing tighter sanctions each time, they joined the consensus over a sanctions resolution that does not hurt their commercial presence in Iran. Russia, for example, secured exclusion of construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran from the sanctions while China approved the resolutions adopted so far if only after the drafts did not cover the field of energy. In recent years, Russia's policy towards Iranian nuclear issue sifted closer to the Western attitude mainly because of the rapprochement with the United States. China also prefers to play a less active role in the face of the escalation of the crisis. Indeed, both countries' bilateral relations with the US and calculations with regard to their economic interests in Iran have impact on their Iran policy.

The purpose of the third chapter is to explain how Turkey's bilateral relations with Iran transformed with particular emphasis on the last decade. Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, bilateral relations passed through critical periods. Both countries quest for strengthening peace and stability in the region formed the ground for peaceful relations in the inter war period. Throughout the first three decades of the Cold War, Turkey and Iran improved the bilateral relations on the basis of alliance and security partnership. However, after the Islamic revolution in Iran bilateral relations took a serious blow because Iran left the Western bloc and adopted non-allied and anti-Western stance. In 1990s the relations were dominated by confrontation over the domestic-sourced issues. Iran's acquiescence to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and verbal attacks to Turkey's secular regime inflamed the suspicions of both Turkish leadership and military about Iran's intentions to destabilize

Turkey and prepare the ground for export of its regime. At the same time, Turkey and Iran had been in competition to expand their “sphere of influence” in the Middle East as well as in Caucasus and the Central Asia. On the other hand, by 2000 this confrontational atmosphere started to change and with the single party government of the AKP bilateral relation entered a period of constant improvement. In the last decade, the Turkish-Iranian relations improved unprecedentedly, thereby two countries enhanced political dialogue and fostered the economic cooperation. Turkey’s vocal support to peaceful nuclear program of Iran and its increasing involvement in the Iranian nuclear issue to facilitate the diplomatic process has also contributed to development of the bilateral relations.

In the fourth chapter, Turkey’s increasing role with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue namely its efforts to facilitate the diplomatic efforts and desire to mediate between Iran and the West will be assessed within the context of improved bilateral relations. The Iranian nuclear crisis puts Turkey in a difficult position and constitutes an obstacle before further strengthening and deepening of the relations with its next door neighbor. Therefore, Turkey’s relative silence vis-à-vis the crisis between Iran and the West replaced by its increasing involvement in the process with a view to contribute to early diplomatic resolution of the issue. In this regard, the argument of this thesis is that failure of the major actors and the relevant international bodies like the IAEA and the UN Security Council to resolve the issue in peaceful way has been forcing Turkey to get involved in the issue and make efforts to keep the diplomatic track on course since further escalation of the tension would further undermine its national interests. In recent years, Turkey’s Iran policy has been explained within the context of alleged

reorientation of Turkish foreign policy but this thesis will argue that Turkey has been following a reasonable and rational Iran policy on the basis of pragmatic factors such as:

- First of all, the centuries long history of Turkish-Iranian relations and shared culture and history bind these countries each other. For centuries Iran and the Ottoman Empire-later Turkey- have been two important regional countries. As such, even when their relations hit the bottom in some periods, for instance in 1990s, they considered each other as important regional power and avoided going beyond verbal confrontation. At the same time, without support of both countries chance of establishing lasting peace and stability in the region is minimal. Therefore, Turkey cannot have the luxury of overlooking these factors and joining the international efforts to isolate Iran.

- Turkey has been following a policy of zero-problem policy with the neighbors for more than a decade. Escalation of the Iranian nuclear crisis further, however, may undermine this policy in terms of Turkish-Iranian relations.

- The volume of trade between Iran and Turkey as well as the potential to double or triple it in the medium term constitutes another dimension of Turkey's approach to Iran. Turkey's pressing need to find new markets for its rapidly increasing export makes Iran an attractive trade partner. At the same time, abundant hydro carbon resources of Iran provides Turkey with opportunity to diversify its energy supply sources and contribute to Europe's energy security through transforming Iranian gas to energy hungry European markets.

- Turkey is against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would be detrimental to security of it as well as the stability of the region. At the same time, possible military intervention to Iran's nuclear facilities would certainly deteriorate regional security and lead to irreparable consequences thereby exacerbating Turkey's security environment.

- Turkey has emerged as increasingly more active regional actor having growing influence on the regional as well as the global issues. Enhanced visibility of Turkey in the world scene necessarily stirred its interests towards this issue.

As one of the top foreign policy items for many countries the Iranian nuclear issue is one of the most widely discussed subjects in various panels and conferences organized by think tanks or official bodies. Therefore, there are sufficient written materials like scholarly articles, reports and briefs that contributed to my research. In addition, the books about Turkish-Iranian relations, history of Iran and attitude of the major actors made substantial contribution to this research. The first hand resources like the letters exchanged between the IAEA and Iran, reports of the IAEA, relevant IAEA and UN Security Council resolutions, speeches given by the leaders and officials of the relevant countries and other official documents has the central place in this research since the publications like scholarly articles and books are not always giving the objective information on this issue. The articles and news published by wide range of newspapers and magazines were used while analyzing the recent events and developments. Last but not least, the interviews with Turkish officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to whom I referred implicitly or explicitly as necessary helped to

make an indepth analysis of the Iranian nuclear issue, in particular Turkey's attitude towards this issue.

CHAPTER 2

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.1. IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS AND WESTERN SUPPORT

2.1.1. Iran's Nuclear Program under Shah

History of Iran's nuclear program goes far back to the aftermath of the Second World War when the grounds of US-Iranian strategic partnership were laid. Iran's strategic importance in the Middle East and its hydro carbon resources were significant motives behind the US interest for establishing strategic relations with this country.²

In 1949 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) achieved to produce nuclear weapons thereby breaking the monopoly of the US in this technology. After this breakthrough the US decided to share this technology with its intimate ally, the Great Britain. However the turning point for the US policy to share the nuclear technology with its allies is President Dwight D. Eisenhower's speech at the UN General Assembly on 8 December 1953. In his speech Eisenhower explained the US's secret nuclear program to the world. It was also understood from the speech that it had already shared the nuclear technology with the Great Britain and Canada.³ In the following decades the US supported nuclear technologic and scientific infrastructure in its allies that had interest in this technology.

² Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 223-245, March 2007, p. 223.; Trita Parsi, "Traacherous Alliance: the Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the United States" (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 20-21.

³ For the text of President Eisenhower's speech, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/dwightdeisenhoweratomsforpeace.html>.

Iran's first acquaintance with nuclear technology traces to the years when US's extended economic, military and technical assistance to this country. In 1957 the US and Iran signed civil nuclear cooperation agreement within the framework of the US Atoms for Peace Program. This agreement included US's technical assistance to Iran, ranging from lease of several kilograms of enriched uranium to cooperation on nuclear research.⁴ Later in 1959 upon the order of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi the Tehran Nuclear Research Center at the Tehran University was established. At the beginning the working area of the nuclear research center was confined to post graduate education and basic nuclear researches but later the capacity of the laboratories was also enhanced. In the following years the United States supplied necessary nuclear fuel and equipment that Iran used to start its research. In addition to the US's technical assistance, the universities in the Western European countries like Germany, France and the Great Britain as well as in the US admitted Iranian students and technicians in various programs. In 1975 the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran signed an agreement with one of the most prominent American institute, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, regarding the training of Iranian nuclear scientists. With this opportunity Iranian students and technicians were able to improve their knowledge and professionalization on nuclear technology. As these scientists and technicians got back to their country Iranian universities established nuclear technology related departments and programs thereby providing Iran with relatively good scientific base.⁵ In 1967 the American Machine and Foundry (AMF) established 5 MW pool-type nuclear research

⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodham, "Iranian Nuclear Weapons ? The Uncertain Nature of Iran's Nuclear Program", *Center For Strategic and International Studies*, Working Draft, Revised in April 2006, p. 21.

⁵ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", *op. cit.*, p. 225

reactors capable of producing plutonium at the Tehran University with the support of the US as the first nuclear reactor of Iran.⁶ In the following year Iran signed the NPT and the *Majlis* ratified the Treaty in 1970. By signing the Treaty, as other signatories Iran gained the right to make nuclear research, produce nuclear energy and obtain necessary technology and equipment for peaceful purposes without any discrimination in accordance with the NPT.

Reinforced by Iran's ratification of the NPT, the US-Iran in cooperation in the nuclear field gained momentum during the Nixon administration. In 1968 the Great Britain declared that it would withdraw from the Persian Gulf by 1971. This development was likely to create a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf and thereby to give the USSR the opportunity to undermine the US influence in the Middle East given that the USSR had already been stirring Arab nationalism in the region. This power vacuum led the US to assume more assertive role in the Middle East.⁷ The US's increasing interest in this region is defined in the Nixon Doctrine of 1969 which included the commitment that Washington shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens freedom of an ally or of a nation whose survival the US deems vital to its security.⁸ In addition, by 1970 the Nixon Administration recognized the US's strategic interests in Iran as well as Saudi Arabia which is known as "Twin Pillars" policy.⁹ In return for Iran's assuming the role of the US's proxy in the region as one of the two

⁶ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, (Ankara: USAK Yayınları), Ocak 2009, p. 31.

⁷ Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", op. cit., p. 228.

⁸ The Nixon Doctrine, <http://www.army.mil/-news/2007/07/22/3867-nixon-doctrine-and-vietnamization/>, Accessed on 14 November 2010.

⁹ The Nixon Administration saw Iran powerful enough to protect the US interests in the Middle East. But in the face of growing Arab radicalism fuelled by the Soviet Union, US needed another proxy that would enable to reach Arab countries. This role was assumed by Saudi Arabia as the other pillar.; Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: the Conflict Between Iran and America*, (New York: Random House), 2004, p. 103.

pillars President Nixon agreed to allow Tehran to purchase any non-nuclear weapons from US¹⁰ Iran's rising oil revenues also opened the door for Shah to America's armories. The US-Iranian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement that was concluded subsequent to Nixon's visit to Tehran in May 1972 also fuelled Shah's ambitions for nuclear projects. Shah indeed sought to benefit more than the US did from this cooperation with a view to follow a more independent and assertive role in the region.¹¹

The eruption of the Arab-Israeli War in 1973 (Yom Kippur) and following oil crises created further incentive for Shah to accelerate the nuclear program. Thanks to the windfall of the oil exports Shah announced the goal of establishing of 23.000 MW nuclear power capacities. In addition, the report of the Stanford Research Institute, published in 1974, concluded that Iran would need 20.000 MW capacity by 1994 fostering Shah's plans to establish nuclear reactors. In line with these plans Shah ordered the foundation of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in 1974.¹²

As the US companies lobbied to induce Iran to invest in cheaper and cleaner energy resources like nuclear energy and to save oil which is abundant in this country, the Iranian government showed increasing interest in nuclear energy contracts with the US, French and German companies. The cooperation between Iran and the Western companies in the field of nuclear energy reached to the extent that Iran signed a contract with German company Kraftwerk Union for building two nuclear reactor of 1.200 MW in Bushehr and another contract with French company Framatome to build two reactors of 950 MW in Darhovin. In 1975 Iran also signed another contract with the US worth 15

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 104.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 105.

¹² Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", *op. cit.*, p. 229.

billion dollars for the construction of eight nuclear reactors of 8.000 MW. In the same year Iran also purchased 10 % of the joint venture uranium enrichment company Eurodif owned by France, Belgium, Spain and Italy.¹³

Cooperation between the United States and Iran went beyond the abovementioned areas. American President Gerald Ford signed a directive that offered Iran to purchase and operate a reprocessing plant. This plant would give Iran even the opportunity to use technology to produce nuclear weapon. By 1977 the agreement between the US and Iran regarding transfer of nuclear technology and nuclear safety was signed. With the aim of furthering ties with Iran, President Jimmy Carter visited Tehran on 31 December 1977 and during this visit he granted Iran the “most favored nation clause status” regarding reprocessing spent fuel. In addition, in July 1978 the Nuclear Energy Agreement between the US and Iran was signed to advance nuclear cooperation and provide easier transfer of necessary nuclear materials to Iran.

2.1.2. Non-Proliferation Aspect of the US-Iranian Nuclear Cooperation

In 1974 Shah reportedly said Iran will have nuclear weapons, "without a doubt and sooner than one would think." The statement is denied by Iranian embassy in France, and Shah later backed off the statement, reaffirming that "not only Iran, but also other nations in the region should refrain from planning to gain atomic arsenals."¹⁴ Shah also made it clear that Iran did not need nuclear weapons and acquiring these weapons would bring nothing for Iran other than trouble. However, Shah underlined that these statements were valid for the time being. That means if within the 10, 15 or 20 years the

¹³ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 33

¹⁴ “Iran Profile, Nuclear Chronology 1957-1985”, *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_1957_1985.html, (14 October 2010).

regional conditions evolve and, for example, one country acquires nuclear weapons Iran would review its policy towards acquiring these weapons.¹⁵ The belief that Shah made a secret deal with South Africa in 1970s to buy yellow cake and he formed a team in the AEOI for designing nuclear bomb inflamed the suspicions about his intentions not to mention the Western intelligence organizations' assumptions that he had secret plans to embark on nuclear weapons program.¹⁶

It can hardly be said that the US had a consistent non-proliferation policy while concluding contracts regarding built of nuclear reactors in proxies like Iran. Due to lack of coherence in non-proliferation strategies and export control policies of the West a number of countries including Iran took the advantage of this situation to gain access to sensitive technology.¹⁷ The US was disturbed by the European nuclear suppliers' reluctance to set strict conditions for their nuclear cooperation with other countries in quest of sensitive technology.¹⁸

On the other hand, the level that the US-Iranian nuclear cooperation reached was far from reflecting the American concerns regarding nuclear proliferation. The deputy chief of the American mission in Iran in 1970s summarizes US policy towards Iran as such; the US Administration had concerns about proliferation of nuclear weapons "but the nuclear deal was attractive in terms of commerce, and the relationship as a whole was very important".¹⁹ As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger also stated non-proliferation was not the issue in the negotiations, Iran was an allied country and these

¹⁵ Homa Katouzian and Hossein Shahidi (eds), *Iran in 20st Century: Politics, Economics and Conflicts*, (Taylor & Francis e-Library), 2007, p. 159

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 159; Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 35

¹⁷ Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", op. cit., p. 231

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 232.

¹⁹ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 34

were “commercial transactions”.²⁰ In a nut shell, it can be argued that in the early decades of the nuclear age non-proliferation was not of priority importance on the international agenda as it is today with regard to nuclear cooperation. Therefore, the nuclear technology holders including the US made their decisions to cooperate with other countries primarily on the basis of commercial motives. Iran was one of the first countries to seize this opportunity and turn the windfall of the oil exports into nuclear projects.

2.1.3. The Return of Imam Khomeini and End of the Nuclear Cooperation

Iran’s nuclear program and projects underway came to a sudden halt with the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Deposition of Shah and return of Imam Khomeini from exile in February 1979 brought a dramatic end to US-Iranian cooperation in the nuclear field as well as in other areas. Inflamed by the hostage crisis in the US Embassy, then the US-Iranian relations were characterized by hostility instead of alliance and cooperation. From then on Washington not only canceled all agreements and protocols concluded in the nuclear field but also pressured other countries to stop technical support and transfer of sensitive material and technology to Iran.²¹ Consequently, in addition to leading to cancellation of the European countries’ projects in Iran US was also able to block nuclear deals between Iran and Argentina, Russia and China after the Islamic revolution and seizure of the US Embassy.²² As stated by former Iranian Ambassador to

²⁰ “Past Arguments Don’t Square With Current Iran Policy”, *Washington Post*, 27 March 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A3983-2005Mar26.html>, (14 October 2010).

²¹ Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran’s Quest for Nuclear Power”, *Middle Eastern Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, Spring 2006, p. 215.

²² “Iran’s Nuclear Program”, *Newsweek*, 20 July 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/07/19/iran-s-nuclear-program.html>, (14 October 2010).

the United Nations, Washington's denial to support Iran's nuclear program after the revolution left Iran "with no option but to be discrete in its peaceful activities".²³

On the other hand, US's attempts to paralyze Iran's nuclear program was not the only factor that brought a sudden halt to nuclear projects underway in the immediate aftermath of the Islamic revolution. Khomeini was not also willing to pursue the nuclear program since the continuation of this program would create dependence on other countries, thereby halting construction of the nuclear plants constituted a reasonable option.²⁴ In the initial years of the revolution anything Western was rejected pursuant to the slogan 'neither East, nor West, only the Islamic Republic [of Iran]'.²⁵ The return of Khomeini and following 'Cultural Revolution' commenced a period of anti-Westernization and anti-modernization in Iran's domestic and foreign policies that led to cancellation or suspension of the major nuclear projects.

2.1.4. Efforts to Resume the Nuclear Program

Iran resumed its nuclear program in mid-1980s after Iraq's attacks with chemical weapons and massive air strike on ports and oil refineries in the Persian Gulf.²⁶ Both sides targeted others' oil refineries causing economic lost and environmental disaster with the aim of destroying vital source through which the war was financed.²⁷ The bitter

²³ Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Tackling the US-Iran Crisis: The Need for a Paradigm Shift", *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2007, Vol. 60, No. 2, p. 81.

²⁴ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", op. cit., p. 235.; Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, "Iran Nükleer Program Değerlendirme Raporu", *Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu*, February 2006, p. 1.

²⁵ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power", op. cit., p. 216.

²⁶ Mark Fitzpatrick, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Avoiding Worst-case Outcomes", "Introduction", *Adelphi Papers*, Vol.48, No. 398, pp.7-10, December 2008, p. 14.

²⁷ Although Iraq waged intensive attacks on Iran's oil facilities as well as the oil tankers in the Gulf, these attacks fell short of crippling Iran's oil industry. Iraq's air planes could not effectively execute strike missions against the targets since their strikes were inaccurate. At the same time, Iraq was not able to destroy Iran's supertankers with the missiles loaded with small warheads. Therefore, the role of the Iraqi

experience of the war with Iraq showed that modern military technology, especially the weapons of mass destruction, could play decisive role in war.²⁸ Iranians argued that if Iran had possessed nuclear capability Iraq would not have started the war or use chemical weapons and the US would not have allied with the Iraqi Ba'th and provide this country with military equipment.²⁹

Severe energy crisis during the early years of the revolution was another factor behind Khomeini's decision to resume the nuclear program though he had some reservations in the initial years. With the population boom in Iran domestic energy consumption rose considerably and oil production began falling short of fulfilling the both domestic and foreign demands. At the same time, with nuclear power production Iran could export highly profitable oil to the European markets which would increase its reserve in dollars at the end.³⁰ Therefore, the clerics gave priority to nuclear projects.

Iran, however, faced a major difficulty in making the countries that left the nuclear facilities unfinished complete their undertakings. Before the revolution 90 % of the construction at the Bushehr-1 nuclear power plant was completed though only 50 % of Bushehr-2 was finished. As a result of bombings during the Iran-Iraq war these plants were seriously damaged. In the early 1980s, with the approval of the Imam Khomeini, President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani asked the French and German companies to resume construction of the nuclear power plants. Neither the German company Kraftwerk Union accepted to resume construction at the Bushehr nuclear power plant

strike on Iran's oil industry in Iran's efforts to diversify its energy sources should not be overestimated. Kenneth Pollack, op. cit., p. 196.

²⁸ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power", op. cit., p. 216.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 37.

nor French company Framatome agreed on building two 950 MW(e) reactors at Darkhovin, or on construction of the Esfahan Nuclear Research Center possibly as a result of the US pressure.³¹

As it became clear that the European allies of the US would not support its nuclear program Iran turned to other potential nuclear suppliers such as China, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, Argentina, Spain and Czechoslovakia. In 1987 Iran signed an agreement with Pakistan in the area of nuclear training to send Iranian nuclear scientists and technicians to Pakistan's nuclear facilities for mastering their skills. In the same year, Iran and Argentina concluded a deal for supply of 20% enriched uranium to the Tehran Nuclear Research Center in accordance with the nuclear cooperation agreement of 1985.³² In 1980s Iran made several contacts with some other Western governments for the completion of the Bushehr nuclear power plant but neither of these efforts yielded result. Then, Iran turned to China and Russia as viable alternatives for nuclear assistance and cooperation.

From mid-1980s to early 1990s Chinese-Iranian nuclear cooperation developed in different areas. First, China extended assistance for the built of fuel fabrication and conversion facilities at the Esfahan Nuclear Research Center. Later in 1991 an agreement between Iran and China for the supply of 20 MW research reactor to Iran was concluded. In the following year President Rafsanjani negotiated with the Chinese President to buy one or two 330 MW reactors and an agreement was announced during

³¹ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", op. cit., p. 235.

³² *Ibid.*

Iranian Defense Minister's visit to Beijing.³³ These agreements led to US protests and pressure on China which achieved to either block or delay realization of them. However, the US pressure did not ensure complete suspension of the Chinese-Iranian nuclear cooperation but China continued supplying nuclear material to Iran, albeit did not fulfill Iran's expectation fully.³⁴

On the other hand, President Rafsanjani started talks with Gorbachev in 1989 for the completion of the Bushehr power plant but the final agreement delayed because of dissolution of the USSR. In the following year Iran signed a nuclear cooperation agreement which set the stage for future cooperation between two countries including completion of the Bushehr nuclear power plant. Finally in 1995 Russia and Iran concluded a nuclear deal worth of \$ 800 million that commits Russia to complete one of two nuclear reactors in Bushehr within four years. According to the contract, Russia would build a VVER-1,000MW reactor at the site. The contract also included construction of another 1000MW unit and two 440MW reactors in Bushehr, as well as education of Iranian students and postgraduates at Russian universities and training opportunity for Iranian nuclear scientists and technicians in the nuclear power facilities of Russia. Iran and Russia also agreed to discuss establishment of uranium enrichment plant with gas centrifuges in Iran.

After Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation was established the US made efforts to dissuade Russia from building nuclear reactors in Iran. However, the US objection did not change Russia's decision because it needed financial resources for post-dissolution

³³ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power", op. cit., p. 217

³⁴ Arzu Celalifer Ekinici, *Iran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 38

recovery. Washington also began raising concerns that plutonium produced in such reactors could be used for producing nuclear weapon. It also claimed that nuclear scientists that were trained by the Russian Federation could enable Iran to gather necessary knowledge for pursuing military nuclear program.³⁵

In the early 1990s, as Iran expanded scope of its nuclear program Washington decided to impose unilateral sanctions on it while, at the same time, pressuring its allies to stop transferring sensitive technology and material to this country. In this context, the US pursued 'dual containment' policy to hinder Iran from improving its technological and scientific capabilities by trying to strictly control transfer of dual-use and sensitive materials from the US as well as Europe to Iran. However, this policy did not bring about the expected results because evidences showed to prove "non-peaceful" nature of Iran's nuclear program to hinder such transfers were found insufficient by the US's European allies to form legitimate basis for halting this lucrative trade with Iran.³⁶

In a nut shell, while the US encouraged and assisted Iran's nuclear program before the Islamic revolution, after the fall of Shah it continuously claimed that Iran had enough hydro carbon resources, therefore, its eagerness for nuclear energy should have been approached with suspicion.³⁷ On the basis of this approach the US intensified its efforts in 1990s to prevent Iran from getting technical and technological support to resume its nuclear program. Although Washington had a major difficulty in convincing

³⁵ Arzu Celalifer Ekinçi, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 39.

³⁶ Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", op. cit., p. 235.

³⁷ Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who pursued the negotiations on nuclear cooperation with Iran wrote, for example, in March 2005 that "for a major oil producer such as Iran, nuclear energy is a wasteful use of resources." White House Spokesman also cited the article during a news briefing stating that the article reflects Bush Administration's views on Iran's nuclear program., Henry Kissinger, "Iran: A Nuclear Test Case", 8 March 2005, <http://www.henryakissinger.com/articles/wp030805.html>; "Past Arguments Don't Square with Current Iran Policy", op. cit.

the countries, including its European allies, who have transferred sensitive material to Iran to avoid such transfers, after the revelation of Iran's secret nuclear facilities in 2002 changed this situation profoundly. As the Iranian nuclear issue rose to the top of the international community's agenda it became even more difficult, albeit not impossible, for Iran to procure sensitive material from its previous suppliers.

2.2. THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

2.2.1. Disclosure of the Secret Facilities and Outbreak of the Crisis

On 14 August 2002 Alireza Jafarzadeh, a member of National Council of Resistance of Iran³⁸, announced in a press conference that his Iranian sources had discovered two secret nuclear facilities in Iran, namely the heavy water reactor in Arak and the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz. In December 2002, the US intelligence service confirmed existence of and activities at these facilities.³⁹ This revelation was an important breakthrough in terms of Iran's nuclear program because it had impact on how the international community perceived Iran's nuclear activities.

These facilities showed that despite the pressure of the US sanctions and efforts to prevent supply of sensitive material and technology, Iran made considerable progress in the field of acquiring uranium enrichment and plutonium production capability. First

³⁸ The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) was established upon the initiative of Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the Iranian resistance, as the political arm of the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK). According to its website NCRI "is the parliament-in-exile of the Iranian Resistance." MEK was founded in 1963 by a group of Iranian leftists, supporters of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq, opposed to the country's pro-Western ruler, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The group actively supported and participated in the Islamic revolution that toppled Shah. However, MEK was excluded because of its ideology, a blend of Marxism, feminism, and Islamism, and its leadership was soon executed by the Khomeini regime. In 1981 MEK was recognized by the Iranian government as a terrorist organization and driven from the country. It is also banned terrorist organization in several European countries and the US.

³⁹ The Western intelligence services had already known the clandestine nuclear facilities of Iran but could not disclose without risking the intelligence sources and methods., Mark Fitzpatrick, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Avoiding Worst-case Outcomes", op. cit., p. 15.

factor that influenced the relative development of Iran's nuclear program was that with election of Khatami there had been a strong expectation that change in Iran would be inevitable. With diminished threat perception from Iran, the US had more difficulty in convincing other countries not to sell highly profitable sensitive materials to Iran. Secondly, the windfall of the oil prices which boosted by 2000s provided Iran with more revenues to invest in the nuclear program. Lastly, most of the Pakistani cooperation and transfers of materials borne fruit by the end of 1990s as the Iranian scientists and technicians improved their knowledge and ability to incorporate these materials into facilities.⁴⁰

After the revelations, the US claimed that Iran's efforts to build uranium enrichment facility at Natanz were clear indications of Iran's intentions to develop nuclear weapons and breach of the NPT. Having called Iran to stop all activities related to uranium enrichment and sign the Additional Protocol (AP) which would allow the IAEA make short notice inspections, Washington also wanted referral of Iran's nuclear dossier from the IAEA Board of Governors to the UN Security Council with a view to take punitive actions against Iran's breach of its obligations.⁴¹

On the other hand, Iranians thought they did not do anything wrong also claiming that their activities are fully compatible with their safeguards obligations. They also argued that they needed to inform the IAEA only when they intended to enrich uranium according to the NPT. Reason for the secrecy of the facilities, Iranian officials argued, was the nuclear powers' not fulfilling their NPT obligations to assist

⁴⁰ Kenneth Pollack, *op. cit.* p. 362.

⁴¹ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", *op. cit.*, p. 235; Arzu Celalifer Ekinici, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

development of civilian nuclear program in Iran. For them pressure exerted by the West was wholly political.⁴²

Iranian officials also tried to explain in private talks how the internal bureaucratic dynamics made it impossible to inform the IAEA about the secret facilities. They also argued that if they had passed the information of these facilities to the IAEA the US would have definitely halted the nuclear program.⁴³

The Israeli air strike on Iraq's Osirak reactor before it had been brought online in 1981 might be another motive behind secrecy of Iran's nuclear activities. After the Islamic revolution, the US made intensive effort to prevent supply of sensitive material to Iran on the basis of the argument that Iran sought to pursue military nuclear program. Therefore, the Iranian leadership might have thought that if they had informed the IAEA about the facilities they would have had little chance to complete them.

2. 2.2. The IAEA Inspection in the Suspected Sites

In August 2002 the IAEA asked the Iranian Government to give clarifications regarding the news about the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and the heavy water reactor in Arak. Gholamreza Aghazadeh, the Deputy Head of AEOI, said in his address to the 46th General Conference of the IAEA on 16 September 2010 that Iran had been embarking on long term plan regarding construction of nuclear power plants with total capacity of 6000 MW which also include advancement in various fields of nuclear

⁴² Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust*, (London: C. Hurst and Company Ltd.), 2006, pp. 200-201.

⁴³ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", op. cit., p. 237.

technology such as fuel cycle, nuclear safety and waste management.⁴⁴ Then, in February 2003 ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, paid the first visit with a group of experts to suspected sites in Iran upon the invitation by the Iranian President Mohammad Khatami. In the following period, the IAEA experts and inspectors visited Iran several times. After these visits the Agency's report, which was submitted on 6 June 2003 to the IAEA Board of Governors concluded that:

Iran has failed to meet its obligations under its Safeguards Agreement with respect to the reporting of nuclear material, the subsequent processing and use of that material and the declaration of facilities where the material was stored and processed.⁴⁵

The report also included the Director General's call for Iran to sign the AP noting that without the protocol in force the Agency ability to verify "the absence of undeclared nuclear activities" is limited.⁴⁶

On 12 September 2003, the IAEA Board passed a resolution calling Iran to provide "accelerated cooperation and full transparency". The report expressed 'grave concern' for Iran's failure to give assurances to the IAEA that there are not undeclared nuclear activities in Iran and constituted an ultimatum to Iran calling it to increase cooperation with the IAEA and provide detailed information about its nuclear activities by the end of October 2003.⁴⁷ This resolution also requested Iran to promptly and

⁴⁴ Statement by Reza Aghazadeh Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and President of the Atomic Energy Organization Of Iran at the 46th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, 16 September 2002, <http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC46/Statements/iran.pdf>.

⁴⁵ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2003/40, 6 June 2003, p. 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁴⁷ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Resolution adopted by the Board*, GOV/2003/69, p. 2.

unconditionally sign, ratify and fully implement the AP. Iran objected the resolution and claimed that it has fully cooperated with the IAEA. Iranian officials also rejected deadline set in the resolution saying that it is inconsistent with the NPT to set deadline for cooperation.⁴⁸

The November 2003 report of ElBaradei was of critical importance because it gave a picture of developments since adoption of the aforementioned resolution. The report gave a detailed chronology of Iran's facilities and activities and stated that Iran's nuclear program was much more developed than the IAEA assumed. Expressing serious concern about Iran's failure to report in timely manner the material, activities and facilities in question which meant breach of its obligations emanating from the Safeguards Agreement the report stated that:

The recent disclosures by Iran about its nuclear program clearly show that, in the past, Iran had concealed many aspects of its nuclear activities, with resultant breaches of its obligation to comply with the provisions of the Safeguards Agreement. While most of the breaches identified to date have involved limited quantities of nuclear material, they have dealt with the most sensitive aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle, including enrichment and reprocessing.⁴⁹

The report also took note of Iran's decision to follow a "policy of full disclosure" and provide "full picture of all of its nuclear activities" within the framework of its cooperation with the Agency after the Board resolution. The findings and assessments in the report was important since its publication coincided critical period when Iran decided to suspend uranium enrichment and implement the AP.

⁴⁸ Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodham, op. cit., p. 35.

⁴⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2003/75, 10 November 2003, p. 10.

2.2.3. Involvement of the EU-3

By September 2003 the EU-3⁵⁰ (Britain, France and Germany) stepped in to initiate a diplomatic process to resolve the issue. Involvement of the EU-3 changed the course of the diplomatic efforts positively. On 21 October 2003, after intensive negotiations, the Foreign Ministers of EU-3 and Iranian Foreign Minister issued a joint declaration. The declaration stated that after receiving necessary clarification Iranian government decided to sign the AP and start ratification process without delay. Iran also declared in the said document that, as confidence building measure, it would implement the AP in advance of its ratification. Another important thing announced in the declaration was Iran's decision to voluntarily to suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities. In return for the abovementioned commitments of Iran, the EU-3 Foreign Ministers reiterated through the declaration that their governments recognize Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with the NPT and three countries pledged to cooperate with Iran with a view to promote regional security and stability including establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.⁵¹

Iran signed the AP on 18 December 2003 and it started to cooperate with the IAEA in accordance with the protocol as confidence building measure. This provided the Agency with the opportunity to pursue an intensive inspection on outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear program in the following months.

⁵⁰ Three leading countries of the EU namely Germany, France and United the Kingdom made an initiative in September 2003 to initiate the negotiations towards a comprehensive solution of the Iranian nuclear issue. Although no such decision was taken within the EU, they pursued the diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Union and other members of the EU also supported their efforts.

⁵¹ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Statement by the Iranian Government and visiting EU Foreign Ministers", 21 October 2003, http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaIran/statement_iran21102003.shtml

In the ensuing period, Germany, France and the United Kingdom continued pressuring Iran to ensure that it suspends all enrichment activities unconditionally. At a meeting in Netherland, the Foreign Ministers of the EU-3 set the November IAEA Board meeting as deadline for Iran to fulfill its obligations regarding suspension of enrichment activities.⁵²

Another initiative by the EU-3 which extended a “last chance” offer to Iran came on 20 October 2004. This offer requested Iran to agree to suspend all enrichment related activities while the Board of Governors of the IAEA decides on whether Iran was in cooperation with the Agency. This action would be taken in return for providing Iran with valuable nuclear technology including a light water research reactor. The Foreign Ministers of the EU-3 also conveyed the Iranian part that if they failes to suspend all enrichment related activities they would support the US call for transferring the issue to the UN Security Council.⁵³ Iran, however, declared the offer unbalanced and called on those countries to offer a “more balanced” proposal.⁵⁴

Through the first half of 2004, Iran’s cooperation with the IAEA in accordance with the AP and the Agency’s inspection with full access provided by Iran in timely manner continued, but still the outstanding issues were far from resolved. The IAEA Board of Governors resolution also continued calling on Iran to ratify the AP, suspend

⁵² “UK sets Iran deadline to end nuclear bomb work”, *Guardian*, 9 September 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/sep/09/iran.politics>, (15 November 2010).

⁵³ “Europe to offer Iran reactor if Tehran shows nuclear program is peaceful”, *Iran Focus*, 20 October 2004, http://www.iranfocus.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=555:europe-to-offer-iran-reactor-if-tehran-shows-nuclear-program-is-peaceful&catid=8:nuclear&Itemid=45, (15 November 2010).

⁵⁴ “Iran Rejects Nuclear Plan As Imbalanced, Europe Is Told”, *New York Times*, 25 October 2004, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C02E2D6163DF936A15753C1A9629C8B63>, (15 November 2010).

all enrichment related activities and urged Iran to assist the Director General in understanding the full extent and nature of Iran's enrichment program.⁵⁵

In the light of these developments, the Paris Agreement signed between Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Iran on 15 November 2004 constitutes a watershed in the negotiations between the EU-3 and Iran. Committing itself to full cooperation and transparency with the IAEA, Iran pledged through the agreement to continue voluntarily implementing the AP. The agreement also recorded Iran's voluntary decision to "continue and extend its suspension to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities" to build further confidence.⁵⁶ Finally, agreement envisaged establishing long-term technological and economic cooperation between the EU and Iran.

Increasing pressure of Washington to ensure referral of Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council and signals that EU-3 might have removed their objection to such action if Iran fails to fulfill its obligations motivated the change in the Iranian position and induced it to sign aforementioned agreement.⁵⁷ Iran announced on 22 November 2004, three days before the IAEA Board met in Vienna, that in line with the

⁵⁵ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Resolution adopted by the Board*, GOV/2004/79, 18 September 2004, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Iran, on voluntary basis, suspended all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities in October 2003. However, in the agreement signed in Paris the suspension also covered all enrichment and reprocessing activities and specifically: the manufacture and import of gas centrifuges and their components; the assembly, installation, testing or operation of gas centrifuges; work to undertake any plutonium separation, or to construct or operate any plutonium separation installation; and all tests or production at any uranium conversion installation.

International Atomic Energy Agency, "Communication dated 26 November 2004 received from the Permanent Representatives of France, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom concerning the agreement signed in Paris on 15 November 2004", *Information Circular*, INFCIRC/637, 26 November 2004

⁵⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodham, op. cit., p. 39.

agreement signed with the EU-3 it suspended uranium enrichment and all related activities.⁵⁸

The following year was of crucial importance for both future of the negotiations between the EU-3 and Iran and the diplomatic process in general as the Presidential elections took place in June 2005. Actually, the EU-3 was hesitant about pushing the negotiations or waiting for the new President whose approach would be critical for continuation of the negotiations.

However, rather than waiting for the Presidential election Iran offered the EU-3 the General Framework for Objective Guarantees within the framework of Tehran Agreement in March 2005. This was a four phased plan according to which Iran would declare to ceil uranium enrichment at low-enriched uranium (LEU) level and would give Iran right to assembly, install and test of 3,000 centrifuges in Natanz. Iran also offered to ratify the AP and to submit legislation on peaceful use of nuclear technology including permanent ban on production, stockpile and use of nuclear weapons to the *Majlis*. In return Iran asked the EU-3 to guarantee Iran's access to EU markets and advanced nuclear technology, recognize Iran as a major source of energy to Europe and provide assistance for building nuclear power plants.⁵⁹

The EU-3 agreed to examine the Iranian proposal but continued insisting publicly that Iran must agree on permanently halting uranium enrichment.⁶⁰ But, they were reportedly striving to find way to prevent derailing of the negotiations without

⁵⁸ "Iran to halt nuclear enrichment", *BBC*, 20 November 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4031055.stm, (22 November 2010).

⁵⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodham, op. cit., p. 4.

⁶⁰ "Europe "Rock-solid" that Iran Cease Enrichment", *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, 15 April 2005, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_2005.html, (22 November 2010).

compromising their position regarding suspension of uranium enrichment. Iran's request for a nuclear power reactor from Europe was reportedly other problematic subject for the EU-3.⁶¹

Iran was impatient to see outcome of the negotiations as it had already suspended uranium enrichment. By April 2005 Tehran started to give the signals that unless Iran's expectation was met it would not stay at the negotiation table any more. On 20 April 2010 Hassan Rowhani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, complaining about the three months long negotiations without any "tangible progress" said to press that "the minute we feel there is no progress, we will quit".⁶²

Statement of the senior Iranian officials also demonstrated that Iran would hardly go with the suspension. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, for example, stated that Iran would resume enrichment sooner rather than later regardless of the outcome of the negotiations.⁶³ In May 2005, Iranian Foreign Minister also told at an UN conference that Iran is determined to resume enrichment at some stage.⁶⁴ These statements by Iranian officials prompted the EU-3 to threaten Iran with referral of the nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's message at a news conference reflected the decisiveness of the EU-3 as he said that "we certainly will

⁶¹ Shannon N. Kile (ed.), "Europe and Iran: Perspectives on Non-Proliferation", *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, Research Report, No. 21, p. 19; Chirac Pushes EU to Drop Hard Line on Iran-Diplomats, Nuclear Threat Initiative, 13 April 2005, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_2005.html.

⁶² "Iran Losing Patience with Europe Talks on Nuclear Program", *New York Times*, 21 April 2005 <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/21/international/middleeast/21iran.html>, (26 November 2010).

⁶³ "Iran Says It Will Resume Uranium Enrichment Regardless of Outcome of Talks With Europeans", *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, 24 April 2005, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_2005.html, (26 November 2010).

⁶⁴ "Iran Slams US over Nuclear Stance", *BBC*, 3 May 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4508903.stm, (26 November 2010).

support referral to the UN Security Council if Iran breeches its undertakings and obligations.”⁶⁵

2.2.4. Resumption of Iran’s Nuclear Program and Collapse of the EU-3-Iran Negotiations

Less than two months after the election of Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, who was seen as hardliner on the nuclear issue, Iran decided to remove seals on the process lines at the Uranium Conversion Facility in Esfahan. Iran informed the IAEA with a letter dated 1 August 2005 that it has decided to resume the uranium conversion activities in Esfahan in the same day. In that letter Iran blamed the EU-3 for the current stalemate in the negotiations complaining that the EU-3 wanted to prolong the fruitless negotiations, thereby prejudicing Iran's inalienable right to resume its enrichment activities. According to the letter, the EU-3 also failed to remove any of the restrictions on Iran's access to advanced and nuclear technology.⁶⁶ Other issue that was raised in the Iranian letter was that despite the agreement reached in the Geneva meeting on 25th May the EU-3 did not propose any incentive as of August 1.

The EU-3 offered an incentive package, namely “the Framework for a Long-term Agreement” proposal to Iran on 5 August 2005, a few days after Iran informed the Agency regarding its decision to resume enrichment. The agreement assured Iran with supply of fuel over the coming years and called Iran to make a “binding commitment not to pursue fuel cycle activities other than the construction and operation of light water

⁶⁵ “Iran Leaves Door Open for Nuclear Discussions”, *Washington Post*, 13 May 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/12/AR2005051200722.html>, (26 November 2010)

⁶⁶ International Atomic Energy Agency, “Communication dated 1 August 2005 received from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency”, *Information Circular*, INFCIRC/648, 1 August 2005.

power and research reactors”. According to the proposal the EU-3 would also expect Iran to halt construction of its heavy water research reactor at Arak. Moreover, the agreement envisaged cooperation between the EU-3 and Iran in a number of areas such as non-proliferation, regional security and combating terrorism in addition to the economic and technological cooperation.⁶⁷ Iran, however, stated in its response that the proposal was “a clear violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, the NPT, Tehran Statement and the Paris Agreement of November 15, 2004”.⁶⁸ Iranian side interpreted the proposal as an attempt to prejudice Iran’s inalienable rights regarding the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Iran resumed uranium converting activities at Esfahan nuclear facility on 8 August 2005 regardless of warnings of the Western countries that such a move could lead to referral of Iran’s nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council. The IAEA, on the other hand, adopted a resolution on August 11 expressing serious concern for Iran’s notification that it has decided to resume uranium conversion activities at Esfahan and urged Iran to “re-establish full suspension of all enrichment related activities”.⁶⁹

Concerns of the EU-3, IAEA and the US were further exacerbated when Iran sent a letter dated 3 January 2006 to inform the IAEA that it would resume the nuclear research and development. On 7 January 2006 Iran requested the IAEA with another letter to remove seals from the facilities in Natanz. Upon these developments the EU-3 issued a declaration on 12 January 2006 with a view to inform the IAEA that the

⁶⁷ International Atomic Energy Agency, “Communication dated 8 August 2005 received from the Resident Representatives of France, Germany and the United Kingdom to the Agency”, *Information Circular*, INFCIRC/651, 8 August 2005.

⁶⁸ “Response of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Framework Agreement proposed by EU-3/EU”, <http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0508/doc03.htm#iran>.

⁶⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency, “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran” *Resolution adopted by the Board*, GOV/2005/64, 11 August 2005, p. 2.

discussions between the EU-3 and Iran reached nowhere. More importantly, it was stated in the declaration that “time has come for the Security Council to become involved to reinforce the authority of IAEA resolution” and called for an extraordinary IAEA Board meeting to take necessary action to that end.⁷⁰ So, this declaration marked the end of the diplomatic efforts made by EU-3 to solve the issue without referring the dossier to the UN Security Council.

2.2.5. Russian Proposal to Overcome the Impasse in the Diplomatic Process

The deadlock in the diplomatic process prompted Russia who enjoyed relatively good political and economic relations with Iran to be involved in the Iranian nuclear issue. Referral of Iran’s nuclear dossier would undermine Russia’s commercial dealings with Iran which included construction of Bushehr nuclear power plant. Therefore, in an attempt to find a mid way to prevent escalation between West and Iran, Moscow offered to set up a joint uranium enrichment facility to produce enriched uranium for Iran’s nuclear power plants on Russian soil in November 2005.⁷¹ This proposal which meant that Iran would not advance its capability for pursuing fuel cycle was also supported by the IAEA, the US and the EU-3.⁷² Iran, however, rejected the offer to enrich uranium in Russian soil and stated that it would produce enriched uranium in Iran. Supreme

⁷⁰ International Atomic Energy Agency, “Communication dated 13 January 2006 received from the Permanent Missions of France, Germany and the United Kingdom to the Agency”, *Information Circular*, INFCIRC/662, 18 January 2006.

⁷¹ Bülent Aras, Fatih Özbay, “Dances with Wolves: Russia, Iran and the Nuclear Issue”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, Winter 2006, p. 140; for more on the content of the proposal see Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, (Ankara: USAK Yayınları), Ocak 2009, pp. 67-68.

⁷² “Russian Proposal” for a Joint-Venture to Enrich Uranium in Russia”, *Washington Post*, 19 November 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/18/AR2005111802679.html>, (30 November 2010); “ElBaradei still backs Russian plan for Iran”, *Financial Times*, 7 December 2005 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6aa6c2f6-66c5-11da-884a-0000779e2340.html#axzz17F8sa0FS>, (30 November 2010); “Atomic Agency Delays Action on Iran”, *New York Times*, 25 November 2005, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A05E6DE1731F936A15752C1A9639C8B63>, (30 November 2010).

National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani said that it was not logical for any country to entrust its energy security to another state.⁷³

In parallel to Russian efforts to open a window of opportunity before Iran's nuclear dossier was referred to the UN Security Council, the EU-3 and the US strived to take action to that end. Representatives from the United States, China, Russia, and the EU-3 reached surprisingly an accord at a meeting in London a few days before an extraordinary IAEA Board meeting, to report Iran to the Security Council.⁷⁴ This decision was important because the EU-3 and the US convinced Russia and China to give support to reporting Iran to the UN Security Council.⁷⁵ On February 2006 Extraordinary Board meeting voted a resolution which requested the Director General to report to the Security Council all IAEA reports and resolutions as well as all obligations of Iran.⁷⁶ Responding this resolution, Iranian officials stated that if Iran's nuclear dossier was reported to the Security Council they would halt cooperation with the Agency.

On the other hand, Russian and Iranian officials met in Moscow to negotiate the Russian previous proposal on 20 February 2006. In the third round of the negotiations Iran and Russia declared that they agreed on a plan which did not include any elements about uranium enrichment on 4 March 2006.⁷⁷ Next day Iran declared that it is ready to pursue uranium enrichment outside until necessary confidence was built between parties

⁷³ "Iran Rejects Russia nuclear plan", *BBC*, 1 January 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4574226.stm>, (30 November 2010).

⁷⁴ "Foreign Ministers Issue Statement on Iran", 31 January 2006, http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2006/e3_eu_iran_statement.html, (30 November 2010).

⁷⁵ While Russia and China have signed the statement that called on the IAEA to report Iran's dossier to the UN Security Council, they insisted that Iran's case be "reported" but not "referred" to the Security Council. Because reporting does not necessarily require sanctions and leaves door open for resolving the issue through diplomatic ways. "Iran Profile, Nuclear Chronology 2006", *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, 31 January 2006, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_2006.html, (2 December 2010).

⁷⁶ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Resolution adopted by the Board*, GOV/2006/14, 4 February 2006, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 75.

on the condition that Iran would continue nuclear research on its soil. But this proposal was not acceptable to the Western countries.

After the IAEA Board meeting on March 8 Director General transmitted his report on Iran's nuclear program to the UN Security Council which was scheduled to take up the issue in the following weeks. In the following days, Iran's rejection of Russian offer to enrich uranium in Russia further exacerbated the tension between the West and Iran. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesmen told to the press that the Russian proposal was not on their agenda anymore.⁷⁸ Rather than going with the Russian proposal Iranian side preferred to wait and see how the Security Council would deal with the issue.

2.2.6. Referral of the Nuclear Dossier to the UN Security Council

The UN Security Council first took action by issuing a presidential statement after intensive discussions on 29 March 2006 which expressed "serious concern" about the outstanding issues pointed out in the IAEA reports and resolutions and Iran's decision to resume enrichment-related activities and called upon Iran to take necessary steps to establish full cooperation.⁷⁹ The statement also requested in 30 days a report from the Director General of the IAEA on the steps taken by Iran.

Despite the warning statement of the Security Council Iran continued making new advancements on its nuclear program. Addressing a ceremony on 11 April 2006, President Ahmedinejad announced that nuclear fuel cycle at the laboratory level has

⁷⁸ "Iran Rejects Russia's Proposal on Uranium", *Washington Post*, 13 March 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/12/AR2006031200275.html>, (3 December 2010).

⁷⁹ United Nations Security Council, "Security Council, in Presidential Statement, Underlines Importance of Iran's Re-establishing Full, Sustained Suspension of Uranium-enrichment Activities" SC/8679, 29 March 2006.

been completed, and that Iran achieved to enrich uranium at desired level for nuclear power plants as of April 9.⁸⁰ This declaration of Iran was interpreted in the Western capitals as a milestone in Iran's nuclear program and defiance of the UN Security Council's calls.⁸¹

The Director General of the IAEA submitted his reports on 28 April 2006, at the end of the 30 days deadline. The report, as previous reports, went on saying that the Agency has found no undeclared nuclear material in Iran other than the small quantities previously reported and Iran continued enrichment-related activities. The report also underlined that full transparency and active cooperation by Iran -enhanced transparency that goes beyond the measures envisaged in the Safeguards Agreement and the AP- was required if the Agency was to be able to understand fully the twenty years of undeclared nuclear activities by Iran.⁸² Iran, on the other hand, reiterated its resistance to discussion of the issue at the Security Council insisting that the IAEA is the relevant forum for the issue.

Although the Agency's report put forward that Iran failed to fulfill its obligations laid down in the IAEA reports and decisions as well as in Security Council Presidential Statement, series of Security Council meetings failed to adopt a common action plan on Iran and to adopt the draft resolution prepared by the US, France and Britain requiring Iran to suspend enrichment-related activities since Russia and China was still resisting to

⁸⁰ "Iran Says It Is Making Nuclear Fuel, Defying U.N.", *New York Times*, 12 April 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/12/world/middleeast/12iran.html>, (3 December 2010).

⁸¹ "Iran Declares Key Nuclear Advance", *BBC*, 11 April 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4900260.stm, (3 December 2010); "Iran Nuclear Program Defies UN", *PBS*, 11 April 2006, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june06/iran_4-11.html, (3 December 2010); "Fuel Grade not Weapon Grade", *PBS*, 11 April 2006, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june06/iran_4-11.html, (3 December 2010).

⁸² International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2006/27, 28 April 2006, p. 7.

a binding Security Council resolution. Consequently, the Security Council decided in this meeting that the EU-3 would prepare a new incentive package to be offered to Iran.⁸³

Javier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), conveyed the said incentive package on behalf of P5+1 on June 6.⁸⁴ According to incentive package the P5+1 would support built of new light water reactors in Iran through international joint projects and suspend discussion of Iran's nuclear program at the Security Council. In exchange, Iran would establish full cooperation with the IAEA to address all outstanding issues, suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and resume implementing the AP. The package also included economic and political incentives like supporting Iran's integration with the World Trade Organization (WTO), cooperation in the field of high technology, removal of restrictions on export of civil aircrafts and their spare parts to Iran and supporting a new conference to promote regional cooperation and dialogue.

Initial positive approach of the Iranian side to the incentive package renewed hopes that the stalemate with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue would be overcome. Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said after meeting with High Representative Solana on 6 June that the proposal contains positive elements together with some ambiguities.⁸⁵ However, in the ensuing period no breakthrough happened. Since Iran received the reviewed proposal Iranian officials continued to say that Iran will not give

⁸³ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 90.

⁸⁴ "Elements of a revised proposal to Iran made by the E3+3", *Arms Control Association*, 6 June 2006 http://www.armscontrol.org/pdf/20060606_Iran_P5+1_Proposal.pdf, (4 December 2010).

⁸⁵ Iran Open to Incentives on Nuclear Talks, With a Hedge, *New York Times*, 7 June 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/07/world/middleeast/07iran.html?scp=13&sq=Iran+nuclear&st=nyt>, (4 December 2010); Mottaki Terms 5+1 Proposal an Opportunity for Nuclear Agreement, *Fars News*, 18 June 2006, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8503280369>, (4 December 2010).

up its rights.⁸⁶ Despite repeated calls from the P5+1 countries for a response Iran rejected deadline each time, Iranian officials stating that they were seriously considering the proposal. P5+1, however, declared on July 12, the day after Solana-Larijani meeting failed to reach any concrete conclusion that they agreed to refer Iran to the UN Security Council.⁸⁷

2.2.7. UN Security Council Resolution 1696

UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1696 on July 31, 2006 after intensive discussions on a draft prepared by the United Kingdom, France and Germany.⁸⁸ The resolution includes important elements which have serious implications in terms of future of Iran's nuclear program. First of all, this resolution like the relevant IAEA resolutions and the UN Security Council Presidential Statement, calls upon Iran to take necessary steps without further delay to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program, demands that Iran suspends all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and endorses the proposals offered to Iran by the P5+1. Second, resolution calls upon all states to exercise vigilance and prevent the transfer of any items, materials, goods and technology that could contribute to Iran's enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and ballistic missile programs in accordance with their national legislation and international law. Third, Security Council requested by 31 August a new report by the Director General of the IAEA on whether

⁸⁶ Iran Won't Give Up Right to Use Atomic Technology, Leader Says, *New York Times*, 28 June 2006; <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/28/world/middleeast/28iran.html?scp=71&sq=Iran+nuclear&st=nyt>, (4 December 2010); "FM: Iran May not Give Up Nuclear Rights", *Fars News*, 20 June 2006, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8503300528>, (4 December 2010); Iran May Never Give Up Nuclear Rights, *Fars News*, 14 June 2006, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8503240430>, (4 December 2010).

⁸⁷ Russia and China Inch Toward Iran Sanctions, *New York Times*, 13 July 2006 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/world/13diplo.html?Scp=37&sq=Iran+nuclear&st=nyt>, (4 December 2010).

⁸⁸ United Nations Security Council, *UNSC Resolution 1696 (2006) S/RES/1696*, 31 July 2006.

Iran suspends all enrichment related and reprocessing activities and establishes full cooperation with the IAEA or not. This constituted a new deadline before taking further action. Last but not least, Security Council expressed its intention to take necessary measures under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations if Iran does not comply with this resolution. This demonstrated that Security Council could take further action on the issue in the event that Iran has not taken any step.

UN Security Council resolution neither ruined the ongoing process of dialogue between P5+1 and Iran nor it forced Iran to take necessary steps requested in the text. Iranian officials' initial response was to dismiss the resolution, accuse the EU-3 for breaking the negotiations and insist that the resolution would not hamper Iran's nuclear program.⁸⁹ Iran was not ready to fulfill at least some of the conditions before the August 31 deadline set in the resolution. Its formal response to the P5+1 proposal on 22 August also fell short of paving the way for new process towards a negotiated solution.⁹⁰ Pointing out the ambiguities in the P5+1's proposal, Iran offered a process of comprehensive negotiations and put forward some conditions for the negotiations to be "constructive". At the same time, in its response, Iran rejected to suspend enrichment-related activities but offered "suspension of Iran's dossier in the Security Council during

⁸⁹ Nuclear Talks Dropped by EU, *Fars News*, 6 August 2006, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8505150184>, (5 December 2010); Iran Says It Will Ignore U.N. Deadline on Uranium Program, *New York Times*, 7 August 2006, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D05E0DC1E3FF934A3575BC0A9609C8B63&scp=54&sq=Iran+nuclear&st=nyt>, (5 December 2010); President: Preventing Iran's Access to Nuclear Technology Impossible, *Fars News*, 16 August 2006, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8505250428>, (5 December 2010).

⁹⁰ Response of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the package presented on 6 June 2006, *Iran Watch*, 22 August 2006, <http://www.iranwatch.org/international/UNSC/un-iran-response-p5plus1-101206.pdf>.

the negotiation period by the other party, and suspension of enrichment activities by Iran through negotiations”.⁹¹

Iran’s counter proposal did not reduce the tension but achieved to delay a possible UN Security Council resolution to impose sanctions. After Iran handed over its response, the rift among the P5+1 countries was sharpened. While the US, United Kingdom and France declared Iran’s response inadequate and continued increasing their pressure to adopt sanctions, Russia and China maintained their resistance to such action. Russian Defense Minister said three days after Iran conveyed its response that it would be “premature” to take punitive actions against Iran.⁹² Despite this backdrop, President Ahmedinejad’s inauguration of the heavy water production plant at Arak on August 26 which was interpreted as defiance of the UN deadline compounded with the IAEA report submitted on August 31 stating that Iran did not suspend enrichment-related and reprocessing activities accelerated the process that led to adoption of the first round of sanctions in the UN Security Council.

2.2.8. UN Security Council Resolution 1737 and 1747

After about four months of discussions, the UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1737 which included first round of the sanctions against Iran.⁹³ According to the resolution, Iran shall suspend without further delay all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and work on all heavy water related activities and all states shall take necessary measures to prevent transfer supply and sale of all items, materials, equipment, goods and technology that could contribute to said activities. The resolution

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Russia Says It Opposes U.N. Sanctions on Iran, *New York Times*, 26 August 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/26/world/middleeast/26russia.html>, (5 December 2010).

⁹³ United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1737 (2006) S/RES/1737, 27 December 2006.

also imposes travel restriction on individuals designated in the annex to this resolution who are engaged with Iran's prohibited nuclear activities and requires states to freeze their funds and financial assets and economic resources. Last but not least, Security Council requested within 60 days a new report from Director General of the IAEA.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1737 was a serious warning to Iran with some concrete measures designed to persuade Iran to heed this warning. However, in the next two months Iran not only defied the said resolution but also made it clear that the sanctions would not stop its nuclear program. After the resolution adopted, President Ahmedinejad said that the sanctions would not prevent Iran from developing its nuclear program. Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Larijani also said that Iran would respond immediately by beginning activities at Natanz to establish 3,000 centrifuges.⁹⁴

Apart from the statements made by the Iranian officials, report prepared by Director General of the IAEA confirmed once again that Iran's non-compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution continued and stated that Iran advanced its nuclear program further.⁹⁵ Iran's failure to take necessary steps stipulated by the Security Council resolutions led to adoption of Resolution 1747 on 24 March 2007, which imposed second round of sanctions on Iran.⁹⁶ This resolution expanded the scope and content of the previous sanctions by imposing funds, financial assets and economic resources freeze provision on additional 15 individuals and 13 entities, banning Iran's export of any arms or related material and calling upon all States to exercise vigilance

⁹⁴ "Iran Is Defiant, Vowing to U.N. It Will Continue Nuclear Efforts", *New York Times*, 25 December 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/world/middleeast/25iran.html>, (5 December 2010).

⁹⁵ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolution 1737 (2006) in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2007/8, 22 February 2007.

⁹⁶ United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1747 (2007) S/RES/1747, 24 March 2007.

and restraint in the supply, sale or transfer of any battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems.

Adoption of two sanctions resolutions in a couple of months was a serious warning to Iran but these resolutions was not likely to stop its nuclear program. Iran once again denounced the sanction resolution and made it clear that it would not give up its nuclear works. After the resolution was passed President Ahmedinejad declared it illegal and said that it will not stop the legal and peaceful nuclear move the Iranian nation has started.⁹⁷ Iran has indeed taken another step forward by declaring on 9 April 2007 that it joined the “nuclear club” by starting the uranium enrichment on industrial scale which also displayed Iran’s resolve to continue its nuclear activities contrary to the UN Security Council resolutions.

Attempts to resume talks between the P5+1 and Iran continued in 2007 when the tension reached a new apex after Iran’s statement regarding uranium enrichment on industrial scale. In April 2007 EU Foreign Policy Chief Solana and Iran’s Chief Nuclear Negotiator met in Ankara to discuss possible next steps regarding the Iranian nuclear issue. Though the parties’ expectation from this meeting was not high, it was important since the parties gathered amid the speculations that the P5+1 might have let Iran pursue partial uranium enrichment.⁹⁸ The meeting ended with no concrete result but the fact that the parties could continue dialogue in such a tense environment was deemed important.

⁹⁷ “No Stop in Iran's Peaceful Nuclear Move Even for a Second”, *Fars News*, 26 March 2007, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8601060084>, (5 December 2010)

⁹⁸ Arzu Celalifer Ekinici, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 128

On the other hand, conduct of negotiations between Larijani and ElBaradei in August 2007 constituted an important development to reduce the tension between Iran and the West. As a result of the negotiations, a working plan and modalities to address outstanding issues on the basis of a common understanding was made public.⁹⁹ According to the work plan and agreed modalities that covered all remaining issues, the Agency would provide Iran with all remaining questions and Iran would provide the Agency with the required clarifications and information. In accordance with this working plan, Iran established more transparent cooperation with the Agency. This situation was also confirmed in the IAEA report issued in November 2007¹⁰⁰ but the increasing cooperation between Iran and the Agency was not considered satisfactory for some P5+1 countries like the US, France and the United Kingdom which insisted that so long as Iran did not comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions P5+1 should have worked on third round of sanctions. They also interpreted Iran's cooperation with the Agency within the framework of the agreed working plan as an attempt to gain time.¹⁰¹

The US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)¹⁰² on Iran's nuclear program published in November 2007 was also expected to positively change the course of the

⁹⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Communication dated 27 August 2007 from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency concerning the text of the "Understandings of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA on the Modalities of Resolution of the Outstanding Issues", IAEA INFCIRC/711, 27 August 2007.

¹⁰⁰ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolution 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007) in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2007/58, 15 November 2007.

¹⁰¹ "The US sees limits, manipulation in Iran deal with IAEA", *Reuters*, 22 August 2007, http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL22157924_20070822, (10 December 2010); Diplomats criticize Iran's deal with UN atom inspectors, 28 August 2007; David Albright, Jacqueline Shir, *A Flawed IAEA-Iran Agreement on Resolving Outstanding Issue*, *The Institute for Science and International Security*, 28 August 2007, <http://www.isis-online.org/publications/iran/flawedagreement.pdf>.

¹⁰² National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) are the most authoritative assessment of the Director of National Intelligence on intelligence related to a particular national security issue. NIEs are produced by

developments. The most striking element in the NIE was the judgment that Iran halted its nuclear weapon program in 2003.¹⁰³ Publication of this intelligence estimate in such a critical period, amid the discussions on necessity of third round of sanctions, stirred different reaction in the international community as well as the US public opinion. While the Bush Administration defended its Iran policy by arguing that suspension of Iran's nuclear weapon program, as stated by the NIE, was success of the Administration's policy. The EU also made it clear that the NIE would not change the dialogue-pressure policy.¹⁰⁴ China and Russia, on the other hand, argued that the NIE changed the conditions under which third round of sanctions were being discussed.¹⁰⁵ They advocated that attempts to impose new sanctions on Iran should be revised in the light of the NIE.

In a nut shell, in the second half of the year 2007 developments revived the expectations that the tension between Iran and the West would be reduced. These expectations were short-lived indeed as it was understood that the US and EU-3 would not be satisfied with any result other than Iran's suspension of its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Therefore, these countries intensified their effort to table new sanctions resolution since Iran did not take necessary action to suspend said nuclear activities. As a result, the

the National Intelligence Council and express the coordinated judgments of the United States Intelligence Community, the group of 16 US intelligence agencies. "National Intelligence Estimates", *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Intelligence_Estimate; "National Intelligence Estimates", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 14 May 2008, http://www.cfr.org/publication/7758/national_intelligence_estimates.html, (10 December 2010).

¹⁰³ National Intelligence Council, *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities*, National Intelligence Estimate, November 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Arzu Celalifer Ekinici, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, pp. 140-142.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

P5+1 countries agreed on a new draft UN Security Council sanction resolution at a meeting in Berlin on 24 January 2008.

2.2.9. UN Security Council Resolution 1803

Iran's failure to fulfill the obligations emanating from the Security Council resolution led to adoption of resolution 1803 on 3 March 2008. This resolution imposed third round of sanctions on Iran through expanding the list of individuals and entities whose funds, financial assets and economic resources would be frozen. The resolution also enlarged the list of individuals to whom travel restriction would be imposed because of engaging in Iran's prohibited nuclear activities. Furthermore, Security Council called through the resolution upon all States to exercise vigilance over the activities with all Iranian banks in particular with Bank Melli and Bank Saderat, and their branches and subsidiaries abroad. Last but not least, all states were called upon to inspect the cargoes to and from Iran, of aircraft and vessels owned or operated by Iran Air Cargo and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line if there is reasonable ground to believe that the aircraft or vessel is transporting goods prohibited under Security Council resolutions.¹⁰⁶

Although Iran severely rejected the third round of sanctions it did not break the communication and dialogue with P5+1. Representatives of the P5+1 countries presented a revised package during at meeting in Tehran in June 2008. This package was the revised version of the one presented in 2006 but this time P5+1 also offered a new model for the negotiations according to which for a six-week "freeze-for-freeze" period Iran would halt the expansion of its enrichment program and P5+1 would not seek

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1803 (2008) S/RES/1803, 3 March 2008.

additional sanctions in the Security Council.¹⁰⁷ This model was indeed reformulation of P5+1's precondition -suspension of enrichment-related activities- for commencement of negotiations which Iran had been rejecting in clear terms. Iran neither accepted nor rejected this proposal but offered a counter proposal which fell short of meeting the expectation of P5+1 as it did not include Iran's suspension of its nuclear activities.¹⁰⁸

This process led to adoption of Security Council resolution 1835¹⁰⁹ which did not impose new sanctions on Iran but called upon Iran to comply with its obligations under the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

2.2.10. The “New Approach” towards Iran and Renewed Dialogue

Although more than eight years passed since the Iranian nuclear issue started to occupy the international community's agenda in 2002 it could not be possible to resolve this issue although various initiatives and proposals were tabled to reach a mutually acceptable solution. The election of Barack Obama as the US president who sought to pursue a “new approach” and abandon the traditional US policy requiring Iran to fulfill its obligations, namely suspension of enrichment-related activities, emanating from the UN Security Council resolutions prior to negotiations created a favorable environment for the resumption of the negotiations with Iran. Encouraged with the US policy shift the P5+1 formally invited Iran to talks in a press statement issued in April 2009.¹¹⁰ Iran's

¹⁰⁷ “Statement, Letter by P5+1 Partners on New Incentives Package for Iran”, 17 June 2008, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/June/20080617165530eafas0.1855738.html>; Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency, “Communication dated 16 June 2008 received from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency concerning the text of the “Islamic Republic of Iran's proposed package for constructive negotiation” INFCIRC/72, 18 June 2008.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1835 (2008) S/RES/1835, 27 September 2008.

¹¹⁰ “World Powers Invite Iran to Nuclear Talks”, *Arms Control association*, May 2009, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_5/world_powers_invite_Iran, (10 December 2010).

positive response to this invitation paved the way for the talks between Iran and the P5+1 in Geneva in October 2009.

While the October 1 was fixed for the negotiations between Iran and P5+1, the former sent a letter on 21 September to the IAEA to inform that it has decided to construct a new pilot fuel enrichment (up to 5 % enrichment) plant, Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP) and that the plant was already under construction.¹¹¹ In the following period Iran granted access for the IAEA experts to this plant and shared its design information in accordance with its safeguards obligations. However, Agency's report concluded that Iran's failure to inform the Agency of its decision to construct a new facility and share the design information in timely fashion is inconsistent with its obligations.¹¹²

On the other hand, though, reportedly, the FFEP was known by the intelligence services before its disclosure¹¹³ on September 25, it was portrayed as proof of Iran's quest for nuclear weapons and its revelation increased distrust regarding peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Western countries displayed measured reaction to this revelation since they did not want to ruin the negotiations scheduled to

¹¹¹ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolution 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803(2008) and 1835(2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2009/74, 16 November 2009.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ "More Details on What the US Knows about Iran's Secret Nuclear Site", *Newsweek*, 25 September 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/blogs/the-gaggle/2009/09/25/more-details-on-what-the-u-s-knows-about-iran-s-secret-nuclear-site.html>, (12 December 2010).

¹¹⁴ "A technical evaluation of the Fordow fuel enrichment plant", *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 23 November 2009, <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/technical-evaluation-of-the-fordow-fuel-enrichment-plant>, (13 December 2010); "Iran is warned over nuclear 'deception'", *New York Times*, 25 September 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/26/world/middleeast/26nuke.html>, (13 December 2010).

hold on October 1. Iran's readiness to allow IAEA inspection and cooperate with the Agency on FFEP was also another factor that softened reaction of major powers.

The P5+1 and Iran met in Geneva to discuss nuclear issue on 1 October 2009 where the US Undersecretary of State William Burns had bilateral meeting with Iran's chief negotiator Jalili which constituted first direct contact between two states after 30 years. In these meetings parties agreed in principle to hold further talks before the end of October and on a formula according to which Iran would send most of its enriched uranium outside for further enrichment and to be turned into fuel rod for the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR) that produces medical isotopes. At the same time, Iran accepted to open FFEP to IAEA inspection in the following two weeks.¹¹⁵

In accordance with the draft agreement, the Vienna Group (VG)¹¹⁶ and Iran met in Vienna on October 19 to discuss the modalities to implement the fuel swap agreement reached in Geneva. After three days of meetings the IAEA Director General made a press statement to announce that parties agreed on a draft agreement.¹¹⁷ According to the draft agreement 70 % of Iran's low enriched uranium (LEU) would be shipped to Russia for enrichment up to 20 % and then France would take the enriched uranium to produce fuel rods to be used at TRR.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, even though the meeting ended with a

¹¹⁵ "Iran Agrees to Send Enriched Uranium to Russia", *New York Times*, 1 October 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/world/middleeast/02nuke.html>, (14 December 2010).

¹¹⁶ Group of the US, France and Russia who assumed the implementation of fuel swap deal since they have necessary technical and technological capability to enrich uranium up to 20 % and to produce fuel rods.

¹¹⁷ "Transcript of Director General's Remarks to Media Following Talks on Supplying Nuclear Fuel to Iran", 21 October 2009, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/transcripts/2009/transcr211009.html>, (14 December 2010).

¹¹⁸ "Iran nuclear fuel deal 'agreed'", *BBC*, 21 October 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8318258.stm>, 17 December 2010; Bayram Sinkaya, "İran'ın Nükleer Programı; Müzakere Sürecinde Umutların Yükseliş ve Düşüşü", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol. 1, No. 12, December 2009, p. 76.

draft agreement, Iran categorically resisted France's role in the plan which later had impact on the implementation of this agreement.¹¹⁹

In the following period Iran neither accepted nor rejected the draft agreement but reflected its different understanding of the terms in the plan. Namely, Iran was not against the idea of fuel swap as laid down in the agreement and neither had it rejected to send its low enrichment uranium outside. But the issue that led to disagreement between Iran and the Vienna Group is that Iran wanted to have "simultaneous fuel swap" inside the country while other party rejected this condition.¹²⁰ At the same time, Iran wanted to send its uranium abroad in smaller batches as it takes fuel rods rather than making a single transfer. In an attempt to overcome Iran's insistence on realizing the fuel swap on its soil, IAEA Director General ElBaradei offered to deposit Iran's uranium in Turkey.¹²¹ However, after series of events that took place in the following weeks the parties almost returned to the point where they had been before the negotiations.

The representatives of P5+1 countries met in Brussels on November 20 to discuss the latest developments and possible future steps. They put the blame on Iran's side for current stalemate over the fuel swap agreement while keeping the door open for the further engagement.¹²² But the IAEA Board resolution¹²³ that was adopted on

¹¹⁹ "Talks on Iran's nuclear programme stall", *Financial Times*, 21 October 2009, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c6202cfe-bdc3-11de-9f6a-00144feab49a.html#axzz18rXQLW2K>, (16 December 2010).

¹²⁰ "Tehran Rejects Nuclear Accord, Officials Report", *New York Times*, 29 October 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/30/world/middleeast/30nuke.html?scp=7&sq=Iran%20rejects%20proposal%20for%20enrichment%20of%20uranium&st=cse>, (16 December 2010); "Iran brushes aside UN nuclear deal", *US Today*, 18 November 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-11-18-iran-un-nuclear_N.htm, (17 December 2010)

¹²¹ "ElBaradei Suggests Turkey as Compromise on Iran Nuclear Impasse", *Bloomberg*, 9 November 2009, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=alRE35EHPc1I>, (17 December 2010)

¹²² "Six powers 'disappointed' as Iran rejects nuclear deal", BBC, 20 November 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8369872.stm>, (17 December 2010)

November 27 and urged Iran to comply fully with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions and with safeguards obligations undermined the dialogue between Iran and West. In response to the IAEA resolution Iran announced that it will build ten new uranium enrichment plants.¹²⁴

In the following months Iran continued stating that if VG countries do not accept its proposals regarding the fuel swap it would start enriching uranium up to 20 % to produce fuel for TRR. Iran took such step in February after informing the IAEA in a letter that it would begin enriching some of its low enriched uranium up to 20 % and the Agency's report issued on February 18 confirmed that Iran achieved enriching uranium up to said level.¹²⁵ The report, unlike previous reports, also expressed concerns about "possible military dimension" of Iran's nuclear program in stronger terms, stating that activities related to military dimension that should be clarified by Iran seem to have continued beyond 2004.¹²⁶

2.2.11. The Joint Declaration: the Last Chance

Iran offered a formal written response to draft agreement regarding fuel swap in February 2010 but Tehran's reply did not go beyond repeating the terms that the P5+1 have already rejected.¹²⁷ Lack of confidence between parties made it impossible to take the common understanding emerged in October 2009 forward. As the diplomatic process

¹²³ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran" GOV/2009/82, 27 November 2009.

¹²⁴ "Iran will build up to 10 new uranium enrichment facilities", *Mehr News*, 29 November 2009, <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=992150>, (17 December 2010).

¹²⁵ International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran" GOV/2010/1, 18 February 2010.

¹²⁶ In contradiction with the 2007 NIE which stated that Iran halted its military nuclear program in 2003, IAEA report points out the possibility that Iran might have maintained the military nuclear program.

¹²⁷ "Iran Letter Repeats Nuclear Swap Terms Rejected by West", *New York Times*, 23 February 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/24/world/middleeast/24nuke.html>, (18 December 2010)

turned into an impasse the P5+1 countries intensified their efforts to adopt a new sanctions resolution with a view to encouraging Iran to be more cooperative. However, in addition to China and Russia's reservation on imposing forth round of sanctions Turkey and Brazil, non-permanent members of the Security Council, voiced their objection to new Security Council resolution and urged the parties for a diplomatic solution. Brazil also joined Turkey in its efforts to revive the diplomatic process and undo the rationale for new sanctions and offered to mediate between the West and Iran which was welcomed by President Ahmedinejad. Brazilian President's planned visit to Tehran on 15-16 May 2010 was interpreted as Iran's last chance to defer upcoming sanctions resolution.¹²⁸

During President Lula da Silva's visit, negotiations regarding fuel swap were held with the participation of Turkish delegation headed by Foreign Minister Davutoğlu. After hours of discussions among Turkish, Brazilian and Iranian officials including Foreign Ministers of these countries, a Joint Declaration regarding the fuel swap was signed by three Foreign Ministers at a ceremony which was attended by Turkish Prime Minister together with Brazilian and Iranian Presidents. With this Declaration, Iran accepted to deposit its 1200 kg low enriched uranium in Turkey under custody of the IAEA within one month after written agreement is concluded between Iran and the VG. According to this agreement the VG would deliver 120 kg fuel required for TRR in no

¹²⁸ "Medvedev: Brazilian visit could be last chance for Tehran", *CNN*, 14 May 2010, <http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2010/05/14/medvedev-brazilian-visit-could-be-last-chance-for-tehran/>, (17 December 2010); "Brazil visit to Iran: 'last chance' before new round of sanctions?", *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 May 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/terrorism-security/2010/0514/Brazil-visit-to-Iran-last-chance-before-new-round-of-sanctions>, (17 December 2010); "Brazil's President To Visit Iran In 'Last Chance' To Avert UN Sanctions", *Radio Free Europe*, 15 May 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Brazils_President_To_Visit_Iran_In_Last_Chance_To_Avert_UN_Sanctions/2042862.html, (17 December 2010), "Brezilya lideri Lula nükleer program görüşmesi için İran'da", *BBC*, 16 May 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2010/05/100516_brazil_iran.shtml, (17 December 2010).

later than one year.¹²⁹ However, although the Declaration emerged as a valuable confidence building measure which the VG has been seeking for some time it was not given due attention by Western countries. The P5+1 countries did not stop discussions on the draft Security Council resolution and just two days after the Joint Declaration was announced the US agreed with China, Russia and other major powers to finalize the draft Security Council resolution.

The P5+1's formal response to Iran's letter which conveyed the Joint Declaration to the VG came just hours before the vote in the Security Council on new sanctions resolution. The VG's reply states, inter alia, that the Joint Declaration does not address Iran's production of 19.75 % enriched uranium as well as suspension of its enrichment related activities. The VG also alleged that the Declaration asserts the right for Iran to continue enrichment activities despite UN Security Council resolutions prohibit this.¹³⁰ Apart from the content of VG's response, timing of its distribution was set to give message on what they thought of the Joint Declaration.

2.2.12. The UN Security Council Resolution 1929

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1929 on 9 June 2010 which imposed fourth round of sanctions on Iran.¹³¹ Turkey and Brazil who have been insisting on diplomatic solution voted against the resolution while Lebanon abstained. The last resolution tightened the sanctions further by calling all States to inspect all cargo to and from Iran, if the State has the information that provides reasonable grounds to believe

¹²⁹ "Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Iran and Brazil", 17 May 2010, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17_05_2010-joint-declaration-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-turkey_-iran-and-brazil_.en.mfa, (18 December 2010).

¹³⁰ "Text: Powers dismiss Iran fuel offer before U.N. vote", *Reuters*, 9 June 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6582W120100609>, (18 December 2010).

¹³¹ United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1929 (2010) S/RES/1929, 9 June 2010.

the cargo contains items transfer of which is prohibited by the Security Council resolutions. This resolution prohibits the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to Iran of any battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile system. The resolution also stipulated stricter restrictions on financial transactions with Iranian banks and expanded the list of individuals to whom travel restriction is imposed.

The logic of imposing new sanctions on Iran is to induce this country to take necessary step to establish full cooperation with the IAEA and display utmost transparency to prove exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program. It was seen in the example of previous sanction that such measures fell short of bringing about the expected result. For this reason, the US and European countries sought tough measures which would cripple Iran's economy. However, given the objection of Russia and China, it was difficult to adopt sanctions resolution in the Security Council which would paralyze Iran's key industries. Therefore, the unilateral sanctions put into force by the US and the EU subsequent to the UN sanctions targeted Iran's oil industry, financial system and some other key industries which are thought to provide financial support to Iran's nuclear program. Since then the US and its European partners intensified its efforts to ensure full implementation of the UN sanctions and, if possible, the unilateral sanctions.

After the new unilateral and multilateral sanctions were put into force the P5+1 countries did not hasten to resume negotiations but rather preferred to wait and see the effects of the sanctions which they think will draw Iran to negotiation table under their terms. As a result of P5+1's reluctant to resume talks with Iran swiftly and Iran's tactics

to gain more time they could hardly met in Geneva on 6-7 December 2010, fourteen months after the first round of talks in October 2009. Though the revival of the dialogue between parties was deemed a success, the meeting bore no concrete result other than scheduling next meeting which was held on 21-22 January 2011 in Istanbul. Two days of talks between the P5+1 and Iran which focused on Iranian nuclear issue ended inconclusively and with no agreement on further discussions in Istanbul meeting. Iranian delegation put forward two preconditions, the lifting of the sanctions and recognition of Iran's right to pursue uranium enrichment to continue the talks while the P5+1 asked Iran to implement certain transparency measures.¹³² However, neither Iran was ready to implement transparency measures which would be interpreted as concession in Tehran without having a broader long term perspective as to how the negotiation will proceed nor the P5+1 was willing to consider recognizing Iran's right to pursue uranium enrichment and lifting sanctions before Iran takes bold steps towards building confidence and fulfills the conditions that constitute basis for the sanctions. Nevertheless, although the discussions did not go beyond "exchange of views" both Iran and P5+1's readiness to hold another meeting after Istanbul talks can be considered as positive development in terms of future of the diplomatic process.¹³³

¹³² "After the Istanbul Meeting with Iran: Maintaining Persistent Diplomacy", Vol. 2, No. 1, 3 February 2011, <http://www.armscontrol.org/issuebriefs/AfterIstanbulIran>, (8 February 2011).

¹³³ "Statement by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of E3+3 following the talks with Iran in Istanbul, 21 and 22 January 2011", 22 January 2011, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/118915.pdf, (8 February 2011); "Ahmadinejad hopes for more talks after stalemate in Istanbul", Today's Zaman, 24 January 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?load=detay&newsId=233344&link=233344, (8 February 2011).

CHAPTER 3

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA:

ROLE OF THE MAJOR POWERS

3. 1. THE US EFFORTS TO CURB IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

3. 1.1. The Motives behind the US Reaction to Iran's Secret Nuclear Program

The revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities which led to a new Iran-sourced crisis at global scale caused strong reactions in the United States. The US claimed that these facilities are clear indication of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons program and violation of Iran's NPT and safeguards obligations.¹³⁴ For the US Iran's efforts to secretly build heavy water reactor and uranium enrichment facility could not be explained with any other reason because if Iran's objective was to produce nuclear energy for civilian purpose the Russian-Iranian cooperation regarding the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant constituted a good example. Therefore, the US has strived to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions with every means at hand including threat to use military force. The National Security Strategy of the US made public in September 2002 entails "strengthened nonproliferation efforts to prevent rogue states and terrorists from acquiring the materials, technologies, and expertise necessary for weapons of mass

¹³⁴ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power", op. cit., p. 209.

destruction” and does not exclude pre-emptive use of military force before enemies acquires weapons of mass destruction.¹³⁵

The US believes that Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapon would trigger an arms race in the Middle East, thereby dealing a major blow to the non-proliferation regime and stability of the region.¹³⁶ This concern is shared and voiced by other major countries as well. The most popular scenario mentioned usually in the Western circles is that if Iran acquires nuclear bomb Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia will be the first countries to follow the suit. For Egypt and Saudi Arabia these scenario was confirmed by the recent publication of US cables by several newspapers.¹³⁷ It is understood from the cables that King of Saudi Arabia and President of Egypt raised the issue of proliferation in the Middle East during the meetings with their American interlocutors and warned that if Iran acquires nuclear weapon they will also seek nuclear weapon capability. However, given the political, economic and technical obstacles to produce nuclear weapon, such threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is not imminent and realistic for the short and medium term. Although Israel is known to possess nuclear weapons, neither its neighbor Egypt who fought four wars with it nor regional powers, like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, have so far considered to follow the same path. But risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East still remains as one of the driving force of the efforts to halt Iran’s

¹³⁵ “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America”, 20 September 2002, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf>.

¹³⁶ Rober J. Einhorn, “A Transatlantic Strategy on Iran’s Nuclear Program” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 pp. 21–32, Autumn 2004, p. 24.; Bruce Riedel and Gary Samore, “Managing Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East”, in *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President*, (Washington: The Brookings Institution Press, 2008), p. 126.; Kathleen J. McInnis, “Extended Deterrence: The US Credibility Gap in the Middle East”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No.3 pp. 169–186, Summer 2005, p. 182.

¹³⁷ “Saudi Arabia urges US attack on Iran to stop nuclear programme”, *Guardian*, 28 November 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/28/us-embassy-cables-saudis-iran>, (23 December 2010); “Egypt considers atom bomb to counter Iran”, 5 December 2010, <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/301005>, (23 December 2010).

nuclear program. The US National Intelligence Council's 2008 report concludes that "over the next 15-20 years, reactions to the decisions Iran makes about its nuclear program could cause a number of regional states to intensify these efforts and consider actively pursuing nuclear weapons".¹³⁸ A nuclear weapon capable Iran is the worst case scenario for the US as well as Israel since such situation would undermine the US preponderance in the Middle East and pose existential threat to its strategic ally, Israel, in the region.

Washington's resistance to Iran's nuclear program is based on the "rogue state" discourse. President Bush revisited this discourse by designating Iran, Iraq and North Korea who are accused of sponsoring terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction, as the "axis of evil". Ever since the Hostage Crisis in 1979 the United States had imposed a series of unilateral sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran on the ground that the country has been supporting the terrorist activities. In 1984, the US designated Iran as a sponsor of terrorism and banned most of the American economic assistance.¹³⁹ Accordingly, the US fears that if Iran acquires nuclear bomb it might double its attempts to undermine stability of its neighbors and encourage terrorism against the United States and Israel.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, though an unlikely scenario, the US officials worry that if Iran produces nuclear weapons it might consider giving these weapons to wrong hands.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ The National Intelligence Council, "Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World", November 2008, http://www.dni.gov/nic/PDF_2025/2025_Global_Trends_Final_Report.pdf.

¹³⁹ Brendan Taylor, "Chapter Three: Sanctioning Iran", *Adelphi Series*, Vol. 49, No. 411, pp.59-100, November 2009, p. 67.

¹⁴⁰ James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and its Complications", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 2, March/April 2010, p. 34.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 37.

Iran's anti-Americanism and vehement opposition to Israel is another reason that worries the United States. From the Israeli perspective a nuclear Iran is not an acceptable option though it had already retained military superiority, nuclear deterrence capability and even obtained security guarantees from the United States. According to Professor Alon Ben-Meir, "No Israeli leader takes Israel's ability to defend itself for granted, regardless of the proven military superiority of the Israeli Defense Forces. Even the minimal risk of exposing Israelis to an Iranian attack would not be accepted by a country that still lives in the shadows of the Holocaust, which claimed the lives of more than six million Jews".¹⁴² Ahmedinejad's remarks from his speech given at an anti-Zionism conference in October 2005 which were translated by the international media as call for a military attack against Israel fuelled Israel's fear that Iran has been making plans to destroy Israel.¹⁴³ Notwithstanding denying statements by Iranian Foreign Minister¹⁴⁴ compounded with other hostile statements which go so far to question the holocaust, the Iranian President's said speech received a wider reaction in the international community.

On the other hand, Israelis are pleased that the US shares their concerns regarding the Iranian threat and provides Israel with security assurances. During his

¹⁴² Alon Ben-Meir, "Iran's Nuclear Program and Israel's Options", 29 April 2010, <http://www.alonben-meir.com/articles/read/id/435>, (23 December 2010).

¹⁴³ Ahmedinejad's speech triggered a discussion on what he exactly said. Some argued that his words interpreted in English wrongly and asserted that he targeted the regime that occupies Jerusalem while some others said quite the opposite. Whatever the exact translation is it is true to say that together with other anti-Israeli statements of Iranian leader this speech was interpreted as indication of Iran's alleged agenda to "wipe out Israel from the map". "Iranian leader: Wipe out Israel", *CNN*, 27 October 2005, http://articles.cnn.com/2005-10-26/world/_ahmadinejad_1_israel-jerusalem-day-islamic-world?_s=PM:WORLD, (23 December 2010); "Just How Far Did They Go, Those Words Against Israel?", *New York Times*, 11 June 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/11/weekinreview/11bronner.html>, (23 December 2006); "Text of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Speech", *New York Times*, 20 October 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/30/weekinreview/30iran.html>, (23 December 2010); "'Wiped Off The Map' - The Rumor of the Century", *Global Research*, 20 January 2007, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=4527>, (23 December 2010).

¹⁴⁴ "Iranian FM denies wanting to 'wipe Israel off the map'", *Haaretz*, 20 February 2006, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/iranian-fm-denies-wanting-to-wipe-israel-off-the-map-1.180643>, (24 December 2010).

eight years in office President Bush repeatedly affirmed US's commitment to protect Israel and praised its value as America's primary Middle Eastern ally. This situation remains unchanged under the Obama Administration. During Israeli Prime Minister's visit to Washington in July 2010, that followed his unsuccessful visit in March, Obama assured his counterpart saying that every public statement he made over the last one and a half year has been "a constant reaffirmation of the special relationship between the United States and Israel, that our commitment to Israel's security has been unwavering."¹⁴⁵ Vice President Biden also reiterated the US support to Israel's security saying that "when it comes to Israel's security there can be no daylight – no daylight – between Israel and the US".¹⁴⁶ In a nutshell, Israel threat perception from Iran lies at the center of the US policy to halt Iran's nuclear program. This partly emanates from Israel's influence in Washington and partly from the US commitment to protect its ally at all cost against the unstable environment in the Middle East.

3.1.2. The US Policy Options and Challenges

After 9/11 terrorist attacks the United States increased its concentration on "rogue states" which also led to a change in US's non-proliferation policy. Since then priority of the US Administration to control overall spread of sensitive technology shifted to the "identity" of states in quest of weapons of mass destruction. President Bush, for example, warned that "a non-transparent society that is the world's premier

¹⁴⁵ "Obama and Netanyahu meet to thaw relations, discuss Middle East peace process", *Washington Post*, 7 July 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/06/AR2010070601889.html> (24 December 2010).

¹⁴⁶ "US support for Israel must continue forever,' says Biden", *Jerusalem Post*, 8 November 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=194410>, (24 December 2010).

sponsor of terror can not be allowed to possess the world's most dangerous weapons".¹⁴⁷ This shift led to downgrading of the importance of the NPT regime which fell short of dealing with the serious cases of proliferation. Accordingly, initial response of the US to both 9/11 and later revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities was to reduce reliance on international instruments and diplomacy and put increasing emphasis on unilateral policies.¹⁴⁸

In this framework, during the 2003-2005 period US policy consisted of efforts to make the IAEA refer Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council so that punitive actions can be taken. At the same time, although the Agency was unable to confirm that Iran has been seeking to produce nuclear weapon, the US insisted on its certain knowledge that Iran is pursuing a military nuclear program and, therefore, it must stop its nuclear activities completely. In dealing with this challenge Washington preferred to keep the door open for both regime change and military strike options.¹⁴⁹ A January 2005 report states that;

The Administration has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions inside Iran at least since last summer. Much of the focus is on the accumulation of intelligence and targeting information on Iranian nuclear, chemical, and missile sites, both declared and suspected. The goal is to identify and isolate three dozen, and perhaps more, such targets that could be destroyed by precision strikes and short-term commando raids.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Shahram Chubin, "*Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*", (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), p. 83.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cenap Çakmak, "ABD ve İran Nükleer İran Krizi: Sorun Ne ve Nereye Gidiyor?" in Kenan Dağcı and Atilla Sandıklı, *Satranç Tahtasında İran: Nükleer Program*, (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2007), p. 113; Mohamed A. El-Khawas, "Iran's Nuclear Controversy: Prospects for a Diplomatic Solution" *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Fall 2005, pp. 20-41, p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ Seymour M. Hersh, "The Coming Wars", *The New Yorker*, 24 January 2005.

In 2003-2005 period while Washington exerted pressure on its European allies to make them support the IAEA's referral of Iran's nuclear dossier to the Security Council it did not rule out the option of diplomatic solution. This is partly because in March 2003 US commenced a military campaign unilaterally against Iraqi government on the grounds that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. As the military campaign advanced non-existence of Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) put the US in a difficult position vis-à-vis the international community. So, the US Administration was acting more rigorously while dealing with Iran. The US was careful not to give the impression that the impasse in the diplomatic process is not Iran's fault and the Bush Administration did not want to rely on the diplomatic process.¹⁵¹ While giving the message that the US also favored diplomatic solution, the Administration made it clear that Iran would not be allowed to prolong the process to gain more time in order to advance its nuclear program. Vice President Dick Cheney said, for example, that "if diplomacy fails, others could conceivably react more forcefully".¹⁵²

By 2005 the Bush Administration started emphasizing the primacy of diplomacy more in quest for resolution to Iranian nuclear issue. His 2005 State of the Union Address delivered on February 2 was interpreted as change of the Administration's tone towards backing the negotiations and working with the EU to defuse the crisis.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ The US Administration's pessimism about success of diplomatic process emanates from its view of Iranian regime. After labeling Iran as part of an "axis of evil" and as a state sponsoring terrorism the Bush Administration strived to take punitive actions in the UN Security Council against Iran. In addition, the US did not want to engage Iran and reward the Iranian regime for halting the nuclear program which has been pursued in breach of the NPT. Mohamed A. El-Khawass, "Iran's Nuclear Controversy: Prospects for a Diplomatic Solution", op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁵² "Europe, America, and Iran: Jaw-Jaw, for Now", *Economist*, 29 January 2005, http://www.economist.com/node/3600294?story_id=3600294, (24 December 2010).

¹⁵³ Mohamed A. El-Khawass, "Iran's Nuclear Controversy: Prospects for a Diplomatic Solution", op. cit., p. 32; "President Bush's State of the Union Address", *New York Times*, 3 February 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/03/politics/03_btext.html, (24 December 2010).

Moreover, the US President declared during his trip to Europe in February 2005 that the US and Europe were "united" in their objective to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear power and for the first time stated that the EU-3 could negotiate with Iran on behalf of the US as well.¹⁵⁴

In this context, the US support to EU-3's diplomatic initiatives continued unabated through 2005. After Iran rejected the EU-3's incentive package in mid-2005 the US became more involved in the diplomatic process. The US and the EU-3 came to the agreement to ask Iran to completely and permanently cease enrichment-related and reprocessing activities which would constitute the only basis for building confidence.¹⁵⁵ In return for the US support to diplomatic efforts the EU-3 made it clear that if the negotiations do not lead to solution they would not oppose referral of Iran's nuclear dossier to the Security Council.¹⁵⁶ In conformity with this understanding the EU-3 joined the US in quest for punitive action to punish non-compliance of Iran after it was seen that the talks between the EU-3 and Iran will yield no result. However, the US and EU-3 had to take China and Russia on board to pass a sanctions resolution at the Security Council. In this context, the US developed the "dual track" approach¹⁵⁷, maintaining

¹⁵⁴ "EU sways Bush towards softer line on Iran", *Guardian*, 25 February 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/feb/25/usa.eu>, (25 December 2010).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 92.

¹⁵⁶ "Iran nuclear progress 'not fast'", *Turkish Weekly*, 11 March 2005, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/6126/iran-nuclear-progress-not-fast-.html>, (25 December 2010); "Britain Warns of Possible UN Action Against Iran", *Voice of America News*, 12 May 2005, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2005-05-12-voa23.html>, (25 December 2010); "Chirac: Iran's nuclear plan may lead to sanctions", *Haaretz*, 22 July 2005, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/chirac-iran-s-nuclear-plan-may-lead-to-sanctions-1.164744>, (25 December 2010); "EU warns Iran could be hauled before UN", *Turkish Weekly*, 2 September 2005, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/19018/eu-warns-iran-could-be-hauled-before-un.html>, (25 December 2010).

¹⁵⁷ The "dual track" strategy includes both incentives and sanctions which are usually referred as "carrot" and "stick" in the case of Iranian nuclear issue. During the Bush Administration the pressure track became more dominant in the diplomatic process. President Obama, however, prioritized the incentives and avoided referring punitive measures and threatening Iran with military action. In this regard, the US decided to join the negotiations and seek a diplomatic solution through these negotiations. Nevertheless,

negotiations while pressuring for new sanctions, to convince China and Russia to give way to exert more pressure on Iran through concrete measures.¹⁵⁸

The US maintained its openings toward Iran in 2006 as part of policy change that it launched by 2005. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced in May 2006 that the US will join talks between the EU-3 and Iran if Tehran suspends enrichment-related activities and accepts more comprehensive IAEA inspection.¹⁵⁹ The US Administration took another step by explicitly backing the incentive package passed to Iran by Javier Solana on behalf of the P5+1. The US reportedly accepted to transfer civilian nuclear technology to Iran and promised to remove the restrictions regarding the agriculture technology and civilian aircraft and their spare parts applied to Iran since 1990s.¹⁶⁰ However, after the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the EU-3 failed to stop Iran's nuclear activities the United States has worked through the UN Security Council to punish Iran together with other permanent members.

On the other hand, objective of regime change in Iran, however, dominated the US policy through the second term of President Bush. The Administration earmarked an extra \$75 million to provide more broadcasting, scholarship and support for the Iranian non-governmental organizations to promote an opposition within Iran.¹⁶¹ The US ambitions to support regime change in Iran, however, were curbed by European powers'

after the negotiations commenced on 1 October 2009 did not yield any result President Obama started to consider tougher measures including new sanctions resolution and to give signals that all options are on the table. As a result, in addition to UNSC Resolution 1929 which imposed additional sanctions on Iran, Obama Administration tightened the unilateral US sanctions. Today, "dual track" approach remains as the dominant strategy to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue and all major stakeholders uphold this approach.

¹⁵⁸ Kadir Üstün, "Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2010, pp. 19-26, p. 20.

¹⁵⁹ "Rice Proposes Path to Talks With Iran on Nuclear Issue", *New York Times*, 31 May 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/world/middle-east/31cnd-iran.html?>, (25 December 2010).

¹⁶⁰ Arzu Celalifer Ekinçi, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 91.

¹⁶¹ Shahram Chubin, "*Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*", op. cit., p. 84.

reluctance to consider it as a viable option. Before anything else, success of efforts to change the Iranian regime was not taken for granted. Such a move could backfire through rallying the Iranians behind the regimes' hardliners and justify the Iranian rhetoric that the United States and the Europeans have been trying to prevent Iran from making use of advanced technologies and seeking to topple the Iranian regime.¹⁶² In addition, an attempt to overthrow the regime would overlook the fact that the nuclear program is common cause of all segments of the Iranian society. Indeed, days of street protests held by the Iranian green movement¹⁶³ displayed resilience of the current political order against mass movements attempting to undermine political power of the regime. After the June 2009 Presidential elections thousands of green movement supporters gathered in Tehran after the Presidential election demanding resignation of victorious Ahmedinejad and introduction of reforms. However, the Iranian President succeeded in quelling the protests in Tehran which claimed lives of about one hundred protestors.

Even if the US takes above-mentioned risks and chooses to bolster a regime change in Iran, this may not lead to desirable consequence. The US officials have always been pointing out the urgency of talking Iran's nuclear program before it gets too late. However, according to this approach, while a more moderate regime does not guarantee cessation of nuclear program even if it worth to try, there would not be enough time to wait and bear the fruits. Former Secretary of State Kissinger suggested that "bringing

¹⁶² Rober J. Einhorn, "A Transatlantic Strategy on Iran's Nuclear Program", op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁶³ Green Movement is the name used for the supporters of opposition Presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi who was defeated in the June 2009 elections. Mousavi preferred green for its election campaign and since then his supporters also carried green colored banners and flags during the protests meetings.

about regime change could take longer than the time estimated for Iran's completion of its nuclear weapons program".¹⁶⁴

As far as the military option is concerned, a number of factors can be mentioned with regard to difficulty of resorting to use of force to stop Iran's nuclear program. First of all, the factors that raise suspicions about success of regime change option are also valid for relevance of the use of force against Iran. Reports state that a limited airstrike to be carried out by either the US or Israel on Iran's nuclear facilities would bolster domestic support and may lead to initial withdrawal of Iran from the NPT and increase its willingness to use all means possible to attain a nuclear weapon.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, an air strike is less likely to destroy Iran's all nuclear facilities which are dispersed around the country and some of which are built underground. Even if the nuclear facilities get significant damage Iran would not need much time to rebuild them with its current technical capability and knowledge. Namely, according to experts Iran's enrichment program has already reached to the "point of no return".¹⁶⁶ The IAEA Director General suggested in an interview that "if you bomb them [Iran], they will go

¹⁶⁴ Henry A. Kissinger, "Iran: A Nuclear Test Case", 8 March 2005, <http://www.henryakissinger.com/articles/wp030805.html>, (25 December 2010).

¹⁶⁵ Time to Talk: The Case for Diplomatic Solutions on Iran, *Oxford Research Group*, 6 February 2007, <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/timetotalk.pdf>; Abdullah Toukan and Anthony H. Cordesman, "Study on a Possible Israeli Strike on Iran's Nuclear Development Facilities", *Center for Strategic International Studies*, 14 March 2009, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090316_israelistrikeiran.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Over the past few years Iran mastered necessary knowledge and technology to enrich uranium up to 20 % without foreign assistance and produced more than 30 kg low enriched uranium (LEU). Enriching uranium is considered as significant threshold because once this point has been reached producing weapons grade uranium is only matter of time if political decision is taken. In addition, Iran joined the few countries that can enrich uranium. However, although Iran can enrich uranium sufficient to produce fuel it does not retain fuel fabrication technology. Therefore, since Iran cannot transform LEU into fuel, purpose of its enrichment activities has been questioned. On the other hand, Iran informed the IAEA in August 2010 that it would start as of November 2010 installing equipment at Uranium Conversion Facility for conversion of the UF₆ enriched up to 20% U-235 to U₃O₈ required for fuel fabrication. The Agency, however, verified in its November 2010 report that Iran has not yet started to install equipment at this facility.; International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" *Report by Director General*, GOV/2010/46, 23 November 2010, p. 6.

on a crash course to develop a weapon. And they have the knowledge. You cannot bomb knowledge. So we should forget about force.”¹⁶⁷

Second and most important factor that constitutes an obstacle to military strike is non-existence of information to back the allegations that Iran has been pursuing military nuclear program and thereby justify a unilateral military intervention not to mention an UN-led operation. The IAEA reports detail some outstanding issue related to “possible military dimension” and the actions required to resolve these issues and point out the lack of full cooperation between Iran and the Agency. However, the IAEA is still not in position to confirm that Iran has been developing military nuclear program.¹⁶⁸ Apart from the IAEA reports Director General ElBaradei said to press in September 2009 that he had seen "no credible evidence" that Iran is developing nuclear weapons, thereby rejecting the British and German allegations that Iran has been pursuing nuclear weapon program for at least four years.¹⁶⁹

In December 2007 publication of part of the US National Intelligence Community’s NIE could be seen as an event annihilating the Bush Administration’s military option rhetoric.¹⁷⁰ The NIE stated that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 contrary to assumptions of the US’s European partners’ intelligence organizations. After publication of the NIE it became more difficult for the US to gather

¹⁶⁷ “You Can’t Bomb Knowledge”, *Newsweek*, 11 December 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/12/10/you-cant-bomb-knowledge.html>, (26 December 2009).

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, latest report of the IAEA Director General; International Atomic Energy Agency, “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran”, GOV/2010/46, op. cit.

¹⁶⁹ “No credible evidence’ of Iranian nuclear weapons, says UN inspector”, *Guardian*, 30 September 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/30/iranian-nuclear-weapons-mohamed-elbaradei>, 26 December 2010).

¹⁷⁰ Fredrik Lindvall, “United States: Drivers, Background, and the Attack Scenario,” in John Rydqvist and Kristina Zetterlund (eds.), *Consequences of Military Actions against Iran: Final Report* (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2008), p. 31.

international support required to legitimize a military attack. The NIE also implied that “the United States is not going to be willing to back its position on Iran’s nuclear program with force”.¹⁷¹ In the final analysis, the NIE had significant implication in term of the military intervention scenarios and also indicated that the US Administration would not repeat the same mistake that it made before the Iraqi war. But still the efforts to impose tougher sanctions on Iran continued unabated and it is uncertain what will follow sanctions.

3.1.3. The Obama Administration: “Reset” in Iran Policy?

The word “reset” is used to explain the new era in the US-Russian relations but it also helps to explain the change in the US approach towards Iran. The position of the Bush Administration that it would not join the negotiations with Iran unless it suspends its nuclear enrichment program has been an obstacle to the US participation in the negotiations. President Obama, however, set a new tone and set of policies for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue through engagement and negotiations without putting forward preconditions for such negotiations to start. Obama Administration’s new policy towards Iran comprises of engaging Iran through the P5+1 process as well as direct talks between the US and Iran. The Administration has been willing to engage Iran in comprehensive dialogue on various issues including regional security.¹⁷² The threat of tougher sanctions, however, would be complementary to this process. President Obama said, for instance, in May 2009 that “we are not foreclosing a range of steps, including much stronger international sanctions, in assuring that Iran understands that we are

¹⁷¹ Alethia H. Cook and Jalil Roshendal, “*The United States and Iran: Policy Challenges and Opportunities*”, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 131.

¹⁷² “What is Now for Obama’s Iran Policy: Tougher Sanctions if Diplomacy Fails”, *The International Institute for Strategies Studies*, Volume 15, Issue 5, June 2009.

serious”.¹⁷³ The policy of pursuing negotiations on the one hand and tightening sanction to put pressure on Iran on the other came to be known as the “dual-track strategy”.

President Obama’s new policy towards Iran also helped to heal the rift dominated the transatlantic relations with regard to the issue of how the Iranian nuclear issue should be dealt with.¹⁷⁴ The differences between the US and EU policies towards Iran narrowed to some extent after the election of hard-liner Ahmedinejad that shifted the EU to the US’s side but Washington’s insistence on suspension of Iran’s nuclear activities prior to negotiations has been constituting a point of disagreement between two. Therefore, the US policy change renewed the European powers’ hopes that with the participation of the United States the negotiations will be more fruitful. The negotiations held in October 2009 between P5+1 and Iran was concluded with a draft agreement geared to build confidence and pave the way for comprehensive solutions. Nevertheless, standoff in the diplomatic process that followed the said deal directed the US Administration together with its European partners to seek another sanctions resolution which, they believed, would convince Iran to stick to the negotiation process.

The deadlock in the diplomatic negotiations put the President Obama in a difficult position in the face of increasing domestic criticism. Even Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has reportedly warned in a secret three-page memorandum to top White House officials that the United States does not have an effective “long-range policy” for countering Iran’s development of nuclear capability.¹⁷⁵ A media report,

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Patrick Clawson, “The Red Line: How to Assess Progress in U.S. Iran Policy”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policies*, 2010, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ “Gates Says U.S. Lacks a Policy to Thwart Iran”, *New York Times*, 17 April 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/18/world/middleeast/18iran.html?_r=1&ref=middleeast, 26 December 2010.

referring to the White House officials, states that the memorandum came amid the intensifying effort inside the Pentagon, the White House and the intelligence agencies to develop new alternatives including military options to be considered if diplomacy and sanctions fail to change the tide of Iran's nuclear program.¹⁷⁶ In the same period, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, said that they had a contingency plan for a military attack against Iran, insisting that the use of military option should be last option.¹⁷⁷ President Obama, on the other hand, presses for diplomatic resolution but repeats that he has not taken other options off the table. Steven Simon, member of the National Security Council during the Clinton Administration and Ray Takeyh, former adviser to the Obama Administration on Iran, argue that "the political, military and policy constraints Obama would face could compel his administration to forgo the military option no matter how close Iran gets to joining the nuclear club".¹⁷⁸ For the time being, President Obama does not consider a military strike against Iran as an "ideal way" to solve the problem. His primary objective is to pressure and isolate Iran further through full implementation of the UN sanctions and tougher unilateral sanctions imposed by the US and EU. At the same time, he gives the message that he does not rule out the military option to increase its leverage against Iran and control the reaction displayed by particularly the Republicans who wants Obama to be tough on Iran. This message also aims to demonstrate Israel that the US will do what is necessary to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions thereby containing a possible Israeli unilateral

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ "US Has Military Options Against Iran, Top Aide Says", *AOL News*, 19 April 2010, <http://www.aolnews.com/2010/04/19/us-has-military-options-against-iran-top-aide-says/>, (26 December 2010).

¹⁷⁸ "If Iran came close to getting a nuclear weapon, would Obama use force?", *Washington Post*, 1 August 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/30/AR2010073002672.html>, (27 December 2010).

action against Iran. However, President Obama will have to make hard choices before the next Presidential elections to raise his chance for the second term in the White House if the renewed diplomatic efforts provide no considerable progress.

3.2. THE LIMITS OF EU-3'S "COERCIVE DIPLOMACY"¹⁷⁹

3.2.1. Why an Ad Hoc EU-3 Initiative?

The EU-3 started to become actively involved in the Iranian nuclear crisis particularly after historic visit of EU-3 Foreign Ministers' visit to Tehran in October 2003 with a view to prevent escalation of the tension in the face of increasing the US pressure to ensure referral of the dossier to the Security Council. Indeed, a number of factors motivated the EU-3 initiative to engage Iran. First of all, 2003 is the year when the EU countries gave a much higher political focus to the issue of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.¹⁸⁰ The European Security Strategy drafted by the EU High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana, and adopted in December 2003 describes the WMD proliferation as "potentially the greatest threat" to the EU.¹⁸¹ At the same time, "Basic Principles for an EU Strategy against Proliferation of WMD" document adopted by the EU Council in June 2003 reiterated EU's commitment to strengthening universal adherence to and implementation of the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. This document also stressed the goal of "ensuring

¹⁷⁹ The EU-3's initiative between 2003 and 2005 is defined as coercive diplomacy. It means that when the decision makers are not willing to make compromise in the negotiation process a threat to impose economic sanctions and even resort to use of force come into play to convince the opponent. Demand, threat and time pressure are referred as characteristics of coercive diplomacy. Tom Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy by the EU: the Iranian Nuclear Weapon Crisis", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.28, No. 3, pp. 613-633, September 2006, p. 614.

¹⁸⁰ Christer Ahlström, "The EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction" in Shannon N. Kile (ed), *Europe and Iran Perspectives on Non-proliferation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

¹⁸¹ The European Union, "A secure Europe in a better world: the European Security Strategy", 12 December 2003, <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

compliance with non-proliferation commitments”.¹⁸² In this framework, the EU-3’s ambitious initiative to take active part in dealing with the Iranian nuclear crisis fits into the EU’s increasing profile vis-à-vis the prevention of WMD proliferation.

Second, the international conjuncture which was dominated by the aftershock of the September 11 terrorist attacks to the United States and subsequent US invasion of Iraq prompted the EU to take active stance with regard to issues of concern to the international community. The Iraqi War not only led to a rift in the transatlantic relations but also constituted a serious setback in terms of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy established with the 1992 Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty).¹⁸³ A number of EU members with the United Kingdom in the lead, supported the U.S position while some other member states led by France and Germany advocated that the UN-mandated inspection regime should be given more time before resorting to use of force. Lacking a common stance with regard to foreign policy issues to counterbalance the unilateral US actions, EU did not want Iran to follow footsteps of Iraq which could lead to another war in the Middle East. In other words, in order to prevent the repetition of the transatlantic divide the EU-3 attempted to intervene before the crisis gets out of hand.¹⁸⁴

Third, mounting tension between the US and Iran and the former’s insistence on imposing multilateral sanctions alarmed the major EU members because Iran was an important trade partner for the EU. After the election of reformist and moderate Mohammad Khatami as president of Iran in 1997, ‘comprehensive dialogue’ between

¹⁸² The European Union, Basic Principles for an EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, 24 June 2003, http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_2478_en.htm.

¹⁸³ Christer Ahlström, “The EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction”, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁸⁴ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 217.

Iran and EU started. The comprehensive dialogue included development of cooperation between two sides on a number of issue including energy, trade and investment. With a view to draw up a contractual framework the EU Commission launched negotiations on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Iran upon the request of the European Council in December 2002. However, the Iraqi crisis during 2002-2003 heightened the EU interest in the non-proliferation and disarmament issues in a way that the EU began to “see issues through a security and nuclear non-proliferation lens”. This hardened the EU position on the issues previously negotiated between parties.¹⁸⁵

Iran’s importance for the EU as trade partner emanates from the former’s abundant hydro carbon resources and Europe’s quest for uninterrupted supply for energy hungry European markets. In 2003, for example, the volume of trade between two reached 17 billion Euros of which the EU imported 7 billion Euros from Iran and exported 10 billion Euros to Iran not to mention that EU’s import from Iran consisted overwhelmingly of energy and energy related products.¹⁸⁶

Last but not least, the EU could turn the Iranian nuclear crisis into benefit through raising its profile as a global actor which can contribute substantially to the resolution of the global problems. It goes without saying that EU’s political influence in the international affairs lags far behind its economic power. Therefore, EU’s active role in and contribution to resolution of Iranian nuclear issue could prove success of the CFSP and promote its global stance thereby encouraging the Union to assume more assertive role. At the same time, the EU could heal the impact of the Iraqi War on CFSP.

¹⁸⁵ Gerrard Quille and Rory Keane, “The EU and Iran: towards a new political and security dialogue” in Shannon N. Kile (ed), *Europe and Iran Perspectives on Non-proliferation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 98.

¹⁸⁶ European Union, External and intra-EU trade - statistical yearbook 1958-2009, 2010 edition, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-GI-10-002/EN/KS-GI-10-002-EN.PDF.

3.2.2. Why did EU-3's Diplomatic Efforts Fail?

Although the EU-3's "carrot" and "stick" policy succeeded to temporarily halt Iran's enrichment activities and convinced Iran to sign and start voluntarily implementing the AP the end result did not change. The EU-3 managed to agree with Iran on a declaration and sign the Paris Treaty in October 2003 and November 2004 respectively but it could not be possible to implement them because of major disagreement between parties. The main point of disagreement between the EU-3 and Iran was Iran's categorical rejection of permanently ceasing its enrichment related activities. During the negotiations Iranians asserted that as a non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT, Iran is entitled to advance sensitive nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment and development of fuel cycle, in accordance with right to use nuclear energy peacefully. They also kept telling that Iran would resume its enrichment activities, under "appropriate assurances" on sole peaceful purpose of its nuclear program, after other safeguards issues are resolved.¹⁸⁷

The EU-3, on the other hand, set complete and permanent cessation of the enrichment activities as the condition for the implementation of the agreement. From Europeans' perspective such a step would constitute only "meaningful objective guarantee" with respect to exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.¹⁸⁸ At the same time, the EU-3 assured Iran that they will provide Iran with access to nuclear technology and fuel.

¹⁸⁷ Shannon N. Kile, "The controversy over Iran's nuclear programme" in Shannon N. Kile (ed), *Europe and Iran Perspectives on Non-proliferation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 18.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 17.

The EU-3's insistence on permanent cessation of enrichment activities can be considered as an attempt to align itself with the US policy or Washington's direct imposition in the negotiation process. The EU-3 would certainly favor permanent cessation of Iran's nuclear activities but it was not as precise as the United States regarding this issue and might even consider allowing Iran to pursue limited enrichment capability under strict controls. However, this situation seems to have started to change in 2005 after the US accepted to back the EU-3 diplomatic efforts through offering Iran some moderate incentives in exchange for the EU support for reporting Iran to the Security Council if the negotiations fail. According to a media report a US official involved in the negotiations said that "the Europeans are now with us in the view that we could never monitor their enrichment activity reliably enough" to ensure that Iran's nuclear program remains peaceful.¹⁸⁹ At the same time, when Iran offered "General Framework for Objective Guarantees" in March 2005 according to which, inter alia, Iran would retain 3000 centrifuges at Natanz the EU-3 accepted to examine this proposal rather than giving an immediate negative response.¹⁹⁰ French President Jacques Chirac reportedly "urged his negotiators to consider Iran's proposal it be allowed to have an enrichment plant with 3000 centrifuges."¹⁹¹ According to Ali M. Ansari;

The European negotiators had to contend with a variety of different constraints: the critics in their own countries, members of the European Union who were not consulted

¹⁸⁹ U.S. and European Allies Agree on Steps in Iran Dispute, *New York Times*, 11 March 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/11/politics/11iran.html>, (27 December 2010).

¹⁹⁰ Of course it cannot be asserted automatically that by accepting to examine Iranian offer the EU-3 admitted to consider allowing Iran to pursue limited enrichment activity. If they rejected Iranian proposal beforehand Iran would rightly blame the EU-3 for overlooking Iran's expectations in the negotiation process. But still decision to examine the proposal or their response that they would do so displays with clarity the difference between the EU-3 and the US approach.

¹⁹¹ "Chirac Pushes EU to Drop Hard Line on Iran-Diplomats," *Reuters*, 13 April 2005, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_2005.html, (27 December 2010)

by the Big Three when they went in haste to Tehran, and the hawks in the United States and Israel.¹⁹²

The process of exchange of proposals and negotiations displayed with clarity that any settlement overlooking the problem of the lack of trust, a consequence of bitter experiences between the US and Iran, would be temporary.¹⁹³ In the absence of a

“broader framework” the Iranians worried that if they had given concession on the nuclear issue US would move to other contentious issues namely terrorism, Israel or Iraq. Therefore, they desired a broader agreement that would cover all areas of concern for Iran.¹⁹⁴ When, for example, US offered Iran moderate economic incentives in March 2005 to back the EU-3’s bargaining power, Iran rejected the offer stating that it was insufficient and the US had no role to play in the negotiations.¹⁹⁵ The United States, however, declined to talk with Iran in a broader context so long as it rejected to permanently cease enrichment activities. At the same time, while the Europeans saw the nuclear program as the core issue US believed that the Iranian regime was the source of the problem.¹⁹⁶ From the US perspective Iranian regime must not have been allowed to acquire nuclear capability. Washington also believed that the negotiations will not halt Iran’s nuclear program and “diplomacy appeared to be the means to demonstrate that no agreement was possible”.¹⁹⁷ Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran analyst for the International Crisis Group stated that the US offer “seems like a transparent strategy: you offer Iran modest incentives that ... the US knows Iran will refuse. Then you can take [Iran] to the Security Council with a clear conscience, knowing that you did offer incentives, but Iran

¹⁹² Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust*, (London: C. Hurst and Company Ltd.), 2006, p. 206.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 205.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁵ Shannon N. Kile, *The Controversy over Iran’s Nuclear Programme*, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁹⁶ Shahram Chubin, *Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

wasn't willing to accept.”¹⁹⁸ Sadjadpour adds “Whether or not it's exaggerated, there is a concern among mullahs that the US is not going to rest until it's removed the regime in Tehran”.

Consequently, the US's efforts to report the nuclear dossier to the Security Council was ironically aided by election of Ahmedinejad as the President of the Islamic Republic in June 2005. After understanding that the EU-3 will not make concession on enrichment issue the Iranian officials continued to emphasize that Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear energy would not be compromised. Election of hard-liner Ahmedinejad and his anti-Israeli rhetoric were only the factors that expedited this process. Although the EU-3 initiative did not prevent escalation of the crisis between the West and Iran it accomplished to delay advancement of Iran's nuclear program for a couple of years. It was become clear after the negotiations that without active participation and full backing of US, the EU-3 could only achieved temporary solutions. After the coercive diplomacy of the EU-3 failed the EU also joined US in its efforts to punish and isolate Iran through unilateral and multilateral sanctions.

The EU's approach towards sanctioning Iran evolved dramatically in the last decade. Until 2005 the EU pursued a policy of preferring “carrots over sticks”.¹⁹⁹ When, for instance, the Clinton Administration put the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act into force in 1996 and decided to extend it for a further five years in 2001 the EU issued statements critical of US decisions. In 2001 the EU press release stated that “as a matter both of principle and policy, the European Union has long opposed unilateral sanctions laws

¹⁹⁸ “Iran rebuffs US over nuclear plans”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 March 2005, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0314/p01s03-wome.html>, (27 December 2010).

¹⁹⁹ Brendan Taylor, “Chapter Three: Sanctioning Iran”, op. cit., p. 73.

with extraterritorial effects”.²⁰⁰ The statement also emphasized that such laws “threaten the open international trading system”. The EU’s traditional stance of favoring incentives over sanctions began to change after the EU-3’s efforts to convince Iran to stop its nuclear program through certain incentives failed. Since then the EU not only supported the UN sanctions resolution but also went beyond the multilateral sanctions by imposing its own restrictions at the implementations phase.²⁰¹ The latest Council Decision²⁰² taken on 26 July 2010 to impose further sanctions on Iran demonstrates how EU’s approach towards unilateral sanctions has evolved. The unilateral EU sanctions go beyond the UN Security Council resolution 1929²⁰³ in a number of areas. First, while the SC resolution 1929 restricts sale, supply and transfer of certain categories of arms to Iran, EU sanctions impose restriction on “arms and related materiel of all types”. Second, departing from UN resolution’s noting that “chemical process equipment and materials required for the petrochemical industry have much in common with those required for certain sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities” the EU sanctions targets Iran’s petrochemical industry. According to the said decision the sale, supply or transfer of “key equipment and technology” for the refining, liquefied natural gas, exploration and production sectors of the oil and natural gas are prohibited. Third, “the granting of any financial loan or credit to enterprises in Iran that are engaged in the sectors of the Iranian oil and gas industry” is also prohibited by the EU Council Decision. Last, EU sanctions include an enlarged list of persons whose admission will be rejected. In a nut

²⁰⁰ “EU regrets extension of US sanctions law against Iran and Libya”, *Statement by Commissioner for External Relations*, 31 July 2001, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/01/1162&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

²⁰¹ For further reading see Brendan Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

²⁰² European Union, “Council Decision of 26 July 2010 concerning restrictive measures against Iran and repealing Common Position 2007/140/CFSP” *Official Journal of European Union*, 27 July 2010, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:195:0039:0073:EN:PDF>.

²⁰³ United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1929 (2010) S/RES/1929, 9 June 2010.

shell, the EU sanctions go far beyond the multilateral sanctions and target Iran's strategic sectors like oil, gas and petrochemical industry. The reason is obvious: the Europeans and the US failed to convince China and Russia to adopt crippling sanctions against Iran's key sectors and after the UN resolution formed the legitimate ground for sanctioning Iran they introduced tighter measure to exert more pressure on Iran.

3.3. RUSSIAN APPROACH TOWARDS IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

3.3.1. Russian-Iranian Economic Cooperation

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian-Iranian political and economic relations developed considerably. Russia's quest for financial resource to foster recovery of its post-dissolution stagnant economy and Iran's pursuit of new partners which would constitute alternative to the Western countries who rejected to supply Iran nuclear materials and technology as well as conventional arms created a favorable ground for cooperation of two countries. First of all, since the early 1990s, Russia emerged as major arms supplier of Iran selling a fair amount of ground forces weaponry, infantry combat vehicles, armored personnel carriers, helicopter, tanks, anti-tank missiles combat aircrafts and submarines.²⁰⁴ The US and EU sanctions against Iran have turned Russia into a rare defense partner but the fourth round of sanctions imposed on Iran with the UN Security Council resolution 1929 seems to thwart this partnership. After this resolution was passed, Russia cancelled shipment of the S-300 air defense system which was planned to enhance Iran's capability to defend its nuclear facilities against an air

²⁰⁴ "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database", *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php, (27 December 2010).

strike partly as a result of the US pressure.²⁰⁵ Iran initially reacted Russia's refusal, Iranian Defense Minister saying that Iran would apply legal channels to realize the provisions of the contract but it was careful to keep the reaction measured because Iran has few alternatives for arms and military technology.²⁰⁶ Iranian Defence Minister also stated that Iran will produce long range defense system similar to the S-300 missiles.²⁰⁷

Russia's economic interests in Iran are not confined to latter's military procurement only. Iran possesses world's second largest gas reserves after Russia. Therefore, energy constitutes another area of cooperation between two. Russia is involved in gas exploration in southern Iran and Moscow aims at increasing its share in Iran's gas production. Russia and Iran signed a treaty in January 2008 to cooperate in developing some of Iran's oil and natural gas reserves.²⁰⁸ In January 2009, Tehran and Moscow signed another agreement to trade natural gas in order to increase their shares in global gas markets.²⁰⁹ In July 2009 Russian Energy Minister voiced support to the implementation of oil and gas projects in Iran.²¹⁰ Moscow, at the same time, seeks to

²⁰⁵ The Security Council resolution banned transfer of heavy weaponry under eight categories such as battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems to Iran. The deal for S-300 missile defense system was signed in 2007 but because of political calculations Russia delayed the shipment. After the resolution 1929 was adopted, Russian Foreign Minister said that the delivery of this system to Iran was not affected while Head of General Staff said the opposite but Russian President Medvedev's decree listing the S-300 system among the military items export of which is forbidden under the last round of sanctions published on Kremlin website put an end to the discussion. "Executive order on measures to implement UN Security Council resolution 1929 on Iran" 22 September 2010, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/acts/980>, (27 December 2010); "Kremlin Bans Sale of S-300 Missile System to Iran", *BBC*, 22 September 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11388680>, (27 December 2010).

²⁰⁶ "Minister: Decision to Annul S-300 Delivery to Harm Russia's Interests", *Fars News*, 12 November 2010, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8908210643>, (27 December 2010).

²⁰⁷ "DM: Russia's Creditability Undermined by Ban on S-300 Delivery to Iran", *Fars News*, 26 September 2010, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8907041692>, (28 December 2010).

²⁰⁸ Ariel Farrar-Wellman, "Russia-Iran Foreign Relations", *Iran Tracker*, 2 August 2010, http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/russia-iran-foreign-relations#_ftn82, (28 December 2010).

²⁰⁹ "Iran, Russia agree to swap gas", *Tehran Times*, 10 January 2009, http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=186443, (28 December 2010).

²¹⁰ "Russia Keen to Implement Oil, Gas Projects in Iran", *Fars News*, 25 July 2010, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8805030926>, (28 December 2010).

involve in Iranian gas transportation to South Asia while possible Iranian gas delivery to Europe is not desirable since it wants to preserve lucrative European market's dependence on Russian gas.²¹¹ However, the tighter sanctions imposed on Iran, particularly the unilateral US sanctions seems to undermine Russian-Iranian energy cooperation.²¹² In March 2010, Russia's largest oil company Lukoil has announced its decision to withdraw from the Anaran project in Iran due to the US sanctions against Tehran.²¹³ In the following month Lukoil halted gasoline sales to Iran because of the same reason. Although this company resumed gasoline supply to Iran in August 2010 this event itself demonstrates that the US pressure has impact on decisions of Russian companies.

3.3.2. Russian-Iranian Nuclear Cooperation

Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation dates back to early 1990s when Iran started to look for new partners to build nuclear reactors after Western countries rejected to support its nuclear program. The cooperation agreement in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy was signed between Russia and Iran on 24 August 1992 and the following day two countries concluded an agreement on construction of the nuclear power plant in Iran. In this framework, the agreement on the completion of unit one of the Bushehr nuclear power plant was signed in January 1995 despite strong reaction of

²¹¹ Dmitri Trenin and Alexey Malashenko, "Iran: A View From Moscow" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/iran_view_moscow.pdf, (28 December 2010).

²¹² Although the unilateral U.S. sanctions are not binding for the Russian companies, they started to withdraw from the Iranian markets in order not to lose their share in the Western markets in the face of U.S. pressure.

²¹³ "Lukoil Withdraws From Iran Project, Citing 'U.S. Sanctions'", *Radio Free Europe*, 24 March 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Lukoil-Withdraws_From_Iran_Project_Citing_US_Sanctions/1992471.html, (28 December 2010).

the United States.²¹⁴ Under this deal worth of \$800 million Russia also agreed to train 20 to 30 Iranian nuclear experts in Russian nuclear facilities and promised to supply three light water reactors to Iran. As the sole partner of Iran in the nuclear field Russia was to benefit less than Iran. For Iran, Russia's acceptance to complete Bushehr nuclear power plant was priceless in view of the US's efforts to isolate Iran and make resumption of its nuclear program impossible. Although this undertaking gave Russia a leverage in its relations with Iran and provided cash resource to stagnant Russian economy, Moscow benefited from this cooperation less than Iran did. While the US strived to generate international reaction the Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation Russians emphasized, on the other hand, that the nuclear cooperation is commercial transaction and accused some Western European countries of trying to supersede the Russian companies and thereby paving the way for their own companies.²¹⁵ In August 2001 the US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld accused Russia of providing Iran with nuclear weapon technology.²¹⁶ Russian President Vladimir Putin refused in an interview with an American television that Russia is providing Iran with sensitive technology which can be used for producing nuclear weapons.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ In addition to questioning genuine intentions of Iran on the ground that this country had vast hydro carbon resources and therefore did not need nuclear energy, U.S. opposition rest on three points. First U.S. concerned that plutonium which can be extracted from the spent fuel allows Iran to produce nuclear bomb. Second, Iran and Russia could use Bushehr as a cover to transfer other sensitive technology. Last, U.S. feared that Iranian scientists working at Bushehr could advance further Iran's nuclear program after gaining necessary knowledge in the Russian built reactor. "Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)", *Global Security*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/iran/bushehr.htm>, (28 December 2010).

²¹⁵ Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "Dances with Wolves: Russia, Iran and the Nuclear Issue", op. cit., p. 135.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 136.

²¹⁷ "Putin disputes reports Russia helping Iran develop weapons of mass destruction", *Independent*, 7 November 2001, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/putin-disputes-reports-russia-helping-iran-develop-weapons-of-mass-destruction-616185.html>, (5 January 2011).

It goes without saying that after the revelation of Iran's clandestine facilities Russia started to receive more pressure but it continued to build the nuclear reactor at Bushehr. Russian officials repeated that the Bushehr nuclear reactor would only be used for peaceful purposes and said that they have nothing to do with the revealed plants.²¹⁸ As Russia refused to withdraw from Bushehr nuclear power plant US made two demands on Russia: first, while the United States reiterating that Russia should cease its support Washington argued that at least it should not supply the fuel for the Bushehr reactor until Iran agrees to return spent fuel to Russia. Second, the US asked Russia not to ship nuclear fuel to Iran until it signs the AP.²¹⁹ Concerning the first demand, Russia and Iran signed an agreement on 28 February 2005 regarding supply of nuclear fuel for the Bushehr reactor and return of spent fuel to Moscow. US's second expectation was met after Iran signed the AP in December 2003 and started implementing prior to ratification. This does not mean necessarily that the US revoked its objection but despite continuous reactions and pressure Russia seemed determined to complete the project and Moscow's efforts led to exemption of the Bushehr reactor from the UN sanctions imposed on Iran.

Although the construction delayed for several years because of economical, political and technical reasons the Russian experts started loading fuel to the Bushehr reactor on 21 August 2010 and it is planned to join Iran's national energy grid by February 2011.²²⁰ Few days before the fuel load began the US State Department Spokesman stated that launch of Bushehr nuclear power plant proves that Iran does not

²¹⁸ Robert O. Freedman, "Russia, Iran and the Nuclear Question: Putin Record" *The Strategic Studies Institute*, November 2006, p. 18.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²²⁰ "Bushehr plant to join Iran grid in Feb", *Press TV*, 3 January 2011, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/158414.html>, (5 January 2011).

need to build uranium enrichment facilities and could use nuclear fuel provided by other countries.²²¹ On 26 October 2010 the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also said that the United States had no problem with the Bushehr nuclear power plant. The statements by the US officials demonstrate that Washington has full confidence with Russia with regard to the Bushehr reactor. Clinton, for example, emphasized that they have enough information to say that the reactor is “strictly for peaceful purposes”.²²²

3.3.3. Russian-Iranian Political Relations and the Nuclear Issue

Russian-Iranian political relations developed on the basis of two countries’ economic cooperation as well as Russia’s recognition of Iran as an important country in the region. The nuclear technology cooperation and arms sales cemented the relations but the US opposition to Russia’s moves casted shadow over the further improvement of the economic and political relations despite both sides desired to do so. In 1995, for example, through the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission²²³ US convinced Russia to halt arms sales to Iran but the reactor deal was not affected.²²⁴ Indeed, the US-Russian relations have been one decisive factor of the Russian-Iranian cooperation. Revelation of Iran’s secret nuclear facilities also constituted another factor having impact on two countries’ cooperation. With the arrival of President Putin Iran’s strategic importance

²²¹ “Iran does not need own uranium enrichment - U.S. State Department”, *Ria Novosti*, 8 August 2010. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100818/160242268.html>, (5 January 2011).

²²² “Clinton: No problem with Iran Bushehr atomic plant”, *Reuters*, 26 October 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE69P3IJ20101026>, (5 January 2011).

²²³ President Clinton and President Yeltsin established the US-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technological Cooperation at their summit meeting in Vancouver, in April 1993. The commission has become known as the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, because of its co-chairmen, US Vice President Al Gore and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Though the initial mandate of the Commission was to enhance cooperation between the United States and Russia in the areas of space, energy, and high technology, as of July 1996 it was expanded to include eight additional committees: Space, Business Development, Energy Policy, Defense Conversion, Science and Technology, Environment, Health, and Agribusiness. “Russia: Gore-Primakov (Gore-Chernomyrdin) Commission (GCC)”, *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, <http://www.nti.org/db/nisprofs/russia/forasst/otherusg/gcc.htm>, (5 January 2011).

²²⁴ Shahram Chubin, *Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, op. cit., p. 109.

was reiterated and arms cooperation with Iran was resumed.²²⁵ However, after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Russia sympathized with US and adopted a cooperative attitude in countering terrorism through, for instance, approving deployment of the US troops in Central Asia.

On the other hand, with the revelation of the secret facilities the nuclear issue took the center in Russian-Iranian relations. Russia disconnected the built of Bushehr plant from Iran's secret nuclear activities and emphasized the exclusively peaceful nature of this plant. Nevertheless, increasing US and Israeli criticism, the post-September 11 environment and revelation of Iran's clandestine facilities increased pressure on Russia making Moscow adopt a more careful attitude.²²⁶ During this period Russia followed a "double-track policy" toward Iran. On the one hand, it continued building the Bushehr nuclear power plant and give the message to the international community that Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation was pursued in compliance with the international rules and standards.²²⁷ Russia also emphasized that it made adherence to the Additional Protocol a precondition for the completion of the Bushehr project. Russian Foreign Minister asserted that it was Russian initiative that made Iran sign the Additional Protocol and suspend uranium enrichment activities.²²⁸

While Russia was determined preserve the volume of its nuclear cooperation it was careful not to allow the Iranian nuclear issue impairs its international stance. Russia

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "Dances with Wolves: Russia, Iran and the Nuclear Issue", op. cit., p. 137.

²²⁷ Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "The Limits of the Russian-Iranian Strategic Alliance: Its History and Geopolitics, and the Nuclear Issue", *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 20, No. 1, March 2008, 45-60, p. 52.

²²⁸ On 9 November 2003, the Secretary of the Iranian National Security Council, Hassan Rohani visited Moscow and after his meeting with President Putin he announced Iran's willingness to sign the Additional Protocol and suspend uranium enrichment activities. *Ibid.*

has certainly no interest in Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. Quite the opposite this would shift the geopolitical and strategic balance from the Caucasus to Central Asia against Moscow.²²⁹ Indeed, a nuclear armed Iran would be a serious rival in the wider Eurasia region and have impact on the energy politics in this region as well. Russia also made its position known by the Western countries, Foreign Minister Ivanov saying in November 2003 that there is no country that wanted Iran to possess nuclear weapons and he reiterated that they have been advising Iran to be more transparent with regard to its nuclear program and comply with the NPT and the IAEA safeguards.²³⁰

Russia, however, opposed to the US position to report Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council without delay and aligned itself with the EU-3 policy, supporting their efforts and launching its own initiative in parallel.²³¹ In this framework, after the EU-3's diplomatic initiatives failed to stop Iran's nuclear program Russia proposed Iran to pursue joint uranium enrichment in Russia. But after Iran rejected the proposal which was also supported by the EU-3 and US, Moscow did not resist the US and Europeans attempts to take punitive actions against Iran. Since the Security Council's involvement in the issue Russia supported the critical UN resolutions on Iranian nuclear issue when the international community united over a common approach while also limiting its relations with Iran with certain "red lines".²³² Moscow, however, continued voicing its opposition to unilateral actions against Iran including tougher

²²⁹ Dmitri Trenin and Alexey Malashenko, op. cit., p. 22.

²³⁰ Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "The Limits of the Russian-Iranian Strategic Alliance: Its History and Geopolitics, and the Nuclear Issue", op. cit., p. 52.

²³¹ Shahram Chubin, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions", op. cit., p. 109.

²³² Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "The Limits of the Russian-Iranian Strategic Alliance: Its History and Geopolitics, and the Nuclear Issue", op. cit., p. 57.

unilateral sanctions and military strike. When, for instance, the US President Obama signed the tougher unilateral sanctions on Iran subsequently after the UN sanctions was adopted in June 2010 President Medvedev rebuffed these sanctions saying that "We should act collectively. If we do, we will have the desired result."²³³ Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov also warned on September 23 that there is no evidence to prove that Iran is working to produce nuclear weapon and that a military strike would have negative impact on Iran.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Russian-US cooperation, inter alia, with regard to Iran's nuclear program reached its apex in recent years. The arrival of the President Obama provided Moscow with a better opportunity to "connect its overall approach to international order to its relations with both the United States and Iran".²³⁴ Having "reset" its policy towards Russia President Obama adopted a softer tone on contentious issues like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement and the ballistic missile defense system deployment in Europe. As a result, in addition to supporting the UN sanctions Russia also accepted to cancel shipment of the S-300 air defense system which awaited delivery for more than three years. Relative improvement in Russian-American relations is apparent in the rhetoric of Russia towards Iran as well. President Medvedev's statement, for example, that Iran is getting closer to have potential to produce nuclear weapon, indeed, surprised Iranians and triggered anger in Tehran towards Russian leader's words.²³⁵ From Tehran's perspective, these words

²³³ "Russia's Medvedev raps EU, US sanctions against Iran", *BBC*, 18 June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10348630>, (5 January 2011).

²³⁴ Dmitri Trenin and Alexey Malashenko, op. cit., p. 22.

²³⁵ "Medvedev: Iran Nearer to Nuclear Weapons Potential", *Voice of America*, 12 July 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Medvedev-Iran-Nearer-to-Nuclear-Weapons-Potential-98239489.html>, (5 January 2011); "FM Dismisses Medvedev's 'Unrealistic' Remarks on Iran's N.

indicated that Russia has joined the US “plots” against Iran. The fierce official Iranian accusation demonstrates the depth of Tehran’s disappointment over the shift in Russian policy on which Iran relied to avoid tougher UN sanctions.

3.4. CHINESE POLICY TOWARD IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

Chinese approach towards Iranian nuclear issue has been important since this country holds one of the permanent seats in the Security Council and, particularly in the last decade, its profile has been rising as a global player displaying increasing interest in the issues on the international agenda. In the past decade, as the Iranian nuclear issue remained unresolved and the US and the major European countries attempted to take punitive actions against Iran the international community turned to China together with Russia to see whether these countries would allow such action or not. However, despite their hesitancy both countries supported four sanction resolutions adopted at the Security Council after making necessary amendments in the draft resolution to protect their interests in Iran.

Although Chinese policy towards Iranian nuclear issue overlaps with Russian policy to a great extent, unlike Russia’s, Chinese policy towards the Middle East in general and Iran in particular is led by its growing energy need.²³⁶ With a rapidly growing economy and dramatically increasing energy consumption China has become a major gas and oil importer in the last decade. China’s crude oil import raised from 36 million tons in 1999 to 178 million tons in 2008 while the total energy consumption

Activities”, *Fars News*, 13 July 2010, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8904221494>, (6 January 2011); “Ahmadinejad Says Medvedev Has Joined 'U.S. Plot' Against Iran”, *Radio Free Europe*, 24 July 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Ahmadinejad_Says_Medvedev_Has_Joined_US_Plot_Against_Iran/2108405.html, (6 January 2011).

²³⁶ Evan S. Medeiros, “*China’s International Behavior: Activism Opportunism and Diversification*”, (California: RAND Corporation, 2009), p. 168.

reached to 2.85 billion tons from 1.33 billion tons in the same period.²³⁷ Iran is second largest supplier of crude oil to China after Saudi Arabia. Notwithstanding the US pressure and threat of unilateral US sanctions major Chinese national energy companies have invested in Iran's oil and gas fields.²³⁸ In addition, whereas the US viewed Iran as primary source of instability China sought to develop stable relations with it on the basis of mutually beneficial economic cooperation. China expanded economic ties with Iran beyond making investment in oil fields through supplying this country arms as well as transferring weapons technology, probably including missile technology. By 2005 the US had imposed 62 sanctions on Chinese firms for violating controls on the transfer of these technologies.²³⁹ The recently leaked US cables also revealed that China refused to act on several US requests to prevent shipment of ballistic-missile components from North Korea to Iran via Beijing in 2007. Moreover, according to the cables the US Secretary of State Clinton warned China that Iran was trying to buy some material used in production of ballistic missiles.²⁴⁰

While the Iranian nuclear issue rose to the top of US's foreign policy agenda after the revelation of Iran's secret facilities, China continued developing its economic relations and remained hesitant to join the efforts to sanction and isolate Iran because China's and US view of the nuclear issue differs to a considerable extent. Firstly, China consistently questioned the claim that Iran has been seeking to develop nuclear weapons

²³⁷ National Bureau of Statistics of China, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/yearlydata/>, (6 January 2011).

²³⁸ John Garver, Flynt Leverett, and Hillary Mann Leverett, "Moving (Slightly) Closer to Iran: China's Shifting Calculus for Managing Its Persian Gulf Dilemma" *Asia-Pacific Policy Papers Series*, pp. 49-51

²³⁹ Hongyi Harry Lai, "China's oil diplomacy: is it a global security threat?", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 519-537, April 2007, p. 525

²⁴⁰ "China Stood Aside on Iran", *Wall Street Journal*, 29 November 2010, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704584804575644031813_953758.html, (6 January 2011).

while the US policymakers are making their calculation on the assumption that Iran will acquire these weapons one they in the future if not sooner. More importantly, for Washington prevention of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is of vital importance while China is not alarmed with the possibility of a nuclear Iran in the region though it is desirable for China that Iran remains non-nuclear.²⁴¹ Secondly, China makes it clear that it supports Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy but emphasizes all countries responsibility to fulfill their obligations under the NPT. In this context, China continued in the past encouraging Iran to increase cooperation with the IAEA to restore the confidence of the international community in peaceful nature of its nuclear program.²⁴² Lastly, China has been defending peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue while the US continuously warns that all alternatives including the military strike are on the

²⁴¹ John Garver, Flynt Leverett, and Hillary Mann Leverett, op. cit. 37.

²⁴² Chinese officials underline this point in their statements. Indeed, US policy makers including the President himself emphasize that they recognize Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. However, two countries have different understanding of "right to peaceful use of nuclear energy". First paragraph of the Article IV of the NPT which defines the said right is read as such: "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all Parties to the Treaty to develop, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty." So, NPT provision gives state right to develop complete fuel cycle including uranium enrichment which is one of the major steps in fuel cycle. It would not be wrong to state that China supports Iran's right to develop fuel cycle as it defined in the NPT. The US, on the other hand, argues that Iran breached its obligation under the NPT by hiding its nuclear activities from the IAEA inspection, pointing out, at the same time, the outstanding issues associated with the possible military dimension of Iran's nuclear program. The Article II of the NPT stipulates that parties to the Treaty shall not obtain nuclear weapon and any other nuclear explosives and develop nuclear weapons. The United States also emphasizes the importance of the additional arrangements such as Additional Protocol and Safeguards Agreement geared to verify that a state's nuclear program remains peaceful. Iran's resistance to ratify the Additional Protocol gives US additional concern with regard to Iran's nuclear program. Therefore, according to the US position together with breach of its NPT obligations Iranian regime constituted reason for not allowing Iran to develop complete fuel cycle while China regard Iran's non-compliance as an issue of confidence between Iran and the international community. Recently leaked US cables sent from Beijing to Washington briefing the meeting with Chinese officials display that China believe that it would not be realistic to expect from Iran to abandon its enrichment program. Rather Chinese officials believe, the cables says, on the basis of full transparency and comprehensive IAEA inspection Iran's development of peaceful nuclear program might be allowed. It goes without saying that the US categorically rejects allowing Iran to pursue uranium enrichment.

table. Chinese official states in clear terms that they disapprove any move by Western countries to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.²⁴³

Although abovementioned principles are guiding the Chinese policy towards Iranian nuclear issue it is hard to say that Chinese approach based only on these principles. Instead Beijing's policy on the nuclear issue seeks to balance different interests, namely regional stability, uninterrupted supply of oil, securing China's northwest border, developing Sino-American relations and Sino-Iranian relations and lastly the positions of Europe and Russia.²⁴⁴ Until today, China aimed at not allowing the Iranian nuclear issue to spoil its relations with the US and European countries and to undermine its international stance as responsible actor striving to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and upholding international regimes. To do so, China approved referral of the Iranian nuclear issue to the Security Council and supported four Security Council sanctions resolutions though it explicitly defended that the sanctions would not help solving the issue.²⁴⁵ Thanks to this policy China prevented turn of disagreement with the US into crisis and give the message to the international community that it is working with other major powers to resolve the issues of concern for the international community.

²⁴³ "China Calls for Peaceful Resolution of Nuclear Standoff", *New York Times*, 6 September 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/world/asia/07china.html>, (8 January 2010); "China seeks peaceful resolution of Iran nuclear issue", *Xinhuanet*, 1 April 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-04/01/c_13234149.htm, (8 January 2010); "China urges peaceful solution to Iranian nuclear issue", *China Daily*, 15 September 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-09/15/content_11308931.htm, (8 January 2010).

²⁴⁴ John Garver, Flynt Leverett, and Hillary Mann Leverett, *op. cit.* 37.

²⁴⁵ China's resistance to the sanctions frequently interpreted as result of Beijing's economic calculations (securing oil supply and promoting arms sale to Iran). However, overall analysis of the leaked US cables demonstrates that the Chinese officials expressed their suspicion about effectiveness of sanctions and warned the US officials that tougher sanction could led to rally of Iranians behind the hardliners that defend continuation of the nuclear program. More importantly, according to the cables Chinese officials encouraged a direct channel between Iran and the US for the negotiations instead of P5+1 channel and even offered to mediate between two countries with a view to establish direct talks.

Sino-American relations have always been important factor in China's calculations with regard to its approach towards Iranian nuclear issue. China does not want to add another issue into the lists of subjects that increases the tension periodically in Sino-American relations. Chinese and American leaders' disagreement on how to move forward on the Iranian nuclear dossier during Obama's visit to Beijing was one of the factor that made Obama Administration to get tough on China by approving conventional arms sale worth of more than \$6 billion to Taiwan in January 2009 and meeting with Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama on February 2010 though Washington cancelled such meeting between two in October 2009.²⁴⁶ Therefore, it can be argued that the reaction of the US to China's refusal to support new sanction resolution played a role in Beijing's decision to support UN Security Council resolution 1929 through urging China's policy makers to prevent further deterioration of the relations.

On the other hand, in orders to address its other interests such as securing oil supply, developing Sino-Iranian relations and promoting regional stability China worked with Russia to diminish the impact of the sanctions on Iran, veto tough measures against Tehran in the Security Council, stand up to use of force against Iran and maintain economic cooperation with it.²⁴⁷ As discussed before China removed its opposition to the adoption of sanctions resolution but Beijing's approval came only after the Security Council resolution excluded the energy investment in Iran's oil and gas fields. Chinese officials, for example, reportedly opposed in clear terms, during the negotiations on the draft of Security Council resolution 1929, that China would not support a draft

²⁴⁶ "U.S. Approval of Taiwan Arms Sales Angers China", *New York Times*, 29 January 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/30/world/asia/30arms.html?_r=1, (9 January 2011).

²⁴⁷ John Garver, Flynt Leverett, and Hillary Mann Leverett, op. cit. 43.

resolution targeting Iran's energy sector.²⁴⁸ Chinese disapproval saved Iran's energy sector from the UN sanctions but following the US and EU unilateral sanctions which Beijing opposed²⁴⁹ covered Iran's energy sector as well as some other major industries. On the other hand, although the forth round of sanctions were passed in the Security Council with Chinese support, US doubted China is abided by these sanctions. The US and Western European countries also worried that withdrawal of Western companies from Iran following both multilateral and unilateral sanctions will be compensated by profiteers in particular the Chinese companies. Recent US allegation that Chinese companies have been bypassing the sanctions²⁵⁰ demonstrates that their fears might come true. In a nut shell, as long as China's dependency on Iranian oil continues it would not be realistic to expect adoption of crippling sanctions on Iran in the Security Council. In addition, chances of unilateral US and EU sanctions will be less without participation of other major trade partners of Iran. However, China's position that favors negotiations instead of sanctions might change if the renewed negotiations do not bear result and if China's possible economic lose in Iran in case of new UN sanction resolution is compensated by any other resources.

²⁴⁸ "China dislikes proposed Iran energy sanctions: envoys", *Reuters*, 12 April 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE63BOWD20100412>, (9 January 2011).

²⁴⁹ "China Opposes Unilateral Iran Sanctions", *Payvand*, 9 October 2010, <http://www.payvand.com/news/10/sep/1089.html>, (9 January 2011).

²⁵⁰ "U.S. says Chinese businesses and banks are bypassing U.N. sanctions against Iran", *Washington Post*, 18 October 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/17/AR2010101703364.html>, (9 January 2011).

CHAPTER 4

TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS: FROM CONFLICT TO COOPERATION

Turkish-Iranian relations were arguably more peaceful than ever in the inter war period (1919-1939) as the new Turkish Republic born from ashes of the Ottoman Empire focused on consolidation thereby avoiding any confrontation with its neighbors in line with Atatürk's famous dictum "peace at home peace in the world". Although the border dispute dominated the relations since the establishment of Turkish Republic resolution of this issue in 1932 allowed both countries to enhance their relations unprecedentedly.²⁵¹ Both Iran's and Turkey's quest for security and more peaceful environment in the uncertain and unstable inter war period led to signature of Saadabad Pact including Iraq and Afghanistan in July 1937 in Tehran. Having emerged as nonaggression and friendship agreement Saadabad Pact gave a contractual framework to friendly Turkish-Iranian relations.²⁵² In the aftermath of the WWII Turkey and Iran became pivotal states in preserving and defending the interests of the alliance of West in the Middle East and protecting south-eastern flank of the NATO in the face of expansionist Soviet Union.

In this chapter, Turkish-Iranian relations after the WWII will be put under spotlight with special emphasis on the last decades as ups and downs and serious rifts

²⁵¹ Emergence of a new republic which adopted the Western values and modern standards attracted the attention of Iran's authoritarian leader Reza Khan who also sought to modernize his country. Turkish Republic indeed set a good precedent for the Iranian leader. This was one of the factors that made Iran approach the new republic with sympathy. Atay Akdevelioğlu and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olaylar, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Vol. I (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 357.

²⁵² *Ibid*, p. 365.

occurred in the relations in this period. It goes without saying that coming of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in Turkey has important share in reaching of the Turkish-Iranian relations to an apex but AKP's policy of "zero problems with neighbors" policy cannot be the only motive behind the improvement in relations. In parallel to the track record achieved in its relations with Iran, Turkey has been playing a facilitator role for the peaceful solution of the problem arising from Iran's nuclear program.

4.1. Turkish-Iranian Relations: 1945-1979

In the post-WWII era Turkey's foreign policy priority was to obtain security guarantee from the West by aligning itself with its policies in the face of Soviet expansionism. During the war, invasion of Iran by the USSR became a source of serious concern to Turkey since it also perceived such threat and as invasion continued even after the war, socialist encirclement by the USSR and its satellites became a nightmare scenario for Turkey.²⁵³ Following the withdrawal of the USSR from this country in 1946, Turkey sought to developed friendly relations with Iran as both countries turned to West in quest for security guarantees. Except a short period when nationalist Prime Minister Muhammad Mussadegh's policies strained relations with the West and raised the concerns to Turkey that policy shift in Iran towards anti-Western nationalist wing might have led to communist takeover, Turkey and Iran enjoyed friendly relations in the chilliest decades of the Cold War.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Atay Akdevelioğlu and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk DışPolitikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olaylar, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, vol.I (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), pp. 648-652, p. 649.

²⁵⁴ Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations" *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3, September 2003, p. 12

After Turkey joined the NATO its importance to Iran enhanced and the latter sought to develop closer security relations with Turkey. This political rapprochement was crowned with Iran's participation in the Baghdad Pact²⁵⁵ which was signed by Turkey and Iraq in 1955 and turned into the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) upon withdrawal of Iraq following nationalist takeover. However, Iran was dissatisfied with the CENTO and strived to raise its profile in the eye of the United States as a "front-line state" whose strategic importance is vital to Western security. Between 1953 and 1961 the US provided Iran with approximately \$500 million military assistance allowing it to increase its armed forces from 120,000 to 200,000.²⁵⁶ Despite several problems between Iran and Turkey strategic alliance with the West, in particular the United States, and their position of standing up to Soviet expansion in the Middle East heightened the stakes and formed a common ground where two countries were able to pursue friendly relations.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ The Baghdad Pact was signed between Turkey and Iraq in 24 February 1955 with a view to establish a contractual framework for cooperation in the areas of security and defense. The idea of signing security and defense pact was based on initial the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's initiative to establish an alliance in the Middle East against the socialist expansion with the participation of major Middle Eastern states. However, this initiative could not become successful due to the dispute between Egypt and Britain related to the Suez and the absence of relations between the Arab states and Israel. But later Turkey and Iraq took this idea forward and signed the Pact. In the same year when the Pact was signed the United Kingdom, Pakistan and Iran also joined. Fahir Armaoğlu, "20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi", (İstanbul: Alkım Kitabevi, 2005), pp. 525-527.

²⁵⁶ Ali M. Ansari, "Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and After", (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), p. 136.

²⁵⁷ The first factor that had the potential to poison Turkish-Iranian relations was Iran's support to dissent Kurdish groups in Iraq. Turkey was concerned that a possible federate Kurdish state in Iraq would stir secessionist feelings of Kurds in Turkey. Secondly, Iran's ambitions to assume the role of gendarmery of the Middle East disturbed Turkey who was also striving for regional leadership. The Nixon Doctrine of 1969 which fuelled leadership ambitions of Shah in the region constituted additional concern for Turkey. Thirdly, Iran's belief that Turkey was not giving due importance to the CENTO, because Turkey was also a NATO member, made Iran became critical of effectiveness of this organization against the Soviet threat. Fourthly, the ideological differences between Turkey and Iran as well as the fact that two countries were governed by different regimes sometimes strained the relations. Turkish press, for example, sometimes criticized authoritarian Iranian regime. Lastly, although two countries were strategic allies the volume of trade between the two lagged behind political relations. Establishment of the Regional Cooperation for Development in 1964 revived the economic relations but the volume of trade did not change considerably.

After the military coup in Turkey in May 1960, a period of uncertainty prevailed in the Turkish-Iranian relations until the coup leaders proclaimed that they were loyal to NATO and CENTO. The ambiguous period did not last long and the new government resumed the political rapprochement and high level mutual visits reiterated this situation. Turkish-Iranian relations gained a new dimension upon the establishment of an organization for economic, technical and cultural cooperation, namely the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), in July 1964, by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. However, the RCD did not fulfill the expectation of Turkey and Iran to augment bilateral trade.²⁵⁸

Following the oil crises of 1973 and Turkish intervention to the conflict in Cyprus, Turkey not only faced financial difficulties because of rising oil prices and the US arms embargo but also it was isolated within the Western bloc. These developments compounded with Iran's increasing oil windfall tilted the balance between Turkey and Iran on behalf of the latter.²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Iran was critical of the US arms embargo and Shah supported Turkey's cause over Cyprus but still it was content with the situation as its strategic importance for the West increased upon these developments.²⁶⁰

4.2. Turkish-Iranian Relations: 1979-2000

The Islamic Revolution in Iran had important implications for Turkey. After the establishment of the theocratic regime in its immediate neighbor Turkey encountered several problems related to the new regime. Firstly, as a neighboring country Iran was an

Atay Akdevelioğlu and Ömer Kürçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk DışPolitikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olaylar, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Vol. I (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), pp. 801-804.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 804.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 803.

²⁶⁰ Gokhan Cetinsaya, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

important trading partner and oil supplier. The new regime's policy toward Turkey could have changed in a negative way and it may face a major difficulty in substituting this country's space. Secondly, these two countries were allies as members of the CENTO defending interests of the West in the strategic geography. Khomeini's preach that Muslims should reject the influence of both liberal capitalism and communism with the slogan "Neither East, nor West-Islamic Republic" meant that the security partnership between Turkey and Iran was over. In addition, Khomeini repositioned Iran's foreign policy on the basis of the goal and ideology of the Islamic Revolution. Thirdly, Shah's policy toward the Iraqi Kurds had already bothered Turkey.²⁶¹ This time Khomeini could have followed more reckless policy towards them as well as the Turkey's Kurds to destabilize the country. Lastly, eventual failure of the revolution and partition of Iran among the ethnic groups might have led to establishment of a Kurdish state including the Iraqi Kurds thereby stirring secessionist ambitions of Turkey's Kurds.

First of all, the revolution in Iran did not cut the commercial ties with Turkey. On the contrary, weak and isolated post-revolution Iran became a good trading partner for Turkey. As the Iran-Iraq war diminished Tehran's trade partners in the West Turkey sought to preserve its commercial ties with it. In addition, the pressing need for capital accumulation in Turkey in this period played an important role in Turkey's quest for improving its economic as well as political relations with the theocratic Iran.²⁶²

On the other hand, Iran's post-revolution foreign policy approach marked naturally the end of Turkish-Iranian alliance as it withdrew from the CENTO and adopted an non-aligned stance and anti-Western discourse. Iran's post-revolution foreign

²⁶¹ Gokhan Cetinsaya, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁶² Robert Olson, *Türkiye-İran İlişkileri: 1979-2004*, (Ankara: Babil Yayıncılık, 2005), p. 12.

policy stood on three pillars: anti-imperialist discourse against the “Great US Satan”, the West and the USSR, non-alliance with the Western or the Eastern bloc and alliance with other “oppressed” Muslims and export the revolutionary idea to them.²⁶³

Turkey faced a dilemma with regard to Iran’s anti-Western and non aligned stance. Turkey’s assessments about and reaction to the Iranian revolution were based on calculations about regional rivalry between the two countries. So, Turkey was content with weakening and isolated Iran since as a rival of Turkey Iran would be less influential in the region in the long run. On the other hand, Turkey concerned that a weakened Iran would have led to instability in its next door which might have provided a favorable ground for Soviet intervention.²⁶⁴ The Iran-Iraq war, however, added another dimension to Turkey’s assessment about how to cope with the revolutionary Iran. Turkey defined its stance with regard to this long and wearing war between two countries on the basis of domestic factors. Having concerned of a possible unrest among its Kurdish population Turkey stayed neutral in this war while its Western allies implicitly backed Iraq.²⁶⁵

After the end of the Iran-Iraq War, Iran revived the revolutionary goals and took the advantage of uncertain and unstable post-Cold War environment to spread its influence and export the revolutionary ideas to the newest republics in the Caucasus and the Central Asia as well as other countries having predominantly Muslim population like Turkey. At the same time, both Iran and Turkey wanted to increase their influence and power beyond the Middle East particularly in the Central Asia and Caucasus. To this

²⁶³ Berna Gürkaş, “Türkiye-İran İlişkileri”, in Kenan Dağcı, Atilla Sandıklı, ed., “*Satranç Tahtasında İran ‘Nükleer Program’*”, (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2007), p. 228.

²⁶⁴ Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, “Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish-Iranian Relations Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 105-106.

²⁶⁵ Ünal Gündoğan, “Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 1, March, 2003, p. 3.

end they underlined shared culture and history while making some openings in these geographies.²⁶⁶ Supported by the West, especially the US, Turkey embodied its endeavors with the sponsorship of Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Turkish Speaking Countries Summit.²⁶⁷ In addition, the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline was another step forward in this cooperation building strong ties among Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Iran's initiative to expand the Economic Cooperation Organization, the successor of the RCD, to include these republics and the proposed Caspian Sea Cooperation Organization and the Association of Persian-Language Speakers were to some degree responses to Turkey's said initiatives.²⁶⁸

The competition between Turkey and Iran for establishing political and economic influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia was not indeed realized in confrontational manner but evidently occurred at the expense of the Russian Federation²⁶⁹. However, while extending aids and loans to the countries in these regions both Turkey and Iran overestimated their capabilities.²⁷⁰ By the second half of 1990s the Russian Federation started to get back on its feet and reasserts its political and economic influence emanating from historical and organizational ties in its near abroad. This development counterbalanced Turkey's and Iran's ambitions to secure presence in these regions. This situation became even clearer in the last decade after Russia passed

²⁶⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Yasemin Nun, "Iran", in Mustafa Kibaroglu (ed), *Turkey's Neighborhood Since the End of the Cold War*, (Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 2008), p. 17.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Edmund Herzig, "Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia", *International Affairs*, No. 8, pp. 503-517, 2004, p. 507

²⁶⁹ Adam Tarock, "Iran's Policy in Central Asia", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 185-200, 1997, p. 187.

²⁷⁰ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Yasemin Nun, *op. cit.*, p. 17

through a period of rapid recovery and reemerged as super power substantially thanks to the windfall of the rising oil prices.

Though Iran and Turkey maintained their economic relations and competed, sometimes cooperated in making Caucasus and Central Asia sphere of their influence, Iran's broader goal of exporting Khomeini's vision of the Islamic revolution and Iran's support to the PKK had spoiled the relations in 1990s. In this decade the success of the Welfare Party (WP) in the municipal elections and its victory in the national elections in 1994 and 1995 respectively occurred at a time when the debate on what role should religion play in public life namely discussion on secularism was high on the agenda in Turkey.²⁷¹ So, the secular elites in Turkey worried about not only the discussions on the role of religion in social life but also rise of the WP whose real intentions they were suspicious about. In addition, the noteworthy rapprochement between Iran and Turkey after the WF formed the government raised concerns among the secular elite as well.²⁷²

Actually, the suspicions about Iran's intentions and its alleged activities in Turkey surfaced even before WP government. When secular author and journalist Uğur Mumcu was assassinated in January 1993 and the assassination was tied to a fundamental group having relations with Iran anger peaked in the funeral. The secularists present at the funeral expressed their feeling with the slogans "Turkey will

²⁷¹ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Yasemin Nun, op. cit., p. 15

²⁷² With the WP government the tension in the Turkish-Iranian relations decreased considerably for a number of reasons. First the Iranian leadership felt Prime Minister Erbakan ideologically close to itself. Second, Prime Minister Erbakan ceased to accuse both Iran and Syria of supporting the PKK. Third, Turkish Prime Minister also took important steps to improve the commercial ties with Iran as well as to effectively combat with the PKK. Shortly after taking the office he visited Tehran to boost the relations. He also concluded a \$ 23 billion gas agreement with Iran. While Prime Minister Erbakan strived to develop the bilateral relations the seculars, in particular the Turkish military, viewed the relations with Iran with suspicion. Later on the Iran-sourced factors such as the "Jerusalem Day" together with some other events laid down the ground for the military to remove Prime Minister Erbakan. Robert Olson, *Türkiye-İran İlişkileri: 1979-2004*, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

not be Iran”, “Mullahs out” and “no to Sharia”.²⁷³ A few weeks after the assassination Turkish-Iranian relations were strained even more after the Turkish police captured 19 fundamentalist Turks whose passports showed that they visited Iran quite frequently.²⁷⁴

Even during the Erbakan government Iran was accused by Turkey, albeit not by the government, of interfering its domestic affairs through supporting the Islamist groups, organizations and associations and thereby undermining the secular regime in Turkey. The tension between Turkey and Iran reached a peak after the events took place during the commemoration of the “Jerusalem Day” in Sincan, a small district of Ankara, on 1 February 1997. Iranian Ambassador Mohammed Reza Bagheri called for institution of Sheri’a in Turkey while strongly criticizing the secular state system in his speech given to the participants. The Sincan events formed the groundwork for overturn of the WP government and eventually closure of it. These events also caused a serious tension between Iran and Turkey as the prospective Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz called Bagheri a terrorist but not a diplomat and he also asked expulsion of him. A few days after his statement Ambassador Bagheri and Iranian Consul General in Istanbul Rashid were declared *persona non grata*.²⁷⁵ In response, Iran accused Turkey of condoning activities of the MEK and supporting the US’s policies of isolating Iran.²⁷⁶ Turkish-Iranian relations were dominated by mutual accusations through 1997. Recrimination continued in the following years over other events which are related to domestic politics of Turkey.

²⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 27.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*. p. 28.

²⁷⁵ Robert Olson, *Türkiye-İran İlişkileri: 1979-2004*, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁷⁶ Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Yasemin Nun, op. cit., p. 16.

The last and may be the most problematic issue spoiled Turkish-Iranian relations was threat posed by the PKK emerged in mid-1980s. Having considered the Shah's sympathetic policy towards the Iraqi Kurds Turkish officials blamed or at least suspected Iran of supporting or turning a blind eye to PKK terrorists that found safe haven on the Iranian side of the loosely controlled border.²⁷⁷ Iran responded by charging Turkey with giving shelter to anti-revolution groups like the MKO.

As large areas on both sides of the border inhabited by the Kurds, Turkey and Iran regarded establishment of a Kurdish state in the northern Iraq as a serious challenge that might incite secessionist feelings among their own Kurdish citizens. Nevertheless, during the war with Iraq, Iran supported the Kurds in the northern Iraq for tactical purposes notwithstanding Turkey's concerns²⁷⁸. By 1983 there was a gradual increase in the number of attacks waged by the PKK terrorists and this prompted Turkey to sign a "hot pursuit" agreement with Iraq to expand its operations to the Iraqi territory when necessary. Following that agreement Turkey conducted several hot pursuit operations in Iraq. Though Iran did not criticize Turkey publicly for these operations at the beginning, Turkish air forces' operation in May 1997 triggered strong opposition of Iran who claimed that Turkey's real intention was to capture the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk.²⁷⁹ Iran's primary concern regarding the comprehensive operation in the northern Iraq was the possibility of increasing Turkish influence in this region. Therefore, Iran continued to provide the PKK with safe haven in Iranian border and turned into blind eye in the face of increasing PKK attacks against Turkish military forces. Nevertheless, after the

²⁷⁷ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Yasemin Nun, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁷⁸ Ünal Gündoğan, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁷⁹ Robert Olson, *Türkiye-İran İlişkileri: 1979-2004*, op. cit., p. 14.

leader of PKK Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999 Iran started to become less tolerant to the PKK attacks against Turkey.

In a nut shell, the Turkish-Iranian relations were negatively influenced by both domestic and external factors as well as the ideological differences that surfaced from time to time. Despite the relative betterment in the relations during the WP government in Turkey, the pressure of Turkey's domestic concerns such as the PKK terrorism and the perceived threat to secularism and Iran's direct and indirect connection with these concerns, particularly in the mind of the Turkish military, emerged as obstacles to further improvement of bilateral relations. It goes without saying that potential in the economic area could never be turned into mutual benefit due to the major problems spoiling the political relations.

4.3. Turkish-Iranian Relations: 2000- to date

The Turkish-Iranian relations entered a period of constant improvement after the AKP came to power in 2002. However, the rapprochement between two countries began even before the change of government in Turkey. Although tension between Turkey and Iran peaked several times in 1990s they avoided making irreparable damage in the relations. After Hatemi was elected as the third President of Iran, the tension between Turkey and Iran was reduced considerably and in March 1998 they appointed ambassadors ending one year crisis in the diplomatic relations emerged after the "Jerusalem Day".²⁸⁰ By 2000s Turkish-Iranian security cooperation against the PKK improved and this issue became less poisonous in the relations. In addition to the

²⁸⁰ As the governments changed both in Turkey and Iran a new opportunity to overcome the diplomatic crisis emerged. At the same time, President Hatemi's constructive and positive policy towards the neighboring countries as well as his attempts to reform Iran and secure integration with the world contributed to softening of Turkish-Iranian relations. Berna Gürkaş, *op. cit.*, p. 235-236.

increasing volume of trade between two countries high level political dialogue also paved the way for better relations. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's official visit to Tehran on 17-18 June 2002 certainly marked an important turning point in the Turkish-Iranian relations.

Although the rapprochement between Turkey and Iran began by the turn of 2000s, with the AKP coming to power the relations reached to an unprecedented level with increasing political dialogue, security cooperation and economic partnership. Indeed, Turkey has always seen Iran, unlike other countries in the Middle East, as a large and important neighbor and deeply rooted civilization.²⁸¹ The AKP government's policy of mitigating the tension with the neighboring countries, seeking resolution to the long standing conflicts and problems and building friendly relations based on soft power with the countries in its region and beyond thereby creating a security belt around brought about considerable improvement in the relations with Iran.

After the election of the AKP Turkey's foreign policy was reshaped by the doctrine of "strategic depth", a concept developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu who became chief foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Erdoğan since 2002 and was appointed as Foreign Minister later in May 2009. The core of this doctrine is that a nation's value in international arena is defined by its geostrategic location. The strategic depth highlights the importance of Turkey's Ottoman past as well as historic and cultural ties with the Central Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East. According to doctrine Turkey should form multiple alliances through these assets and increase its freedom of action to become a

²⁸¹ Daphne McCurdy, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: When Opposites Attract", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2008, p. 88.

truly regional power.²⁸² This approach embodied in Turkey's vision of "zero-problem" with the neighbors which entails repairing economic and political ties with all neighboring countries and resolving long standing disputes. Turkey's foreign policy orientation in the last decade guided by the vision of the "strategic depth" is also interpreted as neo-Ottomanism although Minister Davutoğlu rejects this in clear terms.²⁸³ Turkey's engagement with Syria and Iran, harsh rhetoric against Israeli operations in Gaza and involvement in the Palestinian issue as well as its policies resonating in the Arab streets (for example, the discussion between Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and Israeli President Peres at Davos) namely its foreign policy activism in former Ottoman lands are regarded reflection of Turkey's neo-Ottoman approach to the Middle East. Critics of the notion of neo-Ottomanism, on the other hand, explain new policy dynamism under AKP government on the basis of pragmatism rather than religious and hegemonic motives. Aras, argues, for example, that "Turkish foreign policy in neighboring regions does not assume a hegemonic role for Turkey but targets an inclusive approach for building peace and security based on the dynamics within these regions".²⁸⁴ İbrahim Kalın, Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister Erdoğan, also states that "it is not so much ideology as geo-political necessity that drives Turkey today to engage with a multitude of regions from the Balkans to the Middle

²⁸² For further reading on this topic see Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009).

²⁸³ See, for example, Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism", *Carnegie Papers*, No. 10, September 2008, pp. 14-15; Michael Rubin, "Shifting Sides?: the Problem of Neo-Ottomanism", 10 August 2004, <http://www.michaelrubin.org/918/shifting-sides>, (5 February 2011); Nora Fisher Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy", *EDAM Papers*, October 2009.

²⁸⁴ Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy" *SETA Policy Brief*, No.32, May 2009, p. 7.

East.”²⁸⁵ Ziya Öniş similarly contends that “‘Neo-Ottomanism’ may not be a good term to describe Turkish foreign policy during the AKP era in the sense that it is not governed by hegemonic designs but by pragmatic considerations.”²⁸⁶ Likewise, Davutoğlu puts forward in *Strategic Depth* that it is strategic necessity for Turkey to take into consideration the factor of Iran in its policies towards the Central Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East since this country is located at the crossroads of these regions. The historical depth of Turkish-Iranian relations and their interest towards the Central Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East regions constitutes a common denominator for two countries.²⁸⁷

It can be argued that the rapprochement between Turkey and Iran that started in early 2000s was expedited with the single party government of the AKP established in late 2002. So, which factors motivated the improvement of the relations of Turkey and Iran whose bilateral ties were dominated confrontation in 1990s? First, as discussed above the AKP’s policy of engagement and building peaceful ties with its neighboring countries on the basis of zero-problem policy paved the way for warming of the relations. Second, according to Olson, the common purpose of increasing stability and better management of Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish resistance which emerged as a threat against Turkey and Iran both has Kurdish population after the US invasion in 2003 was the “principal” reason behind Turkish-Iranian cooperation in Iraq.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ İbrahim Kalın, “Turkey and the Middle East: Ideology or Geo-Politics?” *SETA Private View*, Autumn 2008.

²⁸⁶ Ziya Öniş, “New Wave of Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey: Drifting away from Europeanization?”, *DIIS Report*, January 2009, p. 10.

²⁸⁷ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye’nin Uluslararası Konumu*, op.cit., pp. 433-434

²⁸⁸ Robert W. Olson, “Relations Among Turkey, Iraq, Kurdistan-Iraq, the Wider Middle East, and Iran”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Volume 17, Number 4, pp. 13-45, Fall 2006, p. 44.

Despite the eagerness of the AKP to mend the fences with Iran, after effects of the September 11 terrorist attacks to the US and subsequently President Bush's description of Iran, Iraq and the North Korea as "axis of evil" constituted limits for further engagement with this country. The US intervention in Iraq in March 2003 changed the situation in a different way. After Turkey's resistance to allow the US forces to pass from its soil during the Iraqi War strained Turkish-American relations Turkey found itself cooperating with Iran for preventing partition of Iraq and emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq.²⁸⁹ While both Turkey and Iran were closely monitoring the situation in this region to prevent a possible *fait accompli* their cooperation against the PKK reached to new level. During Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tehran in July 2004, Turkey and Iran signed a security agreement with which Iran recognized the PKK as terrorist organization. From then on Iran started bombing the shelters of the PKK and PEJAK, extension of the PKK in Iran, and increased the border controls in order to prevent the PKK affiliates from passing to the Iranian soil. In addition, Turkey and Iran expanded their cooperation against the PKK to include the area of intelligence sharing.²⁹⁰ Ironically, Turkish-Iranian cooperation against the PKK occurred at a time when the US and the Iraqi government hesitated to take necessary steps to remove the PKK camps and its affiliates from the northern Iraq.²⁹¹ While the US, strategic partner of Turkey, remained irresponsive to Turkey's ask for support to

²⁸⁹ As the Turkish-American relations soured because of against vote for the bill to allow the U.S. forces to use Turkish territory during the Iraqi War in the Turkish Parliament in March 2003, Iran was swift to transform this into its gain to break its isolation because of its problematic nuclear program. Accordingly, Turkish-Iranian cooperation against the PKK increased considerably. Daphne McCurdy, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²⁹¹ Robert W. Olson, "Relations Among Turkey, Iraq, Kurdistan-Iraq, the Wider Middle East, and Iran", *op. cit.*, p. 44.

contain the PKK, Iran's bombardment of the PKK camps and arrest of its affiliates resonated quite positively in Turkey.

Third, according to Aras and Polat, in the last decade the defining factors of the Turkish-Iranian relations has undergone a desecuritization process with the driving force of the European membership process.²⁹² In this process with the increasing involvement of the civil society in definition of national security issues and increasing political confidence at domestic level paved the way for questioning traditional understanding of security and thereby opening the national security issues to public discussion.²⁹³ The desecuritization changed Turkey's approach to two issues, namely the threat of political Islam and Iran's support to the PKK, which almost determined Turkish-Iranian relations in 1990s. Iran was perceived as existential threat seeking to undermine Turkey's secular regime but recently this image changed though not totally disappeared. While the previous government did not hesitate to blame Iran for religious-sourced events, the AKP government abandoned this rhetoric.²⁹⁴ The anti-Iran slogans of 1990s, however, were repeated in the series of "republican meetings" held in April and May 2007 where the AKP government was also protested. Nevertheless, with the absence of security speech about threat of political Islam the anti-Iranian discourse remained as the way of criticizing the government's policies. The Turkish foreign policy makers focused on areas of common interest which Turkish-Iranian relations can be built upon rather than maintaining a confrontational approach. Their frequent reference to the Treaty of Qasri

²⁹² Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 39, No. 5, October 2008, p. 496.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 500.

²⁹⁴ Iran was repeatedly blamed for trying to export its regime to Turkey. When, for example, a newly elected parliamentarian Merve Kavakçı came in the Turkish parliament wearing head scarf President Süleyman Demirel accused her of being an "agent provocateur" and serving for Iran. Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, *op.cit.*, p. 506.

Shirin of 1639 which defined Turkish-Iranian border of today while mentioning the Turkish-Iranian relations to indicate that Turkey and Iran are historically good friends is symbolic indeed but demonstrates how Turkey's approach towards Iran has transformed.

Another problem in relations between Turkish-Iranian relations namely the issue of combat against terrorism was also transformed in to an area of cooperation rather than confrontation in this desecuritization process. The continuous recrimination replaced by joint action against the PKK terrorist and intelligence sharing in area of combat with terrorism. At the same time, Iran's bombardment of PKK camps and arrest of its affiliates were interpreted in the Turkish media as gesture.

Turkish-Iranian economic relations have also been prospering in the last decade. Iran became second largest natural gas supplier of Turkey after Russia supplying one third of gas consumed per year. In order to diversify its energy sources Turkey signed a gas supply agreement worth of \$ 23 billion and a second agreement to increase bilateral trade to \$ 2.5 billion annually in 1996.²⁹⁵ In July 2007 Turkey and Iran signed an accord for construction of a pipeline to transport 40 billion cubic meters of gas via Turkey to Europe as part of Nabucco pipeline project. In October 2009 another gas deal was signed between two countries during Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tehran. Nevertheless, because of technical and political reasons this deal has not been realized but energy remains as main trade topic between two countries. The trade figures also show a real improvement in the bilateral trade. The volume of trade between Iran and Turkey rose from \$ 3 billion in 2000 to more than \$ 10 billion in 2010.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Mustafa Kibaroglu, Yasemin Nun, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁹⁶ "Türkiye-İran Ekonomik İlişkileri", <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-iran-ekonomik-iliskileri.tr.mfa>, (4 February 2011).

In parallel to the warming political relations, increasing security cooperation and economic partnership, the people to people dialogue also demonstrates the track record two countries achieved in forging good neighborly relations. In 2009 1,3 million Iranian tourists visited Turkey. As a result of people to people dialogue, each country's people's view of other's has also been affected in a positive way and they no more regard each other as opposites like in 1990s.

Consequently, Turkish-Iranian relations entered a period of continuous improvement in the last decade. Although the rapprochement between two countries started in early 2000s policies of the AKP that formed the government after 2002 elections has considerable share in the betterment of the relations with Iran. In accordance with the "zero-problem policy" the AKP has been making immense efforts to mend the fences with its next door neighbors and adopted a constructive and cooperative discourse and deemphasized the issues that created confrontational environment between Turkey and its neighbors. With regard to Iran, Turkish leadership highlighted the commonalities such as history and culture and shared geography in their statements while seeking to create economic interdependence which would contribute improvement of friendly relations. Turkey and Iran achieved to overcome the mainly domestic-sourced problems that prevented improvement of the relations and forged friendly ties through both eliminating the prejudices and internalizing their problems. However, another major issue remains as substantial obstacle to preserve the current momentum or further improve bilateral relations. Iran's nuclear program and related crisis which has various implications for both bilateral relations and Turkey's relations with the West needs to be resolved if Turkey and Iran to maintain good neighborly

relations on permanent basis. Indeed, these complex factors together with some others which will be discussed in the remaining part of this chapter laid the groundwork for Turkey's involvement in the Iranian nuclear crisis.

CHAPTER 5

TURKEY'S POLICY TOWARDS IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

5.1. Turkey's Moderate Contribution to the International Efforts

When Iran removed the IAEA seals from Uranium Conversion Facility at Esfahan in August 2005 and resumed uranium conversion activities, the tension between the West and Iran mounted leading to the adoption of the decision at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting on 24 September 2005 which laid the ground for transferring Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council.²⁹⁷ Following this resolution, the parties failed to reach a common understanding on how to deal with the crisis and then the Iranian nuclear issue entered a different course with the decision taken at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting on 8 March 2006 which referred the dossier to the UN Security Council.²⁹⁸ From then on the resolution of this issue became even more difficult because Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said just a week after this decision was taken that Tehran's nuclear program was "irreversible" and added that any retreat in the face of international pressure would "break the country's independence which will impose huge costs on the Iranian nation".²⁹⁹ Namely, he gave the signal that Iran would continue the nuclear program despite the referral of the dossier to the UN Security Council.

²⁹⁷ "Iran Profile, Nuclear Chronology 2005", *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, http://www.nti.org/eresearch/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/chronology_2006.html (8 August 2010).

²⁹⁸ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁹⁹ Iran's Top Leader: The Nuclear Program is 'Irreversible' " *Fox News*, 14 March 2006, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,187773,00.html> (8 August 2010).

Turkey has been preoccupied with the Iranian nuclear issue since 2006 when Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement on 29 March and two resolutions on 32 July and 23 December last of which noted that “Iran has not established full and sustained suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities as set out in resolution 1696”.³⁰⁰

In 2006 a number of high level visits were realized between Turkey and Iran to discuss a possible solution on the basis of the P5+1’s incentive package offered Iran in June 2006³⁰¹. When Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül visited Tehran at a critical juncture³⁰² he warned that some circles do not want a peaceful solution to the issue and Iran should seize the favorable ground emerged with the P5+1’s offer. At the same time, Minister Gül, in order not to give the impression that Turkey is just a “transmitter” and to display Turkey’s contribution to the international efforts for the sake of Turkey’s increasing credibility, underlined that Turkey was not just conveying the message of the West but the message was comprised of Turkey’s own approaches.³⁰³ Foreign Ministry Spokesman Namık Tan also rejected during a press conference that Turkey’s initiative to

³⁰⁰ The United Nations Security Council, *UNSC Resolution 1737 (2007)*, op. cit.

³⁰¹ The P5+1 offered an incentive package to Iran on 6 June 2006 in which the P5+1 proposed Iran to reaffirm its right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in compliance with its NPT obligations, support building of new light water reactors through international joint projects and suspend discussing Iran’s nuclear program in the Security Council the resumption of negotiations. In return Iran would commit to address all outstanding issues through full cooperation with the IAEA, suspend enrichment and reprocessing related activities and resume implementation of the Additional Protocol. The Package also foreseen an increased cooperation between Iran and the P5+1 in a wide range of areas from regional security, research and development in nuclear energy, international trade and investment, energy partnership to civil aviation agriculture, telecommunications infrastructure and high technology.

³⁰² Foreign Minister Gül’s visit to Tehran realized at a time when Tehran was discussing the P5+1’s new offer delivered on 6 June 2006. Turkey made efforts to induce Iran not to respond negatively to this offer.

³⁰³ “Türkiye’den İran’a Nükleer Alanda Beş Mesaj” *Hürriyet*, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=4649151> (08 August 2010).

have talks with Iran predetermined by the US stating that “we don't schedule our visits according to inspiration or advice from any country”.³⁰⁴

Turkey's approach towards Iranian nuclear issue is based on certain principles. Turkey supports Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy provided that its nuclear program remains peaceful and it implements transparency measures and allow the IAEA monitoring.³⁰⁵ In this regard, Turkey urges Iran to enhance the transparency and cooperation with the IAEA, reiterates Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy and defies a military intervention targeting Iran's nuclear facilities. When the rumors about a military intervention resonated in western capitals,³⁰⁶ Ankara not only expressed its concerns but also explicitly stated that Turkey would not allow a military action against Iran from its territory.³⁰⁷ Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the same time, reportedly guaranteed during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin that the US will not be allowed to use its military basis in Turkey in case of military strike on Iran.³⁰⁸ In addition, when Israel violated Turkish airspace to bomb a facility in Northern Syria in September 2007, Turkish officials voiced their anger and raised the issue during

³⁰⁴ “Tan: Turkey Free to Talk to Iran” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 4 May 2006, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/h.php?news=tan-turkey-free-to-talk-to-iran-2006-05-04> (08 August 2010)

³⁰⁵ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Baris Caglar, “Implication of A Nuclear Iran for Turkey”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Winter 2008, p. 64.

³⁰⁶ The United States wanted Iran to know that all options including the military strike are on the table. This intention was also seen during discussions on the first UN Security Council resolution on Iran. When the UN Security Council started to discuss the issue, France and Britain prepared a draft resolution that defined Iran's nuclear program as “threat to the peace” thereby making it possible for the UN in the future to impose sanction and authorize military action against Iran if needed. John Bolton, the US Ambassador to the UN, who was eager for passage of such resolution was quoted as saying that “they must know everything is on the table and they must understand what that means.” “Washington Splits Over Best Policy to Halt Iran's Nuclear Plan”, *Time*, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/usandamericas/article737907.ece> (10 August 2010); “İran'a Karşı Uçaklar Hazır”, *Hürriyet*, 7 February 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=3902676> (09 August 2010).

³⁰⁷ “Komşumuza Bizden Saldırı İzni Vermeyiz” *Hürriyet*, 10 February 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=3914040&tarikh=2006-02-10>, (11 August 2010).

³⁰⁸ “İran'a Saldırı İçin Üsleri Kullandırmayız”, *Hürriyet*, 4 January 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=3736088>, (11 August 2010).

visit of Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, making it clear that Turkey could not be regarded as a “springboard” for any future attack on its neighbors.³⁰⁹ This warning included Israel’s possible future attacks not only to Syria but also to Iran because Turkey’s airspace was regarded as the most feasible path way for Israeli aircrafts to bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities.

Turkey’s intensified efforts towards facilitating a peaceful resolution for the Iranian nuclear issue can also be observed in the increasing number of Western senior officials visiting Ankara to discuss the issue throughout 2006. In this period, Turkey continued to give the message to the Western officials that its position vis-à-vis Iran’s nuclear program did not change and expressed concerns about possible military dimension of the nuclear program.³¹⁰

It goes without saying that Turkey’s efforts were welcomed in the Western capitals and by the IAEA. Though the United States was not enthusiastic about Turkish mediation, Turkey’s efforts to encourage Iran for more transparency and cooperation was much appreciated in Washington. Therefore, senior US diplomats visited Turkey to discuss Iranian nuclear program at a time when the issue has been passing through a critical period. The US Secretary of State, for instance, visited Turkey in April 2006 with Iranian nuclear issue high on her agenda.³¹¹ Other major stakeholders were also

³⁰⁹ Daphne McCurdy, op. cit., p. 101; “Turkey no platform for Israeli strikes-official” 13 February 2008, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L13625836.htm>, (5 September 2010).

³¹⁰ “Türkiye: Dünyadaki İran Endişesini Paylaşıyoruz” *Hürriyet*, 2 February 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=3878638> (9 September 2010); “Alpagon: Nükleer Silaha Sahip Komşudan Hoşlanmayız”, *Hürriyet*, 25 May 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=4471055>, (9 September 2010); “Gül: Bölgemizde Kitle İmha Silahına Karşımız” *Zaman*, 2 May 2006, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=281671&keyfield=616264756C6C61682067C3BC6C206972616E> (9 September 2010).

³¹¹ “US Cold to ‘Turkish Mediation’ on Iran”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 19 May 2006, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/h.php?news=us-cold-to-turkish-mediation-on-iran-2006-05-19>, (09 September 2010).

pleased to see a more active Turkey in this process. During his visit to Turkey in June 2006 Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that the views of two countries vis-à-vis Iranian nuclear issue are same, and emphasized Turkey's important role in the resolution of the issue.³¹² The General Director of the IAEA Mohamed ElBaradei not only backed Turkey's role and underlined that Turkey is well poised to encourage a diplomatic solution but also expressed willingness of the Agency to work further on this issue with Turkey.³¹³

Toward the end of 2006 prospects for adoption of a Security Council decision to impose sanctions on Iran increased. In the same period, the Western media covered more news about possibility of a military action against Iran's nuclear facilities³¹⁴, thereby increasing the pressure on this country. However, the hopes that Iran would respond positively to the package offered by the P5+1 were short-lived. Iran sent a twenty-page letter constituting neither positive nor negative answer to the offer but written in ambiguous terms. While Iran presented its questions and raised the ambiguities regarding the P5+1 offer and proposed a "renewed process of negotiations" in its letter, it rejected the preconditions for start of negotiations like suspension of uranium

³¹² "Lavrov: Türkiye ile İran konusundaki görüşümüz aynı", *Zaman*, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=290016&keyfield=616264756C6C61682067C3BC6C206972616E> (09 September 2010).

³¹³ "ElBaradei Backs Turkish Role in Iranian Nuclear Row", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 7 July 2006, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/h.php?news=elbaradei-backs-turkish-role-in-iran-nuclear-row-2006-07-07>, (09 September 2010).

³¹⁴ "The Iran Plans" *The New Yorker*, 17 April 2006, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/04/17/060417_fa_fact, (10 September 2010); "Attacking Iran May Trigger Terrorism", *Washington Post*, 2 April 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/01/AR2006040100981.html>, (11 September 2010); "US Prepares Military Blitz Against Iran's Nuclear Sites", *Telegraph*, 12 February 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1510303/US-prepares-military-blitz-against-irans-nuclear-sites.html>, (11 September 2010); "Talk of Military Action in Iran Standoff", *US Today*, 21 January 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-01-21-iran-nuclear-standoff_x.htm, (11 September 2010); "Nuclear Iran must be stopped at all costs, says McCain", *Time*, 26 January 2006, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article720690.ece, (11 September 2010).

enrichment related activities insisting that Iran will continue “research and development in uranium enrichment”.³¹⁵ Iran’s letter was far from addressing the outstanding issues with regard to its nuclear program and the expectations pointed out in the Security Council Resolution 1696.

Although the improving political dialogue gave Turkey the opportunity to pursue a more effective and frank dialogue with the Iranian leadership this did not mean in any way that the message conveyed by Turkey was given due consideration in Tehran. This situation was seen in Iranian response to the proposal offered by P5+1. When the incentive package was shared with Iran Turkey considered it as an important opportunity to stop the process leading to sanctions resolution and urged Iran to seize this opportunity.³¹⁶ Turkey’s messages, however, did not fall into receptive ears in Tehran. It can be claimed that Iran indeed welcomed Turkey’s involvement in the nuclear issue so long as it remained limited to break its isolation emanating from the pressure imposed by Western powers. Therefore, Turkey did not test the limits of its influence over Iran and was satisfied with the role “tailored” by the parties. In fact, Turkey was content with this status as long as the issue remained high on the agenda of the US and the EU and they led the international efforts to curb Iran’s possible acquisition of nuclear weapons. Thereby Turkey could prioritize improving its political relations, economic ties and security cooperation rather than confronting Iran because of its nuclear program.

While Turkey was playing a facilitator role in the diplomatic process it sought a delicate balance between its Western allies and Iran in order not to create any

³¹⁵ “Islamic Republic of Iran’s Response to the Package Presented on June 6, 2006”, 22 August 2006, available at <http://www.isis-online.org/publications/iran/iranresponse.pdf>, (11 September 2010).

³¹⁶ “İran krizinde Türkiye devrede”, *Hürriyet*, 3 June 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=4519688>, (15 September 2010); “İran’a son uyarı seferine çıkıyor”, *Hürriyet*, 8 July 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=4717735>, (15 September 2010).

misunderstandings as to whom Turkey was siding with.³¹⁷ This is the other reason why Turkey's involvement remained low profile which enabled it to continue developing its relations with Iran while, at the same time, avoiding from being a party to the crisis. Therefore, being aware of the limits of its role Turkey did not take Iran's negative response to the P5+1 proposal personal. Assuming a low profile role also gives Turkey freedom of action and opportunity to preserve its status as impartial facilitator. Indeed, Turkey's contribution to Western efforts towards pressuring Iran was desirable for its Western allies but Turkey's status as impartial facilitator could help the P5+1 more as potential asset in reviving the negotiation if it congested at one point.³¹⁸ For instance, the Israeli and American officials raised their serious concerns regarding the visit of Iranian President Ahmedinejad to İstanbul in August 2008. However, Turkish officials viewed this visit as an opportunity to help bridging the gap between proposal of the P5+1 and Iranian position.³¹⁹ Turkey's value as facilitator was proven when the diplomatic process came to the point of halt after the UN Security Council Resolutions 1737 and 1747. With the initiative of Turkey the EU High Representative for CFSP Solana and Secretary of Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Jalili met in Ankara on 26 April 2007 to revive the diplomatic process. This meeting was interpreted as Turkey's diplomatic success though it did not yield concrete results.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Rather than supporting one party's position Turkey preserved its status as impartial facilitator taking into account the considerations and expectations of both sides and conveying their messages. It also made its own contribution to the dialogue between two sides on the basis of its principled policy towards the Iranian nuclear issue.

³¹⁸ Andreas Breitetger, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: A Reality Check", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Fall 2009, p. 121-122.

³¹⁹ Daphne McCurdy, op. cit., p. 103.

³²⁰ Bayram Sinkaya, "İran Nükleer Programı Karşısında Türkiye'nin Tutumu ve Uranyum Takası Mutabakatı", *Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, Cilt 2, Sayı 18, Haziran 2010, p. 68.

5.2. Turkey's Quest for Mediating between US and Iran

Escalation of the tension between the West and Iran with the adoption of third round of sanctions resolution in the Security Council in March 2008 prompted Turkey to assume more active role regarding the Iranian nuclear issue. Rumors about possible military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities also made Turkey give more direct and frank messages at the highest level. When President Ahmedinejad visited Turkey in August 2008 despite the strong objection of US and Israel, President Gül expressed Turkey's expectations as to diplomatic solution, also explicitly warning Iran that "the US can hit Iran at any time" in the bilateral meeting. "Iran is of course not Iraq but you should avoid developments that would detrimental effects on the region" President Gül said. To make seriousness of the situation clearer President Gül referred Iraqi War frankly saying that "We have the example of destroyed Baghdad. Do not let Iran live the same fate". President Ahmedinejad, in response, complained about the Western pressure on Iran to make it stop uranium enrichment and stated that Iran cannot accept this. He also criticized the West for using Iran's nuclear program as an excuse to halt Iran's technological and economic development.³²¹

Turkey offered to mediate between the US and Iran to bridge the confidence gap between the parties and thereby pave the way for comprehensive negotiations on nuclear issue. In November 2008 before his visit to Washington D.C. to attend the G20 Summit Prime Minister Erdogan stated that Turkey has been watching the relations between Iran and the US with great concern. He also raised the expectation of resolving the issue

³²¹ Daphne McCurdy, op. cit., p. 103; "Gül, İstanbul'da ağırladığı Ahmmedinecad'ı uyardı: ABD, İran'ı her an vurabilir" *Radikal*, 16 August 2008, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetay&ArticleID=893837&Date=16.08.2010&CategoryID=98>, (16 August 2010); Gül'ün İran'a üç uyarısı, *Hürriyet*, 16 August 2008, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=9674256>, (16 August 2010).

through diplomatic means expressing readiness to mediate such diplomatic solution and saying that “We are ready to be the mediator.”³²²

Washington declined Turkey’s offer to mediate the talks between two sides. The Spokesman of the State Department Sean McCormack stated in press conference that there is not any necessity for Turkey’s mediation in negotiations between Washington and Tehran.³²³ He pointed the P5+1 as the true address of dialogue for Iran in the negotiation process. Iran neither rejected nor accepted Turkish mediation but pointed out the difficulty of solving problems between the US and Iran. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hassan Qashqavi stated in press conference that Iran is not against the idea of mediating in principle but the issue and problems between Iran and the United States go beyond the usual political problems between two states.³²⁴ The Iranian Ambassador to Turkey Bahman Huseyinpur was not also enthusiastic about Turkey’s mediation saying that “We understand Erdogan’s good will and thank him. But the problems between Iran and the US are so grave that cannot be resolved through mediator.”³²⁵

The United States’s rejection of Turkey’s offer had its own logic. First, Washington might not want to give the impression that the Iranian nuclear issue was a purely bilateral problem between the US and Iran while, on the other hand, Iran strived to reflect the nuclear crisis as extension of “hostile attack” of Washington on Iran’s inalienable rights. In other words, the US regarded Iran’s nuclear program as a

³²² “Turkish Leader Volunteers to Be US-Iran Mediator”, *New York Times*, 11 November 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/12/world/europe/12turkey.html?scp=1&sq=erdogan%20iran%202008&st=cse>, (10 October 2010).

³²³ “Ankara’nın Önerilerine ABD’den Ret” *Hürriyet*, 20 November 2008, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=10401523>, (10 October 2010).

³²⁴ “Iran accepts Turkish mediator for Obama talks”, *Press TV*, 17 November 2008 <http://presstv.ir>, (10 October 2010).

³²⁵ “ABD’den Sonra İran’dan da ret”, *Hürriyet*, 21 November 2008, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=10414964>, (10 October 2010).

proliferation issue challenging international security. Therefore, the P5+1 is the true address to handle this issue. Turkey's mediation between the US and Iran might have given the impression that the nuclear issue is an item on the agenda of the US-Iranian relations but not an international issue. Second, without suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment related activities it was unlikely for US to accept having dialogue with Iran directly or indirectly. This was actually policy of Bush Administration since the revelation of Iran's clandestine facilities.

As far as Iran's response is concerned, one reason for its rejection of Turkey's mediation might be related to domestic political calculations. The Presidential election held in January 2009 and the subsequent protest meetings showed the presence of a strong opposition to President Ahmedinejad. However, for the overwhelming majority of Iranians nuclear program is "national cause" and a "source of pride".³²⁶ Iran's nuclear program constitutes one of the areas that unite the opposition and the government. For Iranians their country deserves to be a nuclear power.³²⁷ Iran's reformist opposition leader Mir-Hossein Mousavi, for example, said to press during his election campaign that if elected "he will push ahead with Iran's nuclear activities and will never halt uranium enrichment". The Reformist Candidate also described suspension between 2003 and 2005 as a "bad experience and a tool to deprive Iran of having access to nuclear

³²⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power", op. cit., p. 221.

³²⁷ What being a "nuclear power" means for Iranians is issue of further discussion. An opinion poll made in February 2010 shows that majority of Iranians (55 percent) supports peaceful nuclear program while the percentage of the Iranians who support possible nuclear weapons program remains at 38 %. These numbers also reflects the preferences of reformist Presidential Candidate Mousavi supporters. When it comes to trading off uranium enrichment with removing the sanctions, however, Mousavi supporters seems more willing than the overall Iranians but still majority of Mousavi supporters does not supports such trade off (51 percent opposes, 38 percent favors). "An Analysis of Multiple Polls of the Iranian Public", 3 March 2010, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/feb10/IranElectionFeb10_rpt.pdf, (20 October 2010).

technology".³²⁸ This was probably an attempt to reach a wider audience but not the reflection of what Mousavi really thinks.³²⁹ Namely, in view of the support of the Iranians to the nuclear program, confrontation with the West to “defend Iran’s inalienable right” would increase public support thereby making it more attractive to maintain a confrontational discourse.

Another reason of Iran’s negative response to Turkey’s mediation is related to domestic politics. Iranian government is aware that direct and indirect contact with the US will be interpreted as weakness and despair on the Iranian part. Therefore, they expect Washington to renounce the confrontational discourse about Iran and recognize their right to develop full fuel cycle program before such contact. For instance, shortly after Iranian Chief Negotiator Jalili met with the US negotiator Burns in Geneva in October 2009 within the framework of the P5+1-Iran meeting, Iranian officials stated that request of meeting came from the United States to defy the criticisms of hardliners.³³⁰ Jalili declined the request of American side to hold another bilateral meeting during the P5+1-Iran follow-up talks in Geneva and Istanbul in December 2010 and January 2011 respectively. This indeed demonstrates that the Iranian government avoids establishing direct contact with the US in order not to trigger domestic criticisms.

³²⁸ “Mousavi: Iran will Never Halt Enrichment”, *Payvand*, 14 April 2009, <http://payvand.com/news/09/apr/1156.html>, (20 October 2010).

³²⁹ When the fourth round of sanctions was accepted in the UN Security Council on 9 June 2010 Mousavi strongly criticized President Ahmedinejad for not preventing imposition of sanctions and acting with “wisdom and rationality”. Having considered the preconditions, suspension of uranium enrichment related activities together with some transparency measures to be implemented by Iran, of the P5+1 to lift the sanctions, it can be said that acting with “wisdom and rationality” is included halting enrichment related activities. “Iran’s Mousavi Blames Sanctions on Ahmedinejad”, *Medya News*, 8 July 2010, <http://medyanews.com/english/?p=2761>, (21 October 2010).

³³⁰ “Iran: Jalili-Burns Meeting Held at US Request”, *Khabar Online*, 4 October 2009, <http://www.khabaronline.ir/news-19128.aspx>, (25 October 2010); Morteza Kazemian, “Burns, Jalili and Shari’atmadari”, *Iranian Diplomacy*, 19 October 2009, <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/index.php?Lang=en&Page=21&TypeId=&ArticleId=6044&Action=ArticleBodyView>, (25 October 2010).

5.3. Turkey: Mediator

As the Iranian nuclear issue remained unresolved, the crisis further escalated and the third round of the sanctions adopted in 2008 did not stop Iran's nuclear program it became more difficult for Turkey to maintain the delicate balance between Iran and the West in the face of latter's increasing call for it to join the international community in pressuring Iran.³³¹ When the improving Turkish-Iranian cooperation in different fields was added to Turkish officials' sound support to Iran's nuclear program which, they believe, is of peaceful nature the US and Israeli officials started to express their concern explicitly about Turkey's increasing engagement with Iran. While the Western countries expected Turkey to share their concern about Iran's nuclear program and join them in isolating this country Turkey continued its efforts to find a way out of this crisis while also maintaining its support to Iran's presumably peaceful nuclear activities. In an interview with Guardian Prime Minister Erdoğan said "There is no doubt he (Iran) is our friend. As a friend so far we have very good relations and have had no difficulty at all." Erdoğan also continued supporting Iran's nuclear program saying that "Iran does not accept it is building a weapon. They are working on nuclear power for the purposes of energy only."³³² Turkey's Western allies, on the other hand, asked Turkey's support for possible UN sanctions resolutions after the negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 failed in Fall 2009 while, at the same time, expressing their concerns about Turkey's continued support to Iran.

³³¹ This includes broader interpretation and implementation of the current sanctions, using a tough rhetoric regarding Iran's nuclear program in the international forums like the IAEA and the UN, withdrawing its support from Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

³³² "Iran is our friend,' says Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan", *Guardian*, 26 October 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/26/turkey-iran1>, (10 December 2010).

In parallel to increasing pressure of the Western countries Turkey intensified its efforts in the second half of 2009 to cushion this pressure and advance the diplomatic process to avoid new Security Council resolution imposing sanctions which Turkish officials believed would not make any contribution to resolution of the issue but would further complicate it. What made Turkey's role important in recent years, apart from its ability to talk with both sides of the dispute at the highest level, was its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council and membership in the IAEA Board of Governors. These two forums represent the venue in which Iran's nuclear program is dealt with. Therefore, Turkey with the right to say in these forums had the opportunity to contribute to the diplomatic process. This also raised Turkey's profile in the eye of the Iranian leadership making Turkey's support to nuclear program much more valuable.

The international conjuncture offered a favorable ground for taking forward the diplomatic process in quest for negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in 2009. The Obama Administration's "new approach" towards Iran highlighted dialogue and direct negotiation with this country to find a diplomatic solution instead of maintain the confrontational and threatening rhetoric. Unlike his predecessor President Obama accepted to join the negotiations with Iran without any preconditions and supported direct contact with it. This approach indeed not only paved the way for the P5+1-Iran negotiations in Geneva in October 2009 but made the first contact between the US and Iran after thirty years possible. However, as discussed earlier, although the parties agreed on a fuel swap accord in Geneva and they defined the modalities of this swap in Vienna in October 2009 this accord could not be taken forward to realize fuel swap as a confidence building measure.

5.3.1. The Road to Tehran Joint Declaration

Iran and VG delegations agreed in principle on the modalities of the fuel swap provision which entailed shipment of Iran's 1200 kg LEU to Russia for further enrichment up to 20 % and then to France for production of fuel. According to this agreement Iran would have 120 kg uranium enriched up to 20 % which corresponds to exact amount of the TRR's fuel need. However, due to strong reaction of opposition in Iran the fuel swap agreement turned into a foreign policy crisis.³³³ While the President Ahmedinejad interpreted this agreement as success of Iran and expressed his country's readiness to cooperate in the nuclear field, the opposition led by the Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani objected the agreement together with some other members of the Parliament on the basis of that Russia and France are not trustable.³³⁴ Upon the strong warning from the Parliament Iran requested two changes in the agreement in the letter of response submitted to the IAEA on October 29. Tehran put forward in its response that it would only ship its uranium in batches after delivery of fuel rods and also stipulated that fuel exchange would take place in Iran.³³⁵ This unilateral amendment in the agreement was rejected by the VG. In order to find a way out of this stalemate former Director

³³³ Bayram Sinkaya, "İran'ın Nükleer Programı: Müzakere Sürecinde Umutların Yükseliş ve Düşüşü", op. cit., pp. 76-77

³³⁴ Iran's distrust with France stems from latter's rejection of abiding by the nuclear agreements between two countries. France is also one of the forerunners of the pressure diplomacy within the P5+1. Russia, on the other hand, has followed a balanced approach towards Iranian nuclear issue and has always sought to improve its ties with Iran. However, because of the pressure of U.S. it delayed the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant and cancelled shipment of S-300 missile defense systems. In addition to these factors, Russia's recent rapprochement with U.S. also increased suspicions of Iran as to whether Russia will continue to counterbalance U.S. and its allies within the P5+1 or not., *ibid*; "Iran's Ahmadinejad seen backing nuclear deal", *Reuters*, 17 November 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/11/17/us-iran-nuclear-ahmadinejadidUSTRE5AG53620091117?pageNumber=2>, (10 February 2011); "Iran's Nuke Standoff and Ahmadinejad's Woes", *Time*, 16 November 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1939645,00.html>, (10 February 2011).

³³⁵ Iran would only ship its uranium out in batches, and only when the French-made fuel rods were delivered, *Guardian*, 29 October 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/29/iran-nuclear-uranium-exchange-deal>, (11 February 2011).

General of the IAEA Elbaradei proposed to deposit Iran's low enriched uranium in Turkey until production of the corresponding fuel. This opening was indeed feasible since it would address the concerns of the both parties. It was acceptable for the VG because two third of Iran's LEU would not stay at the hand of this country which meant for them that Iran would not have the capability to produce nuclear weapon if such decision is made. It was acceptable for Iran since deposition of the LEU in Turkey would give the guarantees Iranian side has been seeking. However, although the VG approved this plan and Turkey also accepted take the LEU under its custody, Iran categorically rejected this offer, Foreign Minister Mottaqi insisting that Iran's uranium will stay in the country.³³⁶ Despite the initial negative response of the Iranian side Turkey continued to believe that this offer could help overcome the impasse and launched its mediation efforts to find a common ground for realization of the swap deal.

On the other hand, developments that followed Iran's negative response to the IAEA with regard to the swap deal exacerbated already tight environment and led to collapse of the negotiations on Iran's nuclear program. Adoption of the IAEA Board of Government resolution condemning Iran's non-compliance with its obligations under relevant UN Security Council resolutions in November 2009, Iranian President's subsequent statement that they would establish ten new uranium enrichment plants and Iranian side's rigid stance with regard to the fuel swap provision were major development that ruined the dialogue between Iran and the P5+1. At the same time, Iranian President's declaration on December 2 that Iran would stick to its plan to enrich

³³⁶ "İran uranyumuna Türk formülü", *Hürriyet*, 16 November 2009, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=12955193>, (11 February 2011); "Iran not to send out enriched uranium for swap: FM", *ISNA*, 18 November 2009, <http://isna.ir/ISNA/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-1441927&Lang=E>, (11 February 2011).

uranium up to 20 % to meet fuel requirement of the TRR even further complicated the situation. In this regard, through the end of 2009 it has become more important to prevent escalation of the crisis between West and Iran particularly for two reasons. Firstly, back in May 2009 President Obama had set a deadline of the end of the year for Iran to give positive response to his engagement. In a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in May Obama said he will “gauge and do a reassessment by the end of the year” to decide whether the diplomatic efforts yielding results.³³⁷ As the fuel swap deal collapsed and diplomatic process stalled, possibility of a new sanctions resolution increased. In this case, only Iran’s approval of the swap deal might have prevented a new UN Security Council resolution. Secondly, on 2 January 2010 Iran gave the VG a month to respond its revised proposal on fuel swap and warned that if it could not get the necessary fuel it would start producing on its own.³³⁸ Although Iran does not have the fuel fabrication capability its decision to enrich uranium up to 20 % constituted an additional reason for the P5+1 to consider tougher sanctions.

This negative atmosphere prompted Turkey who has been seeking to assume more active role in the diplomatic process. Against this negative backdrop Turkey maintained its contacts with the Iranian side regarding the fuel swap plan. Since announcement of ElBaradei’s proposal to deposit Iran’s LEU in Turkey Foreign Minister Davutoğlu paid six visit to Tehran and his Iranian counterpart visited Ankara five times with the aim of discussing the fuel swap plan, not to mention the other contacts with the US Secretary of State Clinton, EU High Representative Ashton and

³³⁷ Obama Tells Netanyahu He Has an Iran Timetable, *The New York Times*, 18 May 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/19/world/middleeast/19prexy.html>, (13 February 2011).

³³⁸ Mark Fitzpatrick, “Iran: The Fragile Promise of the Fuel-Swap Plan”, *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 67-94, 2 June 2010, p. 76.

Foreign Ministers of other major countries including through the telephone calls. At the same time, Prime Minister Erdoğan's official visit to Iran in October and President Ahmedinejad's participation to the COMCEC Summit in İstanbul provided Turkey with valuable opportunity to convey the messages directly at the highest level in such a critical period. During his visit Prime Minister Erdoğan reiterated Turkey's support to Iran's peaceful nuclear activities and underlined that Turkey is against nuclear weapons in its region. He also stated that possible solution to Iranian nuclear issue should respect Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy and address the concerns of the international community.³³⁹

Turkey pursued its diplomatic efforts in close cooperation and coordination with the major stakeholders. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for example, discussed the Iranian nuclear issue with his counterparts from the P5+1 countries in various occasions. In their contacts with the P5+1 countries, Turkish officials made it clear that Turkey was against a new Security Council resolution, rather it upholds and contributes to the diplomatic process. They also continued urging Iran to reevaluate the fuel swap deal though Iranian officials gave mixed signals.³⁴⁰ This actually encouraged Turkey further because since the Iranian did not categorically rejected the deal unlike they did initially Turkey persistent effort could yield result.

The Nuclear Security Summit held on 12-13 April 2010 in Washington provided the US with a favorable ground to gather international support against Iran as well as for the up-coming UN Security Council resolution. On the other hand, in his address to the

³³⁹ "Turkey Urges Diplomatic Solution for Iran's Nuclear Issue", *Fars News Agency*, 29 October 2009, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8808070602>, (13 February 2011).

³⁴⁰ Bayram Sinkaya, "İran Nükleer Programı Karşısında Türkiye'nin Tutumu ve Uranyum Takası Mutabakatı", *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Summit, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that Turkey's position regarding resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and engagement remained unchanged.³⁴¹ In addition, Turkey together with Brazil³⁴² disagreed with President Obama on imposing new sanction and they decided to pursue a joint diplomatic initiative to prevent further escalation of the issue due to a new sanctions resolution.³⁴³ In following couple of days Foreign Minister Davutoğlu paid three critical visits to Brazil, Tehran and Brussels respectively with the Iranian nuclear issue on his agenda. Brazilian Foreign Minister Amorim also visited Tehran in 28 April to coordinate upcoming visit of Brazilian

³⁴¹ "Erdoğan'dan "nükleer" için diyalog mesajı", *CNN Türk*, 13 April 2010, <http://www.cnnturk.com/2010/dunya/04/13/nukleer.guvenlik.zirvesi.basladi/571976.0/index.html>, (14 February 2011).

³⁴² Turkey's and Brazil's attitude towards the Iranian nuclear issue overlaps in many aspects. Brazil's position is that the IAEA but not the Security Council should resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program. This is because Brazil regards the issue as technical problem which should be discussed within the IAEA. Brazil supports Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. In September 2007, Brazilian President Lula da Silva said that "Iran has the right to proceed with peaceful nuclear research and should not be punished just because of Western suspicions it wants to make an atomic bomb". Namely, Brazil believes that the current evidences laid down by the West as indication of Iran's possible military nuclear program are insufficient. Moreover, Brazil is vocally against Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons and strong supporter of Middle East free of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the same concerns lies behind Turkey's and Brazil's opposition to tightening the sanctions against Iran. First, in the eyes of Brazilians further sanctions may prelude a military strike. In February 2010 Brazilian Foreign Minister Amorim stated that "the last time the Security Council voted on the basis of insufficient evidences the world witnessed afterwards a major illegitimate intervention against Iraq". Second, Brazil believes that sanctions would not help resolution of the issue rather would toughen Iran's position. Foreign Minister Amorim recalling the bitter experiences of the Iraqi war warned that sanctions had not serious impact on Saddam Hussein. However, these factors cannot explain Brazil's involvement in the nuclear issue alone. This country has been rising as increasingly influential actor in the South America and sought to extend its influence to the world politics. Non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council strengthened Brasilia's ambitions to bolster its visibility in the world scene. Brazil, at the same time, sees the Iranian nuclear case as an opportunity to trigger a broader argument on non-proliferation regime. He, for example, opposes the politicization of the regime by the US and rejects the double standard dominating the some major countries' positions on non-proliferation cases. In this regard, Brazil emphasized the "inconsistency" in the US approach towards Iran, a party to the NPT, and Israel and India who remain outside the NPT. When Israeli Foreign Minister insisted that Brazil pressure Iran to contain Iran's nuclear program at a press conference with Brazilian President and Foreign Minister during his visit to Brazil in July 2009 President Lula da Silva responded explicitly criticizing Israel refusal to accede the NPT. Ariel Farrar-Wellman, "Brazil-Iran Foreign Relations", *Iran Tracker*, 20 May 2010, <http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/brazil-iran-foreign-relations>, (14 February 2011); Matias Spektor, "How to Read Brazil's Stance on Iran" *Council on Foreign Relations*, 4 March 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/brazil/read-brazils-stance-iran/p21576>, (14 February 2011); "Brazil cautions on sanctions against Iran", *Reuters*, 9 February 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/09/iran-nuclear-brazil-idUSN0910876520100209>, (14 February 2011).

³⁴³ "Obama'ya Erdoğan ve Lula freni", *Hürriyet*, 14 April 2010, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=14414219>, (14 February 2011); "İran için ortak hareket", *Hürriyet*, 15 April 2010, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=14422148>, (14 February 2011)

President to Tehran when he also proposed to mediate between Iran and the West together with Turkey.³⁴⁴ On May 4 Iranian President Ahmedinejad announced that they accept in principle mediation of Brazil to revive the swap deal.³⁴⁵

Brazilian President Lula da Silva paid an official visit to Tehran on 16 June 2010, which was regarded as the last chance for Iran to stop vote on new UN Security Council resolution, to discuss the bilateral issues as well as the nuclear issue. Although President Ahmedinejad had invited Turkish Prime Minister to have trilateral talks on the nuclear issue Erdoğan did not fly to Tehran until Iran signaled that it was ready to sign an agreement. On 17 May 2011 Foreign Minister's of Turkey, Brazil and Iran accompanied by the leaders of these countries signed the Joint Declaration regarding the fuel swap.³⁴⁶

5.3.2. The Tehran Joint Declaration

The Tehran Joint Declaration which constituted Turkey's most concrete contribution to the diplomatic process draws the framework for possible fuel swap agreement between the VG and Iran and records commitment of Iran to cooperate with the VG to this end. The Joint Declaration consists of three major elements. Firstly, in the declaration Turkey, Brazil and Iran reaffirm their commitment to the NPT and "recall the right of all State Parties, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy (as well as nuclear fuel cycle including enrichment activities) for peaceful purposes without discrimination". For Iran recognition of this right constituted a "red line" since the Western countries and the

³⁴⁴ "Brezilya: Türkiye ile arabuluculuk yapabiliriz", *NTVMSNBC*, 28 April 2010, <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25087925/>, (15 February 2011).

³⁴⁵ "Iran accepts Brazil mediation to revive atom deal", *Reuters*, 5 May 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/05/us-iran-nuclear-brazil-idUSTRE6440X320100505?PageNumber=2>, (15 February 2010).

³⁴⁶ "Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Iran and Brazil", *op. cit.*

relevant Security Council resolutions ask Iran to stop its uranium enrichment related activities. Secondly, the deal foresees swap of 1200 kg LEU Iran possesses with the corresponding amount of 120 kg nuclear fuel for the TRR outside Iranian territory. Through the deal Iran accepted to deposit its LEU within one month after the final agreement between Iran and the VG is signed in Turkey as its property and the VG would deliver 120 kg fuel required for the TRR no later than one year. Thereby, Iran lifted its precondition that there can only be a simultaneous fuel swap in Iran. Lastly, the declaration underlines the strong conviction of three countries that the nuclear fuel exchange will provide an opportunity to begin a forward-looking process. The declaration stated that “the nuclear fuel exchange is a starting point to begin cooperation and a positive constructive move forward among nations”. Through the declaration Iran also expressed its readiness to pursue talks with the P5+1 in any place including Turkey or Brazil.

Turkey and Brazil evaluated the Joint Declaration as a major step towards building confidence between Iran and the West and they called the P5+1 to suspend discussion on new sanctions resolution and seize the opportunity that the declaration provided for furthering diplomatic process and pursuing negotiations. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu warned at the press conference on May 19 that a new sanctions resolution could “demolish the positive atmosphere created by the Joint Declaration, lead to escalation of the tension and provoke the Iranians”.³⁴⁷ Subsequent to signature of the declaration, Turkish and Brazilian Foreign Ministers sent a joint letter to all members of the Security Council to inform them about the deal and convey the message that the

³⁴⁷ “Bakan Davutoğlu’nun İran ile varılan nükleer uzlaşısı ile güncel dış politika gelişmeleri hakkında basın toplantısı metni,” 19 May 2010, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/bakan-davutoglu_nun-iran-ile-varilan-nukleer-uzlasi-ile-guncel-dis-politika-gelismeleri-hakkinda-basin-toplantisi-metni.tr.mfa, (15 February 2011).

declaration should have been given chance.³⁴⁸ In addition, Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu made several telephone conversations with their counterparts from the P5+1 countries to convince them to suspend the draft UN Security Council resolution.

As Turkey and Brazil believed that the P5+1 would embrace the Joint Declaration, the initial negative responses created disappointment on their part. First and foremost, the deal was criticized for not addressing the core issues, like Iran's continuing uranium enrichment up to 20 %. The statements made by the White House and the US State Department directly linked the swap deal with Iran's obligation to suspend uranium enrichment in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. At a press briefing on May 17, the White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs stated that the Joint Declaration made no change in the Administration's policy toward the Iranian nuclear issue because it does not address the question of Iran's enrichment up to 20 %.³⁴⁹ The State Department's Spokesman PJ Crowley went one step further by making connection between the TRR deal and Iran's suspension obligation by saying that "Public statements today suggest that the TRR deal is unrelated to its [Iran's] ongoing enrichment activity. In fact they are integrally linked".³⁵⁰

Secondly, the VG stated in its response to the Joint Declaration that the declaration overlooks Iran's accumulation of LEU since the IAEA first proposed the TRR deal. Namely, since October 2009 when 1200 kg LEU corresponded to two third of

³⁴⁸ "Türkiye ve Brezilya'dan BM'ye mektup: İran'a yeni yaptırım uygulanmasın", *BBC*, 19 May 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2010/05/100519_iran_reaction.shtml, (15 February 2010).

³⁴⁹ "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs", 17 May 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/press-briefing-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-5172010>, (15 February 2011).

³⁵⁰ Trita Parsi, "Analysis: Iran's Nuke Deal Irritates Washington", *ABC News*, 18 May 2010, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/analysis-irans-nuclear-deal-turkey-brazil/story?id=10681106>, (16 February 2011).

total LEU, Iran nearly doubled its LEU stock. Therefore, removal of 1,200 kg LEU would leave Iran with substantial stocks, thereby decreasing the confidence-building value of the original proposal.³⁵¹

Thirdly, the Joint Declaration is said to “assert” a right for Iran to continue its enrichment activities regardless of several UN Security Council resolutions prohibiting Iran’s such activities.³⁵²

Lastly, Washington and its European allies interpreted the signature of Joint Declaration as Iran’s tactical attempt to avoid new sanctions which were being discussed among the P5+1 countries at that moment. Speaking to press on May 25 the US Secretary of State Clinton said that “It [the agreement] was a transparent ploy to avoid Security Council action”.³⁵³ Clinton toughened tone of her statements by stating during a conference at Brookings Institute on May 27 that they “think buying time for Iran, enabling Iran to avoid international unity with respect to their nuclear program makes the world more dangerous, not less.”³⁵⁴ Namely, recognizing the sincere efforts of Turkey and Brazil, the American officials put forward that they believe Iran transformed effort of these countries into its advantage to reduce the momentum towards a new sanctions resolution.

The reactions of the European members of the P5+1 group were more or less in line with the American officials’ statements. France and Britain expressed their concerns

³⁵¹ “Text: Powers dismiss Iran fuel offer before U.N. vote”, *Reuters*, 9 June 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/09/us-nuclear-iran-response-text-idUSTRE6582W120100609>, (17 February 2011).

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ Clinton: Iran Nuclear Fuel Swap Offer Is "Ploy", *CBS News*, 25 May 2010, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/05/25/world/main6517434.shtml>, (17 February 2011).

³⁵⁴ “Previewing the Obama Administration’s National Security Strategy: A Conversation with Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton”, *The Brookings Institute*, 27 May 2010, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/events/2010/0527_secretary_clinton/20100527_national_security_strategy.pdf, (17 February 2011).

about continuation of Iran's enrichment activities and supported US efforts to pass a new sanctions resolution. On the other hand, having shared the concerns put forward by the Western countries regarding the uranium enrichment activities of Iran, Russian President Medvedev said that as there has been a change in the conditions that justifies tougher sanctions "a small pause on this problem would not do any harm". China was also likely to increase its opposition to the sanctions in the light of the new deal. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said on May 18 that his country welcomes the swap deal and appreciates the diplomatic efforts made by the parties.³⁵⁵ However, neither China nor Russia opposed the draft sanctions resolution and Clinton announced on May 18 that the P5+1 agreed on a new Security Council draft resolution to be submitted to vote in the Council in the next couple of weeks.

Turkish and Brazilian response to the reactions first and foremost made it clear that the Joint Declaration was concluded as a confidence building measure that would pave the way for a comprehensive process of negotiations between the parties through building trust. The enrichment issue indeed constitutes core of the Iranian nuclear issue which could not be addressed in fuel swap deal. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said at a press conference on May 19 that "Turkey's and Brazil's mandate was to negotiate the swap deal but not the enrichment issue. The goal of the diplomatic efforts two countries making since the October 2009 was to achieve this deal. Turkey and Brazil are not in a position to negotiate the suspension of uranium enrichment on behalf of the IAEA which

³⁵⁵ "Israel fears Iran nuclear deal will delay UN sanctions", *Haaretz*, 18 May 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-fears-iran-nuclear-deal-will-delay-un-sanctions-1.290809>, (17 February 2011).

is a topic of negotiations between P5+1 and Iran”.³⁵⁶ The joint letter of Turkish and Brazilian Foreign Ministers to their counterparts from the Security Council members also emphasized the confidence building nature of the swap deal.

In view of the fact that the original swap deal proposal mediated by Elbaradei did not address the issue of uranium enrichment and was conceived as a confidence-building measure, the linkage between swap deal and Iran’s uranium enrichment activities set by the US constitutes a new condition. The letter from President Obama to Brazilian President Lula da Silva setting out the conditions for possible swap deal with Iran also verifies that the issue of uranium enrichment had never been on the agenda of Turkey and Brazil.³⁵⁷ Offering a detailed explanation of his “perspective” and suggesting “a way ahead” Obama did not touch upon directly or indirectly to the uranium enrichment issue in the aforementioned letter. Therefore, blaming Turkey and Brazil for not addressing suspension of uranium enrichment is not realistic in the light of Obama’s letter and the original fuel swap proposal offered back in 2009.

Secondly, the VG contention that since Iran doubled its LEU stocks after the original fuel swap proposal was first tabled, the amount of LEU to be deposited in Turkey should have been revised indeed contradicts what US requested Turkey and Brazil before the signature of the deal. Obama puts forward in his letter clearly that

³⁵⁶ “Bakan Davutoğlu’nun İran ile varılan nükleer uzlaşısı ile güncel dış politika gelişmeleri hakkında basın toplantısı metni”, op. cit.

³⁵⁷ This letter, which the White House did not dispute Obama sent, was leaked by Brazil on May 27 upon the increasing reactions of the VG to the swap deal, Turkey and Brazil signed with Iran. It is understood from the letter that Turkish, Brazilian and American leaders made a trilateral meeting in Washington on the margins of the Nuclear Security Summit to discuss a possible swap deal. It can also be inferred from the content of the letter that Obama might have promised to send a letter to lay down the expectations of the VG from a possible swap deal. “Obama’s Letter to Lula Regarding Brazil-Iran-Turkey Nuclear Negotiations” *Politica Externa*, 27 May 2010, <http://www.politicaexterna.com/11023/brazil-iran-turkey-nuclear-negotiations-obamas-letter-to-lula#axzz0pB5f3OCQ>, (17 February 2011).

“Iran’s agreement to transfer 1,200 kg of its LEU out of the country would build confidence and reduce regional tensions by substantially reducing Iran’s LEU stockpile”.³⁵⁸ Besides Turkish officials states that throughout the process, Turkey was asked to convince Iran to deposit 1200 kg of its LEU in Turkey in one batch. There was not any official notification that the amount of LEU needed to be revised.

Thirdly, although the VG interpreted the first article of the Joint Declaration as recognition of Iran’s right to pursue uranium enrichment which the P5+1 is not ready to do so at least at this stage, this article does not go beyond the NPT wording. The first article of the declaration recalls the “right of all State Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy (as well as nuclear fuel cycle including enrichment activities) for peaceful purposes” as stipulated by the NPT.³⁵⁹ Moreover, in each and every relevant UN Security Council resolution and IAEA Board of Governors resolution, this inalienable right is upheld. At the same time, Turkey and Brazil supports

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ According to the Article 4 of the NPT every state parties has the right to “develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination”. This right includes development of complete fuel cycle including uranium enrichment. In the case of the Iranian nuclear issue, U.S. and its European allies emphasize that rights bear some responsibilities which is exactly what the NPT stipulates. However, the problem is that it is uncertain whether Iran will enjoy this right at any time if it fully fulfills its obligations and restores the confidence in the future or on which basis Iran will accept to do so. On the other hand, efforts of the nuclear technology holders to prevent expansion of the “nuclear club” through denying transfer of sensitive technology and material to third countries constitutes another dimension of the problem. Because in the last decade there has been an increasing tendency to confine right of every states parties to the NPT to benefit from the nuclear energy for peaceful purposes to “black-box” transfers of enrichment equipment and technology under conditions that do not permit or enable replication of the enrichment facilities. In parallel to this the leading technology holders supports the arrangements that envisages establishment of fuel banks which they believe make development of national uranium enrichment capability less attractive. Participation to such arrangements is not compulsory but non technology holders might feel obliged at one point to do so. Because there are three ways to benefit from nuclear energy: First, any state may master necessary capability for nuclear fuel cycle but this is almost impossible under today’s conditions. Establishing cooperation with technology holders for both “black-box” transfer of nuclear reactor and supply of fuel constitutes the second way. However, this is not attractive for the countries who seek not to be dependent on single source of supply. The third way is to buy nuclear reactor and get fuel from the fuel banks. See, for example, “Fred McGoldrick, “The Road Ahead for Export Controls: Challenges for the Nuclear Suppliers Group”, *Arms Control Association*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/print/4642>, (17 February 2011); Cole J. Harvey, “The Low-Enriched Uranium Fuel Reserve at Angarsk” *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, 19 January 2010, http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_low_enriched_uranium_angarsk.html, (17 February 2011)

Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. Minister Davutoğlu underlined at the press conference held after signature of the deal that “the first article refers to Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy because Iran has such right on the condition that it fulfils its obligations. There is also reference to Iran's obligation along with rights reiterated in this article”.³⁶⁰

Lastly, the VG's claim that Iran accepted to sign the Joint Declaration to thwart the upcoming sanctions resolution does not make the declaration irrelevant. Even if it is true, Iran's insincere intentions do not necessarily make the declaration worthless. The important thing is whether the declaration serves as a confidence building measure or not. At the same time, the P5+1 knew that during Brazilian President Lula da Silva's planned visit to Tehran some real improvement on the fuel swap issue might be possible. As discussed before, it was indeed some P5+1 countries including the US who announced this visit as the last chance of Iran before the adoption of the sanctions. So, the timing of the declaration should not be a surprise to these countries.

As a result, the efforts of Turkey and Brazil to persuade the VG to seize this “opportunity” did not yield result and France, Russia and the US conveyed their negative response including their questions and concerns regarding the declaration to the IAEA on June 9, hours before the UN Security Council meeting where the UNSC resolution 1929 was adopted.³⁶¹ Although the VG highlighted the shortcomings in the Joint Declaration and put forward counter arguments on each element of it, the political factors played instrumental role in its refusal to take the Joint Deceleration forward. First and foremost, the major stake holders did not believed that Turkey and Brazil could

³⁶⁰ “Bakan Davutoğlu'nun İran ile varılan nükleer uzlaşısı ile güncel dış politika gelişmeleri hakkında basın toplantısı metni”, op. cit.

³⁶¹ “Text: Powers dismiss Iran fuel offer before U.N. vote”, op. cit.

broker an agreement with Tehran. In the eve of Brazilian President's visit to Iran Clinton said "I have told my counterparts in many capitals around the world that I believe that we will not get any serious response out of the Iranians until after the Security Council acts". Russian President Medvedev also stated that President Lula da Silva had a 30 percent chance at best.³⁶² Moreover, Clinton made telephone calls with Turkish and Brazilian Foreign Ministers three days before the signature of the Joint Declaration and reportedly warned her counterparts that they believe "Iran's recent diplomacy was an attempt to stop Security Council action without actually taking steps to address international concerns about its nuclear program". These conversations interpreted as Washington's attempt to fend off joint Turkish and Brazilian initiatives.³⁶³ In this regard, it can be said that the Joint Declaration created a new situation in the process leading to the sanctions because the US Administration officials had insisted that sanctions would be only persuaded if the diplomatic track failed to yield result and sanctions would be only way to convince Iran to accept a deal.³⁶⁴ As a Turkish official pointed out, since US foreign policy makers had no prospect for swap deal they advanced the discussions on draft resolution to an irreversible level. Therefore, when Joint Declaration was signed it was more difficult for Washington to suspend the sanctions resolution than saying "no" to the declaration.³⁶⁵ In the face of this unexpected development the US put forward new conditions for implementation of fuel swap agreement such as suspension of Iran's enrichment related activities.

³⁶² Clinton says Lula faces uphill climb in Iran, *Reuters*, 14 May 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/14/us-nuclear-iran-usa-idUSTRE64D4VC20100514>, (18 February 2011).

³⁶³ Bayram Sinkaya, "İran Nükleer Programı Karşısında Türkiye'nin Tutumu ve Uranyum Takası Mutabakatı", *op. cit.*, p. 74.

³⁶⁴ Trita Parsi, "Analysis: Iran's Nuke Deal Irritates Washington", *op. cit.*

³⁶⁵ Interview with Turkish official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara, January 2011.

Second, the endorsement of the draft Security Council resolution by the P5+1 just one day after the Joint Declaration was signed illustrates that the P5+1 had already discussed the details of the resolution and came to final stage. In this context, having secured the support of Russia and China for new sanctions resolution Washington might have assessed that delaying sanction for a period of time would derail the UN sanctions track.³⁶⁶ Referring an Administration official Mustafa Kibaroglu noted that Washington assessed suspending the sanctions process for a period of two to three months but at the end the Administration did not want to risk Chinese and Russian support.³⁶⁷ Obama Administration also aimed at increasing pressure on Iran after the failure of the diplomatic track to contain the domestic challenges rising against his engagement policy.³⁶⁸ The domestic political demands meant that the sanctions would be prerequisite for further talks with Iran.

5.3.3. Vote on the Security Council Resolution 1929: Tough Choice Ahead

The declination of the swap deal by the VG put Turkey and Brazil in a difficult position regarding the vote on the Security Council resolution 1929. President Obama made a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Erdoğan before the vote in the Security Council to ask Turkey's support for the new sanctions resolution or at least guarantee its abstention.³⁶⁹ Prime Minister Erdoğan also called President Obama hours before the voting to share Turkey's decision and to assure him that Turkey's negative

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ Interview with Mustafa Kibaroglu, Ankara, November 2010.

³⁶⁸ Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett, "The Key to Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran", *Monthly Review*, 2 August 2010, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/leverett020810.html>, (18 February 2011).

³⁶⁹ "Türkiye'den yaptırıma 'hayır'", *Hürriyet*, 10 June 2010, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=14980061>, (18 February 2011).

vote aims at ensuring Iran remains committed to the diplomatic process.³⁷⁰ According to Turkish officials, Turkey, together with Brazil, voted against the UN Security Council resolution 1929 to uphold the opportunity created by the Joint Declaration. Subsequently, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu also made similar statements not to allow any misjudgment about Turkey's position towards Iran. Turkey indeed reached this decision after making comprehensive assessment about possible impacts of voting against the resolution or abstaining in the light of the telephone conversation Turkish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister made with their counterparts from Iran, Brazil, the US and European countries. Turkey's decision is based on the idea of reiterating its commitment to the diplomatic process in general and the Joint Declaration in particular. One Turkish official stated that "Turkey's position regarding the new sanctions resolution was well known. But Turkey's commitment to the diplomatic process and desire to keep the Joint Declaration on the table has the biggest share in Turkey's decision to vote against the resolution. Otherwise, Iran would not remain committed to the declaration and the diplomatic process. Abstention would obviously not make the same effect."³⁷¹

Turkey's vote against the sanctions resolution created disappointment in Washington but the responses to Turkey were measured. The US Secretary of Defense Gates said he was disappointed but pointed out that "Allies don't always agree on things, but we move forward from here". Secretary of State Clinton also underlining the disagreement between the US and Turkey stated that Turkey and Brazil could still play a

³⁷⁰ "Neden 'Hayır'", *Hürriyet*, 10 June 2010, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=14980093>, (18 February 2011).

³⁷¹ Interview with Turkish official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara, February 2011.

role in the diplomatic process.³⁷² In fact, Turkey's principled and sincere effort to facilitate the diplomatic process along with its resolved stance in the face of reactions to the Joint Declaration prevented outbreak of an Iran-sourced crisis in the Turkish-American relations and Ankara's relations with its Western allies. First, Turkish officials insisted that Turkey and Brazil successfully brokered a deal with Iran which offered a window of opportunity to be seized by the international community. They also emphasized that Turkey's stance against the sanctions resolution is related to its commitment to the diplomatic process and should not be interpreted as reaction to P5+1. Second, Turkey announced after the adoption of the sanctions resolution that it will be abided by the UN sanctions.³⁷³ Third, Turkish officials also made it clear that Turkey's vote against the sanctions resolution does not mean that it sides with Iran and give unconditional support to Iran's nuclear program.³⁷⁴ They assured the Western countries that Turkey continues to share the concerns of the international community emanating from the outstanding issues with respect to Iran's nuclear program. Lastly, even after the Joint Declaration was rejected by the VG Turkey did not hesitate to maintain its diplomatic efforts. Ankara made it known to its Western allies that Turkey will not be an outsider vis-à-vis the issue of close interest. For instance, when one senior US official told to press that Clinton had asked Foreign Minister Davutoğlu during a telephone conversation on July 12 to leave the Iranian nuclear issue to the P5+1 and the IAEA,

³⁷² "Gates Criticizes Turkey Vote Against Sanctions" *The New York Times*, 11 June 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/12/world/europe/12nato.html>, (18 February 2011).

³⁷³ "Ankara to implement Iran sanctions despite 'no' vote", *Todays Zaman*, 27 June 2010, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-214337-100-ankara-to-implementiran-sanctions-despite-no-vote.html>, (18 February 2011)

³⁷⁴ Interview with Turkish official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara, December 2010.

Davutoğlu denied he had such conversation with his American counterpart and stated that “there will not be a process without Turkey”.³⁷⁵

On the other hand, in the wake of the Security Council vote on sanctions resolution which coincided with the Gaza flotilla disaster, strength and status of Turkey’s affinities and alliance with the West became a topic for public debate both in domestic and international circles. More specifically, Turkey’s “no” vote in the Security Council refueled the debate on the AKP’s foreign policy approach in the last decade which is sometimes explained as “a shift of axis” namely “a drift away from the predominantly Western orientation which has been the hallmark of Turkish foreign policy throughout the post-War period, toward a more “eastern-oriented” pattern of foreign policy behavior.”³⁷⁶ This “shift of axis” argument suggests that Turkey has been shifting its interest from West-oriented foreign policy which entails goal of full membership to the EU, firm loyalty to the Transatlantic relations and further strengthening strategic partnership with the US and embracement of the Western values and standards to East-oriented foreign policy which includes enhancing its ties with Syria and Iran, supporting Hamas in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, namely making friend with foes of the West, quarreling with Israel and seeking to strengthen its relations with China and Russia. Some analysts argues that Turkey’s increasing involvement and visibility in the Middle Eastern affairs occurs at the expense of its place in the European architecture and strong bond of alliance with the West while some others contend that

³⁷⁵ “US official says Turkey agrees to leave Iran nuclear issue to security council powers and IAEA”, *Guardian*, 12 July 2010, <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/Canada---World/Society/2010-07-12/article-1536684/US-official-says-Turkey-agrees-to-leave-Iran-nuclear-issue-to-security-council-powers-and-IAEA/1>, (18 February 2011); “Türkiye’siz İran süreci olmaz”, *Zaman*, 14 July 2010, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=1005154&title=turkiyesiz-iran-sureci-olmaz>, (18 February 2011).

³⁷⁶ Ziya Öniş, “Multiple Faces of the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique”, *GLODEM Working Paper Series*, April 2010, p. 2.

Turkey's quest for enhancing its relations with Middle Eastern countries as well as other non-Western countries like Russia and China does not necessarily lead to drift away from the West but constituted strategic necessity for Turkey.

Turkey's discordance with its Western allies on Iran has been referred as stark indication of reorientation in the Turkish foreign policy driven by AKP's "Islamist roots".³⁷⁷ This debate on Turkey's increasing Eastern orientation in parallel to fading interest in its bonds of partnership with Western countries was also carried out at the official level by primarily the American policy makers. The next day after the UN Security Council vote on sanctions resolution the US Secretary of Defense Gates said "I personally think that if there is anything to the notion that Turkey is, if you will, moving eastward, it is, in my view, in no small part because it was pushed, and pushed by some in Europe refusing to give Turkey the kind of organic link to the West that Turkey sought". President Obama also joined the discussion on Turkey's place in the West by saying that he does not think that the EU's "slow pace or reluctance" regarding Turkey's membership is the only factor behind some of the "recent changes in Turkey's orientation" but, he warned, "if they (Turkish people) do not feel part of the European

³⁷⁷ Sally McNamara , Ariel Cohen and James Phillips, "Countering Turkey's Strategic Drift", *Heritage Foundation*, 26 July 2010, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/07/countering-turkey-s-strategic-drift>, (19 February 2011); Soner Çağaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?", *Foreign Affairs*, 26 October 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65661/soner-cagaptay/is-turkey-leaving-the-west?page=show>, (19 February 2011); Thomas L. Friedman, "Letter from Istanbul", *New York Times*, 15 June 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/16/opinion/16friedman.html?_r=1, (19 February 2011); Denis MacShane "Stop the Blame Game" *Newsweek*, 23 July 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/07/23/stop-the-blame-game.html>, (19 February 2011); James Traub, "Turkish Dilemma", *Foreign Policy*, 15 June 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/15/turkish_dilemma, (19 February 2011); James Kitfield, "Who Lost Turkey?", *National Journal*, 21 June 2010, http://www.nationaljournal.com/njonline/ns_20100621_3616.php, (19 February 2011).

family, then obviously they're going to look elsewhere for alliances and affiliations".³⁷⁸ Lastly, commenting Turkey's vote against the UNSC resolution 1929 Philip Gordon, assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs stated that they think "Turkey remains committed to NATO, Europe and the United States, but that needs to be demonstrated".³⁷⁹ Namely, the remarks by the US officials at different level contributed to the debate on Turkey's alleged foreign policy reorientation in recent years demonstrating suspicions of Washington about Turkey's loyalty to the West.

On the other hand, according to another view Turkey's rising profile in the Middle East and betterment of its relations with non-Western countries does not categorically mean its drift away from the West. In this regard, Oğuzlu argues that in recent years Turkey turned its face from West towards the East as its national security interests and the nature of Turkey's relations with both the United States and the European Union predominantly influenced by the development taking place in the Middle East. But the "Middle Easternization" of Turkish foreign policy does not mean that Turkey breaks away from the West but the growing salience of the Middle East in Turkey's relations with the West.³⁸⁰ Öniş also notes that Turkey has been correctly following a more active and assertive foreign policy to response changing domestic and global dynamics and to improve bilateral ties with neighboring countries on the basis of

³⁷⁸ "Obama Says Turkey Should Be Full Member of Europe", *Corriere Della Sera*, 8 July 2010, <http://www.corriere.it/International/english/articoli/2010/07/08/Barack-Obama-exclusive-interview-Corriere-della-Sera.shtml>, (19 February 2011).

³⁷⁹ "US official: Turkey must demonstrate commitment to West", *Today's Zaman*, 28 June 2010, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-214400-100-us-official-turkey-must-demonstrate-commitment-to-west.html>, (19 February 2010).

³⁸⁰ Tarık Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 3–20, March 2008, p. 3.

economic and security interests.³⁸¹ According to Öniş Turkey has perfect legitimate concerns behind its engagement policy with an important neighbor such as Iran on economic, security and cultural grounds but this policy must be in more “balanced and reserved manner”.³⁸² According to Aras and Gorener Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East does not contradict with traditional emphasize of Turkish policy-makers on the relations with the EU and the US but these two dimensions complement each other. They argue that “AKP foreign policy-makers, led by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, have envisioned Turkey as holding multiple roles in world politics, whereas these were previously thought of as incompatible. In conformity with these multiple identities, Turkey’s foreign policy interests have been extended to a much larger realm, escaping the constraints of a single focus. Turkey’s continuing commitments to involvement with the West, while deepening connections with the Middle East, constitute the hallmarks of the new foreign policy vision”.³⁸³ Öniş and Yılmaz point out that “there is significant continuity in terms of a pro-active and a multilateral approach to policymaking. Yet, one is able to detect a certain rupture after the early years of the AKP government. The discontinuity is marked by a shift from a commitment to deep Europeanization to loose Europeanization and a simultaneous shift to soft Euro-asianism.”³⁸⁴ But focus on Euro-asianism does not indicate abandonment the Europeanization projects at all though this constitutes a challenge for Turkey’s full-membership aspirations and likely to have significant repercussions for the “depth and

³⁸¹ Ziya Öniş, “Multiple Faces of the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique”, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁸² *Ibid*, p. 18.

³⁸³ Bülent Aras and Aylin Gorener, “National role conceptions and foreign policy orientation: the ideational bases of the Justice and Development Party's foreign policy activism in the Middle East”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12: 1, 73-92, 18 February 2010, pp. 90-91

³⁸⁴ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “Between Europeanization and Euro-asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era”, *Turkish Studies*, Volume 10, Issue 1, pp. 7-24, March 2009, p. 13.

intensity” of Turkey’s democratization process.³⁸⁵ Lastly, Kalin argues that “as a committed member of NATO, Turkey has treaded a carefully charted middle path between political loyalties and geo-strategic realities from Iraq, Iran and Lebanon to most recently the Caucasus.”³⁸⁶ Namely, Turkey reconciles the traditional foreign policy which upholds its bonds with the West with the new opportunities and necessities recent foreign policy activism entails.

5.3.4. Motives behind Turkey’s Attitude towards the Iranian Nuclear Issue

Turkey’s attitude towards the Iranian nuclear issue and the efforts it pursued particularly in recent years can be assessed as manifestation of Turkish foreign policy activism and do not constitute a contradiction in terms of Turkey’s traditional relations with the West. In this regard, Turkey’s remarkably developing relations with Iran and sometimes its discordance with the West on the Iranian nuclear issue are not indication of Turkey’s drift away from the West. Indeed Turkey’s policy toward Iranian nuclear issue is based on complex set of rational and pragmatic factors which are directly related to its national interests. The Iranian nuclear crisis puts Turkey in a difficult position in its relations with the West, constitutes an obstacle before further strengthening and deepening of the bilateral economic and political relations with Iran and emerges as a challenge against regional security and stability. In this context, the failure of the major powers and the relevant international bodies like the IAEA and the UN Security Council to make any opening to overcome current stalemate and resolve the issue triggered Turkey’s involvement in this rocky process and encouraged it to assume more active

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Ibrahim Kalin, “US-Turkish relations under Obama: promise, challenge and opportunity in the 21st century”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12: 1, pp. 93-08, 18 February 2010, p. 99.

role in diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation of the tension which would undermine its national interests.

First of all, Turkish-Iranian relations are more complex than mere neighborhood relations. The centuries old interaction between two countries and historical depth of this interaction forms the ground of current bilateral relations. As Aras notes, “for hundreds of years, Turkish-Iranian relations have been characterized by controlled tensions, which, ironically, have served to stabilize the Iranian-Turkish border throughout this period”.³⁸⁷ Indeed, Turkey and Iran did not fight a major warfare since the Treaty of Quasri Shrin of 1639 which defined today’s Turkish-Iranian border. As discussed earlier Turkish Foreign policy makers frequently refer this treaty while explaining the roots and peaceful nature of bilateral relations. For instance, Davutoğlu notes in his book, “Considering that major powers are defining element of Turkish-Iranian relations is inconsistent with the historical accumulation and real politics. To make it clear with striking comparison, history of Turkish-Iranian border is older than the history of the US (1774) and unification of Germany (1871)”.³⁸⁸

On the other hand, the shared culture and geography constitute other factors bridging between Iran and Turkey. Although the centuries long rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Iran based on sectarian ideological differences was even pursued by these countries until the last decade, today policy makers of two countries put emphasis on the commonalities, the Muslim identity and neighborhood, rather than the differences. In addition to cultural affinities, the fact that the Azeris form the one third of Iran’s population affects the Turks’ sentiments about this country positively. The

³⁸⁷ Bülent Aras, “Turkish Foreign Policy Toward Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux”, *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Spring 2001, p. 105.

³⁸⁸ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, op. cit., p. 434.

program of Turkish President Abdullah Gül's official visit to Iran in February 2011 also included one-day visit to Tabriz which is the most populated city in Iranian Azerbaijan, where he was given a warm welcome and attracted great attention of the Iranian Azeris.

The geostrategic disposition of Turkey and Iran necessitates their cooperation and coordination on the issues of common concern. As the two major powers of the region they have to be receptive about each other's approach to a particular foreign policy issue. As Davutoğlu argues;

From historical and geographical perspective Ottoman/Turkey-Safavid/Iran relations resembles France-Germany relations. Fate of these countries which are located at the common geocultural and geopolitical axis cannot be broken off even if they fight or make alliance. As in the case of Germany-France relations, even if Turkey and Iran sometimes conflicts they do not certainly ignore each other.³⁸⁹

Against this background, it can be argued that Turkey's regional policies can hardly be implemented at the expense of Iran. Today, Iran enjoys certain level of influence in the geographies like Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria and some of the Central Asian and Caucasus countries which Turkey seeks to establish strong relationship. In this regard, Turkey's efforts to restore stability in Iraq, fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan together with NATO, prevent internal strife in Lebanon and help integration of Syria with the international community might not yield enduring result if Iran counters Turkey's constructive efforts. At the same time, regional strife and confrontation with Iran would undermine Turkey's security and stability as it was the case in 1990s. As discussed before, today, thanks to the recent rapprochement between two countries fight against terrorism became an area of cooperation which both

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 429.

of them benefits. In the light of these factors that forms a natural bridge and a kind of interdependence between Turkey and Iran, engagement and conciliation should be primary objective of Turkish foreign policy towards Iran. As one Turkish official underlined, “Turkey does not have the luxury of building a wall on its border with Iran and turn its back to its next door neighbor. Such attitude would be against Turkey’s interests as well as the reality”.³⁹⁰

Secondly, “zero problem policy toward Turkey’s neighbors” constitutes one of the principles of current Turkish foreign policy approach³⁹¹ and leads to deviation from fixed positions Turkish foreign policy adopted until recently. This policy initiative entails repairing the relations with neighbors on the basic principle of enhancing economic interdependence and minimizing the problematic issues on the agenda while avoiding involvement in the regional crisis. In the last decade, Turkey displayed remarkable willingness to mend the fences with all neighboring countries and create a security belt on the basis of economic interdependence and historical and cultural commonalities. In the case of Turkish-Iranian relations, Turkey has successfully implemented this ambitious foreign policy agenda thereby eliminating the confrontational atmosphere and strengthening the relations in areas of mutual interest. Having considered that Turkey and Iran viewed each other with antipathy and suspicion even in early 2000s the progress achieved so far indicates a significant transformation of the dynamics that form the ground of Turkish-Iranian relations. Whether Turkey and Iran can achieve the goal of “zero problem” and advance to the aim for maximum

³⁹⁰ Interview with Turkish official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara, December 2010.

³⁹¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s foreign policy vision: An Assessment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January –March 2008, p. 80

cooperation which is defined by Davutoğlu as the next stage depends primarily on prospective developments with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue.³⁹²

So far, Turkey successfully followed a balanced approach on the basis of aforementioned principles to protect its interests from the shock waves of the crisis between the West and Iran over the latter's nuclear program. However, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to preserve this balance in the face of escalating tension between the parties. As long as the Iranian nuclear issue remains unresolved Turkey will not feel comfortable while seeking to enhance its relations with Iran to the level of "maximum cooperation". In view of the fact that both unilateral and multilateral sanctions imposed on Iran did not change the status of cooperation between Iran and the IAEA, the major stake holders might be tempted to consider toughen the sanctions that would cripple Iran's economy or even the military option might prevail as possible last resort to stop its nuclear program. In such cases, Turkey's ambitious "zero problem policy" would encounter a major challenge in terms of its relations with Iran because as Washington's engagement policy seems not to deliver the expected results US is expected to further the pressure on Iran and increase political and economic isolation of it thereby urging Ankara give robust support to these policies. This would create difficulty for Turkey with regard to its relations with Iran given that even the plain political dialogue between Iran and Turkey is not welcomed by the US.³⁹³

The discussions on the NATO missile defense system before and during the Lisbon Summit held on 19-20 November 2010 demonstrated how escalation of the crisis between West and Iran and the former's deepening perception of insecurity from Iran

³⁹² Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy" op. cit., p. 9.

³⁹³ See for instance, Arzu Celalifer Ekinçi, "Ahmedinejad'ın Türkiye Ziyareti", *USAK Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi*, 28 October 2008, <http://www.usak.org.tr/makale.asp?id=739>, (19 February 2011).

can affect Turkey's neighborhood policy in the medium and long term. The eagerness of the major NATO members to name Iran and Syria in the documents of the Alliance as source of ballistic missile threat was countered by Turkey. The assessment that such declaratory policy would be in contradiction with "zero-problem policy" constituted one reason for Turkey's disapproval.³⁹⁴

On the other hand, reversal of the recent trend in Turkish-Iranian relations would have ramifications for Turkey's increasing foreign policy activism at regional level. Possible friction between Iran and Turkey, two major powers in the Middle East, would certainly have implications in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Afghanistan where both of them are influential at different levels. In this regard, delimitation of the rapprochement between Iran and Turkey for one or another reason would undermine "zero problem policy" in terms of Turkish-Iranian relations as well as Turkey's ties with its other Middle Eastern neighbors. In addition, Turkey's categorical and unprincipled support to the West's policies with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue might challenge perception of Turkey in the Islamic world given the fact that even Turkish people sympathizes with Iran regarding its nuclear program.³⁹⁵

Thirdly, Turkish-Iranian economic relations occupy a significant place in Turkey's Iran policy and drive Ankara to seek early diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. In parallel to Turkish-Iranian rapprochement bilateral trade recorded a rapid pace of increase in the last decade. Obviously the high level visits exchanged between Iran and Turkey set the stage for further enhancement of economic relations. For instance, during Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tehran in October 2009 Turkey

³⁹⁴ Armağan Kuloğlu, "Füze Savunma Sistemi Projesi ve Türkiye", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 23, November 2010, p. 62.

³⁹⁵ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Baris Caglar, "Implication of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey", *op. cit.*, p. 70.

and Iran agreed to raise the volume of bilateral trade to \$ 30 billion by 2011. On the margins of this visit two countries also concluded a number agreement on establishment of free trade area on the Turkish-Iranian border, foundation of a joint airline and opening of new branches of the Turkish banks in Iran and vice versa.³⁹⁶ However, despite the willingness of both parties to augment bilateral trade and establish robust economic bonds through various projects in different fields, current state of the Turkish-Iranian economic profile displays the limits of these countries' economic convergence under existing unilateral and multilateral sanctions. The projects that were concluded during Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit could not be put into force so far while the volume of bilateral trade lags far behind the goal set in 2009. Nevertheless, Turkey and Iran remains committed to push economic relation to the level which political relations reached. The fact that Turkish President Abdullah Gül was accompanied by a huge delegation consisting of predominantly businessmen during his visit to Tehran in February 2011 demonstrates Turkey's desire to open Iranian markets to Turkish companies. Addressing Turkey-Iran Business Council President Gül emphasized that there is a great potential for stronger cooperation between two countries and this potential should be transformed into benefit of both sides through appropriate arrangements.³⁹⁷ However, the UN sanctions stands as the main obstacle before development of bold cooperation no matter how attractive the Iranian markets are for the Turkish companies not to mention the US pressure.

³⁹⁶ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, "Son Ziyaretler Kapsamında Türkiye-İran İlişkileri", *USAK Analizleri*, Kasım 2009, p. 10.

³⁹⁷ 'İran ve Türkiye arasında büyük bir işbirliği olabilir', *DHA*, 14 February 2011, http://www.dha.com.tr/gul-iran-ve-turkiye-arasinda-buyuk-bir-isbirligi-olabilir-son-dakika-haberi_142202.html, (20 February 2011).

On the other hand, energy cooperation with Iran constitutes an important dimension of Turkey's quest for strengthening economic relations with this country. Turkey's energy strategy is to realize its energy security through diversification of supply sources and then to contribute to Europe's energy security through major pipeline projects, realized and proposed, which will enhance Turkey's role as an important and reliable transit country.³⁹⁸ Iran with its abundant hydro carbon resources stands as a potential energy partner for Turkey in view of the fact that Turkey's domestic energy sources are highly limited.³⁹⁹ With respect to Turkey's efforts to diversify supply sources in the face of its rapidly growing energy consumption Iran is viable option as Turkey's already major oil and gas supplier. In addition, Turkey's export of refined petroleum products to Iran contributes the balance of trade between these countries. However, the existing UN Security Council and the unilateral US and the EU sanctions casts shadow over Turkish-Iranian energy partnership and curbs Turkey's ambitions to strengthen energy cooperation with its next door neighbour. As discussed earlier, the agreements signed between Iran and Turkey which provides the Latter with the opportunity to join in developing Iran's South Pars field could not be implemented because of the US pressure and unilateral sanctions which can be imposed on any company investing more than \$ 20 million per year in Iran's energy sector.⁴⁰⁰

At the same time, Iran may be an ideal partner in term of realization of the second pillar, contribution to Europe's energy security, of Turkey's energy strategy. Having in mind the gas cuts in 2006 and 2009 because of the dispute between Ukraine

³⁹⁸ "Turkey's Energy Strategy", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey*, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye_nin-enerji-politikasi.en.mfa, (20 February 2011).

³⁹⁹ Turkey imports 74 % of its energy consumption per year. *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ William Hale, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 'New Era'" *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 143-159, 2009, p. 154.

and Russia the EU aims at opening other routes bypassing Russia to secure uninterrupted gas supply. In this regard, the major pipeline projects Turkey assumed so far are geared to address the EU's energy supply diversification efforts. The planned Nabucco Natural Gas Pipeline project which envisages transportation of natural gas via Turkey through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to Austria and also backed by the US and the EU is a major undertaking to this end. However, although the Intergovernmental Agreement was signed in July 2009 by the participating governments and entered into force in August 2010 how this pipeline will be filled with gas is an issue pending for solution.⁴⁰¹ Although Iran stands ready to supply natural gas to Europe via Nabucco pipeline, because of the crisis over its nuclear program the US categorically reject this option though many European backers of Nabucco believe that this projects will not have long term viability without Iran.⁴⁰² Nevertheless, Turkey's withdrawal from the gas extraction agreement with Iran displays that Iranian nuclear issue constitutes a hurdle for Turkish-Iranian cooperation to transport gas to Europe. Furthermore, Turkey gives its full backing to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline Project planned to transport Iranian gas to Europe in line with its policy of enhancing energy security of the EU.⁴⁰³ However, in the face of increasing international pressure and the unilateral EU sanctions, realization of this project seems impossible at least at this stage. In a nut shell, although Turkish-Iranian economic and energy cooperation recorded considerable achievement in the last decade,

⁴⁰¹ "Nabucco'da tarihi imzalar atılıyor ama hatta kimin gaz vereceği hâlâ net değil", *Radikal*, 13 July 2009, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetayV3&Date=&ArticleID=944750>, (20 February 2011).

⁴⁰² Daniel Freifeld, "Nabucco: Pipeline Politics and the U.S.-Turkey Strategic Partnership", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vo. 7, No. 4, p. 76; "İran, Oriflame'i gönderdi, Nabucco hattında 'siyasi durum' engeline takıldı", *Hürriyet*, 24 August 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/15619694.asp>, (20 February 2011).

⁴⁰³ Yusuf Yazar, "Turkey's Role and Priorities in Enhancement of Security of Oil and Gas Supplies" *SETA Policy Brief*, No. 51, November 2010, p. 12.

the potential is much higher than what has been achieved. However, the international pressure on Iran and the unilateral and multilateral sanctions stands as obstacle before deepening and widening of Turkish-Iranian economic cooperation.

Fourthly, Turkey's position towards Iranian nuclear issue is based on aforementioned basic principles. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu explains Turkey's approach to Iranian nuclear issue with reference to NPT mentioning four category of countries according to their possession of nuclear technology and nuclear weapons: a) NPT parties holding nuclear technology and possessing nuclear weapons (declared nuclear weapon-states), b) states outside the NPT but possessing nuclear weapons (non-declared nuclear weapon-states like India, Pakistan and Isreal), c) NPT parties holding nuclear technology but not possessing nuclear weapons like Brazil, Japan, etc.) d) NPT parties without nuclear technology and nuclear weapons. Minister Davutoğlu makes it clear that if Iran wants to be in the second category Turkey would certainly oppose this even before anyone else including the US but Turkey would not have any problem if Iran wants to stay in the third category so long as it opens its facilities to international monitoring.⁴⁰⁴ He also makes a link between ambitions to form monopoly in the are of nuclear technology and strong resistance to Iran's nuclear program underlining that even Turkey might be target of international pressure in the future for seeking peaceful nuclear technology.⁴⁰⁵ So far, Turkey has been criticized by its Western allies for supporting Iran's nuclear program, opposing sanctions and not joining the international efforts to isolate Iran. Although these critics do not reflect the real situation exactly they

⁴⁰⁴ "Davutoğlu: 'İsrail ile barışma niyetimiz var'", *CNN Türk*, 25 December 2010, <http://www.cnnturk.com/2010/turkiye/12/25/davutoglu.israil.ile.barisma.niyetimiz.var/600736.0/index.html>, (24 February 2011).

⁴⁰⁵ "Dışişleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu: Nükleer tekeli istemiyoruz", *Zaman*, 25 September 2010, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=1031891>, (24 February 2010).

challenge the principles that Turkey has followed carefully on the basis of some legitimate concerns. First, Turkey's support to Iran's peaceful nuclear program is matter of principle. At the same time, while Turkey upholding right to peaceful use of nuclear energy in accordance with the NPT, it emphasizes the obligations emanating from this Treaty. Ankara's categorical resistance to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East also complements this policy stance. Second, Turkey's hesitant approach to sanctioning Iran is primarily related to the fact that sanctions imposed so far did not help to solve the problem, quite the contrary, exacerbated the crisis through hardening Iran's position. Sanctioning Iran hurts Turkey's economic interest more than any country that negotiates the sanctions resolution and submits to the vote in the Security Council. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has been complaining about the attitude of Turkey's allies in the P5+1 who did not consult with it regarding the UNSC resolution 1929 although Turkey bear the biggest cost while China and Russia achieved to remove the elements that would undermine their economic interests from the draft resolution.⁴⁰⁶ Thirdly, Turkey fears that sanctions would prelude military option which might be necessary at one point according to supporters of hard line position against Iran. Even limited military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities is likely to have wide ranging consequences which would fuel already smoking fire in the Middle East and offer a strong incentive for Iran to withdraw from the NPT and seek to acquire nuclear weapons. As discussed earlier, military strike is not viable option since it would not paralyze Iran's nuclear activities which already passed the critical threshold and would only delay Iran's nuclear program at best for five years.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, Turkey would be

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Turkish official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara, February 2011.

one of the most negatively affected countries from Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons since such development may curb Turkey's regional influence and pose a significant threat to it. Although Turkey's territory is covered by a "nuclear umbrella" according to Article 5 of the 1949 Washington Treaty, Ankara's sour experiences related to security guarantees of NATO stays in the minds of Turkish foreign policy makers.⁴⁰⁸ Indeed, all of these possible consequences of escalation of Iranian nuclear crisis are nightmare scenario for Turkey who oppose proliferation of WMD and strives to bring enduring stability in its region. Although these scenarios do not go beyond speculation for the time being, considering the fact that the US never stated that the military option is off the table and Israeli officials desire a military strike on Iran sooner rather than later it can be argued that continuing unresolved status of Iranian nuclear issue and escalation of the crisis between Iran and the West accordingly might pave the way for undesirable consequences in the medium term. Therefore, Turkey believes that it can contribute to bridging the positions of both sides and building mutual confidence to avoid worst case option. The Joint Declaration also displayed that Turkey's efforts can yield result although this opportunity could not be seized unduly by the P5+1.

Lastly, Turkey's emergence as a regional power in the last couple of years with its increasingly assertive and self confident foreign policy stirred its appetite to play more active role in the resolution of disputes and crisis in its vicinity. Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East manifests itself in its active involvement in the international efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. The Middle Eastern countries can be roughly divided into two broad categories: security producers and security

⁴⁰⁸ Mustafa Kibaroglu and Baris Caglar, "Implication of A Nuclear Iran for Turkey", op. cit., pp. 68-69.

consumers.⁴⁰⁹ Turkey falls under the category of security producer while Iran is currently a security consumer country due to the dispute over its nuclear program. In this regard, as a major regional power, Turkey's active efforts to make active contribution to the diplomatic process is first and foremost related to its quest for establishing enduring peace and stability in the Middle East. As Davutoğlu argues;

Turkey needs to deepen its participation in regional matters. Specifically, Turkey should contribute to peace, security, and prosperity in its region. Obviously, Turkey would benefit from such a positive environment; working toward it would raise Turkey to an internationally proactive position. This elevation could occur via Turkey's implementation of energy, transportation, and cultural policies. Turkey could pursue a more influential policy line in international politics after asserting itself in its regional setting.⁴¹⁰

Although Turkey is aware of the fact that it is not the major stake holder in the Iranian nuclear crisis, Iran's and the P5+1's failure to come to an agreement to find a way out of this crisis and the increasing tension between the parties disturbs Ankara. This is because the nuclear crisis with wide ranging implications and potential to trigger other crisis in the fragile security atmosphere of the Middle East poses direct challenge to Turkey's as well as other Middle Eastern countries' stability and security. In this regard, Turkey's sees itself as responsible for containing the crisis with all instruments available before it gets out of control. As Aras and Gorener argued, "increasing dialogue with all political actors, various mediation initiatives, undertaking facilitator and promoter roles among the states in surrounding regions can all be considered as part of a larger aspiration to formulate all-embracing policies in regional matters, with a goal of

⁴⁰⁹ This "security consumer/security producer" definition is inspired from Pinar Bilgin, "Turkey & The EU: Yesterday's Answers to Tomorrow's Security Problems?", *EU Civilian Crisis Management Conflict Studies Research Centre*, May 2001.

⁴¹⁰ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's foreign policy vision: An Assessment of 2007", op. cit., p. 96.

constructing a new regional order”.⁴¹¹ Commenting on the statement of the spokesman of the US State Department who alleged that Davutoğlu agreed with Clinton to focus primarily on Iran’s dialogue with P5+1 and the IAEA which was interpreted as Turkey’s withdrawal from the process Davutoğlu said “no one can tell us to ‘stay outside the process’. We will be in all processes which affects Turkey”.⁴¹²

Apart from Turkey’s regional role, its ability to engage Iran and convey its message to Iranian leaders directly offers Ankara invaluable opportunity to assume more active role in the diplomatic process. As Turkish officials emphasizes since Turkey has such distinguished positions it is quite natural that it facilitates the process and strives to eliminate certain misunderstandings. For instance, during the P5+1-Iran talks in İstanbul on 21-22 January 2010, although Turkey is not at the table Foreign Minister Davutoğlu intervened several times when the talks came to brink of collapse.⁴¹³ The difference between Turkey and P5+1 countries is that while Turkish officials can talk to Iranians at all level and give frank messages, P5+1 countries can communicate on the nuclear issue with Iran at best through letters. As Aras and Gorener further argues;

Turkey now hosts Middle Eastern, Eurasian, and African leaders as well as high-level politicians and officials from Western countries, and facilitates platforms for the solution of conflicts in various geographies. Turkish policymakers try to overcome differences between countries in conflict through confidence-building measures and by acting as a mediator and facilitator to find solutions to chronic regional problems. Turkish policymakers’ approach has enabled Turkey to emerge in the role of peace-maker in the periphery of the international system.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ Bülent Aras and Aylin Gorener, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴¹² Murat Yetkin, “Davutoğlu: İran’a yaptırma tabii uyacağız”, *Radikal*, 15 July 2010, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&ArticleID=1008067&Yazar=MURAT%20YETK%DDN&Date=07.10.2010&CategoryID=98>, (24 February 2010).

⁴¹³ “Davutoğlu’nun çabaları yetmedi” *Hürriyet*, 23 January 2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/16830009.asp>, (25 February 2011).

⁴¹⁴ Bülent Aras and Aylin Gorener, op. cit., p. 84.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Iranian nuclear issue started to occupy a significant place on the world's agenda after the revelation of two clandestine facilities in 2002 but the roots of the problem go back to 1979 when Shah was overthrown with the Islamic revolution. Although the Western countries including the US stirred Shah's nuclear ambitions and gave technical, technological and financial support to the nuclear projects in Iran the regime change altered the attitude of the West towards Iran's nuclear program dramatically. The Islamic regime's attempts to resume the nuclear program after a period of suspension demonstrated that the Western countries were not willing, mainly because of the US pressure, to complete the projects they undertaken in Iran regardless of how profitable the investment in this country's nuclear market. After the decision was taken in Tehran to resume the nuclear program the US started accusing the Iranian regime of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons and supporting the fundamentalist groups and terrorist organizations in the Middle East. Driven by the hostility emanating from the hostage crisis after the Islamic revolution which has characterized the US-Iranian relations in the last three decades predominantly political motives formed the basis for the US resistance to development of Iran's nuclear program. In this context, through 1990s and early 2000s the US strived to prevent transfer of sensitive materials and technology to Iran with a view to make development of its nuclear program impossible. The revelation of two clandestine nuclear facilities of Iran in 2002 exacerbated the concerns of US and was presented by Washington to the international community as

clear indications of Iran's ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons. Since then, the US insisted that Iran's nuclear dossier should be referred to the UN Security Council so that concrete measures can be adopted to prevent Iran's "acquisition of nuclear weapons" and it achieved to gather international support to this end. However, the referral of Iran's nuclear dossier to the Security Council led to further escalation of the issue since it paved the way for a process of recrimination, confrontation and showdown between the West and Iran which was also exacerbated by lack of confidence between the parties.

Today, the lack of confidence between Iran and the major stake holders can be pointed out as the core of the problem and constitutes the first and foremost reason preventing parties from taking bold steps in the negotiations. Iran asks the P5+1 to recognize its right to peaceful use of nuclear energy at the beginning of the negotiations because it has suspicions about real intentions of the US and the European countries and believes that they want to restrict its rights emanating from the NPT. The P5+1, on the other hand, is not ready to guarantee Iran that they will give way to its complete fuel cycle activities because they are not assured that Iran will respond their recognition of Iran's rights through implementing transparency measures and establish full cooperation with the IAEA. This is indeed a legitimate concern given that the outstanding issues with regard to military dimension of Iran's nuclear program are not addressed yet and Tehran avoids implementing voluntary transparency measures. As such, the issue of who will take the first step became much more important than the substance of the negotiations. The lack of confidence between the parties has constituted a major obstacle before the implementation of agreements reached by the parties towards resolving the issue. Indeed, this was the reason why the diplomatic initiatives failed throughout the process

which followed the revelation of secret nuclear facilities of Iran. The Paris Agreement signed between the EU-3 and Iran in 2004 and the fuel swap agreement signed by Iran and VG in 2009 are cases in point.

The history of Iranian nuclear issue and the diplomatic efforts pursued so far demonstrates that so long as the hostility continues to dominate the US-Iranian relations and the confidence between Iran and the West is not restored, resolution of the nuclear dispute will be a difficult goal to achieve. However, it is ambiguous how the confidence would be restored. Although the EU-3 and Russia performed efforts between 2003 and 2006 to prevent escalation of this crisis and build confidence, due to lack of US full involvement in these processes these efforts could only yield interim results. The US President Obama's "new approach" increased the prospects that a process of rapprochement would begin in US-Iranian relations but since Obama's engagement remained confined to the nuclear issue only Iranian leadership could not duly respond this engagement policy. Namely, Obama's engagement policy overlooked the fact that the diplomatic process with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue is taken hostage by the confrontational US-Iranian relations. Indeed, resolution of the nuclear dispute can only be a part of "grand bargain" between Tehran and Washington which would cover all conflictual areas. In the absence of such comprehensive process any efforts to make contribution to the diplomatic process would have limited effects. The swap deal agreement signed by Turkey, Brazil and Iran in May 2010 is case in point.

Although the US and Iran's positions and approaches are vital for success of the diplomacy other major stake holders also have important role to play in the diplomatic process. After the outbreak of the crisis in 2002, the EU-3's initiatives counterbalanced

US who sought to punish Iran for breach of its obligations and prevented the escalation of the crisis. In addition, despite the fact that these initiatives yielded no concrete result, the EU-3 achieved to delay development of Iran's nuclear program for the period between 2003 and 2006. The EU's hesitance to resort to use of force in order to stop Iran's nuclear program has also constituted an important factor deterring US from taking such step. However, after the failure of the diplomatic initiative the EU-3 shifted closer to the US position and they removed their resistance to adoption of punitive measures against Iran. This situation prompted Russia to intensify its efforts to advance the diplomatic process since the impasse in this process would form the ground for tough measures and thereby lead to escalation of the tension. The Russian initiative also did not help to overcome the impasse in the diplomatic process and eventually this country approved the sanctions resolutions in the Security Council. Ever since Iran's nuclear file was referred to the UN Security Council Russia primarily focused on preserving its economic interest in Iran and maintaining its relatively good relations with this country rather than playing a leading for upholding the diplomacy. Turkey's efforts to facilitate the diplomatic process and attempts to mediate between US and Iran indeed filled this vacuum created by withdrawal of Russia.

In this regard, Turkey's diplomatic efforts are necessary and useful in terms of upholding the diplomatic process. Actually, Turkey's efforts can be considered as follow up to the EU-3's and Russia's diplomatic initiatives. Indeed Turkey has been playing a moderate role by upholding and facilitating the diplomatic process and urging the parties to stick to the negotiations but this role is important because when the diplomatic track is stalled adoption of tough measures prevails as the only viable option to stop Iran's

nuclear program. Turkey has certain advantages compared to the EU-3 and Russia since it enjoys strong political dialogue with Iran and can reach out the Iranian leadership to convey direct and frank messages. At the same time, as neighbor of Iran, Turkey can place the nuclear issue within the regional context and understand better the sensitivities of Iranians while the Western countries evaluate the nuclear issue in a vacuum. In the final analysis the effectiveness of Turkey's efforts should not be exaggerated and limits of its role should not be overlooked. However, in the absence of a political actor facilitating the diplomatic process and bridging the different approaches escalation of the tension would be inevitable.

Turkey pursues its diplomatic efforts guided by certain principles on the basis of some legitimate concerns and expectations from early diplomatic resolution of the issue. So far, Turkey followed a balanced and careful approach without compromising its principles. But how long it can continue pursuing this policy is uncertain given that the increasing tension between the parties narrows the grey areas. As such, possible scenarios regarding future of the nuclear dispute concerns Turkey and make it intensify efforts to facilitate resolution of this issue without further delay. Turkey departs from the fact that the Iranian nuclear issue and prospective negative developments with regard to it poses a serious challenge to its economic and political interests in the region. Turkey is also aware that continuation of its rise as a regional actor depends on establishment of enduring stability and security in its vicinity. Moreover, Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East bestow upon it responsibility to make active contribution to the resolution of regional disputes and conflicts. In this regard, the attempts to explain Turkey's policy towards Iranian nuclear issue with the notion of "shift of axis" as an

unconditional support to Iran's nuclear program overlook the rational and pragmatic factors behind this attitude as well as its sincere efforts to contribute resolution of this dispute.

Driven by these factors Turkey's role went beyond facilitation in recent years as it mediated between Iran and the VG to contribute realization of the fuel swap deal as a confidence building measure. After the swap deal, drafted in October 2009 by Iran and the VG, could not be finalized Turkey emerged as mediator between the parties to prevent collapse of the negotiations and adoption of new sanctions resolution. Finally, after months of discussions the Tehran Joint Declaration was signed by Turkey, Brazil and Iran as a confidence building measure which could pave the way for comprehensive diplomatic process. This deal indeed constitutes the most concrete contribution of Turkey to the diplomatic process. However, because of mostly political reasons the VG did not accept to take forward this deal and realize fuel swap but opted to support the last sanctions resolution which exacerbated the tension between Iran and the West and delayed the diplomatic talks for more than one year. On the other hand, despite the negative reactions of some Western countries to the Joint Declaration and criticisms with regard to Turkey's efforts it continues to facilitate the diplomatic process and mediate between the parties when requested.

Consequently, the state of the diplomatic process demonstrates that in Western capitals there is no clear idea about what the next step will be. The success of the "dual track" strategy is not taken for granted and Iran continues to exploit this uncertainty to improve its nuclear program. The Western officials praise the unity within the P5+1 against Iran but obviously being united does not help to solve the issue itself in the

absence of an effective strategy which is the case for the time being. Indeed, the “dual track” strategy overlooks the fact that any issue which is presented as a cause of “national pride” cannot be resolved through pressure. While the sanctions did not change Iran’s behavior so far they increase popular support of the incumbent regime. Pressure might be an effective instrument to convince Iran to be more cooperative only if it is supported with persistent and determined negotiations.

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