

**TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS IN THE 2000s:
RAPPROCHEMEENT OR BEYOND?**

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ABSTRACT

TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS IN THE 2000s: RAPPROCHEMENT OR BEYOND?

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For most of their histories, Turkey and Iran have had a friendly but competitive relationship in ideological and geopolitical venues. When this competition reached its peak in the 1990s, conventional wisdom foresaw prospects for cooperation between Turkey and Iran would gradually decrease. Instead, bilateral relations began to be enhanced in the early 2000s, which is commonly labeled as *rapprochement*. This rapprochement spread to the political, economic and security arenas, and has accelerated during AKP (Justice and Development Party) rule in Turkey, especially after the Iraqi War of 2003. However, the rapprochement process in bilateral relations lost its momentum in 2010. This thesis examines the reasons and extent of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations in the first decade of 2000s, attempting to answer the following research questions: ‘How can the rapprochement process in bilateral relations be defined?’ and ‘Is this rapprochement a structural or just a conjectural change?’ In this respect, three issues, the Kurdish issue, the nuclear issue and economic relations, are analyzed.

This thesis argues that Turkish-Iranian relations moved from *fragile détente* between 1998 and 2002, to *sustainable rapprochement* between 2003 and 2011, as a result of conjectural changes. However, moving from the existing *sustainable rapprochement* to *durable partnership* is less likely. On the contrary, returning to *fragile détente* is most likely, which includes the possibility of a return to conflictual relations, as in the 1990s, before the period of *fragile détente*.

Keywords: Turkey, Iran, Kurdish Issue, Nuclear, Economic relations

ÖZ

2000'Lİ YILLARDA TÜRKİYE-İRAN İLİŞKİLERİ: YAKINLAŞMA MI?

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Tarih boyunca Türkiye ve İran'ın dostça, ama aynı zamanda da ideolojik ve jeopolitik açılarından rekabetçi bir ilişkisi olmuştur. 1990'lı yıllarda iki ülke arasındaki rekabetin en üst seviyeye ulaşmasıyla genel kanı, Türkiye-İran işbirliği olasılığının azaldığı yönündeydi. Genel kanının aksine, 2000'li yıllarda ikili ilişkiler gelişmiş, bu süreç de yakınlaşma olarak tanımlanmıştır. Siyasi, ekonomik ve güvenlik alanlarındaki bu yakınlaşma, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) döneminde, özellikle 2003 Irak Savaşından sonra artmıştır. Ancak ikili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma süreci 2010 yılının sonlarında hız kaybetmiştir. Bu tez, 2000'li yılların ilk on senesinde Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki yakınlaşma sürecinin nedenleri ve boyutunu incelemektedir. “İkili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma süreci nasıl tanımlanabilir?” ve “Bu yakınlaşma yapısal mı yoksa sadece konjonktürel bir değişim mi?” sorularına cevap aramaktadır. Bu çerçevede, üç konu; Kürt konusu, nükleer konu ve ekonomik ilişkiler incelenmiştir.

Bu tez, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin 1998-2002 yılları arasındaki *kırılgan yumuşama* sürecinden 2003-2011 yılları arasında konjonktürel değişimler sonucunda

sürdürülebilir yaklaşma evresine girdiğini savunmaktadır. Ancak, mevcut durumdaki *sürdürülebilir yaklaşma* evresinden *sürekli ortaklık* safhasına geçme olasılığının düşük olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Aynı zamanda *kırılgan yumuşama* sürecine geri dönüş ihtimalinin yüksek olduğunu, hatta 1990'lı yillardaki gibi *kırılgan yumuşama* süreci öncesine damgasını vuran çatışmacı ilişkilere geri dönülebileceğini göz ardı etmemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, İran, Kürt konusu, nükleer, ekonomik ilişkiler

To My Father, A. Faruk ALPTÜRK

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Turkey is one of the very important countries in the region, just as Iran is. Iran is also an important country in the region. But as to which country will have a place among the nations that change the fate of the world in the 21st century, one has to look at and examine a number of things. (...) It is very important that the countries of the world cooperate among themselves. If the countries in the region go hand in hand and cooperate, the development in the region will be much faster.”¹

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, 2000

“Turkey’s friendly relations with Iran remain on the basis of not intervening in each other’s internal affairs and good neighborhood [relations]. Iran is an important country in our region with its significant geo-strategic position, economic potential and dynamic population. Turkey and Iran participate in multilateral economic and political initiatives. Turkey and Iran are the main actors in the region and the main contributors to regional security and stability.”²

Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep T. Erdogan, 2009

1.1. Scope and Argument of the Dissertation

As reflected in the statements by Kharrazi and Erdogan, there has been general agreement that Turkish-Iranian relations have become more cooperative since the early 2000s. This new phase in bilateral relations has commonly been described with the term rapprochement. This thesis aims to analyze the reasons and the extent of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s.

¹ “Kharrazi: Iran Emphasizes its Relations with Turkey,” Hürriyet Daily News, 20 January 2000.

² Star, 28 October 2009.

For most of their histories, Turkey and Iran have had a friendly but competitive relationship in ideological and geopolitical venues. It seems that throughout the history, the Turkish-Iranian relations have been characterized by cycles of rapprochement in and worsening of bilateral relations. Historically, there have been three distinct phases of rapprochement between the two countries. The first phase of rapprochement was in the early 1920s. From the very beginning, adherence to different sects of Islam – Sunnism and Shiism, respectively – has been a significant determinant in bilateral relations. Ottoman-Safavid relations had been shaped by a long-term rivalry based on sectarian differences, with each struggling to be the leader of the Muslim world. With the collapse of these empires, both became engaged in nation-building processes in the 1920s. The establishment of anti-imperialist and secular nation-states in both countries paved the way for rapprochement in bilateral relations. However, the collapse of Iran's attempt to establish a republican and secular model re-catalyzed mutual suspicion, which limited further rapprochement. As a result of the establishment of monarchy in Iran, ideational factors caused by regime differences reappeared in bilateral relations in the form of republicanism versus monarchy. The second phase of rapprochement occurred in the early 1950s. During the Cold War years, the common threat perception by Turkey and Iran from the Soviet Union led each to side with the United States, making relations with the United States a determinant in the ups and downs of bilateral relations in the early 1950s. Although their Western orientations and common threat perceptions from the Soviet Union created grounds for close relations, Turkey's increasing concerns about the Kurdish issue, the reappearance of ideational factors and problematic economic

relations slowed rapprochement. By the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, ideological considerations had regained importance in determining bilateral relations. In the post-Islamic Revolution era, Turkey's democratic, secular and Western orientation and Iran's theocratic, religious and anti-Western orientation shaped their mutual images and policies towards each other. Regarding ideational factors, Henri J. Barkey identifies Turkey and Iran as “mirror images of each other.”³ According to him, they represent two opposing worldviews: Turkey is a secular state and a strategic ally of the Western world, while Iran is a theocracy isolated by the Western world.

However, Turkish-Iranian relations should not only be looked at through an ideological window. With respect to this, Süha Bülbüldaş states, “Had Turkey and Iran been simply influenced by ideological considerations, they should have been each other’s mortal enemies. Turkey is the oldest and most profoundly secularized state of the Muslim Middle East and Iran is the only theocratic nation in the region.”⁴ Since Turkish-Iranian relations cannot be understood by ideology-oriented explanations alone, this thesis employs more comprehensive analytical tools. While taking into account ideational factors, it also looks at both countries’ national interests, which identify the goals and objectives of their foreign policies, in various periods. In Entessar’s characterization, Turkey and Iran are neither natural partners nor adversaries, and both overlapping and contradictory interests

³Henri J. Barkey, “Iran and Turkey,” <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/Iran%20and%20Turkey.pdf> (Accessed 8 January 2011)

⁴ Süha Bülbüldaş, “Turkey Copes with Revolutionary Iran,” Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies XIII, No. 1&2, (Fall/Winter 1989): 94

have determined their relations.⁵ Therefore, this thesis will attempt to understand the rapprochement process in bilateral relations in the 2000s regarding both the overlapping and contradictory geopolitical and economic interests of each country.

Turkey and Iran are located in a strategically important geography that links the Middle East, Central Asia/the Caucasus and Europe. As both are geographically powerful states, they have competed to maximize their influence in these regions. The Kurdish issue has had a significant part in this competition from the very beginning of bilateral relations. Turkey and Iran have competed to establish and maximize control over Kurds in Iraq as an attempt to block spillover effects related with developments in northern Iraq into their own territories.⁶ The collapse of the Soviet Union also created an opportunity in the 1990s for Turkey and Iran to maximize their regional powers in the post-Soviet era, leading them to present two different regime models to the newly emerging countries. The geopolitical competition between Turkey and Iran has also had economic and energy dimensions.

When the ideological and geopolitical competition reached its peak in the 1990s, conventional wisdom expected prospects for cooperation between Turkey and Iran would gradually decrease. Instead, bilateral relations began to be enhanced in the early 2000s, partly as a result of the improved political atmosphere following the

⁵ Nader Entessar, “Whither Iranian-Turkish Relations?” *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 16, No. 1, (April 2000)

⁶ In this thesis, “northern Iraq” refers to a geographical area which is located in the North of 36th parallel, unless it is mentioned differently.

capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1998. This enhancement, which spread to the political, economic and security arenas, has accelerated during AKP (Justice and Development Party) rule in Turkey, especially after the Iraqi War of 2003. In this respect, this thesis argues that the third phase of rapprochement in the Turkish-Iranian relations was initiated in the 2000s. However, this rapprochement process has also been observed to decelerate over the last year. As the Turkish-Iranian relations of the 2000s include both overlapping and contradictory interests, this thesis aims to examine the reasons and extent of this rapprochement.

In International Relations literature, *rapprochement*, which comes from the French word *rapprocher*, is used to define “the renewal of normal relations.”⁷ The Dictionary of International Relations also mentions the concept of *détente* while defining *rapprochement*. *Détente* means “a relaxation or a slackening of tension in the previously strained relations between states.”⁸ Although the term *détente* is now used as a synonym for *rapprochement*, it is typically used to describe specific periods, such as the Concert of Europe that was established in post-1815 Europe. It is now often used to describe the period during which relations between the United States and the Soviet Union began to ease in the 1960s. Since *détente* is so readily associated with a specific period in US-Soviet relations, the term *rapprochement* seems more appropriate to generally demarcate periods of normalization and improvement of relations between states, including Turkey and Iran.

⁷ Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, Dictionary of International Relations, (USA: The Penguin Books, 1998), 462

⁸ Ibid, 125

Even though there is plenty of literature in the discipline that addresses rapprochement between states, there are no comprehensive studies on Turkish-Iranian rapprochement. Although Karacasulu and Karakır define Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s as *pragmatic rapprochement*, they do not conceptually elaborate on it.⁹ According to them, bilateral relations between the two countries have improved as a result of strategic calculations on security, energy and economy. Therefore, they define this process in bilateral relations as *pragmatic rapprochement*, but they do not clarify this term. Ehteshami and Elik define Turkish-Iranian relations between 1925 and 2011 as *cooperative and competitive détente*.¹⁰ They argue that Turkish-Iranian relations provide an example of middle power state behavior, which is defined as friendly, rivalry and détente relations in the framework of the two countries' diplomatic relations. However, they neither provide a conceptual explanation of the term *détente*. Therefore, other studies on the rapprochement process have contributed to the analysis of this thesis on the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement process. For example, the analysis by Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz of the Turkish-Greek rapprochement process will be used in this thesis to define and understand the extent of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement.¹¹ Öniş and Yılmaz examined the improvement of Turkish-Greek relations on the basis of the nature, content and duration of enhancement in relations. Their three analytical categories are named “fragile détente,” “sustainable rapprochement” and “durable partnership.” Based on their analysis, *fragile détente* often exists at only

⁹ Nilüfer Karacasulu and İrem Aşkar Karakır, “Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement,” *Ege Akademik Bakış* (Ege Academic Review) 11, No. 1(January 2011)

¹⁰ Anoushivar Ehteshami and Süleyman Elik, “Turkey’s Growing Relations with Iran and Arab Middle East,” *Turkish Studies* 12, No. 4 (December 2011): 647

¹¹ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?,” *Political Science Quarterly* 123, No. 1, (2008): 143-144

one level – primarily the intergovernmental level. Since there is no consensus among key players in domestic politics, détente fails to spread to the non-governmental and societal levels. In terms of content, the core problematic issues, especially those related to hard security issues, remain unresolved because contact is limited, mutual confidence levels are low and the zero-sum game mentality continues to inform the approach to critical issues. In fact, *fragile détente* often does not extend beyond some mutual gestures and remarks by political leaders.

The second category is *sustainable rapprochement*, which takes place at different levels, including the inter-governmental, non-governmental and societal levels. At the stage of *sustainable rapprochement*, the majority of the central domestic and international actors generally support the process. The likelihood of military conflict is reduced as a result of increasing contact at multiple levels, increasing mutual confidence levels and the perception of mutual benefits to rapprochement. Regarding duration, *sustainable rapprochement* is medium- to long-term in nature, even though the process is still vulnerable to internal and external challenges.

The third stage in improving relations is *durable partnership*, which requires rapprochement at all domestic and international levels, as well as in public opinion. At this stage, all core conflicts are resolved as a result of intensive interaction between states and societies. A “win-win” mentality is thus fostered, leading countries to conduct joint political and economic initiatives that lead to long-term durable partnerships between states.

Regarding the analysis of Öniş and Yılmaz, this thesis aims to analyze the reasons and extent of the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement over the last decade. It will primarily attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the underlying reasons behind the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement in the first decade of 2000s?
- Is this rapprochement process a structural change or merely conjectural?
- What is the extent of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement over the last decade?
- What are the factors working for and against this rapprochement process?
- How can the Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s be classified? Is it a *fragile détente, sustainable rapprochement* or *durable partnership*?

In this thesis, rapprochement is defined as the phenomenon of relations evolving from enmity to amity that represents a transitional period in which states seek the ways for cooperation. Although Turkey and Iran had never been enemies to each other, they became more cooperative in the last decade. For instance, mutual suspicions that have long characterized bilateral relations have decreased in recent years. In public statements, Turkish and Iranian officials have been stressing the longstanding – over 400 years – peaceful nature of their shared border more than ever. They are also, more than in the past, cooperating on the Kurdish issue. Bilateral trade relations, as well, have been greatly expanded, and the two states are considering the possibility of signing a free trade agreement. This thesis is thus focused on an ongoing phase in Turkish-Iranian relations, wherein the conflictual issues of previous decades are no longer a source of tension in the process of rapprochement. Aiming to understand the reasons and extent of the rapprochement

process in bilateral relations, this thesis will focus on the Kurdish issue, the nuclear issue and economic relations, and will analyze each in detail in the subsequent chapters.

The Kurdish issue became significant to the rapprochement process especially following the Iraq War of 2003. As will be seen in the second chapter, the Kurdish issue had been a source of serious tension between Turkey and Iran in the 1990s. By the 2000s, however, it had become an issue by which the rapprochement process could be measured. While each country accused the other of harboring terrorists in the 1990s, they have cooperated on the Kurdish issue in the 2000s, from coordinating their foreign policies towards Iraq to cooperating in counterterrorism efforts. As will be seen in the third chapter, the Kurdish issue itself will be analyzed in detail with reference to the rapprochement process in bilateral relations during the 2000s arising from domestic and regional factors.

The nuclear issue also became a significant factor in the rapprochement process. It is arguably not a factor in bilateral relations, since there has been no nuclear issue in bilateral relations before the revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear activities in 2002. As will be seen in the second chapter, Iranian nuclear policy in the 1980s and 1990s would have been expected to cause serious tension in bilateral relations due to high level of mutual suspicion. However, the Iranian nuclear program has not appeared as a conflictual issue in bilateral relations. Moreover, Turkey and Iran are viewed internationally as being on the same side of the controversy, with Turkey supporting Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and

with its criticisms of double standards in US nonproliferation policies towards Iran and Israel. In addition, Turkey's efforts to build confidence between Iran and the international community, its emphasis on diplomatic solutions and rejection of military attacks against Iran, as well as its opposition to further economic sanctions – especially the unilateral sanctions led by the United States – are perceived as significant elements in the rapprochement process.

The improvement of bilateral economic relations in the last decade has been another reflection of rapprochement. It is noteworthy that economic relations between Turkey and Iran had never been severed, despite political problems between the two states. However, mutual efforts towards further bilateral economic relations through increased trade, investments and cooperation in the energy sector have worked in favor of the rapprochement process in the 2000s. For Turkey, the improvement of economic relations with Iran was mainly determined by its need for oil and natural gas resources. In addition, Turkey's economic growth that made it necessary to improve its trade relations with neighbors and its acting as a “trading state” under the AKP rule as a result of its foreign policy vision that highlights the necessity of economic interdependence for regional stability contributed to the improvement of bilateral economic relations. For Iran, the improvement of economic relations with Turkey was mainly meant as a means of breaking out of its international isolation due to the US and UN economic sanctions.

While all three issues have played a significant part in the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement process of the 2000s, each also contains components that limit further bilateral rapprochement. Since this thesis aims to analyze the extent of the rapprochement process as well, each of these limitations will also be examined. It is observed that the factors that work against further rapprochement are rarely addressed in the literature, especially in studies in which Turkish-Iranian relations are analyzed from a Turkey-centered perspective.

1.2. Relevant Literature

Even though scholarly literature on Turkish-Iranian relations has increased over the last decade, it is still limited. Studies on bilateral relations in the post-Islamic Revolution period are much greater than others. In a similar manner to each other, these studies have introduced the historical background of bilateral relations and have examined it taking into account conflictual and cooperative issues such as the ideational factors, the Kurdish issue and the political and economic competition in the Middle East and Central Asia/the Caucasus.¹²

¹² Süha Bölükbaşı, "Turkey Copes with Revolutionary Iran," Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies XIII, No. 1&2, (Fall/Winter 1989); Atila Eralp, "Facing the Challenge: Post-Revolutionary Relations with Iran," in Henri J. Barkey (ed.) Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East (Washington D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press, 1996) ; Robert Olson, The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998, (California: Mazda Publishers, 1998); Atila Eralp and Özlem Tür, "İran'la Devrim Sonrası İlişkiler," in Türkiye ve Ortadoğu: Tarih, Kimlik, Güvenlik ed. Meliha Benli Altunışık (İstanbul: Boyut Yayınları, 1999); Mehmet Saray, Türk-İran İlişkileri (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1999); Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Türkiye-İran İlişkileri (1945-1997)" in Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Sürec (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999); Avrasya Dosyası, İran Özel, 5, Issue 3, (Autumn 1999); Nader Entessar, "Whither Iranian-Turkish Relations?," Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis 16, No. 1, (April 2000); Robert Olson, Türkiye-İran İlişkileri 1979-2004 (Ankara: Babil Yayıncılık, 2005)

Studies that cover bilateral relations in the last decade, which is the main topic of this thesis, primarily focus on the recent normalization trend of Turkish-Iranian relations and characterize this trend by the term rapprochement.¹³ Some studies deal with the internal dynamics and changes in foreign policy decision-making processes behind rapprochement. Bülent Aras, for instance, investigated the domestic sources of Turkish foreign policy, focusing on the identities and political-ideological contentions of domestic actors. Contrary to the explanations of neoliberal and neorealist theories of International Relations based on the rationalist account, Aras emphasizes that actor preferences and orientations serve as bases for the formulation of national interests and consequently, of foreign policy. According to him, “most of the problems between Ankara and Tehran (...) have little to do with Turkey’s intrinsic national interests. Rather, they are the results of internal disputes and domestic security problems in Turkey.”¹⁴ Therefore, Aras argues that non-material and ideological factors have held priority and led to abnormal foreign policy behavior in Turkey that has negatively affected Turkish-Iranian relations. Since Turkey had perceived all Islamists and Kurdish terrorist activities as extensions of Iran’s efforts to destabilize Turkey, bilateral relations in the previous decade had been badly affected. According to Aras, the involvement

¹³ Ertan Efegil and Leonard A. Stone, “Iran and Turkey in Central Asia: Opportunities for Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era,” *Journal of Third World Studies*, XX, No. 1 (Spring 2003); Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, “Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish-Iranian Relations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution,” *Middle East Policy*, XVII, No. 3 (Fall 2010); Nilüfer Karacasulu and İrem Aşkar Karakır, “Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement,” *Ege Akademik Bakış* (Ege Academic Review) 11, No. 1(January 2011); Behsat Ekici, *Is Turkey Realigning?: A Three Dimensional Investigation of Turkish-Iranian Security Rapprochement* PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, (September 2010);
“استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه” (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey),
(The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament),
شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی : 260
<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

¹⁴ Bülent Aras, “Turkish Foreign Policy towards Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux,” *Journal of Third World Studies* XVIII, No.1 (2001):110-111

of the military in foreign policy-making processes had been an underlying reason behind the lack of progressive change in Turkish-Iranian relations during the 1990s. In line with this argument, Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat argue that changes at the domestic level, defined by a process termed *desecuritization*, have led Turkey to soften its policies towards Iran since the beginning of 2000s.¹⁵ According to them, bilateral relations improved as a result of a normalization of perceptions on formerly securitized issues.

On the other hand, Andreas Breitegger argues that not only there were changes in Turkish foreign policy and strategic outlook, there were also changes in Iran, and that the coincidental alignment of both countries' national interests contributed to the improvement of bilateral relations over the last decade.¹⁶ Regarding changes in Turkey, Breitegger argues that its 'zero-problems with neighbors' emphasis on ensuring regional stability has had profound implications on improvement of its relations with Iran. Breitegger adds that Turkey's closer relations with Iran have also been determined by its efforts to become a major regional power. Regarding the Kurdish issue, through which Turkey and Iran became closer, Breitteger argues that since Iran is more concerned with its territorial integrity, it ended its support of the PKK, which created grounds for cooperation between Turkey and Iran on counterterrorism efforts.

¹⁵ Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," Security Dialogue 39, No. 5 (October 2008)

¹⁶ Andreas Breitegger, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: A Reality Check," Turkish Policy Quarterly 8, No. 3 (2009)

These studies, which primarily focus on internal dynamics, perceive the rise of the AKP as an influential factor in Turkish-Iranian rapprochement. Most of these studies note that Turkey eased its relations with the Muslim world, including Iran, as a result of the AKP ruling elite's acceptance of an Islamic identity for Turkey. A report from the Iranian Parliament on cooperation between Turkey and Iran, for instance, mentioned the coming to power of the AKP as a factor contributing to mutual confidence between Turkey and Iran, which in turn contributed to the bilateral rapprochement process. As stated in the report, mutual doubt that was high under Kemalist rule in Turkey limited bilateral cooperation.¹⁷ Since the AKP's Islamic affinity has been seen as a major contributor to rapprochement, a literature asking whether the axis of Turkish foreign policy has shifted under AKP rule has emerged. As the scope of this thesis is not to analyze Turkish foreign policy, it is enough to say here that Turkish and Iranian scholars share the view that Turkish foreign policy remains Western-oriented, but that there have been changes under AKP rule.¹⁸ From the Iranian perspective, the continuation of this

¹⁷ استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

¹⁸ زیباقلام: ترکیه نان شکست های ایران را می خورد که نوش جانش! (Zibakalam: Turkey is Eating Iran's Crumbs, Bon Appetit!), Khabar Online, <http://www.khabaronline.ir/news-75524.aspx> 24 تیر 1389 (July 2010) (Accessed 2 June 2011); دکترین تعامل سازنده در سیاست « منوچهر محمدی، ابراهیم متقدی (Manoucher Mohammadi and Ibrahim Mottaki) (Constructive Doctrine in Iranian Foreign Policy), Strategic Journal of Yas, 1385 4 No. 4 (2006); 26 بهمن 1389 (Iran and Turkey: Ally and Competitor), (Iran and Turkey: Ally and Competitor), 26 بهمن 1389 (2010), http://www.donya-e-eqtesad.com/Default_view.asp?@=243656 (Accessed 3 June 2011); Hasret Dikici Bilgin, "Foreign Policy Orientation of Turkey's Pro-Islamist Parties: A Comparative Study of the AKP and Refah," *Turkish Studies* 9, No. 3 (September 2008); Tarik Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" *Turkish Studies* 9, No. 1(March 2008); Ziya Öniş, "Multiple Faces of the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique," *Insight Turkey* 13, No. 1 (2011); Mesut Özcan and Ali Resul Usul, "Understanding the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Changes within Continuity Is Turkey Departing from the West?" *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, No. 21 (2010)

Western-orientation works against further rapprochement, despite improvement made possible by the AKP's Islamic affinity.¹⁹

Although Iran initially viewed Islamic affinity of the AKP as an important contributor to the improvement of bilateral relations, it started to question it in the recent years. In this respect, the recent Iranian literature approaches the AKP's Islamic affinity with greater suspicion. The first reason, as explained, is caused by the continuing Western orientation of Turkish foreign policy. The second reason is the result of the Iranian perspective about the "AKP's Islamism," namely that the AKP's aim to deploy an Islamist model that is compatible with the Western democracy contradicts the Iranian Islamist model.²⁰ A report from the Iranian parliament focusing on Turkish foreign policy under the AKP rule observes competition between Turkey and Iran to serve as a model to the Islamic world.²¹ Siamak Kakaei concurs with the idea that Turkey's desire to impose itself as a model contradicts Iranian geopolitical interests.²² In this respect, Iranian officials

¹⁹ منوچهر محمدی، ابراهیم منتی (Manoucher Mohammadi and Ibrahim Mottaki) فصلنامه "دکترین تعاون سازنده در سیاست خارجی کشور" (Constructive Doctrine in Iranian Foreign Policy), شماره 4 (Strategic Journal of Yas), 1385 (2006, No. 4)

²⁰ "استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه" (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826>) (Accessed 31 May 2011); "ایران و ترکیه پس از بهار عربی" (Turkey and Iran After the Arab Spring) (<http://www.mardomak.net/story/65005>) ۱۳۹۰ شهریور ۲۴ (2011) (Accessed 29 September 2011)

²¹ سیاست خارجی اسلامگاران ترکیه (Foreign Policies of Turkey's Islamists), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), کد موضوعی: 8403، شماره مسلسل 260، تیر ماه 1386 (July 2007,) (<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/732450>) (Accessed 31 May 2011)

²² Interview with سیامک کاکایی (Siamak Kakaei) "ترکها هم رفیقند هم رقیب" (Turks are both ally and competitor) 23 فروردین 1390 (April 2011) (<http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/60/bodyView/11810/%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%E2%80%>

interpret the AKP's "neo-Ottomanism" in foreign policy, which provides support to Sunnis throughout the region, as a significant challenge.²³

There are also studies on Turkish-Iranian relations that separately focus on the Kurdish issue, the nuclear issue and bilateral economic relations in the 2000s. Although the quantity of literature on the Kurdish issue is relatively greater than the others, few of them focus on the Kurdish issue in relation to Turkish-Iranian relations. There are two main groups of studies that analyze the Kurdish issue. The first group focuses primarily on the Kurdish issue either in Turkey or in Iran. The second group covers the Kurdish issue only in analysis of Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s. Looking at the first group there are various studies analyzing the Kurdish issue in Turkey.²⁴ Contrary to the number of studies on the Kurdish issue in Turkish domestic and foreign policy, the literature on the Kurdish issue in Iran is quite limited.²⁵

<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 3 June 2011)

²³ "استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه" (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635، بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260، (<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826>) (Accessed 31 May 2011)

²⁴ For example: Doğu Ergil, "The Kurdish Question in Turkey," Journal of Democracy 11, No. 3 (July 2000); Svante E. Cornell, "The Land of Many Crossroads: The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," Orbis (2001); Kemal Kirişçi, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," in Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis (eds.) The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2004); Sedat Laçiner and İhsan Bal, "The Ideological and Historical Roots of the Kurdish Movements in Turkey: Ethnicity, Demography and Politics," Nationalism and Ethnic Politics 10 (2004); Ersel Aydinlı, "Between Security and Liberalization: Decoding Turkey's Struggle with the PKK," Security Dialogue 33, No. 2 (June 2002); Pınar Tank, "Analysis: The effects of the Iraq War on the Kurdish issue in Turkey," Conflict, Security and Development 5, No. 1(April 2005)

²⁵ For a few number of examples: Majid Hakki and Sharif Behruz (eds.) "Kurdish Issue in Iran" Journal Ghasemlou Center for Research and Political Development 1 (December 2008); A. Manafy, The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005); Kerim Yıldız and Tanyel B. Taysi, The Kurds in Iran: The

As mentioned, the Kurdish issue in Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s is rarely addressed in the literature. Only limited studies primarily focusing on the rapprochement process cover the issue in the context of regional developments. Most of these argue that the new strategic context that emerged with the Iraq War of 2003 created a common threat and led Turkey and Iran to cooperate on the Kurdish issue. Özden Zeynep Oktav, for instance, argues that the changing security perceptions of Turkey and Iran following the US attack on Iraq pushed them to develop better ties.²⁶ Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar also emphasize the influence of both Turkey's and Iran's relations with the great powers, as well as the influence of regional developments in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus on bilateral relations. They describe Turkish-Iranian relations as a "structural regional rivalry" whose intensity and issues are determined by conjectural changes at the systemic and sub-systemic levels. However, it is also argued that a rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations has been observed in the last decade to balance increased American penetration into the region.²⁷ In addition, the Report of the Iranian Parliament noted that the post-2003 strategic context had created a common threat perception and contributed to the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations on security issues.²⁸

Past, Present and Future (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Gareth Stansfield, "The Political, Cultural, and Military Re-Awakening of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iran," Middle East Journal 64, No. 1 (Winter 2010)

²⁶ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations," Perceptions IX (June-August 2004)

²⁷ Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, "Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish-Iranian Relations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution," Middle East Policy, XVII, No. 3 (Fall 2010)

²⁸ "استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه" (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey),

The literature on the nuclear issue mostly analyzes the Iranian nuclear program, covering arguments on nearly all sides of the dispute, including Iran, the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), the United States, European powers, Russia and China.²⁹ Some studies also focus on Turkish-Iranian relations regarding the nuclear issue. Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Barış Çağlar, for instance, analyzed the Iranian nuclear program from a Turkish perspective.³⁰ They argued that Turkey will be the most negatively impacted by a nuclear Iran and therefore, contrary to the official stance, Turkey cannot remain aloof from Iran's nuclearization for long, even under the AKP government. Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Nilsu Gören also examined Turkish views and threat perceptions regarding weapons of mass destruction – particularly Iran's potential to acquire nuclear weapons. According to them, state and societal actors have different perceptions of the Iranian nuclear program. They concluded that the state and secular media advocated a diplomatic solution, opposed economic sanctions on Iran and criticized the United States for its double standards in the region. The pro-Islamist media, on the other hand, not

گزارش تحقیقاتی مجلس شورای اسلامی (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

²⁹ James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh "After Iran gets the bomb: Containment and its Complications" Foreign Affairs (March/April 2010); Arzu Celalifer Ekinci Iran Nükleer Krizi, (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, Ocak 2009); Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar "Iran's Nuclear Program and the Future of US-Iranian Relations," Middle East Policy XVI, No. 1(Spring 2009); Mustafa Kibaroğlu "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," Middle Eastern Studies 43, No. 2 (March 2007); Mustafa Kibaroğlu "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power," Middle East Journal 60 , No. 2 (Spring 2006); Gawdat Bahgat "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran," International Studies Perspectives 7, Issue 2 (2006); Kaveh Afrasiabi and Mustafa Kibaroğlu "Negotiating Iran's Nuclear Populism," The Brown Journal of World Affairs XII, Issue 1, (Summer/Fall 2005)

³⁰ Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Barış Çağlar, "Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey," Middle East Policy XV. No. 4 (Winter 2008).

only condemn the sanctions, but also argue that Iran has the right even to develop nuclear weapons.³¹

Regarding studies on Turkish-Iranian relations with respect to the nuclear issue, some focus on Turkey's role in the negotiation process. Kadir Üstün, for example, analyzes the reasons behind Turkish willingness to take an active role in the negotiation process.³² He argues that its efforts to foster a secure neighborhood and attempts to overcome the regional challenges of the economic sanctions against Iran motivated Turkey to take an active role in the negotiation process on the Iranian nuclear program. Alon Ben Meir, on the other hand, introduces reasons why Turkey should take an active role.³³ He believes Turkey should play an active role in the negotiation process, representing the collective concerns and interests of NATO members. In addition, he argues that Turkey, as a Muslim majority state currently governed by the Islamic-oriented AKP government, is more likely to be trusted by Iran than others. Many Iranian scholars, however, oppose Turkey's mediation. Kayhan Barzegar, for instance, cites the importance of the nuclear issue for Iran and thus argues that Iran should solve problems caused by its nuclear program itself. According to him, Turkey's mediation would not suit Iranian interests.³⁴ Some Iranian scholars also link Turkey's willingness to mediate on the

³¹ Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Nilsu Goren, "Turkish Perceptions and Nuclear Proliferation," Strategic Insights VIII, Issue 2 (April 2009)

³² Kadir Üstün "Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions," Insight Turkey 12, No. 3 (2010)

³³ Alon Ben Meir "Turkey and Iran's Nuclear Challenge," The World Today (November 2010) www.theworldtoday.org

³⁴ "روابط استراتژیک ایران و ترکیه در خاورمیانه" (Keyhan Barzegar) (Strategic Relationship between Turkey and Iran in the Middle East), 1388/12/29 (2010),

nuclear issue with an agenda of increasing its regional influence. Both Kakaei and Zibakalam, for instance, argue that for Turkey to succeed in its mediating role and to increase its regional power would pose a challenge to Iran's geopolitical interests.³⁵

Conceptual explanations for Turkey's capacity to fulfill its role in the negotiation process, however, have rarely been addressed in the literature. An article by Bonab partly fills this gap. He argues that the great powers may not be ready to accept the mediation of a regional actor like Turkey in arms control issues, which are considered issues of high politics.³⁶ Ghahremanpour also explains limitations on Turkey's mediating role from a conceptual perspective. He lists requirements for taking on a mediator role, emphasizing that aims should be clear and that both sides should call for mediation of a dispute. He thus argues that Turkey's involvement would not be defined as mediation because neither side called for a

<http://fa.merc.ir/archive/article/tabid/62/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/52/----.aspx> (Accessed 3 June 2011)

³⁵ Interview with Siamak Kakaei, 1390 23 فروردین (April 2011) <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/60/bodyView/11810/%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%85.%D8%B1%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%D9%86%D8%AF.%D9%87%D9%85.%D8%B1%D9%82%DB%8C%D8%A8.html> (Accessed 3 June 2011) ; Siamak Kakaei, "Turkish Mediation Between Iran and the West: A Dream for Mounting Diplomatic Weight," *Iran Review* (28 July 2008) http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkish_Mediation_between_Iran_West_A_Dream_for_Mounting_Diplomatic_Weight.htm (8 May 2011); "زیباکلام : ترکیه نان شکست های ایران را می خورد که نوش جاش !" (Zibakalam: Turkey is Eating Iran's Crumbs, Bon Appetit!), Khabar Online, <http://www.khabaronline.ir/news-75524.aspx> 1389 24 تیر (July 2010) (Accessed 2 June 2011)

³⁶ Rahman G. Bonab, "Turkey's Emerging Role as a Mediator on Iran's Nuclear Activities," *Insight Turkey* 11, No. 3 (2009)

mediator. He characterizes Turkey's actions as being a product of its good neighborhood policies.³⁷

Regarding bilateral economic relations, the bulk of the literature focuses on economic considerations of both Turkey and Iran that contribute to the rapprochement process. Two views are prevalent. The first is that economic considerations of both countries created a positive atmosphere for the improvement of bilateral relations. Kemal Kirişçi argues that economic considerations have increasingly shaped Turkish foreign policy behavior in the last couple of years. In this regard, Kirişçi labels Turkey a “trading state.”³⁸ Özlem Tür as well argues that Turkish state under the AKP has begun to act in accordance with its role as a “trading state” and the influence of business communities on Turkish foreign policy and Turkey’s relations with the Middle Eastern countries has significantly increased.³⁹ In line with these arguments, Mustafa Kutlay emphasizes the increasing role and influence of business circles in the Turkish foreign policy, stating that “the Turkish business elite have begun to explore economic and financial opportunities in neighboring countries, and have backed the state in its efforts to stabilize the region for the sake of their interests, *inter*

³⁷ ”ترکیه میان ایران و غرب منافع ملی را می بیند” (Turkey looks for its national interests between Iran and the West)

گفت و گو با Rahman Ghahremanpour, <http://irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/4/bodyView/7029/0%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%DB%8C%D9%87.%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86.%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88.%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8.%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B9.%D9%85%D9%84%D9%89.%D8%B1%D8%A7.%D9%85%D9%89.%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AF.html> 1388 14 اسفند (Mart 2009) (Accessed 3 June 2011)

³⁸ Kemal Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State,” New Perspectives on Turkey No. 49 (2009): 39

³⁹ Özlem Tür, “Economic Relations with the Middle East under the AKP – Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones,” Turkish Studies 12, No. 4 (December 2011): 590.

*alia.*⁴⁰ The second view is that a positive political environment between the two countries contributed to the improvement of bilateral economic relations. In line with the first view, Ertan Efegil and Leonard A. Stone demonstrated that both Turkey and Iran's economic considerations have led them to improve their economic relations since 1993.⁴¹ In line with the second view, Mustafa Aydin and Damla Aras analyzed Turkish-Iranian economic relations focusing on political determinants, such as the election of moderate Khatami as Iranian president in 1997, the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1998 and the defeat of the Turkish Hezbollah in 2001.⁴²

There are also graduate-level theses on the topic of Turkish-Iranian relations. However, within YÖK's National Thesis Database and the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database, an international database, PhD theses on Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s number only one, as the time of writing this thesis. Titled "Is Turkey Realigning?: A Three Dimensional Investigation of Turkish-Iranian Security Rapprochement," this thesis by Behsat Ekici is an examination of Turkish-Iranian relations from a security perspective, in order to determine whether or not the ongoing rapprochement was indicative that Turkey was

⁴⁰ Mustafa Kutlay, "Economy as the Practical Hand of 'New Turkish Foreign Policy': A Political Economy Explanation," Insight Turkey 13, No. 1 (2011): 71

⁴¹ Ertan Efegil and Leonard A. Stone, "Iran and Turkey in Central Asia: Opportunities for Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era," Journal of Third World Studies, XX, No. 1 (Spring 2003)

⁴² Mustafa Aydin and Damla Aras, "Political Conditionality of Economic Relations between Paternalist States: Turkey's Interaction with Iran, Iraq and Syria," Arab Studies Quarterly 27, Number 1&2,(Winter/Spring 2005)

realigning itself in the international system.⁴³ However, this thesis analyzes bilateral relations primarily with a Turkey-centered approach and explanations. In other words, it is about Turkish foreign policy rather than about bilateral relations.

Since Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s have so rarely been addressed in the literature, this thesis will first attempt to fill this gap, taking on the most significant subjects in the rapprochement process, such as the Kurdish issue, the nuclear issue and economic relations. Since most existing studies analyze Turkish-Iranian relations from either the Turkish or the Iranian perspective, the main contribution of this thesis will be its analysis of both perspectives.

1.3. Methodology

This study deploys qualitative methodology, namely process tracing and event analysis, in order to investigate the factors that work for and against Turkish-Iranian rapprochement in the first decade of 2000s. I examined four sources of data. The first consists of Turkish, Persian and English data from official reports. These were collected from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Parliamentary Commissions on Foreign Relations and the Statistical Institutes of both Turkey and Iran. In addition, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions were consulted. The second source of data consists of scholarly journals in Turkish, Persian and English. The third consists of media broadcasts and think tank reports in Turkish, Persian and

⁴³Behsat Ekici, Is Turkey Realigning?: A Three Dimensional Investigation of Turkish-Iranian Security Rapprochement PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, (September 2010)

English; statements of both Turkish and Iranian officials were analyzed from these sources. The final source is made up of personal interviews with officials and journalists familiar with the subject of this thesis. To that end, I visited Iran twice to collect relevant materials.

During the research process, I encountered two major challenges. The first was getting access to Persian language studies and Iranian press archives. Most electronic archives of Iranian newspapers cover only the past three years, not more. They also had functionality issues due to technical problems. Some news from Iranian newspapers were thus obtained via the archives of either Turkish or international newspapers. The second challenge was earning the acceptance of high-ranking officials from both countries in order to talk about Turkish-Iranian relations. Despite a great effort and several attempts to speak with officials, I observed a reluctance to speak about and answer my detailed research questions. Since they used diplomatic language during our interviews, as expected, their contributions were limited to helping to understand the reasons for and extent of the rapprochement process in bilateral relations.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter Two will introduce the historical background of Turkish-Iranian relations from Ottoman-Safavid period to the present. The first part of the chapter will analyze relations during six periods: the Ottoman-Safavid period, the inter-war years, the Cold War years, the post-Islamic Revolution era, the post-Cold War years and the last decade. The aim is to

introduce the background of ups and downs in bilateral relations, discussing both ideological and geopolitical challenges, which had mostly worked against the rapprochement process, and security and economic considerations, which sometimes worked in favor of bilateral rapprochement. The second part of the chapter will focus on bilateral relations over the last decade. This will be an examination of both domestic and international/regional factors in bilateral relations. Among the domestic factors, the AKP's foreign policy approach and Iran's isolation are analyzed. Among international and regional developments, the influence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, and of the 2003 Iraq War on bilateral relations, are discussed.

Chapter Three will analyze the Kurdish issue in the rapprochement process of Turkish-Iranian relations. The first part of the chapter will analyze the Kurdish issues of Turkey and Iran in order to understand what the issue means to each country, and why it is influential in bilateral relations. The second part will introduce the historical background of the impact of the Kurdish issue in bilateral relations. The third part of the chapter will analyze factors that work both for and against the rapprochement process relating to the Kurdish issue.

Chapter Four will analyze the nuclear issue in the bilateral rapprochement process. The first part of the chapter will introduce the historical background of the Iranian nuclear program, in order to demonstrate how the issue became internationalized. After analyzing the Iranian program, the second part will examine Turkey's policy towards the Iranian nuclear program and its involvement in the negotiation

process. The third part will analyze factors working both for and against Turkish-Iranian rapprochement relating to the nuclear issue.

Chapter Five will analyze the enhancement of economic relations in the rapprochement process. The first part of the chapter will consist of a brief history of bilateral economic relations in order to illustrate both the continuities and changes in economic relations. The second part of the chapter will analyze factors relating to the economic issues that work both for and against rapprochement in bilateral relations.

Chapter Six presents the conclusion of the dissertation. It will detail the conclusions of this research on the extent of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations in relation to the Kurdish, nuclear and economic factors working both for and against the rapprochement process.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS

Turkey and Iran, which share a 499 km land border, are the most politically, militarily and economically powerful countries in the Middle East region. From the very beginning, the general contours of Turkish-Iranian relations have been determined by the international system and the domestic politics of each country, and they have hence experienced cycles of tense and good periods. In this respect, two elements have been influential. The first is based on ideological orientations and the second on the geopolitical interests of each country. Ideational factors have influenced relations between Turkey and Iran since the Ottoman/Safavid period. These two neighboring empires experienced difficult neighborly relations based on sectarian differences, with the Ottomans adhering to the Sunni, and the Safavids adhering to the Shia branches of Islam. However, with the establishment of secular nation-states in both Turkey and Iran in the 1920s, sectarian differences lost importance, and the nature of the ideational factors in bilateral relations transformed into issues of republic and monarchy, of democracy and totalitarianism. With the Islamic Revolution in Iran, however, these ideational factors caused serious tensions between Turkey and Iran. The different regimes styles of each not only influenced their mutual perceptions and foreign policy, but also shaped the foreign policy of each towards other Muslim countries, which in turn accelerated the geopolitical competition between them. In this context, while Turkey took on the role of Western-type democratic and secular model among

states with predominantly Muslim citizens, Iran became took on an Islamist state model. These roles also impacted their relations with other countries, specifically with the United States, and their integration or isolation from the rest of the world.

Just as ideational orientations and geopolitical concerns have always been important elements in bilateral relations, systemic factors have also been influential in determining foreign policy towards each other. This chapter will therefore analyze Turkish-Iranian relations during six time periods, taking into account systemic and domestic factors. These periods are the Ottoman-Safavid period, the inter-war years, the Cold-War years, the post-Islamic Revolution era, the post-Cold War years and the 2000s.

2.1. Who is the leader of the Muslim World: the Ottomans or the Safavids?

In the 13th century, the Ottoman Empire emerged out of the tribes of Anatolia while the Safavid Dynasty was born out of a religious brotherhood. Difficulties between the two rising powers had begun to show themselves by the 16th century. Ideational factors and geopolitical competition were the two main elements of Ottoman-Safavid competition. There were two important dimensions to the ideational factors. The first dimension was a product of the aforementioned religious sectarian differences, and the second dimension extended from the competition between the two powers for leadership of the Muslim world. On the one hand, Ottoman Sultan Selim had named himself leader of all Muslims as the caliphate, while on the other hand, Shah Ismail had declared himself the earthly representative of the Hidden Twelfth Imam. And by labeling the wars against the

Ottoman Empire ‘holy wars,’ Shah İsmail entrenched the role of ideational factors in bilateral relations in the early 16th century.⁴⁴

Geopolitical competition increased, and relations between the Safavids and Ottomans began to become tense, as the Safavids attempted to expand into Ottoman-ruled regions, initiating a cycle of conflicts that has ranged from cutting economic ties to engaging in military confrontation. Shah İsmail campaigned to expand his influence into Ottoman territories in Eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Shirvan, Baghdad and Mosul, prompting Sultan Selim, in turn, to launch a violent campaign against the Anatolian Qezelbash, who was viewed as the “fifth column” of the Shiite Safavids in Anatolia.⁴⁵ Forty thousand of these who acted against the Ottoman Empire were imprisoned or executed.⁴⁶ He also cut economic relations with Iran, banning the silk trade and sales of arms.⁴⁷ By the time of the Chaldiran War of 1514, the Ottomans had secured the region of Eastern Anatolia and limited Shiism to within the Safavid border.

⁴⁴ Remzi Kılıç, “Osmanlı Devletinin İran Politikası (16. Ve 17. Yüzyıllar),” in Mustafa Bıyıklı (ed.) Türk Dış Politikası Osmanlı Dönemi Cilt. 1, (İstanbul: Gökkubbe, 2008): 81

⁴⁵ The Şahkulu Baba Tekeli Rebellion, for instance, was supported by the Safavid Dynasty with the goal of ruining the Ottoman Empire. In subsequent years, the Zünnüoğlu (1526), Vali Halife, Kalenderoğlu (1527) Rebellions, and the Mollah Kabız Issue (1527) against the Ottoman Empire were supported by Safavids. Such rebellions continued in the following years. For more details: Bekir Kütkoğlu, Osmanlı-İran Münasebetleri (1578-1612) (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1993)

⁴⁶ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi Cilt 2, 5th edition, (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumları Yayıncılığı, 1998): 257-258

⁴⁷ Barış Cin, Türkiye-İran Siyasi İlişkileri: 1923-1938 (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2007): 17; Remzi Kılıç, “Osmanlı Devletinin İran Politikası (16. Ve 17. Yüzyıllar),” in Mustafa Bıyıklı (ed.) Türk Dış Politikası Osmanlı Dönemi Cilt 1, (İstanbul: Gökkubbe, 2008): 82

While Ottoman and Safavid geopolitical interests in the same region created tension, Ottoman attempts to expand towards Europe served as grounds for the establishment of good neighborhood policies with the Safavids. For instance, as expansion towards Europe became a priority of the Ottoman Empire, Kanuni Sultan Süleyman worked to stabilize relations with Iran. He emancipated 600 households-in-exile who had been deported from Tabriz at the end of the Chaldiran War and terminated the ban on silk trade with Iran. He also sent a letter to Shah İsmail offering to make an agreement of friendship and cooperation against “infidel forces.”⁴⁸ However, the Safavids did not believe the offer to be sincere, and instead expanded activities into Anatolia in order to export Shiism. Because of this, during the period of Tahmasb Bahadır, who acceded to the throne in 1524, bilateral tensions reappeared. Sultan Süleyman responded with another letter to Iran declaring that the establishment of Shiite Safavid state between the Western and Eastern Turkic worlds would be unacceptable to the Ottoman Empire. This letter is symbolic of the continuation of tension due to sectarian differences. The Ottomans later initiated a war known as the Irakeyn Expedition (1533-1535) against Iran, conquering Tabriz, the Safavid capital. The Ottoman Empire not only ensured the unity of Anatolia but also expanded its influence into the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the political power of the Safavid Dynasty remained potent.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Remzi Kılıç, “Osmanlı Devletinin İran Politikası (16. Ve 17. Yüzyıllar),” in Mustafa Büyüklü (ed.) Türk Dış Politikası Osmanlı Dönemi Cilt 1, (İstanbul: Gökkubbe, 2008): 83

⁴⁹ Ibid, 88

In the following years, armed conflicts continued, primarily caused by Safavid expansion and Ottoman attempts to control their expansion. For example, in the aftermath of the invasion of Eastern Anatolia and the Sunni Turkic lands of the Caucasus by Shah Tahmasb, Sultan Süleyman declared war against the Safavids in 1548. As a result, the Ottoman Empire regained Tabriz and secured the Ottoman-Safavid border regions. In 1552 as Sultan Süleyman was fighting against Austria, Germany and Spain, Shah Tahmasb once again invaded Ottoman cities in Eastern Anatolia. Two years later, Sultan Süleyman declared war against the Safavids. The Ottomans neutralized the Safavids, but in so doing also reached the conclusion that they were better off achieving reconciliation. The result was the Amasya Peace Agreement, signed on 1 June 1555, guaranteeing non-violation of established boundaries.⁵⁰

Since the two empires were in competition for dominance over the Islamic world, Kurds and the territories they inhabit were crucial for both empires. Baghdad and most of the lands of what is now Iraq were under Safavid control when Shah Ismail introduced Shiism as the obligatory religion for the subjects of his empire. Sunni shrines were destroyed, and mosques were turned into Shia spaces in the effort to forcibly convert the population.⁵¹ “For the Safavids, [the territory of modern-day] Iraq was the home of the two most sacred shrines of Shiism: Nacaf, the center of Shia theology, and Karbala, the site of the martyrdom of Imam

⁵⁰ Ibid, 93

⁵¹ William L. Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East 2nd Edition, (United States: Westview Press, 2000): 57

Husayn”.⁵² The policies of Shah Ismail were intolerable to the Ottoman Empire because “to the Ottomans, Baghdad was the Abbasid capital city for 500 years, the home of the founders of universal Islam whose legacy the Ottoman sultan-caliphs sought to perpetuate.”⁵³ In addition, control of the territory of modern-day Iraq would mean Safavid control of the Persian Gulf, which was contrary to Ottoman economic interests. In fact, this territory was the source of ongoing armed conflicts between the Ottomans and Safavids from 1534 to 1638. Ultimately, the Ottomans conquered Baghdad in 1638 and maintained their control until the First World War. In 1639, the Ottomans and the Safavids signed the Treaty of Kasr-ı Şirin, establishing a border very similar to the current Turkish-Iranian border.

During the 18th century, both the Ottomans and Safavid focused on internal problems. While the Ottomans were dealing with the empire’s internal problems by implementing reforms, the Safavid dynasty came to an end in 1772, replaced by the Qajar dynasty in 1794. By the 19th century, systemic factors had become more significant to bilateral relations, and these factors led both countries to focus on developments in Europe, rather than on each other’s regional policies. At this time, the European alliance system was changing in configuration, primarily caused by Germany’s growing power and the United Kingdom’s reaction to this development. Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany established an alliance known as the Triple Alliance, while the United Kingdom, France and Russia formed the Triple Entente. The United Kingdom and Russia thus reconciled their long-standing differences in Asia, but at the expense of Iran. Recognizing mutual

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

spheres of influence in Iran, Russia took control of the northern part of Iran, while the United Kingdom took control of the southern part, leaving the center neutral. This agreement on Iranian partition presented “an ominous threat to the Ottomans.”⁵⁴ These changes in the European alliance system and the new regional partition led the Ottomans to speed up military reforms, and to strengthen the empire’s economic, military and diplomatic ties with Germany.

By the World War I, Ottoman-Qajar relations had minimized as both parties shifted their attention to the challenges of the war. The Entente powers signed a number of wartime agreements on the future partition of Ottoman territories amongst themselves, resulting in the Treaty of Sevres, signed by the Ottoman government and the Entente powers in August 1920.⁵⁵ The agreement was made void by the Turkish victory in the War of Independence.

2.2 The Nation-State Building Process in Both Countries: An Opportunity for Closer Relations?

In the years following the First World War, Turkey and Iran established nation-states and focused on reform programs. In Turkey, a body of representatives composed of delegates chosen from Anatolia and Thrace, including several

⁵⁴ Ibid, 131

⁵⁵ Article 64 of The Treaty of Sevres stated, “If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish people ... show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these people are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.” Although the Treaty of Sevres was no longer valid, it remained fresh in mind the Turks. ‘Sevres Syndrome,’ as it was called, informed the attitude of the call by the great powers for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

members of the dissolved Ottoman Parliament, came together in Ankara in 1920 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and established the Grand National Assembly in Ankara. The assembly declared that the Istanbul government that had been controlled by foreign occupiers no longer represented the will of the Turkish people. In 1921, the assembly adopted a constitution that included the National Pact, which has formed the basis of Turkish foreign policy. Renouncing any territorial claims to the former Ottoman lands, the National Pact announced the right of full Turkish sovereignty in the current territory of Turkey. As a result of the War of Independence, the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 on the basis of Kemalism, and the deputies of the assembly elected Atatürk the first President of Turkey. In the same year, the Treaty of Lausanne, recognizing Turkish sovereignty over all areas claimed in the National Pact except Mosul in northern Iraq, was signed.

The First World War weakened the authority of Iran's government as well. Although the Qajar ruler was in power, the two occupying powers, the United Kingdom in the south and the Soviet Union in the north, were the real authorities in the country. As a result of the increase in discontent among Iranians towards the pro-British government, Reza Khan convinced the Majlis to overthrow the Qajar dynasty and established Pahlavi Dynasty in 1926.

The establishment of a nation-state in both countries positively affected Turkish-Iranian relations. Turkey abandoned pan-Islamic and pan-Turkish objectives in its foreign policy, which paved the way to the establishment of good relations with

Iran.⁵⁶ On 21 June 1921, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Kemal Tengirşen, stated in his speech to the National Assembly that they were on the eve of taking a significant step with Iran.⁵⁷ First official contact with Iran was established a year later, in 1922, when the Iranian Minister of Education and his delegation visited Ankara. On 22 June 1922, Iran declared its recognition of the Ankara government and assigned its first Ambassador to Turkey. Turkey assigned its Ambassador to Iran a year later. In addition, the visit of Reza Shah Pahlavi, who spent nearly a month in Turkey in 1934, contributed to the improvement of mutual perceptions.

Turkish-Iranian relations in the inter-war years were also affected by the reform programs of Atatürk in Turkey and Reza Shah in Iran. Although it was expected that their similar reform programs would bring the two countries closer, the result was not as expected. Since the Shah's reform programs had failed to establish a secular state as in Turkey, ideational factors continued to inform bilateral relations. A priority of Atatürk was to remove Islam as an institutionalized regulating agent in the affairs of state and society and to protect it only in the sphere of personal belief. To that end, Turkey's Grand National Assembly abolished the Caliphate in 1924. In the following years, the office of Shayk al-Islam was abolished, religious schools were closed, the Ministry of Religious Endowments was eliminated and shariah rule was replaced with the secular civil code. Like Turkey, the Iranian Majlis adopted a new civil code in 1928, but maintained some aspects of shariah

⁵⁶ Ünal Gündoğan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7, No. 1 (March 2003)

⁵⁷ Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılığı, 2001): 204

law in matters of personal status. The role of the ulama in national judicial life was also reduced with the appointment of judges, but the shariah judicial system was not specifically abolished. Reza Shah attempted to reduce the financial independence of the religious establishment as well. However, he was not successful in introducing secular and democratic rule.⁵⁸ Turkish-Iranian rapprochement process begun in the late 1920s thus failed to gain the expected momentum as, instead reverting to ideational rivalry. For instance, when the Caliphate was abolished in Turkey, the Shiite ulama in Iran abruptly became anti-republican. In fact, Reza Khan abandoned republicanism altogether and declared a new monarchy under his own dynasty.⁵⁹

Regarding domestic dynamics, systemic factors also established grounds for cooperation immediately after the establishment of the Turkish and Iranian nation-states. In this regard, the Kurdish issue emerged as an issue which Turkey and Iran realized the need for cooperation. As explained previously, the will of the European powers to establish an independent Kurdish state became apparent with the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. Although the treaty was made void with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the ongoing activities of Kurdish rebels against the Turkish government, explained in the next chapter, became a motivating factor towards cooperation. In this context, Turkey and Iran signed Treaty of Friendship on 22 April 1926 in Tehran. Friendship, neutrality and mutual

⁵⁸ Homa Katouzian, “State and Society under Reza Shah” in Touraj Atabaki and Erik J. Zucher (eds.) Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Ataturk and Reza Shah (London and New York: I&B Tauris, 2004): 29

⁵⁹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, “Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations,” Middle East Review of International Affairs 7, No. 3 (September 2003)

nonaggression were the basic principles of the agreement, along with the possibility of joint action against groups attempting to disturb peace and security or to change the government of either country.⁶⁰ Despite the treaty of friendship, Kurdish unrest in eastern Turkey continued, leading Turkey to call on Iran to enact a hard line policy towards Kurds. However, Turkey perceived Iran's response to have fallen short, since insurgents were able to take supplies and launch attacks from Iranian territory. On 23 January 1932, Turkey and Iran signed a frontier treaty in order to ensure border security. In spite of treaties, the continuation of the Kurdish problem had brought the two countries to the brink of war by the time of the Ağrı (Ararat) rebellion.⁶¹ In the subsequent years, Turkey's security concerns regarding the Kurdish issue led it to sign Saadabad Pact with Iran in 1937, along with Iraq and Afghanistan, in order to ensure security and peace in the region.⁶²

By the Second World War, systemic factors once again led Turkey and Iran to focus on internal problems. On the eve of the war, Turkey was more concerned with Italy's efforts to change the status quo in the Balkans and the Middle East, moving it closer to the United Kingdom. Iran, on the other hand, moved closer to Germany in order to balance the UK against the Soviet Union. As a result of this different stance of Turkey and Iran, Turkey remained neutral during the war,

⁶⁰Mehmet Öğütçü, "Turkey: A Major Regional Power to Engage or Confront Iran," http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cepmplp/journal/html/Vol17/Vol17_10.pdf; Ali Fuat Borovalı, "Kurdish Insurgencies, the Gulf War and Turkey's Changing Role," *Conflict Quarterly* (Fall 1987): 31; Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2001): 361

⁶¹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Tarihsel Perspektifte Türkiye-İran İlişkileri ve Nükleer Sorun," in SETA İran Dosyası, Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA), Rapor No. ST2-706 (Temmuz 2006)

⁶² Robert Olson, *The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998*, (USA: Mazda Publishers, 1998): 24

however, Iran was invaded by the Great Britain and the Soviet Union in 1941. In fact, Turkish-Iranian relations were frozen between 1941 and 1947 when the real power was in the hands of occupiers in Iran that was invaded by the UK and Soviet Union.⁶³ When the occupiers withdrew from Iran in 1946, each once again appointed ambassadors to the other.

2.3. The Cold War Years: A Common Threat from Communism, but Limited Cooperation

Turkish-Iranian relations remained under the shadow of the Cold War. Since each perceived a threat from the Soviet Union, they sided with the United States. This brought them closer and the relations with the United States became a significant determinant in Turkish-Iranian relations at this period. Therefore, an increase in anti-Western sentiments in Iran at the beginning of the 1950s inevitably damaged Turkish-Iranian relations. In 1951, the Iranian oil industry, which had been under British control since 1913, was nationalized under the leadership of nationalist movement leader Mossadeq, who served as Prime Minister between 1951 and 1953. These developments were not perceived warmly by Turkey, with its Western-oriented foreign policy. The increase in anti-Western sentiment in Iran was thus treated within Turkey as if it were anti-Turkish sentiment. Turkey also feared the increasing power of the Iranian communist party, the Tudeh party, which would have paved the way to the establishment of an Iranian government under Soviet influence. As a result of these factors, Turkish-Iranian relations tensed between 1951 and 1953.

⁶³ Baskın Oran (ed.), Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılığı, 2001): 648

Since relations with the United States were the primary determinant of Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1950s, re-coming of Reza Pahlavi to power in 1953 as a result of the coup organized and carried out by the CIA and MI6 immediately improved bilateral relations. Under Pahlavi's US-influenced government, the threat of communism became the primary concern of Iranian foreign policy. The same concern was also at the top of Turkey's foreign policy agenda. In this period, the United States began to implement a containment policy against the communist threat, which led to the establishment of the *Northern Tier*, in which both Turkey and Iran were included. These developments furthered Turkish-Iranian relations, and they established an allied relationship through the 1955 Baghdad Pact, which was a part of the US policy of Soviet containment.

Even though their Western-orientations and common threat perceptions from the Soviet Union established grounds for close relations, Turkey's increasing concerns over the Kurdish issue, as well as the reappearance of ideational factors and problematic economic relations between the two slowed the rapprochement that had begun in the mid-1950s. By the 1960s, the policies of the Shah towards Kurds increased Turkey's concerns. The following chapter details the impact of this issue on bilateral relations, so it is enough to say here that the Kurdish issue, along with the reappearance of ideational factors once again limited Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1960s. As the Iranian opposition was gathering strength, criticism of the Pahlavi dynasty was increasing in Turkey. Turkish public opinion became increasingly critical of the Shah's dictatorship, and in return Iran became critical of

Turkey's secular regime. Alaçam quoted that the Shah stated at a lunch with Turkey's President Cevdet Sunay, that

This [secularism] was needed in the early years of state [Turkey]. But now, we believe in that the continuation of this principle [secularism as a constitutional principle] is not needed and damages the Islamic world. (...) Therefore, we [Iran] ask you [Turkey] to avoid secularism as a constitutional principle.⁶⁴

The increasing mutual suspicion also negatively affected economic relations between Turkey and Iran, especially in the 1970s. Although they reached an agreement for oil in the late 1970s, bilateral economic relations were quite problematic. While Turkey was facing severe economic difficulties, Iran's economy was benefiting from the increase in oil prices. This situation created two dimensions affecting bilateral relations. The first was related Tehran's aim of becoming a dominant power in the Persian Gulf. To that end, the increasing oil prices triggered Iranian armament and tilted the balance of power in favor of Iran. Turkey's concerns about Iranian armament limited further rapprochement even in the good atmosphere created by the 1975 Algeria Agreement, discussed in detail in the next chapter. The second dimension was directly related to Turkey's economic concerns, which necessitated close and stable relations with oil-rich Iran.⁶⁵ This, however, was not easy to achieve, since Turkish-Iranian economic relations were limited by the primary objective of Turkey to secure a favorable price on oil. Turkish efforts, including a visit by President Fahri Korutürk, to Tehran in 1975,

⁶⁴ Fahir Alaçam, "Cumhurbaşkanı Cevdet Sunay'ın İran Ziyareti," in Turhan Fırat (ed.) Türk Dış Politikamızın Perde Arkası: 23 Büyükelçinin Olaylara Bakışı, (Ankara: Ümit Yayıncılık, 2005): 184-185

⁶⁵ Quoted in Alon Liel, Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam and Politics (London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001): 5; Interview with Retired Ambassador Turgut Tülümen, who was Ambassador of Turkey to Iran between September 1978 and November 1980, 10 April 2009.

the two countries were unable to reach an oil agreement.⁶⁶ Neither did the visit of the Shah to Turkey on 1 November 1975.⁶⁷ Ankara perceived Tehran as unwilling to sell cheap oil to Turkey. In the words of Turkey's Foreign Minister Haluk Bayülken, “The shah has always [been] jealous of Turkey (...) Since we put up pressure, they were feeling a need to do something, so occasionally they were making various offers. (...)⁶⁸ Turkey and Iran ultimately signed an oil agreement in 1978, but the Cold War years passed with mutual suspicion that limited the improvement of bilateral relations.

2.4. The Post-Islamic Revolution Era: Politically Tense, Economically Warm

Dissatisfaction in various segments of Iranian society, including the clergy, workers, students, middle class merchants and technocrats, over the Shah's policies reached its peak at the end of the 1970s. With demonstrations gaining momentum, the Shah had to leave the country in mid-January 1979. Two weeks later, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran, and on 1 April, the establishment of an Islamic Republic was officially proclaimed.

With the Islamic Revolution, changes in Iranian foreign policy ushered in a new phase of Turkish-Iranian relations. While some scholars contend revolutionary Iran's foreign policy did not constitute a break from the past due to the continuity

⁶⁶ “Korutürk ve Şah Başbaşa Görüştü,” Milliyet, 4 June 1975

⁶⁷ Alon Liel, Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam and Politics (London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001): 67

⁶⁸ Ibid, 68

in geopolitical, historical and economic arenas,⁶⁹ Sadri argues that the difference between the imperial and an Islamic republican regime before and after the revolution constituted a substantive difference.⁷⁰ During the Shah period, Iran had cordial and normal relations with countries across a broad ideological spectrum. It had also maintained a close association with the West, especially with the United States. In the aftermath of the Revolution, Iran's foreign policy was based primarily on an Islamic model in which "religious principles have a norm-defining function."⁷¹ Religious discourse became dominant in Iran's foreign policy and was the source of a distinction drawn between the "arrogant powers" and oppressed countries. Non-alignment and non-participation in great power conflicts became guiding principles of revolutionary Iran's foreign policy. One of the pillars of "close" Turkish-Iranian relations during the pre-revolutionary period had been mutual participation in the Western bloc against communism as a Cold War strategy, but the Islamic Revolution ended Iran's alliance with the West, posing further challenges to Turkish-Iranian relations.

It should be noted that this new phase of bilateral relations was not a case of the sudden deterioration of Turkish-Iranian relations. Contrary to expectations, Turkey adopted a "wait and see" policy in the first years of the Revolution. Moreover, it quickly recognized the revolutionary government of Iran and declared its

⁶⁹ Shirin T. Hunter, Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990)

⁷⁰ Houman A. Sadri, "Trends in the Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Iran," Journal of Third World Studies XV, No. 1 (1998): 14

⁷¹ M.R. Dehshiri and M.R. Majidi, "Iran's Foreign Policy in Post-Revolution Era: A Holistic Approach," The Iranian Journal of International Affairs XXI, No. 1-2(Winter-Spring, 2008-09): 102

willingness to develop bilateral relations.⁷² This reaction has been explained in various ways. According to Böyükbaş and Gündoğan, Turkey was worried about the consequences of a possible collapse of Iranian unity and of its falling into the Soviet sphere of influence.⁷³ Robert Olson, on the other hand, interprets Turkey's quick recognition as an attempt to prevent Turkish politics from the negative consequences of increasing Kurdish nationalism and Islamism.⁷⁴ In view of Turgut Tülümen, Turkish ambassador to Iran at the time, Turkey should not be late in recognizing the government of a country in which 40% of the population is comprised of Azeri Turks. His position was that “regimes could be changed, but Turkey could not turn its back on Iranian Azeri Turks.”⁷⁵ Lastly and perhaps most importantly, Turkey did not initially perceive a threat from revolutionary Iran.⁷⁶ Turkish newspapers of the time reflect how Turkey read the Islamic Revolution. Although some warned against possible negative impacts of the Revolution on Turkey's secular regime,⁷⁷ the dominant view was less-alarmist. Turkey appears to have viewed itself as distinctive among Muslim countries due to its secularity. For instance, Sami Kohen, columnist for *Milliyet*, did not include Turkey on a list of

⁷² Milliyet. 13 February 1979

⁷³ Süha Böyükbaş, “Turkey Copes with Revolutionary Iran,” Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies XIII, No. 1&2, (Fall/Winter 1989); Ünal Gündoğan, “Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences,” Middle East Review of International Affairs 7, No. 1(March 2003)

⁷⁴ Robert Olson, The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998, (USA: Mazda Publishers, 1998): 28

⁷⁵ Author's interview with (R) Ambassador Turgut Tülümen on 10 April 2009

⁷⁶ Author's interviews with Tülümen on 10 April 2009 and columnist Sami Kohen on 28 February 2009

⁷⁷ Abdi İpekçi, “İran'da Beklenenler,” Milliyet, 2 Şubat 1979

regional Muslim countries that would be affected by the Revolution.⁷⁸ Secondly, the non-Islamic features of the Revolution were highlighted in the Turkish media in the early years of the Revolution. For instance, Haluk Gerger, columnist for *Cumhuriyet*, stressed the anti-imperialist character of the Revolution and stated that it was a manifestation of a war between oppressed and oppressors.⁷⁹

As Iran's revolutionary foreign policy was implemented, Turkish-Iranian relations began to deteriorate. In the first decade of the Revolution, Iranian attempts to export revolutionary ideas to other Muslim countries became apparent. According to Khomeini, “our movement [Islamic Revolution] is for an Islamic goal, not for Iran alone (...). Iran has only been the starting point.”⁸⁰ and “Islam [was] revealed for mankind and the Muslims (...). An Islamic movement, therefore, cannot limit itself to any particular country (...).”⁸¹ Moreover, he stated that “Islam is not peculiar to a country, to several countries, a group, or even the Muslims. Islam has come for humanity (...). Islam wishes to bring all of humanity under the umbrella of its justice.”⁸² At this point, Turkey began to perceive an Islamic threat from Iran against its secular regime. Khomeini had also criticized Atatürk's reforms,

⁷⁸ Sami Kohen, “Çok Şey Değişebilir,” Milliyet, 15 February 1979

⁷⁹ Haluk Gerger, “Ortadoğu’da Devrim ve Karşı Devrim,” Cumhuriyet, 3 October 1980

⁸⁰ David Menashri, Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution (New York and London: Homes and Meier, 1990): 96

⁸¹ Sermon delivered on 2 November 1979 and quoted in Arshin Abid-Moghaddam, Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic (Hurst&Company: London, 2007): 32

⁸² R.K. Ramazani, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran’s Foreign Policy,” Middle East Journal 58. No. 4 (Autumn 2004)

alarming Turkish bureaucrats and elites.⁸³ In a speech made on August 24, 1986, he stated,

In the Islamic world, the ulama were led to believe that they had to obey the tyrants, oppressors, and the holders of naked power. Certain lackeys preferred to obey Atatürk, who destroyed the rule of Islam, instead of obeying the orders of the prophet. How can a reasonable mind accept this? Today, the ulama [in Turkey] who are the puppets of the Pharaonic forces, teach the people the orders of God and the prophet, but at the same time call on them to obey Atatürk.... How can one argue that this is consistent with the notion of [Islamic rulers] whom God ordered us to obey? Obviously, [Islamic rulers] in the real sense can only be those who follow the order of God and his messenger.⁸⁴

Leaders of the Islamic revolution had always seen Atatürk as an ally of Reza Shah and an enemy to Islam. In their view, Turkey became a country serving the interests of the United States and Western countries since its establishment on the principle of Kemalism, causing it to deviate from the path of Islam.⁸⁵

By the time of the Iran-Iraq War, which broke out in 1980, Turkish-Iranian relations had entered a new phase that included tense relations over the Kurdish issue at the same time as warm economic relations. The outbreak of war led Tehran to re-implement its traditional policy by which it supported Iraqi Kurds against the Iraqi government. This development caused the Kurdish issue to reappear as an area of conflict in Turkish-Iranian relations, as will be analyzed in the following chapter. It is enough to say here that Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1980s were primarily shaped by the relations of each to Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government.

⁸³ Turgut Tülümen, İran Devrimi Hatıraları This book is no longer in print. (R) Ambassador Turgut Tülümen provided copy at the 10 April 2009 interview.

⁸⁴ Ergun Özbudun, “Khomeinism – A Danger for Turkey,” in David Menashri (ed.) The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990): 244-245

⁸⁵ Tschangiz H. Pahlavan, “Turkish-Iranian Relations: An Iranian View,” in Henri J. Barkey (ed.) Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey’s Role in the Middle East (United States Institute of Peace Press: Washington D.C., 2005): 76

Despite conflict on the basis of the Kurdish issue in the bilateral relations and the ongoing negative effects of ideational factors, the economic visions of both Turkish and Iranian foreign policy resulted in improvement in this aspect of bilateral relations.⁸⁶ During the 1980s and the administration of Turgut Özal, who introduced the liberal economy to Turkey, economy became an important factor in Turkish foreign policy. During this period, newly emerging elite from business circles became influential in foreign policy decision-making. As a result, Turkey turned towards the Middle East and the Eastern Bloc. As with Turkey, economic considerations began to dominate Iran's foreign policy in the 1980s.⁸⁷ This trend is labeled “economization of foreign policy”⁸⁸ by Korany, and it led Tehran to adopt a more conciliatory approach in its foreign policy. As will be seen in the Chapter Five, the economy-oriented foreign policies of both Turkey and Iran led each to maintain economic relations in the 1980s despite politically problematic issues.

2.5. The End of the Cold War: Problematic Years, but also a Transitional Period

As Iran recognized by the end of the Cold War that it would not be able to function effectively outside the interdependent structure of the international system, it

⁸⁶Gökhan Çetinsaya, “Tarihsel Perspektifte Türkiye-İran İlişkileri ve Nükleer Sorun,” in SETA İran Dosyası, Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA), Rapor No. ST2-706 (Temmuz 2006)

⁸⁷R.K. Ramazani, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran’s Foreign Policy,” *Middle East Journal* 58. No. 4 (Autumn 2004)

⁸⁸Bahgat Korany, “From Revolution to Domestication: The Foreign Policy of Algeria,” in Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hilal Dessouki (eds.) *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change* 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991): 103-155

implemented a pragmatic foreign policy. Ehteshami argues that Khomeini's populist slogan, "Neither East nor West" became irrelevant after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁸⁹ Although Mohammad Mahallati argues that Iran's economic ambitions did not supersede the predominant spiritual and ideological aspirations of the 1980s, the fact remains that economic necessities led Iran to conduct a less-ideologically oriented foreign policy in the 1990s.⁹⁰ Even though Iran's pragmatic foreign policy contributed to the continuation of its economic relations with Turkey, it failed to decrease political tensions in bilateral relations during this period.

Two major systemic factors, coming from Central Asia/the Caucasus and the Middle East, had determining roles in Turkish-Iranian relations in this period. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent states were established in the Central Asia and the Caucasus. This resulted in competition between Turkey and Iran over expansion of influence into this region. This competition had two dimensions. These were the political and economic competition for the status of "model country" to newly independent states. Turkey represented a secular state, whose citizens were predominantly Muslim citizens, politically and economically integrated with the rest of the world. Iran, in contrast, represented an Islamic state isolated by Western powers. In addition, each

⁸⁹ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Iran's International Posture After the Fall of Baghdad," Middle East Journal 58, No. 2 (Spring 2004)

⁹⁰ Mallahati states that Iranian first fulfilled its spiritual needs with the Revolution, then in the 1990s was ready to secure its long-term economic well-being. In this regard, former President Hashemi Rafsanjani repeatedly stressed that if the Islamic regime of Iran failed in its economic development strategy, it would soon lose its ideological credibility as well. It is thus unsurprising that, in contrast with the 1980s, economic development became a central goal of Iran in the 1990s. Mohammad Mahallati, "The Middle East: In Search of an Equilibrium between Transcendent Idealism and Practicality," Journal of International Affairs 50, Issue 1 (Summer 1996)

presented itself as the best route for the commodities and energy resources of these newly independent states. The competition between Turkey and Iran over Central Asia/the Caucasus resulted in the formation of two informal alliances. The first was formed by Russia, Armenia and Iran; the second was established by the United States, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Although Turkey and Iran were in different camps in these informal alliances, their mutual economic considerations led them to seek paths to economic cooperation. In this context, Turkey declined to join in the US-led Iran Libya Sanction Act (ILSA), which enacted trade and financial sanctions on foreign investment in Iran's energy sector in order to halt the development of Iran's oil and gas industries. Turkey and Iran also signed a natural gas agreement in 1996 despite the US sanctions.

The second systemic factor that influenced the Turkish-Iranian relations during the 1990s was the Gulf War, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. At the time, Washington was conducting a dual containment policy against Iran and Iraq and called on its allies to support it. Despite this call, Turkey and Iran sought possibilities of cooperation immediately after the Gulf War. The main reason for these mutual cooperative efforts was a common threat perception about the developments in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War. The establishment of the “no-fly zone” in the north of the thirty-sixth parallel by the coalition forces irritated both Ankara and Tehran. It was perceived as the establishment of a de facto Kurdish state that would be a safe haven for anti-Turkish and anti-Iranian Kurdish oppositional groups. This new situation led Turkey and Iran, along with Syria, to sign a series of security protocols to prevent the establishment of an

independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. However, the rapprochement trend did not last long, transforming again into tense relations by the mid-1990s. Details of this are discussed in the following chapter, so it is enough to say here that Turkey and Iran's tactical relations with Iraqi Kurds in the 1990s increased mutual suspicion and brought Turkish-Iranian relations to perhaps their most conflictual period.

2.5.1. Period of Cem and Khatami: Fragile Détente

By the late 1990s, Turkish-Iranian relations had entered what could be defined as *fragile détente*, which was previously explained in Chapter One.⁹¹ As explained by Öniş and Yılmaz, at the stage of *fragile détente*, the improvement of bilateral relations often occurs at only one level – primarily the intergovernmental level. Since there is no consensus among key players in domestic politics, détente fails to spread to the non-governmental and societal levels. Regarding the Turkish-Iranian relations in the late 1990s, it is observed that the improvement of relations between the two countries did not spread to the non-governmental and societal levels since the core problematic issues, especially those related to hard security issues, namely the Kurdish issue, were not resolved. Therefore, mutual confidence levels between the two countries were low in those years. However, at this transitional period from enmity/conflict to amity/cooperation, two important officials from Turkey and Iran played a significant role. These were Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem and Iran's President Mohammad Khatami.

⁹¹ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?,” Political Science Quarterly 123, No. 1, (2008): 143-144

Turkish foreign policy was reoriented in 1997, when İsmail Cem became Minister of Foreign Affairs. Cem viewed the promises of former Foreign Ministers to maintain traditional Turkish foreign policy as guarantees that Turkey would take a hands-off approach to regional issues, distancing itself from its historical geography.⁹² Criticizing traditional Turkish foreign policy for being bereft of its historical dimension and trapped between “European versus Asian” and “West versus East,” Cem introduced a foreign policy approach that included the concepts of *depth*, with respect to time, and *breadth*, with respect to space.⁹³ He also noted the role of culture in any country’s foreign policy, saying that “in the development of any policy – particularly in the shaping of foreign policy – a nation’s culture and its self-perception are fundamental elements.”⁹⁴ According to him, ruling elites had narrowed Turkey’s culture such that achievements inherited from previous historical periods were practically non-existent. Turkey’s foreign policy towards Islamist states was thus negatively impacted by the cultural prejudices of the governing elites.⁹⁵ Cem’s foreign policy approach, in contrast, systematically mobilized these historical and cultural assets in order to improve Turkey’s economic and political relations with countries in the Balkans and Middle East that shared a common Ottoman past.⁹⁶ One of these countries was Iran, which opened the door for bilateral relations. Cem stated during a February 2001 visit to Iran that

⁹² İsmail Cem, Turkey in the New Century 2nd Edition(Mersin: Rustem Bookshop, 2001): 4

⁹³ Ibid, 2-4

⁹⁴ Ibid, 10

⁹⁵ Ibid, 11

⁹⁶ Ibid, 3

new opportunities and an appropriate environment for trade have emerged in recent years.⁹⁷ His visit was also perceived by many, including Iranian Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as a symbol of the beginning of the rapprochement trend in Turkish-Iranian relations.⁹⁸

Developments in Iranian internal politics also contributed to the entry of Turkey and Iran into a new conciliatory period. Mohammad Khatami, a moderate, was elected president in 1997, having based his campaign on a reform program promising democracy, rule of law and improvement in social rights. His presidency thus became a symbol of ‘change,’ ‘reform’ and ‘new openings,’ and initiated a new phase in Iranian foreign policy.⁹⁹ During his eight-year rule, he focused on improving Iran’s relations with the world based on détente and mutual respect.¹⁰⁰ Aiming to reduce isolation and pressure on the regime,¹⁰¹ Iran attempted to repair its relations with the Arab world, and even with the United States.¹⁰² Khatami’s foreign policy contributed to the improvement Turkish-Iranian relations as well. After his election, high-level visits between Turkey and

⁹⁷ “Cem, İran’da Çok Şeyler Yapmanın Eşiğinde,” *Hürriyet*, 13 February 2001

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ M. Turgut Demirtepe, “Tahran’daki Değişim Sürecinde İktidar Mücadelesi,” *Avrasya Dosyası İran Özel*, 5, No. 3 (Autumn 1999)

¹⁰⁰ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, “Introduction,” in Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri (eds.) *Iran’s Foreign Policy From Khatami to Ahmedinejad*, (UK: Ithaca Press, 2008): xiv

¹⁰¹ Shahram Chubin, “Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,” The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 342, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 18. For Iranian foreign policy during the Khatami Presidency see, R.K. Ramazani, “The Shifting Premise of Iran’s Foreign Policy: Towards a Democratic Peace,” *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (Spring 1998); Shah Alam, “The Changing Paradigm of Iranian Foreign Policy under Khatami,” *Strategic Analysis* XXIV, No. 9 (December 2000)

¹⁰² Anoushiravan Ehteshami, “Iran’s New Order: Domestic Developments and Foreign Policy Outcomes,” *Global Dialogue* 3, Number 2-3 (Spring-Summer 2001)

Iran accelerated. However, the disappearance of the mutual suspicion in bilateral relations took time, despite the new vision and the pro-active approach in Turkish and Iranian foreign policies.

Although the election of Khatami was warmly received in Turkey, Turkish-Iranian relations were witnessing an unpleasant period.¹⁰³ In the mid-1990s, Turkey was dealing with internal problems caused by the increasing power of Islamist political parties. During his brief period of rule in 1996-97, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan sought alliances with Islamist states and a place for Turkey in the Islamic world. His first foreign visits were to Libya, Iran and other Muslim countries. Aiming to achieve strong economic and political unity among Muslim countries, Erbakan led the establishment of D-8 (Developing Eight), including leading Muslim countries, namely Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Pakistan. Erbakan's Islamist vision alarmed Turkish secular elite circles, including the military. Since Turkey had continually accused Iran of attempting to export its revolution and of supporting Islamists in Turkey, the policies of the Erbakan government were perceived in these circles as a signal of increasing Iranian influence in Turkey. The "Jerusalem Night," which was organized in 1997 by Bekir Yıldız, mayor of the Sincan district of Ankara and member of the Welfare Party, deepened the concerns of Turkish secular elites. At that meeting, Iranian Ambassador M. Reza Bagheri called upon audience members not to be afraid of being called "radicals" and urged them to follow the path of

¹⁰³ Sami Kohen, "İran Kırıldı," Milliyet, 24 May 1997; Umur Talu, "Dört Ülke ve 'Değişim,'" Milliyet, 27 May 1997; Sami Kohen, "Halkın Mesajı: Yeter!," Milliyet, 27 May 1997; Ali Sirmen, "Hatemi Ne Yapabilir?" Milliyet, 29 May 1997; Milliyet, "Ankara'dan İlimli Hatemi Yönetimine Destek," Milliyet, 19 January 2000

shariah.¹⁰⁴ The speech not only triggered discontent in military circles, resulting in the ouster of the Erbakan government, but also resulted in the reciprocal withdrawal of Turkish and Iranian ambassadors. Turkey expelled the head of the Iranian consulate in Istanbul M. Reza Rashid and Iranian consul in Erzurum Said Zare. In response, Iran expelled Ambassador Osman Korutürk and Turkish consul in Urumiyeh Ufuk Özsancak.¹⁰⁵

The increasing tension during the 1990s caused by ideational factors and the Kurdish issue ushered in perhaps the most conflictual period in Turkish-Iranian relations. As will be seen in the next chapter, Iran's continuing support of the PKK, the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement in the mid-1990s, Turkey's accusation that Iran supported Turkish Hezbollah and allegations of a link between Iran and the assassinations of Turkish elites severely increased tension in bilateral relations.

2.6. 2000s: A Rapprochement Period in Bilateral Relations?

At the beginning of the 2000s, problems in bilateral relations caused by mutual suspicions remained influential, as when a statement by Turkish Prime Minister immediately after Iran's 2000 parliamentary election was interpreted as an intervention into Iranian internal affairs. Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit stated that "the sweeping victory of the reformists will be conducive for a more contemporary and moderate Islam to flourish in Iran. Such a transformation in that country will

¹⁰⁴ Turkish Daily News, 6 February 1997

¹⁰⁵ Robert Olson, The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998, (USA: Mazda Publishers, 1998): 56-57

help to improve Turkish-Iranian relations.”¹⁰⁶ Iranian officials, in response, told Turkish Ambassador Turan Moralı that “Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit’s remarks were a clear example of interference in Iran’s [sic] and an insult to the Iranian nation and system.”¹⁰⁷ The second problematic issue was resulted from accusations by Turkey over Iranian support of Turkish Hezbollah, and of aiming to establish an Islamist government in Turkey. The Turkish press widely covered relations between Hezbollah and Iran, and links between Iran and a series of assassinations of Turkish secular elites.¹⁰⁸ As Turkish concerns over Iranian policies towards the Islamists in Turkey increased, Turkish-Iranian relations were characterized as “neither black nor white, but a shade of gray” in 2001 by former Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Prime Minister Ecevit declared that there were serious problems in bilateral relations despite Khatami’s rule,¹¹⁰ stating,

It has been known for many years that Iran has sheltered separatist terror on its soil. It is also well known that the regime in Iran wants, in its own words, to export revolution to other countries. These events have been disturbing us. As the investigations about the assassinations yield concrete results, we will reconsider our relations with Iran accordingly.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ “Ecevit: Election Results will Improve Turkish-Iranian Relations,” Hürriyet Daily News, 24 February 2000

¹⁰⁷ “Iran Protests Against Turkish Prime Minister’s Remarks,” Hürriyet Daily News, 25 February 2000

¹⁰⁸ Hürriyet, “Adres Yine İran,” 17 May 2000; Hürriyet, 18 May 2000; Muhamrem Sarıkaya, “İran’ın Kullandığı Casuslara da Ulaşıldı,” Hürriyet, 18 May 2000; Tufan Turenç, “İran ve Bir Hoca Fikrasi,” Hürriyet, 27 May 2000

¹⁰⁹ Tansu Çiller, “Turkey: Today’s Political and Economic Realities,” Policy Watch No. 534: Special Forum Report, Washington D.C. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 15 May 2001

¹¹⁰ Ferhat Ünlü, “Ecevit İddialı Konuştu,” Yeni Şafak, 18 May 2000

¹¹¹ “Turkish-Iranian Relations Tense Once More,” Hürriyet Daily News, 21 May 2000

In return, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Hussein Adeli denied reports that Tehran wanted to destabilize Turkey through political killings.¹¹² Despite this denial, Turkish Courts – first the Second Chamber of the State Security Court of Ankara, then the 11th High Criminal Court of Ankara, charged Iran. The courts convicted the members of a radical Islamist group, Tevhid-Salam, for 22 assassinations including those of Bahriye Uçok, Muammer Aksoy, Uğur Mumcu and Ahmet Taner Kışlalı. The decision of the Court claimed the members of Tevhid-Salam were trained by the Revolutionary Guards of Iran, and that Iran aimed to export its revolutionary ideologies.¹¹³

Towards the end of 2002, bilateral relations began to normalize as a result of factors at the domestic and international levels. Among the domestic factors, Khatami's Iran contributed to change Iran's image, which had been heavily identified with mullahs, in Turkey. Differentiation between *Khatami's Iran* and the *Mullah's Iran* began to be covered in the Turkish press, introducing the prospect of cooperation with an Iran in the process of democratization and modernization under the Khatami rule.¹¹⁴ In this respect, Iranian Ambassador Muhammed Huseyin Lavasani stated that Khatami's détente policy did not only reduce tensions in bilateral relations, but also established confidence between the officials of both countries, which had a positive impact on bilateral relations.¹¹⁵ Following

¹¹² "Terrorism in Turkey in against Iran's Interests," Hürriyet Daily News, 6 June 2000

¹¹³ "Umut Davasının Gerekçeli Kararında Iran Terörizmi," Milliyet, 17 December 2005

¹¹⁴ Güneri Civaoğlu, Milliyet, 11 May 2000

¹¹⁵Hürriyet, Almanak 2002,
http://dosyalar.hurriyet.com.tr/almanak2002/news_detail.asp?nid=143&sid=14 (Accessed 15 January 2010)

the visit of Turkey's President Ahmet Necdet Sezer to Tehran on 17-18 June 2002, which was called a “groundbreaking visit” in the media,¹¹⁶ Khatami's declaration that Turkey and Iran are two branches of the same civilization tree signaled the beginning of the current rapprochement process.¹¹⁷

Regarding developments at the international level, Turkey's relations with the European Union (EU) also contributed to the improvement of Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s. As the Turkey's relations with the EU deteriorated, Turkey sought to improve its relations with Eastern countries. When France and Germany proposed a ‘privileged membership’ to Turkey instead of full membership, Turkey lost confidence that the EU would accept it as a full member. In 2002, Tuncer Kılınç, Secretary General of the National Security Council, said Turkey was not receiving support from the EU on issues related to its national interests and that it should get involved in the regional establishment with Russia and Iran, without regard to the United States.¹¹⁸ Although Kılınç's statement was criticized by Chief of the General Staff Kırıkoğlu, who commented that the Turkish military would not give up the effort to integrate with civilization,¹¹⁹ he also commented on the need to revise Turkish foreign policy.

¹¹⁶ “Turkey's Sezer Seeks to Settle Complicated Ties in Groundbreaking Visit to Iran,” Associated Press, 17 June 2002

¹¹⁷ Hürriyet, 29 July 2004

¹¹⁸ Taner Baytok (Retired Ambassador), “Kılınç Paşa Yanlış mı Konuştu?,” Hürriyet, 13 March 2002

¹¹⁹ “Genelkurmay'dan Mesaj: Iran'la Kol Kola Girmeyiz,” Sabah, 18 Mart 2002

2.6.1. The Reasons and Extent of the Rapprochement Process: Domestic Factors

2.6.1.1. Turkey: The AKP's Foreign Policy

Immediately since the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government came into power in 2002, Turkish foreign policy has been in a state of change. The outcomes of this change have also been observable in improving Turkish-Iranian relations. Analyzing the impact of the AKP's foreign policy on Turkish-Iranian relations, it is observed that the discussion has revolved around two debates. The first of these is that the “Islamic identity” of the AKP government, which was initially seen as a factor behind the rapprochement in Turkish-Iranian relations.

Despite the AKP's claim to be a conservative democratic party loyal to the fundamental values of the Turkish Republic,¹²⁰ many Turkish citizens and outside observers have questioned whether its foreign policy approach is influenced by a hidden Islamist agenda. In this debate, Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern countries, including Iran, have been a focal point. AKP Vice Chair Murat Mercan, one week after the AKP came to power, declared the party was willing to improve ties with Iran.¹²¹ According to Baran, the remarkable changes in Turkish-Iranian relations were partly due to the stance of the AKP government.¹²² Çağaptay also comments on the role of the AKP in the rapprochement process, stating,

Although AKP (...) claims to have shed its Islamist past and describes itself as a conservative Muslim democratic movement (...), AKP's Islamist pedigree is clearly making inroads into Turkish foreign policy. Many party deputies nurture deep cultural and religious empathy

¹²⁰ “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi Programı 2001,” (The Party Program of the Justice and Development Party) www.akparti.org.tr

¹²¹ Radikal, 8 November 2002

¹²² Zeyno Baran, Torn Country: Turkey - Between Secularism & Islamism (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2010): 4

toward the Muslim Middle East. (...) Today's conservatives and Islamists in Ankara may be considered by some to be bold in their sympathy for the Muslim Middle East; indeed, some of them are closer politically to Syria and Iran than they are to any other country.¹²³

This view is partly supported by some Iranian officials as well. When the AKP government came into power, the victory was viewed favorably by Iran.¹²⁴ According to Iranian officials, problems in bilateral relations had been caused by Kemalist policies, which were secular and anti-Iran. Therefore, the rule of “Islamists [implying the AKP]” would ease bilateral relations.¹²⁵ An Iranian ambassador had also cited the AKP’s Islamic roots and affinity for the Muslim world in this context.¹²⁶

Even though it is generally argued that the “Islamic identity” of the AKP government has played a significant role in the rapprochement process, to consider it the sole factor would be to take a reductionist approach. If so, this would not explain the trend of improved relations with Turkey’s non-Muslim neighbors, namely Greece, Russia and Armenia. This reductionist approach, which attempts to explain bilateral relations through the lens of ideology, would also be insufficient to understand the reasons for limitations in further cooperation.

¹²³ Soner Cagaptay, “A Turkish Rapprochement with Middle East Rogue States?” Policy Watch, 9 January 2004, <http://www.cagaptay.com/660/a-turkish-rapprochement-with-middle-east-rogue-states> (Accessed 11 February 2009)

¹²⁴ (”استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه“) (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826>) (Accessed 31 May 2011)

¹²⁵ (”استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه“) (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826>) (Accessed 31 May 2011)

¹²⁶ Author’s Interview with an Iranian diplomat who wished to remain anonymous, on 9 April 2009.

Therefore, the principles of the AKP foreign policy approach will be analyzed here in order to understand the reasons and extent of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations. The principles to be examined are multi-dimensional and pro-active foreign policy, zero-problems with neighbors and the balance of security and democracy.¹²⁷

The AKP's foreign policy approach has been shaped by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who became Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, following a period as chief advisor to the prime minister. Davutoğlu's concept of *strategic depth* has two main components; the first is *historical depth* and the second is *geographical depth*. Davutoğlu argues that *historical depth*, an assessment of the links between the past, present and future, and *geographical depth*, an outcome determined by relations between domestic, regional and global factors, should be taken into account in order to formulate a lasting strategic perspective.¹²⁸ According to him, Turkey's position should be redefined in terms of its geographical position and historical assets. Turkey has generally been presented as a bridge between East and West or a model for the Muslim world. Davutoğlu questioned this designation. He advocates instead a view of Turkey as a central country in its own region,¹²⁹ stating,

It [Turkey] is both an Asian and European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean. A central country with such an optimal geographic location cannot

¹²⁷ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye Merkez Ülke Olmalı," Radikal, 26 February 2004

¹²⁸ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, No. 1 (2008): 80. For more detailed information on Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision, see: Ahmet Davutoğlu, Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu 23rd edition (İstanbul: Küre Yayıncılıarı, 2007)

¹²⁹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye Merkez Ülke Olmalı," Radikal, 26 February 2004

define itself in a defensive manner. It should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points, nor a frontier country, nor indeed as an ordinary country, which sits at the edge of the Muslim world or the West.¹³⁰

Moreover, the cultural geography of Turkey harmonizes elements from Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Middle East. Davutoğlu thus advocates a new diplomatic style for Turkey that does not reduce multiple identities into a unified character or a single region. In accordance with the multi-dimensional approach, Turkey actively involved itself in regional affairs in order to ensure a secure neighborhood. Regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, which will be analyzed in Chapter Four, Turkey's desire for a secure neighborhood motivated it to take an active role in the negotiation process about Iran's nuclear program. Davutoğlu explained this by saying, "we [Turkey] want to have a secure environment."¹³¹

"Zero-problems with neighbors" is another tenet of the AKP's foreign policy. AKP leaders have cited the need for a multidimensional approach and active engagement with all regional systems in Turkey's neighborhood. To that end, Davutoğlu announced that Turkey's foreign policy vision had become more region-oriented in order to be able to deal with questions around Turkey in a systematic manner.¹³² He declared Turkey had a new role that dictated it to provide security and stability not only for itself, but for its neighboring regions.¹³³

¹³⁰ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, No. 1 (2008): 78

¹³¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkish Vision of Regional and Global Order: Theoretical Background and Practical Implementation," *Political Reflection* 1, No. 1 (June-July-August 2010): 45

¹³² Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey in 2008," a discussion hosted by the Henry Jackson Society and Bob Laxton MP, 11 June 2008

¹³³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, No. 1 (2008): 79

According to AKP officials this was consistent with Turkey's traditional foreign policy premise: "peace at home, peace in the world," with new elements resulting from the end of the Cold War. These new elements did not contradict the fundamental values and interests of the Euro-Atlantic community. In this regard, Davutoğlu thus asserted, "Turkey should guarantee its own security and stability by taking on a more active, constructive role to provide order, stability and security in its environs."¹³⁴

In accordance with the policy of "zero-problems with neighbors," improving relations, especially economic relations, with regional states became an important aspect of the AKP's foreign policy in order to ensure regional stability and security through consolidating economic interdependence. Therefore, AKP adopted the policy of "zero-problems-limitless trade with neighbors." As mentioned, economy had become an important parameter in Turkish foreign policy during the Özal period of the 1980s, as a result of the increasing influence of business circles in foreign policy decision-making. This trend did not last due to heightened security concerns in the 1990s, but was reintroduced by the AKP government as part of a strategy to negate regional conflicts.¹³⁵ Regarding Turkish-Iranian relations, the AKP gave priority to improving its economic ties with Iran as well. As will be seen in Chapter Five, the rapprochement process has been positively affected by these economic considerations over the last decade.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Mustafa Yetim and Rıdvan Kalaycı, "Türkiye Iran İlişkileri: 'Sıfır Sorun mu?', Nükleer Sorun mu?", Akademik Ortadoğu 5, No. 2 (2011): 92

Ensuring a balance between security and democracy is another principle of the AKP's foreign policy approach. As explained, the rise of political Islam and the Kurdish issue were at the center of Turkey's security considerations during the 1980s and 1990s. By the 2000s, however, these considerations began to be framed as part of Turkey's democratization process at the domestic level, a side effect of which was a positive turn in foreign policy towards Iran. Since the rise of the political Islam and Kurdish separatist nationalism had been perceived as central threats against the Turkish state in the 1980s and 1990s,¹³⁶ Islamists were seen as extensions of Iran seeking to establish an Islamic regime in Turkey, and the PKK was perceived as a tool of hostile countries, including Iran, aiming to destabilize or divide Turkey. Drawing upon securitization theory¹³⁷, both Aras and Polat argue that Turkey's foreign policy-makers have successfully externalized the rise of political Islam and Kurdish separatism,¹³⁸ with Aras arguing that

¹³⁶ “İşte Tarihi Değişiklikler,” *Hürriyet*, 4 November 1997; Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change*, (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005): 125

¹³⁷ Securitization Theory was first conceived by Ole Waever and later developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. Traditional security studies have attempted to answer the question, “how can we become more secure?” Securitization Theory, however, asks, “how does an issue become a security issue?” (Filip Ejodus, “Dangerous Liaisons: Securitization Theory and Schmittian Legacy,” in Carl Schmitt and Copenhagen School of Security Studies, *Western Balkans Security Observer, Journal of the Belgrade School of Security Studies*, Year 4, No. 13, April-June 2009, p. 11). In Balzacq's terms, “securitization predominantly examines how security problems emerge, evolve and dissolve.” (Thierry Balzacq, “Constructivism and Securitization Studies,” in Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Victor Mauer (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies*(London: Routledge, 2009)) According to Ole Waever and Bary Buzan, securitization is a speech act “through which an inter-subjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Bary Burzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers* (2003): 491). Aras and Polat define securitization “as a field of power struggle in which securitizing actors point at a security issue to obtain the support of society for a certain policy or course of action.” In their view, this power game has been played between the bureaucracy/military and the political elite in the case of Turkey (Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran,” *Security Dialogue* 39, No. 5 (October 2008): 498)

¹³⁸ Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran,” *Security Dialogue* 39, No. 5 (October 2008)

“(...) the increasing role of the military in Turkish politics has had a direct impact on the conduct of foreign policy, increasing the likelihood of an incorrect interpretation of Iran’s behavior and intentions. This has also led to seeing foreign relations as a function of domestic politics, turning foreign policy into an internal game – namely, as the logic goes, if Islam is a domestic threat, Iran also constitutes a threat since it has an Islamic regime.”¹³⁹

According to him, “the increasing hegemony enjoyed by the military over foreign policy decision-making decreases prospects for progressive change.”¹⁴⁰ By the 2000s, however, the influence of the military in this arena gradually decreased, partly as a result of the implementation of EU reforms and partly due to the demands of the political parties. As will be seen in the following chapter, the decline in the influence of the military in foreign policy decision-making processes caused the Kurdish issue to be removed from the security sphere and returned it to the political arena in the 2000s, described as a “desecuritization process.”¹⁴¹ This paved the way for the rapprochement trend in Turkish-Iranian relations with respect to the Kurdish issue during this period. As with the Kurdish issue, the controversy surrounding political Islam was also desecuritized. Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül declared that “Bilateral tension over charges that Iran wants to undermine Turkey's secular system is ‘a thing of the past.’”¹⁴² In other words, it

¹³⁹ Bülent Aras, “Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux,” *Journal of Third World Studies*, XVIII, No. 1 (2001): 111

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Securitization Theory also introduces the reverse concept: “desecuritization.” Desecuritization, as understood in Williams, is the “moving of the issues off the ‘security’ agenda and back into the realms of public political discourse and ‘normal’ political dispute and accommodation.” (Michael C. Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (2003): 523

¹⁴² Mehmet Öğütçü, “Turkey: A Major Regional Power to Engage or Confront Iran,” http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cepmpl/journal/html/Vol17/Vol17_10.pdf

can be stated that “secular-Islamic divide is no longer relevant” in Turkish-Iranian relations.¹⁴³

Despite factors supporting the rapprochement process over the last decade, there remain factors working against it. The main limitation relates to questions about Turkey’s foreign policy orientation in the AKP period. While the “Islamic identity” of the AKP government was initially seen as a factor in favor of rapprochement, Iran has recently expressed suspicion about the orientation of AKP foreign policy.

As observed, AKP leaders have always rejected accusations that they have an Islamist agenda.¹⁴⁴ Prime Minister Erdoğan, for instance, declared the AKP had given up making politics using religious motives and narratives.¹⁴⁵ Vice Chair Murat Mercan confirmed that the main tenets of Turkish foreign policy will remain, adding that religious or ideological concerns would not determine the AKP’s foreign policy.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the AKP manifesto emphasizes national interests as the guiding principle in foreign policy without reference to the role of religious or ideological concerns in international relations.¹⁴⁷ Contrary to the Islamist foreign policy discourse of the Welfare Party, led by Erbakan, the AKP’s

¹⁴³ Mohammed Ayoob, “Beyond the Democratic Wave in the Arab World: The Middle East’s Turko-Persian Future,” *Insight Turkey* 13, No. 2 (2011): 65

¹⁴⁴ Menderes Çınar, “Turkey’s Transformation under the AKP Rule,” *The Muslim World* 96 (July 2006): 475

¹⁴⁵ Hürriyet, 16 May 2000

¹⁴⁶ Radikal, 8 November 2002

¹⁴⁷ “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi Programı 2001,” (The Party Program of the Justice and Development Party) www.akparti.org.tr

foreign policy stance is based on the idea that isolation from globalization and Europeanization could lead to a political crisis in Turkey. Furthermore, contrary to the vision of Erbakan, Erdoğan announced his opposition to the idea of forming an Islamic economic bloc.¹⁴⁸ Instead, the AKP has attempted to advance cooperation between the Muslim world and the West. As argued by Duran,

The JDP's [AKP's] foreign policy seems to balance multiple perspectives, including good relations with Middle Eastern countries and the accession to the EU. This stance creates a fertile ground for eliminating the identity crisis of Turkish domestic and foreign policies. In other words, the JDP has been transforming the parameters of both Turkish politics and Islamist politics through 'Europeanization' and 'internationalization' of internal issues. This task of transforming both itself and Turkey has to be based on a careful balance between Islamist and secularist expectations in domestic politics and between the United States and Europe in an international context.¹⁴⁹

However, the will of the AKP to advance cooperation between the Muslim world and the West was perceived with suspicion by Iran, which has been experiencing political tension with Western countries, especially with the United States. While the West and the domestic opposition criticize Turkey for allegedly turning towards the East, against the West or joining an Islamist bloc, Iran does not perceive any rupture between Turkey and the West. Zibakalam, for instance, argues that despite the Islamist political victory, Turkey was not estranged from its Western-oriented policies. Rather, it seeks to act as a bridge between Western and Islamic countries.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the continuing partnership between Turkey and the United States is perceived by Iran as being contrary to its interests and its anti-

¹⁴⁸ Turkish Daily News, 20 January 2004

¹⁴⁹ Burhanettin Duran, "JDP and Foreign Policy as an Agent of Transformation," in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.) The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006): 282

¹⁵⁰ "زیباکلام : ترکیه نان شکست های ایران را می خورد که نوش جانش !" (Zibakalam: Turkey is Eating Iran's Crumbs, Bon Appetit!), Khabar Online, <http://www.khabaronline.ir/news-75524.aspx> 24 تیر 1389 (Accessed 2 June 2011)

imperialist and anti-Western foreign policies.¹⁵¹ As a result, the perception that Turkey's foreign policy remained Western-oriented would most likely work against the rapprochement process in bilateral relations.¹⁵²

Iran's doubts about Turkey follow two lines. The first concern is over the *Turkish model*, which represents a country that has Muslim majority, but at the same time implements Western values. The second concern includes the question of whether the AKP's foreign policy really has a neo-Ottomanist vision. Regarding the first concern, Iran perceives the *Turkish model* as a challenge against its Islamist model to the Muslim world. Although Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi asserted that “Islam is one and concepts such as ‘Iranian Islam’ and ‘Turkish Islam’ do not exist,”¹⁵³ recently published Iranian sources focus largely on the differences between “Turkish Islamists” and “Iranian Islamists.”¹⁵⁴ Former Court of Appeals

¹⁵¹ ”استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه“ (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), مرکز پژوهش‌های مجلس شورای اسلامی (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011); 26 بهمن 1389 (Iran and Turkey: Ally and Competitor), محمود صدری (Iran and Turkey: Ally and Competitor), http://www.donya-e-eqtesad.com/Default_view.asp?@=243656 (Accessed 3 June 2011)

¹⁵² ”استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه“ (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), مرکز پژوهش‌های مجلس شورای اسلامی (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 سیامک کاکایی (Iran and Turkey: Ally and Competitor), <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011); Interview with Siamak Kakaei (Turks are both ally and competitor) 23 فروردین 1390 (April 2011) <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/60/bodyView/11810%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%82%DB%8C%D8%A8.html> (Accessed 3 June 2011); دکترین تعامل سازنده در سیاست منوچهر محمدی، ابراهیم متکی (Constructive Doctrine in Iranian Foreign Policy), فصلنامه راهبردی یاس (Strategic Journal of Yas), شماره 4 (2006, No. 4)

¹⁵³ “There is no Iranian or Turkish Islam: Salehi,” Mehr News Agency, 15 March 2011

¹⁵⁴ ”سیاست خارجی اسلامگرایان ترکیه“ (Foreign Policies of Turkey’s Islamists), مرکز پژوهش‌های مجلس شورای اسلامی (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), کد موضوعی: 260، شماره مسلسل 8403، تیر ماه 1386 (July 2007,): 31,

Chief Ayotollah Sahroudi cited this difference, accusing the AKP of spreading liberal Islam.¹⁵⁵ From the Iranian perspective, the *Turkish model*, in the name of “moderate Islam” or “liberal Islam,” is a product of the Western powers, and contradicts the *Iranian model*.¹⁵⁶ In this context, the different stances of Turkey and Iran on the Arab Spring, a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests that began on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia, then spread to Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, became one of the challenges to Turkish-Iranian rapprochement process.¹⁵⁷ From the Turkish perspective, Middle Eastern countries will inevitably orient themselves towards democracy, even if it will take long time. This re-orientation will take the form of state reforms in response to internal popular pressure, if not through a peaceful transition of power. Therefore, Turkey rejects any foreign interventions in this process. From the Iranian perspective, however, the Arab Spring is an extension of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, making the recent developments on Arab streets were the outcome of an “Arab Islamic Awakening” led by the values of the Iranian Islamic Revolution.¹⁵⁸ The different stances of Turkey and Iran were deepened with the demonstrations in Syria. For Iran, Syrian

<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/732450> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

¹⁵⁵ (ایران و ترکیه پس از بهار عربی) Mahmoud Kiyani Arshi (Turkey and Iran After the Arab Spring) <http://www.mardomak.net/story/65005> پنجشنبه ۲۴ شهریور ۱۳۹۰ (2011) (Accessed 29 September 2011)

¹⁵⁶ (استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه) (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: ۱۰۶۳۵ بهمن ماه ۱۳۸۹، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: ۲۶۰ <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

¹⁵⁷ Bayram Sinkaya, “Türkiye-İran İlişkilerinde ‘Güz Sancısı’,” ORSAM, Dış Politika Analizleri, 20 Eylül 2011, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.aspx?ID=2645> (Accessed 21 September 2011)

¹⁵⁸ “Assoc. Prof. Hassan-Khani: Iran and Turkey Can Adopt a Cooperative Competition,” in an interview with ORSAM Middle East Advisor Pınar Arıkan, ORSAM, ORSAM Guest, 19 December 2011, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showOrsamGuest.aspx?ID=263> (Accessed 11 January 2012)

demonstrations are the product of Western policies, making Syria the victim of Western-backed plans and Syrian demonstrators the agents of foreign powers wanting to overthrow the Assad regime.¹⁵⁹ For Turkey, however, if Syrians are demanding greater freedoms and democracy, the Assad regime should quickly conduct reforms.¹⁶⁰

The core issue in the competition between Turkey and Iran with reference to the Arab Spring relates to the ability of each to impose its model to the post-revolutionary Arab states. Turkey espouses a model based on democracy, Islamic moderation and integration with the international community. Iran, on the other hand, prefers its Islamic model, which is based on anti-Western and anti-Israel approach, to be implemented. The last visit of Turkish Prime Minister Erdoan to Egypt deepened this competition. Prior to the visit, the prime minister sat for an interview with an Egyptian private satellite TV channel, wherein he addressed Egyptians, saying, “Do not be wary of secularism. I hope there will be a secular state in Egypt.”¹⁶¹ This was perceived in Iran as an intervention in Egyptian internal affairs.¹⁶² Moreover, Erdoan’s last visit to Arab countries in September

¹⁵⁹ (Turkish-Iranian Diplomacy in the Arab Spring,) Khabarnet, 1390 11 مرداد (September 2011) <http://www.khabarnet.info/index.php/article/inter/86-international/5287-1390-05-11-14-51-16.html> (Accessed 29 September 2011)

¹⁶⁰ Ali Hussein Bakeer, “Turkish-Iranian Relations in the Shadow of the Arab Revolutions: A Vision of the Present and the Future,” The Journal of Turkish Weekly (5 July 2011) http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_supreme_leader_makes_ambiguous_fatwa_on_facebook/243602_56.html (Accessed 20 October 2011)

¹⁶¹ “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Criticizes Erdoan’s Call for a Secular State,” Al Arabiya News, 14 September 2011

¹⁶² از دیدار باشaron تا سامانه موشكى ناتو؛ تركيه به کجا خواهد” (Where is Turkey going?) Mochtabi Daneshtalab (مجتبى دانشطلب) Raja News, <http://www.rajanews.com/Detail.asp?id=102411> , 29 شهریور 1390 (September 2011) (Accesses 29 September 2011)

2011 had been interpreted as propaganda in the interest of the United States.¹⁶³

Iranian Major General Yahya Safavi, former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and currently serving as senior military advisor to the Supreme Leader, called Erdogan's pronouncement in Egypt a mistake. He asserted,

Ankara wants to convey a message to regional countries, where massive uprisings have been taking place, that their revolutions are similar to Turkey's not to those occurred in other countries like Iran. (...) Turkey's secular system is not 'a good model.'¹⁶⁴

He went on to say that such policies by Ankara are incompatible with the ideals of Muslim people of Turkey. On the future relationship between Tehran and Ankara, he said if Turkish political leaders do not adopt a transparent foreign policy toward Iran, they will encounter problems in the future.

As the time of this writing, "Turkey and Iran have managed to keep their differences in check," preventing a triggering of tensions.¹⁶⁵ However, their different stances on the Arab Spring would most likely work against the rapprochement process. According to Ali Hussein Bakeer, "the Arab revolutions are likely to disrupt this balance [the balance between Turkey and Iran] in a way that will favor one of the countries, and bring their conflicting interests, visions and projects to the fore."¹⁶⁶ Parallel to this argument, Nuray Mert advocated,

¹⁶³(تور تبلیغاتی اردوغان علیہ اسرائیل پا بے نفع امریکا،) "The Propaganda Tour of Erdogan, Is It against Israel or for US Interests?", Raja News, <http://rajanews.com/Detail.asp?id=101650> 1390 شهریور 21 (September 2011) (Accessed 29 September 2011)

¹⁶⁴ "Turkey Made a Strategic Mistake by Agreeing to Host the NATO Shield," Mehr News, 10 September 2011 <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1428696> (Accessed 11 September 2011)

¹⁶⁵Ali Hussein Bakeer, "Turkish-Iranian Relations in the Shadow of the Arab Revolutions: A Vision of the Present and the Future," The Journal of Turkish Weekly (5 July 2011) http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_supreme_leader_makes_ambiguous_fatwa_on_facebook/24360256.html (Accessed 20 October 2011)

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

If there is going to be a regime change in Syria, the whole power balance will change. If Iran loses Syria, they will lose an important base of power in the Middle East. So it will be a major defeat for Iran and within this framework, Turkey sides with the dissidents and supports some sort of regime change. Iran will take it directly against itself.¹⁶⁷

Iran's second concern relates to the question of whether AKP foreign policy includes a neo-Ottomanist vision. Despite rejection by AKP leaders,¹⁶⁸ it is widely argued that the increasing of Turkey's involvement in Middle Eastern or Islamic affairs is partly the result of a neo-Ottomanism in Turkish foreign policy.¹⁶⁹ Despite common use of the concept of *neo-Ottomanism*, it has various definitions.¹⁷⁰ The following are appropriate to understand the Iranian concern

¹⁶⁷ Dorian Jones, "Turkey and Iran: The End of the Affair," Radio Free Europe, 19 October 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/turkey_iran_end_of_the_affair/24364900.html (Accessed 21 October 2011)

¹⁶⁸ "Erdoğan: Yeni Osmanlılığı Kabul Etmeyiz," Radikal, 20 March 2011; President Abdullah Gül gave a seminar at Chatham House, where he characterized the idea of neo-Ottomanism as unrealistic, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/77922/cumhurbaskani-Gül-chatham-housedasorulari-cevapladi.html>, 8 December 2010 (Accessed 11 January 2011); Sami Kohen, "Yeni Osmanlılık mı?," Milliyet, 25 November 2009 (Accessed 25 November 2009); In an interview, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu emphasized that he never used the concept "neo-Ottomanism": Ceyda Karan, "Bati'nin Emperyal Perspektifinden Yeni Osmanlılık," Radikal, 7 December 2009. (Accessed 7 December 2009)

¹⁶⁹ "Erdoğan: Yeni Osmanlılığı Kabul Etmeyiz," Radikal, 20 March 2011; President Abdullah Gül gave a seminar at Chatham House where he characterized the idea of neo-Ottomanism as unrealistic, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/77922/cumhurbaskani-Gül-chatham-housedasorulari-cevapladi.html>, 8 December 2010 (Accessed 11 January 2011); Sami Kohen, "Yeni Osmanlılık mı?" Milliyet, 25 November 2009 (Accessed 25 November 2009); In an interview, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu emphasized that he never used the concept "neo-Ottomanism": Ceyda Karan, "Bati'nin Emperyal Perspektifinden Yeni Osmanlılık," Radikal, 7 December 2009. (Accessed 7 December 2009)

¹⁷⁰ Philip Robins, "Between the EU and the Middle East: Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP Government, 2002-2007," ISPI Working Papers, 2007; Kemal Kirişçi, "Between Europe and the Middle East: The Transformation of Turkish Policy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, No. 1 (March 2004); Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, No. 1 (March 2009); Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, No. 6 (November 2006): 950-951; Tarık Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" *Turkish Studies* 9, No. 1 (March 2008); "عثمانی نئو سیاستهای و ترکیه" (Turkey and Its Policies of Neo-Ottomanism), Iran Diplomacy, 27 October 2009 (Accessed in 17 November 2009)

¹⁷⁰ For a different usage of neo-Ottomanism, see Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, No. 6 (November 2006); Resat

over the neo-Ottomanist vision of AKP foreign policy. Hakan Yavuz, for instance, argues,

Neo-Ottomanists hope to construct a new Turkey where loyalty is determined not by any exclusivist form of racial and linguistic characteristics, but rather by a shared Ottoman historical experience and broad and diffuse attachment to Islam. Neo-Ottomanism, as a signifier of a cognitive framework, is a code for evoking rather than denoting a reified identity or a territory.¹⁷¹

Parallel to this argument, Ömer Taşpinar argues that “neo-Ottomanism does not call for Islamic governance in Turkey or Turkish imperialism in the Middle East and the Balkans. Instead, it seeks a less militant understanding of secularism at home and ‘soft’ Turkish influence in formerly Ottoman territories.”¹⁷²

As can be understood from these definitions, *neo-Ottomanism* would expand Turkey’s influence in countries with Ottoman legacies. Given the geopolitical competition between Turkey and Iran throughout history, Iran would be the most affected by *neo-Ottomanism* in Turkish foreign policy, which would diminish Iranian efforts to take leadership in the Islamic world.¹⁷³

Kasaba and Sibel Bozdogan, “Turkey at a Crossroad,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, No. 1 (Fall 2000): 14

¹⁷¹ M. Hakan Yavuz, “Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism,” *Middle East Critique* (Spring 1998): 23

¹⁷² Ömer Taşpinar, “Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalist Foreign Policy,” Today’s Zaman, 22 September 2008. For detailed analysis, see Ömer Taşpinar, “Turkey’s Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism,” Carnegie Papers, Number 10 (September 2008)

¹⁷³ (استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه) (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of the Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (February 2010), p. 39, <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

2.6.1.2. Iran: The More Isolated Internationally, the Closer to Turkey?

Since Mahmoud Ahmedinejad was first elected President of Iran in 2005, then reelected in 2009, Iran's foreign policy has been in a state of change.¹⁷⁴ His pronouncements on Israel and his unflinching position on the continuation of Iran's nuclear program have led Iran's foreign policy to be perceived as aggressive, offensive, expansionist and ideological.¹⁷⁵ In this context, the West mainly focused on politically isolating Iran and posing economic sanctions against it.

In an attempt to reduce the negative impact of its isolation, Iran mainly focused on expanding its regional relations. Minister of Foreign Affairs Salehi described Iran's foreign policy priority as "expanding international ties of the Islamic Republic of Iran particularly with the countries of the Islamic world (...)."¹⁷⁶ Facing serious challenges resulting from its isolation, Iran's first aim has been to deter US or Israeli military attacks on its nuclear program. Ahmedinejad thus emphasized the formation of regional alliances with friendly states, such as Syria and Turkey, and political movements, such as Hezbollah or Iraqi Shias.¹⁷⁷ Turkey has supported diplomatic means to solve problems caused by Iran's nuclear program, and thus became an appropriate partner. As will be analyzed in Chapter

¹⁷⁴ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 106-107

¹⁷⁵ Mark Gasiorowski, "The New Aggressiveness in Iran's Foreign Policy," Middle East Policy XIV, No. 2 (Summer 2007); Kayhan Barzegar "Iran's Foreign Policy Strategy After Saddam," The Washington Quarterly, (January 2010)

¹⁷⁶ Iran's Foreign Policy Aims in 1390 Outlined, Khabar Online, 26 April 2011

¹⁷⁷ Kayhan Barzegar "Iran's Foreign Policy Strategy After Saddam," The Washington Quarterly, (January 2010): 181

Four, this situation contributed to the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations. In addition, Turkey's relations with Western countries and participation in international organizations facilitated the communications between Iran and the international community about its nuclear program. President Ahmedinejad thus declared, "I am confident that Turkey will also support the rights of the Iranian nation in all international circles."¹⁷⁸ As a result, the isolation of Iran created a ground for improving its relations with Turkey.

Besides its political isolation, Iran has also been dealing with the economic sanctions adopted by the US and the UN because of its nuclear program. As will be analyzed in Chapter Five, this situation also contributed to improve bilateral economic relations between Turkey and Iran.

2.6.2. The Reasons and Extent of the Rapprochement Process: International and Regional Factors

2.6.2.1. The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks: "Rogue State" vs US Ally?

The 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States affected both the international and Middle Eastern regional systems which had reflections on Turkish-Iranian relations as well. At the international level, the unilateral and "with us or against us" policies of the United States became influential. Although Iran condemned the terrorist attacks, it was included as part of the *axis of evils* by George W. Bush in his 2002 speech. By then, tension between the US and Iran has been exacerbated.

¹⁷⁸ "Iran-Turkey Bolstering Ties in Different Fields," Iran Review, 15 February 2011, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran_Turkey_Bolstering_Ties_in_Different_Fields_.htm (Accessed 20 March 2011)

Since the end of the Cold War, one of the objectives of US foreign policy has been to contain *rogue states*. Until the late 1970s, the terms *pariah* and *rogue* had been used to describe regimes whose behaviors towards their own people were criticized. By the 1980s, however, these terms were being used to specifically describe US concerns about these regimes.¹⁷⁹ US perceptions of a threat to its own interests or those of its allies in these strategic regions became grounds for applying the label *rogue state*.¹⁸⁰ Although there is no clear and commonly accepted definition, rogue states are usually considered to be the states that are dissatisfied with the status quo, that reject the norms of international order, that have ambitions to acquire weapons of mass destruction and that use terrorism as an instrument of state policy.¹⁸¹

As a result of the hostage crisis between Iran and the United States in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, Iran began to be labeled as a rogue state by the United States. From the US perspective, Iran desired to export its revolution, supported terrorism – namely Hamas and Hezbollah – was opposed to the Middle East peace process, was attempting to acquire nuclear weapons and been oppressing its own people. Despite the attempts by Mohammad Khatami to ease Iran-US relations in the early 2000s, the capture of the vessel Karine A, which had been loaded with the weapons for the Palestinian Authority, reinforced Iran's image as a rogue state

¹⁷⁹ Robert S. Litwak, Rogue States and US Foreign Policy: Containment after the Cold War (Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000): xiii

¹⁸⁰ Deon Goldenhuys, "Beyond the Rogue State Paradigm," South African Journal of International Affairs, Number 1 (Summer 2002): 76

¹⁸¹ Robert S. Litwak, Rogue States and US Foreign Policy: Containment after the Cold War (Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000): 6-7

because the alleged weapons purchaser had been in contact with Iran and Hezbollah.¹⁸² Immediately after the incident, US President George W. Bush classified Iran as a *rogue state*, then included it in the *axis of evil* in his 2002 “State of the Union” speech. This characterization was immediately criticized by Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, who asserted,

The United States president is threatening and accusing other countries of evil involvement while America has opposed popular movements, supported undemocratic regimes, sold lethal weapons and looted the wealth of other nations more than any other country. These are evil acts and so America is the most evil country. The Islamic Republic is proud to be the target of the hate and anger of the world's greatest evil, we never seek to be praised by American officials.¹⁸³

In addition, the Iranian mission to the United Nations rejected the US accusations of Iran about supporting terrorism and seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. He also expressed his regrets, saying the President's speech had damaged efforts to improve mutual understanding between Iran and the United States.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, relations between Turkey and the United States remained allied. In September 2001, Ankara immediately expressed its solidarity with the American people and declared it would stand with Washington in its fight against terrorism. A few months later, in response to a US request, Turkey sent troops to Afghanistan.

These changes at the international level deepened the different images of Turkey and Iran. While Turkey was seen a strategic partner for the West in its fight against

¹⁸² Ali M. Ansari, “Iran and the US in the Shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian Question Revisited,” *Iranian Studies* 39, Number 2 (June 2006): 164

¹⁸³ Nazila Fathi, “A Nation Challenged: The Rogue List; Bush’s ‘Evil’ Label Rejected by Angry Iranian Leaders,” *New York Times*, 1 February 2002

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Iran was seen as a challenger to the policies of the Western world. As a result, Iran's image in world politics deteriorated and it attempted to improve bilateral relations with its neighboring states in order to minimize the side effects of isolationism. According to Afrasiabi and Maleki,

in the post-11 September regional realities, the Iranian government has initiated a number of foreign policy adjustments aimed at enhancing national security and optimizing its gains from solidarities and alliances. These include (...) stabilizing relations with Turkey, Pakistan and Iraq; enhancing regional cooperation; exploring new security arrangements; and simultaneously, upgrading its military preparedness.¹⁸⁵

In this context, systemic factors, which will be analyzed in detail in the following chapters, worked in favor of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations at the beginning of the 2000s.

2.6.2.2.Opposition to the US Intervention in Iraq

From the time al-Qaeda attacked the United States until the start of the Iraq War in March 2003, Iran maintained a policy of what it called “active neutrality.”¹⁸⁶ While it supported the operation against the Saddam regime, it did not agree to take sides, though it did stay in contact with Washington. At the time, Iran consistently emphasized its desire to solve the Iraqi problem in a multilateral forum, preferably through the United Nations, in order not to be besieged by the United States. Iran’s self-perceived status as a Third World and Islamic

¹⁸⁵ Kaveh Afrasiabi and Abbas Maleki, “Iran’s Foreign Policy After 11 September,” The Brown Journal of World Affairs IX, Issue 2 (Winter/Spring 2003): 256

¹⁸⁶ “Iran Says Ready to Thwart Aggression, Reiterates Neutrality Toward Iraq Crisis,” Payvand News, 24 March 2003

community leader was another reason for its opposition to US-led unilateral action.¹⁸⁷

As with Iran, Turkey also opposed the US-led unilateral military attack against Iraq, emphasizing the lack of international legitimacy for the war. When the Turkish parliament voted down a proposal to allow the US to deploy a second front from Turkey on 1 March 2003, the future of the Turkey-US alliance came into question. This common stance of Turkey and Iran on the US-led military operation against Iraq brought them closer. In an attempt to prevent a war that would have negative impact on regional security and stability, Turkey urged neighbors to take an active role in the Iraqi reconstruction process and hosted the first gathering of the ministers of foreign affairs of neighboring countries to Iraq in the hope of averting war. These efforts continued even after war broke out, with the ministers of foreign affairs holding regular meetings to discuss the Iraqi reconstruction process. When the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt met in Damascus to discuss the post-war situation in Iraq on November 2003, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül declared that “Our destiny is intertwined with Iraq. Therefore, we shall be part and parcel of the operations helping the Iraqi transition.”¹⁸⁸ At the meeting, the ministers agreed to continue to meet until Iraq completely restored its sovereignty, security and stability. In this context, Iranian Foreign Minister Kemal Kharrazi stated, “Stability in Iraq is possible only with support from the neighbors of Iraq. The

¹⁸⁷ Abbas William Samii, “The Nearest and Dearest Enemy: Iran after the Iraq War,” The Middle East Review of International Affairs 9, No. 3(September 2005)

¹⁸⁸ “Turkey Urges Neighbors to Assume ‘Historic Role’ in Iraqi Transition,” Hürriyet Daily News, 4 November 2003.

concerns and interests of the neighbors should be considered while establishing the future of Iraq.”¹⁸⁹ As a result, the common concerns of Ankara and Tehran over the future of Iraq created grounds for Turkish-Iranian rapprochement at the beginning of the 2000s. When the US-led coalition forces intervened in Iraq, this rapprochement process further improved. As will be explained in the next chapter, the common threat perception by Turkey and Iran of the possible disintegration of Iraq, which would have spillover effects on their own Kurdish citizens, contributed to improve bilateral relations.

2.6.2.3.The “Shia Crescent”: A Limit for the Rapprochement Process?

The Iraq War has contributed significantly to the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations, especially with respect to the Kurdish issue, which is the subject of the next chapter. Although the war led Turkey and Iran to seek modes of cooperation against common threats, it also raised the possibility of discussion over Turkish-Iranian sectarian competition resulting from an increase in Iranian power in the region.

The Iraq War not only removed the Baathist regime in Iraq, but also improved the rights and influence of Iraq’s Shia community. It is expected that the changes in Iraqi politics would trigger the demands of Shia community, who have been marginalized in countries like Syria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. This process was named by the term of *Shia revival*, which refers to “anchoring Shia

¹⁸⁹ “Turkey, Iran Discuss Northern Iraq and UN Intervention in War,” Hürriyet Daily News, 7 April 2003.

interests in national identities.”¹⁹⁰ The term *Shia crescent* also became popular at this time as a geopolitical term used to describe a contiguous zone within the Middle East with a majority or strong minority Shia population. Since Iran is the only Shia country in the region, the *Shia revival* is perceived both as a product of and contributor to Iran’s influence. Therefore, it became a concern of Sunni Arab states, Israel and the United States, which perceive the increase of Iranian power as a threat to regional security and stability. King Abdullah II of Jordan, for instance, expressed this concern publicly. He argued that an alliance between Shia-led Iraq and Iran would pose a danger to the region, and that relations between Iran and Shia-led Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah and Lebanon – countries in which the *Shia crescent* is formed, would destabilize the Gulf countries and the whole region.¹⁹¹

Since Iranian influence has been increasing throughout the region in the post-Saddam period, scholarly literature on the issue has also been enhanced. The literature has focused on two central questions. The first is: Is the influence and power of Iran really increasing throughout the region as a result of the rise of the Shia communities in these countries? Two views have emerged from this question. The first argues that Iran’s regional power has been increasing through the rise of the Shia communities. Juan Cole, for instance, argues that the promotion of democracy by the United States in the Middle East, which brought Iraqi Shias to

¹⁹⁰ Vali Nasr, The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future (New York & London: W.W. Norton Company, 2006): 234

¹⁹¹ “Interview with King Abdullah Discussing Politics in the Middle East,” with Chris Matthews, 8 December 2004, <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/hmka12082004.htm> (Accessed 1 August 2010)

power, has helped to create a “second phase” of Iran’s Islamic Revolution.¹⁹² The second view, however, approaches the influence of Iran on Shias throughout the region with suspicion. Vali Nasr, for instance, states, “Shias are far from a political monolith. They are under the control of no single authority, and no one person or entity is dictating their views of the future.”¹⁹³ By his characterization “Iran will be an influential big brother but not a ‘heavy father,’ much less a master.”¹⁹⁴ Maximilian Terhalle also asserts that there are major constraints to the Shia revival under the leadership of Iran. According to him, as external influence on Shia populations is limited, local social, political and economic conditions are more potent factors shaping behaviors and attitudes. Secondly, Iranian nationalism poses a challenge to such a leadership role. Finally, the different perception of Shias towards *velayet-e faqih* creates an important limitation for creating a monolithic political entity by Shias.¹⁹⁵ Kayhan Barzegar, as well, argues that the creation of a Shiite coalition of the Persian and Arab masses would be difficult because of cultural, societal and political differences.¹⁹⁶

The second question in the literature about the *Shia Crescent* is: What would the regional result of Iran’s increasing influence and power be? While some scholars argue this situation will create regional sectarian conflict, others oppose this

¹⁹² Juan Cole, “A ‘Shia Crescent?’ The Regional Impact of the Iraq War,” *Current History* 105, No. 685, (January 2006): 20

¹⁹³ Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York & London: W.W. Norton Company, 2006): 183

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 184

¹⁹⁵ Maximilian Terhalle, “Are the Shia Rising?” *Middle East Policy* XIV, No. 2 (Summer 2007)

¹⁹⁶ Kayhan Barzegar, “Iran and the Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* XV, Issue 1 (Fall/Winter 2008)

argument. Vali Nasr, for instance, argues, “In the coming years Shias and Sunnis will compete over power, first in Iraq but ultimately across the entire region. Beyond Iraq, other countries will (...) have to cope with intensifying rivalries between Shias and Sunnis.”¹⁹⁷ Kayhan Barzegar, on the other hand, argues that since Iran’s main aim is to create a coalition of Shiite-friendly governments in order to contain the regional US presence, the regional conflict could not be an ideological rivalry. It would most likely be an inter-Arab world power-sharing conflict, as seen by the Shia-Sunni conflict in the post-Saddam era.¹⁹⁸

The debate over the *Shia crescent* has also had reflections in Turkish-Iranian relations. Some observers have speculated that an allied Sunni bloc would emerge, including Turkey, Sunni Arab states and Israel, for the purpose of containing Iranian power in the region. Allegations about the neo-Ottomanist vision of Turkish foreign policy have thus strengthened the view that Turkey would take part in an alliance against Iran, with *neo-Ottomanism* as a new imperialist project by Turkey to lead the Muslim world. Mshari Al-Zaydi, for instance, argued that

much of the vehement sectarianism that we witness today is a product of that ancient and fierce imperialistic conflict between Iran and Turkey, or the Safavids and the Ottomans, or the Sunnis and the Shia. In the end however, it was a confrontation in which the Arabs did not play a fundamental role; they are marginal to the situation.¹⁹⁹

From the very beginning, the idea of a possible Turkish-Iranian confrontation on the basis of sectarianism has been criticized by the officials of both Turkey and

¹⁹⁷ Vali Nasr, The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future (New York & London: W.W. Norton Company, 2006): 24

¹⁹⁸ Kayhan Barzegar, “Iran and the Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities,” Brown Journal of World Affairs XV, Issue 1 (Fall/Winter 2008): 87

¹⁹⁹ Mshari Al-Zaydi, “The Return of the Ottoman Empire?” Asharq Alawsat, 5 February 2009, <http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=15618> (Accessed 5 May 2009)

Iran. Turkish leaders, for instance, rejected this possibility, emphasizing that it would only cause regional instability and contradict the “zero-problems with neighbors” principle of Turkish foreign policy. In addition, these scenarios were seen as an American plan²⁰⁰ or at least as in favor of the US policies in the Middle East.²⁰¹ Like Turkey, Iran perceived this debate as speculation created by external powers. Iran’s ex-President Khatami, for instance, called the *Shia crescent* as a factitious concept that was created in order to destabilize the region.²⁰² Iranian diplomats also emphasized that Iran has no interest in promoting pan-Shia sectarian movements, since it believes in “one Islam.”²⁰³ Haji-Yousefi characterized this situation as a “Shiaphobia” that was created by the United States and the Arab world in favor of their own interests, since fragmentation in the Islamic world was against Iran’s pan-Islamic ideals.²⁰⁴ Regarding the debate over the *Shia revival* and the *Shia crescent*, Turkish-Iranian relations do not appear to have been badly affected. However, this debate at least raised questions about the future of the rapprochement process in bilateral relations, taking into account the possibility of division among regional countries along sectarian lines under the informal leadership of Turkey and Iran.

²⁰⁰ İbrahim Karagül, “İllimli Sünni Konsensus: Allah Akıl Fikir Versin!” *Yeni Şafak*, 6 October 2006; İbrahim Karagül, “Şii-Sünni Savaşı Bekleyenlere,” *Yeni Şafak*, 3 October 2007; Hüsnü Mahalli, “İdeolojik Savas,” *Akşam*, 27 June 2009; İbrahim Kalın, “Target Iran!,” *Today’s Zaman*, 19 June 2008

²⁰¹ Türel Yılmaz, “Türkiye Alternatif Bir Dış Politika Düşünemez,” in Habibe Özdal, Osman Bahadir Dinçer and Mehmet Yeğin (eds) Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası Cilt 2 (Ankara: USAK Yayıncıları, 2011): 333

²⁰² *Zaman Online*, 16 November 2006

²⁰³ Author’s interview with an Iranian diplomat who wished to remain anonymous, at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ankara, 14 May 2009

²⁰⁴ Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, “Whose Agenda is Served by the Idea of a Shia Crescent?” Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations 8, No 1 (Spring 2009)

2.7. Conclusion

From the Ottoman-Safavid period to the present, domestic and systemic factors have been determinants in Turkish-Iranian relations. Regarding the domestic factors, ideational issues have typically created tension in bilateral relations in the form of the sectarian and regime differences. Sectarian differences among Ottomans and Safavids, for instance, triggered competition for the leadership in the Islamic world. Although the establishment of nation-states in Turkey and Iran, which coincided with the reform programs of Atatürk in Turkey and Reza Shah in Iran, created grounds for closer relations, the failure of Shah's reforms to implement secular and democratic rule in Iran damaged the bilateral rapprochement process. With the establishment of monarchy in Iran, the influence of ideational factors in bilateral relations reappeared in the form of regime difference, namely republic versus monarchy and democracy versus totalitarianism. By the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, ideational factors had become even more conflictual in the name of secular and Islamic division.

Taking into account systemic factors, bilateral relations have been cycling through warmth and tension. While the Cold War and Gulf War had brought Turkey and Iran closer to each other, the rapprochement process has always been interrupted because of geopolitical competition between them. The Kurdish issue has historically been significant as a factor working for and against the improvement of bilateral relations. On the one hand, when Turkey and Iran have perceived a common threat, they have searched for ways to cooperate. On the other hand, when they have accused each other of using the Kurdish issue to advance their

own geopolitical interests, cooperation has been damaged. Regarding systemic factors, the collapse of the Soviet Union also affected bilateral relations, triggering economic and political competition between Turkey and Iran over Central Asia and the Caucasus.

By the 2000s, Turkish-Iranian relations entered a new rapprochement phase, in which ideational factors and geopolitical competition have become less conflictual in bilateral relations. Domestic and systemic factors have once again contributed to this rapprochement process, although they have also posed challenges to further cooperation. Aiming to understand the reasons and the extent of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s, the following chapters will analyze separately the Kurdish issue, the nuclear issue and the bilateral economic relations

CHAPTER 3

THE KURDISH ISSUE IN BILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE 2000s

The Kurdish factor has been a major variable in shaping the contours of Turkish-Iranian relations. As Yildiz and Taysi argue,

The importance of the Kurdish issue, be it one of intrastate or domestic containment of Kurdish nationalism (defined in the literature as the ‘Kurdish problem’), or inter- or trans-state challenges posed by Kurdish nationalism (the ‘Kurdish question’) cannot be overstated. Indeed, the combined Kurdish problem and question has been of foremost importance informing the relations and foreign policy of the states in the region, particularly Turkey, Iran and Syria.²⁰⁵

The Kurdish issue had created severe tension in the bilateral relations primarily because each country has accused the other of using the “Kurdish card” to further their national interests. However, the issue became a zone of Turkish-Iranian cooperation, especially after the 2003 Iraq War. This chapter will attempt to understand the reasons behind and extent of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement regarding the Kurdish issue. The chapter is comprised of three parts. The first part will be separate analyses of the Turkish and Iranian Kurdish issues in order to understand what the issue means for each country, and why it impacts bilateral relations. The second part will introduce the history of this issue with respect to its influence on bilateral relations. The final part will focus on bilateral relations through an examination of factors relating to the Kurdish issue that worked both for and against the rapprochement process.

²⁰⁵ Kerim Yildiz and Tanyel B. Taysi, The Kurds in Iran: The Past, Present and Future (London: Pluto Press, 2007): 69

3.1. THE KURDISH ISSUE: FROM TURKISH AND IRANIAN PERSPECTIVES

3.1.1. Turkey's Kurdish Issue

The Kurdish issue has been an influential element in Turkish internal and foreign policies. Regarding internal policy, the issue has had two core dimensions. The first of these is related to the state-society relationship. The second relates to the democratization process in Turkey.

Secularism and nationalism have played a significant role in the state-society relationship. When the Turkish Republic was formed as a successor state of the Ottoman Empire, its construction dramatically changed the relationship between the state and its citizens. The Ottoman Empire had been an authoritarian monarchy with a religious foundation derived from the Sultan's claim to also be the caliph and worldwide spiritual leader of Muslims. In this context, minorities within the Empire were defined only in religious terms. Ethnicity was not taken into account because religion was considered to bind the Muslim peoples of the Empire, including the Kurds, together. However, this approach could not prevent the awakening of national identity awareness. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic was established on a nation-state model. Secularism and nationalism, two important pillars of this model, have also appeared as two important factors in the Kurdish issue. While Islam had successfully brought Muslims together under the umbrella of Ottoman citizenship, the abolition of the caliphate as a result of the introduction of secularism did away with this bond among the citizens of the newly founded Turkish Republic. Secularism, a break of

with the Islamic character of the state, angered the more religious elements of the population, including Kurds, because Islam was one of the main determinants of the Kurdish identity.²⁰⁶ On the other hand, the Turkish Republic was founded on the basis of Turkish nationalism, treating all ethnic groups as citizens of a newly founded Republic. However, this nationalist approach was perceived as an assimilation policy by some Kurds. Even though the expression by Atatürk, “Happy is whoever says ‘I am a Turk’” is meant to stress that to be a Turk meant to live within the boundaries of the republic and to be its citizen, the expression began to be interpreted as “Happy is whoever is a Turk,” giving the Kurdish issue an ethnic dimension. Çağaptay, for instance, states that “Ankara had proceeded to make Turkey into a nation-state for the Turks.”²⁰⁷ He also added,

Given the rising ethnic-based definition of the nation (...) which dictated that all of Anatolia’s inhabitants were Turkish, and while the legacy of the Millet system led the Kemalists to view all Anatolian Muslims as Turks, the regime in Ankara expected that all Anatolian Muslims would merge into the Turkish nation. This process worked fairly smoothly for most non-Turkish Muslims, except for the Kurds. The Kurds were a formidable challenge to Ankara’s desire to craft a new Turkish nation.²⁰⁸

Immediately after the establishment of Turkish Republic, the Kurds revolted under the leadership of Sheikh Said in 1925 and of İhsan Nuri in 1929 against the Turkish government. Although there has been an ongoing debate over whether these rebellions were motivated by religion or nationalism, it is certain that they triggered the political consciousness and demands of the Kurds.²⁰⁹ As a result of

²⁰⁶ Metin Heper, Devlet ve Kürtler (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008): 175; Svante E. Cornell, “The Land of Many Crossroads: The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics,” Orbis 45, No. 1(Winter 2001)

²⁰⁷ Soner Çağaptay, Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk? (Routledge: London and New York, 2006): 105-106

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 102.

²⁰⁹ A. Manafy, The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005): 98

these rebellions, maintaining stability and consolidating the nation-state became Ankara's priorities during the 1930s.

When the Democrat Party won the election of 1950, the new government allowed exiled shaykhs – leaders of religious orders, and aghas – leaders of ruling families/tribes – to return. This provided an impetus for Kurds to migrate to urban areas in southeastern Turkey. In addition, the Democrat Party sought to integrate Kurdish leaders with the government, resulting in some Kurdish leaders being elected to the Turkish National Assembly and others became ministers.

A new phase in Kurdish movements began with the 1960 military coup. In the more liberal environment created by the 1961 Constitution, a number of leftist groups and organizations, such as Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu and Türkiye İşçi Partisi, began to raise the Kurdish issue. In this context, unauthorized demonstrations were organized in 1967 by the Turkish Kurdistan Democratic Party (Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi - TKDP), which was illegally established in 1965 in cities around Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia. The TKDP was an extension of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party and wanted a region within the territory of Turkey to be declared as “Kurdistan” and be recognized by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, wherein Kurdish would be the official language. As the state perceived a threat from these demands, the party was closed in 1968.²¹⁰ However, the Kurdish issue continued to be a source of concern for some political parties and organizations.

²¹⁰ Metin Heper, Devlet ve Kürtler (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008): 233

The Kurdish issue was defined first as a problem to be solved at the 4th general meeting of the Turkish Labor Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi – TIP) in 1970.²¹¹ At this meeting, the establishment of a federal state composed of Turks and Kurds was recommended.

In the meantime, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which also falls under the larger leftist umbrella, became an official political party in 1978 under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan. The stated aim of the PKK was to create a Marxist Kurdish state.²¹² "Kurdistan," according to the PKK, had been divided among four colonialist states: Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.²¹³ As seen in the document, named as "The Path of the Kurdish Revolution," which provides the framework within which the PKK has functioned, the party's priority is a socioeconomic restructuring of the southeast region through the dismantling of tribal institutions. It calls "the Kurdish society as a colonial entity dominated and exploited by Kurdish feudal lords and comprador bourgeoisie, who cooperated with the ruling classes of the colonizing countries, especially Turkey."²¹⁴ The pamphlet also criticized Kurdish intellectuals for denial of their own Kurdish identity and pretending to be Turks.²¹⁵ The document recommended a two-tiered policy to

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² The Case of the PKK: History, Ideology, Methodology, and Structure (1978-99), Ankara Paper 9 (2004): 26

²¹³ Metin Heper, Devlet ve Kürtler (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008): 234

²¹⁴ A. Manafy, The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005): 106

²¹⁵ Ibid, 107

solve the Kurdish issue.²¹⁶ The first, national phase of the Kurdish revolution requires the establishment of an independent “Kurdistan” as a *sine qua non* for the realization of Kurdish rights. The second tier includes the democratic phase of the Kurdish revolution, which sees the Marxist-Leninist approach as the only way to transform Kurdish society into a classless society. Armed struggle was seen as the only method by which these goals could be achieved. As violent clashes between the extreme right and left increased during the late 1970s, the PKK also launched major attacks on Turkish targets.

By the military coup of 1980, the dynamics of the Kurdish issue were transformed. On the one hand, Kurdish activists and members of the PKK were arrested and charged with promoting separatism. In addition, the military administration banned the use of Kurdish in public, prohibited giving Kurdish names to children and changed the names of town and villages from Kurdish to Turkish. The PKK, meanwhile, changed its strategy from acting under the political entity to conducting terrorist attacks on Turkish targets from 1984 onwards. With the initiation of terrorist activities, the Turkish government began to conduct new strategies to counter PKK terrorism. The first strategy was the introduction of the *village guard system* in 1985 by which civilian militias began to supplement gendarme operations. Its first aim was to supplement the armed forces with people familiar with local conditions. The second was to show that not all Kurds in the eastern and southeastern regions were opposed to the Turkish state. The second strategy was the 1987 declaration of a *state of emergency* in the ten provinces of the east and southeast regions. The *state of emergency*, which was extended every

²¹⁶ Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East* (USA: Lexington Books, 2010): 123

four months by parliamentary vote, granted the governors of these provinces extraordinary powers, which were later criticized for being used to violate the human rights of the Kurds. As a result, on the one hand, the Kurdish issue began to be defined by some Kurds as a problem of an ethnic discrimination and state assimilation policies. On the other hand, it began to be viewed as an issue of terrorism by the state.

The second dimension of the Kurdish issue in Turkey is related to the process of democratization. Restrictions on the Kurdish language in education and media broadcasting are perceived as a refusal of the Turkish state to recognize the cultural identity of its Kurdish citizens. Therefore, the issue began to be seen as a problem, which is needed to be addressed for Turkey's democratization process and its participation to the European Union. In this context, the prospect of membership in the European Union has motivated Turkey to make improvements in human rights issues. In addition, as the debate linking the Kurdish issue and the democratization process intensified, political parties attempted to deal with the issue by taking concrete steps to ensure the cultural, social and economic rights of Kurdish citizens. In July 1990, the Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti – SHP) published a report on conditions in the southeastern region of Turkey and made recommendations for solutions to the Kurdish issue. It recommended free expression of identity and linguistic freedom, abolition of the village guards, the governorate-general and the state of emergency, as well as the implementation of a program of regional development. In the meantime, Turgut Özal, who had succeeded Kenan Evren to become president, played a significant

role in easing criticism against Turkey's policies towards its Kurdish citizens. The cabinet that met under the leadership of Özal decided to lift the ban on the usage of Kurdish language in 1991. This trend continued after the ANAP government that was replaced by a coalition led by Süleyman Demirel, which also included the SHP as junior partner. Demirel declared that Turkey had to recognize "the reality of its Kurdish population."²¹⁷ Deputy Prime Minister and head of the SHP Erdal İnönü also asserted that the cultural identity of Kurdish citizens must be recognized in full.²¹⁸ The first Kurdish-language newspaper, Rojname, was subsequently published.²¹⁹

Despite the positive transformation of the Turkish political atmosphere, two important factors worked against prospects of solving the Kurdish issue. The first was Kurdish parliamentarians in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), under the umbrella of SHP, who continued their offensive against the symbols of the Turkish state. For example, the oath-takings ceremonies of Leyla Zana and Hatip Dicle during the inauguration of the TGNA in November 1991 created serious tension in Turkish politics. Zana spoke the last sentence of her address in Kurdish, considered treasonous at that time, and Dicle declared that he was taking the oath only because the constitution required him to do so. Their actions antagonized their opponents and potential friends in political parties alike, as well as the public. The second was the increase in PKK terrorist activities during the

²¹⁷ Milliyet, 10 December 1991

²¹⁸ Milliyet, 17 December 1991

²¹⁹ David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds (3rd Revised Edition), (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004): 431

1990s. These two factors alarmed some political and military circles, which regarded recognition of Kurdish reality and cultural rights as a first step toward a grand strategy for establishing an independent Kurdish state. They believed cultural demands would trigger political demands for the creation of a federation, then statehood together with the adjacent Kurdish regions in Iran, Iraq and Syria. In this context, the emerging relationship between moderate Kurdish movements and liberal Turkish elites broke down, and the Kurdish issue once again began to be looked at through a securitized lens.

The Kurdish issue has not only been an internal problem of Turkey. The presence of significant Kurdish populations in Iran, Iraq and Syria has made the Kurdish issue an influential factor in these countries' interstate relations. In addition, the escape of PKK leaders and members from Turkey to Syria on the eve of the 1980 military coup and the evidence of the foreign support to the PKK internationalized the Kurdish issue and inevitably began to influence Turkish foreign relations. The extraterritoriality of the issue has had two outcomes for Turkey. The first is that Ankara began to view its foreign relations, especially with Syria, Iran and Iraq through the lens of security concerns because of the presence of PKK in these countries.²²⁰ During this period, Turkish political elites regarded the issue as one of

²²⁰ Since the scope of this thesis is not to analyze the impact of the PKK on Turkish foreign policy, it is enough to mention here that the Kurdish issue was a serious concern, leading Turkey to construct its foreign policy through a security lens. As the PKK gained foreign support, Turkey's relations with countries that funded it or tolerated its activities on their soil witnessed problematic periods. For example, Turkish-Syrian relations were based more heavily on the Kurdish issue than it was by "the water issue" during the 1980s and 1990s. Turkish-Russian relations were also deeply influenced by Russian policies towards the PKK and Turkey's relations with Chechen separatists during the 1990s. This same applied to Greece, Germany, France and other European countries. For more information see; Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations," Security Dialogue 37, No. 2 (June 2006): 236; Ersel

security, posing what Robins calls an “existential threat” to Turkey.²²¹ Therefore, the issue was seen as a security issue, rather than political and cultural rights of the Kurdish citizens, so it was advocated that it should not be addressed in the political terms. As Kirişçi notes,

As part of Turkey’s denial of the existence of a Kurdish problem, the PKK had always been portrayed as an externally-supported organization whose aim was to weaken and divide Turkey. Such a portrayal is very much part of what in Turkey is commonly referred to as the ‘Sevres Syndrome,’ a concept popular among nationalist, as well as bureaucratic and military circles. It is based on the belief in a conspiracy and embodies the fear that the Treaty of Sevres will be revived.²²²

In this context, the Kurdish issue appeared as a major factor that created tension in Turkey’s relations with neighboring states – including Iran, as will be analyzed in detail in the following part – during the 1980s and 1990s. The second outcome of the extraterritorial nature of the Kurdish issue is the realization of Ankara that it had to take into account developments in neighboring states, since these developments would influence its own Kurdish citizens. It therefore adopted a foreign policy approach that takes into consideration the policies of neighboring countries towards their Kurdish populations. By the 1990s, Turkey had begun to see the Kurds in its neighbors as ‘brothers’ and attempted to improve its relations with them, especially with the Iraqi Kurds.²²³ The Gulf War of 1991 opened a new phase of the Kurdish issue of Turkey when northern Iraq was removed from Baghdad’s jurisdiction and a US-backed Kurdish autonomous entity was created

Aydınlı, “Russia’s ‘Kurdish Card’ in Turkish-Russian Rivalry,” *Caspian Crossroads* 3, No. 1 (Accessed via <http://members.internettrash.com/pkk/a-russia.html>)

²²¹ Philip Robins, “The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue,” *International Affairs* 69, No. 4 (October 1993): 659

²²² Kemal Kirişçi, “The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy,” in Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis (eds.) *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2004): 290

²²³ Altan Öymen, “Devrim Gibi,” Milliyet, 10 December 1991

there. The establishment of a no-fly zone in the north of the thirty-sixth parallel created a safe-haven for Kurdish movements in northern Iraq. In the meantime, Turkey took an active role in reaching a power-sharing agreement between Barzani's KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq) and Talabani's PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) in order to keep PKK out of the area. However, the peaceful period between the KDP and the PUK did not last long, and the power vacuum in northern Iraq made for an excellent environment within which the PKK could position its bases by 1994. The result was intensified PKK attacks against Turkey in the late 1990s.

In addition to the developments in Iraq, Syria's continuing support of the PKK within its borders also posed a challenge to Turkey. Although the two countries signed a protocol in 1987 to prevent insurgent activities against each other, and to enable the extradition of individuals who involved in the terrorist activities, PKK attacks from Syria continued. In January 1996, the Turkish foreign ministry sent a memorandum to Syria asking it to cease support to the PKK, and declared that failure to do so, would lead Turkey to exercise its right to respond using any measures it deemed appropriate.²²⁴ When Syria did not comply, Turkey froze its relations with Syria. Although Turkey had made great efforts to find a diplomatic solution, Syria's ongoing support to the PKK and sheltering of Abdullah Öcalan brought the two countries to the brink of war in 1998. Recognizing the seriousness of the threat of force, Syria eventually expelled Öcalan from Damascus. Then, Turkey and Syria reached an agreement by signing the Adana Accords in 1998,

²²⁴ Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations," Security Dialogue 37, No. 2 (June 2006): 236

which contributed to improve bilateral relations, especially in the field of security. After his expulsion from Syria, Öcalan flew to Italy, where he sought asylum. At the end of November 1998, he flew to Athens and then arrived in Nairobi in February 1999. Two weeks later, he was arrested by American forces en route to the airport to fly to South Africa, and was handed to Turkish forces waiting at the airport. In June 1999, Öcalan was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. However, Turkey abolished the death penalty as part of its EU membership reforms before the execution was carried out. In fact, Öcalan was jailed on İmralı Island. Following his capture, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire, which lasted nearly 5 years. In April 2002, it changed its name to KADEK (Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress) in order to convince the international community, whose sensitivity about terrorism had increased after the 9/11 attacks, that it was now a legitimate political organization. In October 2003, the organization was once again renamed as KONGRA-GEL (Kurdistan Peoples Congress). Despite these changes, the organizational leadership remained the same.

At the end of the 1990s, at least 30,000 people had lost their lives to PKK terrorist activities. By the 2000s, the Kurdish issue had once again entered a new phase in both Turkey's internal and foreign policies. As the partial result of the declaration of unilateral ceasefire by Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 and the decreasing role of the military in foreign policy making in favor of increasing civilian input, the Kurdish issue gradually dropped out of the security sphere and returned to the political arena. This process labeled as "desecuritization" of the Kurdish issue by which it began to be viewed as a component of the democratization process of Turkey. As

this “desecuritization” process will be explained in the following part, it returned the Kurdish issue to the political arena that contributed to the improvement of Turkey’s relations with Iran in the 2000s. In other words, the process created an opportunity for Turkey and Iran to seek paths towards cooperation, in stark contrast to the situation during the 1990s.

In the 2000s, there have also been changes in internal politics regarding the Kurdish issue. The state has attempted to separate the terror problem caused by the PKK from the cultural, social and economic demands of its Kurdish citizens, in order to resolve the Kurdish issue. For example, legal reforms have been passed improving the cultural rights of Kurdish citizens in 2002. In the summer of 2003, *Topluma Kazandırma Yasası*, popularly called the *Eve Dönüş Yasası* (Homecoming Act), was passed, granting amnesty to PKK members who had not involved any crimes. A year later, the PKK announced that it had ended ceasefire on 1 June 2004 and restarted terrorist activities. The AKP government thus initiated a two-track policy on the Kurdish issue. On the one hand, military options were re-operationalized in reaction to the end of the ceasefire. On the other hand, it also launched an initiative in the summer of 2009 first called the “Kurdish opening,” then renamed a “democratic opening” so as to apply to other groups, including non-Muslims, Alevis and Romans. According to the AKP government, the aim of these initiatives was to strengthen social unity in Turkey through democratization, even though the particulars have remained undisclosed.²²⁵ In 2009, Turkey’s first official Kurdish-language television channel was established,

²²⁵ “The Democratic Opening Project with Questions and Answers: The National Brotherhood Project,” <http://www.akparti.org.tr/acilim220110.pdf>

and the government called for the establishment of Kurdish literature departments at state universities. In the meantime, however, the increasing attacks of the PKK and the demands of the DTP (Democratic Society Party) caused a serious crisis in this process. The DTP insisted that any dialogue with Kurds must include Abdullah Öcalan and take into account his “road map” to resolving the Kurdish issue. While the debate between opponents and proponents of the government’s initiative dragged on, the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), a platform for Kurdish associations and movements, declared that “democratic autonomy,” meaning Kurdish self-government, had been established in Diyarbakır, in Southeastern Anatolia.²²⁶ This declaration further deepened tensions surrounding the Kurdish issue.

As seen from the brief historical background on the evolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, two differing perspectives exist. As Kirişçi observed, the first views the issue “as a problem of terror, aggravated by the economic and social problems of southeastern Turkey and the support given to the PKK by the international community.”²²⁷ The second views the Kurdish issue as “a product of increasing demands by Kurds to express their cultural and ethnic identity and the inability of Turkey to adjust to these demands.”²²⁸ As a result, the Kurdish issue in Turkey appears to be caught between the demands for collective rights and the terrorist attacks.

²²⁶ “DTK, Demokratik Özgerlik İlan Etti,” Milliyet, 14 July 2011

²²⁷ Kemal Kirişçi, “The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy,” in Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis (eds.) The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2004): 283.

²²⁸ Ibid, 287

3.1.2. Iran's Kurdish Issue

As in Turkey, the Kurdish issue has been influential in Iranian internal and foreign policies. Internally, the Kurdish issue has three dimensions. The first includes the political demands of Iran's Kurdish citizens. The second includes their cultural and socio-economic demands. The third dimension covers the terrorist activities of Kurdish nationalist movements.

Regarding Kurdish political demands, Iran has had to deal with serious challenges. Although it is commonly argued that the Kurdish issue presents less of a threat to the Iranian state than the Turkish state,²²⁹ Iranian security concerns on the issue are more or less the same as those of Turkey. Furthermore, Iran had faced with the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous entity within its territory. The parcelling of Iranian territory to the Soviet Union and Britain in 1941 provided an opportunity for Iranian Kurds to establish a degree of autonomy. In 1942, Komala, a nationalist organization working towards an autonomous Iranian Kurdistan, was formed in Mahabad, historically a center of Kurdish nationalist movements in a West Azerbaijan province. It openly blamed aghas and Kurdish tribal leaders for the failure of the Kurdish liberation struggle. For instance, the magazine published by Komala named *Nishman* ("Fatherland"), attacked the religious clergy for blocking

²²⁹ Robert Olson, The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998 (California: Mazda Publishers, 1998): xix; "استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه" (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (<http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826>) (Accessed 31 May 2011)

socio-political and structural reforms in Kurdish movements.²³⁰ In 1945, the Komala was disbanded and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I) was created in order to meet the political needs of Kurdish nationalist movement. In 1946, at the meeting, with the KDP-I leadership, Soviet Red Army officers, the Barzani tribal leader and other tribal chiefs in attendance, KDP-I leader Gazi Mohammed declared the establishment of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad and was elected as president. However, the Mahabad Republic was not sustainable after the withdrawal of the Red Army in October 1946. Then, the Iranian army entered to Mahabad, and arrested and then executed Kurdish leaders, including Gazi Mohammed. Over the next few decades, the KDP-I operated largely underground, moving its headquarters to Iraq in the 1960s. In the meantime, Barzani, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP), accepted the assistance of the Shah's government in return for weakening the Baathist regime in Iraq. This partnership disappointed KDP-I members, who had previously struggled for Barzani in Iraq. As a result, some returned to Iran and restarted their rebellion against the Shah's government. Eighteen months later, the leaders of the insurgency were arrested with the aid of Barzani's forces and killed by the Iranian government. Other Iranian Kurdish insurgents were also killed or arrested by Barzani's forces.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the Iranian regime was dealing with serious domestic political unrest against the Shah regime. In the middle of 1978, a committee named Zagros was organized by the KDP, which sent its leading

²³⁰ David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds (3rd Revised Edition), (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004): 238

members to Iran in order to support the struggle of Iranian Kurds against the regime. Although the Zagros committee attempted to organize public protests against the regime, neither the Zagros committee nor the Iranian Kurds appeared to be prepared to promote Kurdish interests in any new arrangement following the revolution.²³¹

Even though Iranian Kurds showed active opposition to the Shah's regime alongside the Iranians and saw the Islamic Revolution as "an opportunity for autonomy even greater than that which occurred when the Republic of Mahabad was established,"²³² these demands for greater autonomy were not perceived as acceptable democratic rights by the revolutionary government. In this context, some Kurdish delegations met with Iranian authorities, including Supreme Leader Khomeini, to convince them that Iranian Kurds were not against the revolution, however, no agreement was reached and tensions escalated into armed confrontation between the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Pasdaran, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Only five weeks after the revolution, 450 people died at the Newroz celebrations in the city of Sanandaj in Iranian Kurdistan. Armed struggle between Iranian Kurds and the state ended in November 1979 with Khomeini's declaration of support for a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish issue.²³³ In response,

²³¹ Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Gareth Stansfield, "The Political, Cultural, and Military Re-Awakening of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iran," *Middle East Journal* 64, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 17

²³² Kerim Yildiz and Tanyel B. Tayisi, *The Kurds in Iran: The Past, Present and Future*, (London: Pluto Press, 2007): 22

²³³ Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Gareth Stansfield, "The Political, Cultural, and Military Re-Awakening of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iran," *Middle East Journal* 64, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 18

a Kurdish delegation consisting of members of the KDP-I, Komala and the Iranian People's Fedai Guerillas prepared a proposal formulating Kurdish demands for greater autonomy. In the proposal, the delegation demanded Kurdish-language education, the establishment of Kurdish local security forces and the appointment of Kurdish local administrators.²³⁴ Negotiations between the delegation and the Iranian authorities, which took the form of occasional meetings, ultimately failed.

When the Iran-Iraq War broke out in 1980, clashes ensued between Kurds and state forces. The war posed further challenges to the Kurds in Iran. In the years following the war, Iraqi Kurdish forces with bases in Iran were fighting against the Iraqi regime, which brought Iranian and Iraqi Kurds into a conflict since Iran supported Iraqi Kurds and Iraq supported Iranian Kurds. As a result, towns and villages in Iranian Kurdistan came under massive attack from both sides. Moreover, the assassination of KDP-I leader Abdul Rahman Ghassemloou by the Iranian government on 13 July 1989 demonstrated the determination of the Iranian government to fight Kurdish demands for greater autonomy.

The second dimension of the Kurdish issue in Iran is related to cultural and socio-economic demands by Kurdish citizens of Iran, which became more apparent with the election of Khatami as President of Iran in 1996. In this period, cultural and socio-economic rights became the center of Kurdish demands, partly as a result of Khatami's more liberal policies. Numerous Kurdish journals were published, and literary and cultural services were organized in almost all Kurdish cities. This liberal environment contributed to the emergence of a new Kurdish discourse,

²³⁴ Ibid, 19

which differed from the traditional discourse espoused by parties like the KDP-I and Komala.²³⁵ With the victory of the reformists in the election of 2000, 40 Kurdish deputies entered the parliament. At every opportunity these deputies emphasized the poverty of regions they represented, and implored the government to look for solutions to the ever-worsening unemployment problem in predominantly Kurdish regions. Khatami's platform of reform, which included social and political freedom for all Iranians, including ethnic and religious minorities, had given them hope. Ultimately, however, all Kurdish representatives resigned from parliament in 2001, citing the continuation of discriminatory policies against Kurds, even under the Khatami rule.²³⁶ The rejection by the Guardian Council of the candidacy of the Kurdish deputies in the parliamentary elections of 2004 widened the gap between the Kurds and the state.

The 2005 election of Ahmedinejad as president signaled a new period of difficulty in relations between Kurds and the state. First of all, neo-conservatives saw the demands of ethnic groups as policies of the United States, Israel and Britain designed to challenge the Iranian regime. With the removal of the Saddam regime in Iraq and the increase in political power of Iraqi Kurds, the Iranian government began to believe that Iranian Kurdish leadership would work with the United States towards regime change in Iran. Increasing contact between the United States and KDP-I and Komala representatives deepened this suspicion,²³⁷ motivating the

²³⁵ Ibid, 21

²³⁶ "All Iranian Kurdish MPs Quit to Protest Inequality," Hürriyet Daily News, 1 October 2001

²³⁷ For more information about the relationship between Iranian Kurdish opposition leaders and the United States, see "The Next Iranian Revolution: How Armed Exiles are Working to Topple Tehran's Islamic Government," Reason, October 2007, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1568/is_5_39/ai_n21053007 (Accessed 1 December 2011);

government to take every measure to suppress political, cultural, social and economic demands by all ethnic groups, especially those of Kurds. As the threat perception of the Iranian state from the United States increased in the post-9/11 era, the Iranian government's policy-making began to be dominated by security concerns.²³⁸ This militarization of Iranian politics has partly caused the radicalization of Kurdish nationalist movements during the 2000s.²³⁹ This has resulted in the third dimension of Iran's Kurdish issue.

The third dimension refers to terrorist activities against the Iranian state. Iran was faced with the serious challenge in the form of increasing terrorist activities. The Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), based in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq, was established by Iranian Kurds in 2004 as an equivalent organization to the PKK. Although the PJAK aims to achieve greater rights for Kurds and eventually to form a greater Kurdistan under the KDP-I and Komala, it differs from these in its conducting of terrorist activities. While some Kurdish organizations had engaged in armed confrontation against state forces in the past, this is to be distinguished from terrorism as a strategy to attain goals.

Eli Lake, "Kurdish Iranian Opposition Leader Seeks Clear Strategy from US," The New York Sun, 18 May 2007, <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/kurdish-iranian-opposition-leader-seeks-clear/54773/> (Accessed 1 December 2011); Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Gareth Stansfield, "The Political, Cultural, and Military Re-Awakening of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iran," *Middle East Journal* 64, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 22

²³⁸ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 153

²³⁹ Yüksel Taşkin, "İran'da Rejim ve Kürtler Arasındaki Siyasal Mücadeleyi Anlamak: Ahmedinejad'la Değişen Ne?," http://www.yenidendevrim.org/resimler/ekler/2230b853516e7b0_ek.pdf (Accessed 26 August 2010)

The transnational character of the Kurdish issue has also been an influential factor in Iran's foreign policy, as in Turkey. First, Iran is concerned with developments regarding the Kurdish issue in neighboring states, since these developments would influence its own Kurdish citizens. Like Turkey and Syria, Iran fears the possibility of irredentist Kurdish sentiment inspired by the situation of Iraqi Kurds. Tehran has therefore taken the policies of its neighboring countries into consideration with respect to its own policies towards its Kurdish citizens. Iranian governments have thus attentively followed the political successes of Iraqi Kurds since the Gulf War of 1991 and the Iraqi War of 2003. Secondly, the Kurdish issue has seen as a bargaining tool in Iran's relations with countries that have been perceived a threat from the Kurdish issue, such as Turkey and Iraq. For example, relations between Iranian and Iraqi Kurds have been crucial in Iranian-Iraqi relations. Since the 1970s, support for Iraqi Kurds has been a part of Iran's containment policy against Iraq. During the 1980s and 1990s, Iran used the same strategy against Turkey, with the "Kurdish card" being a bargaining to achieve its national interests.

As seen from a brief historical background of the evolution of the Kurdish issue in Iran, there are two prevailing perceptions. The first view asserts that Iranian Kurds have full rights as a part of the Iranian nation and the main issue is about PJAK terrorist activities. According to Pahlavan,

the conflicts and clashes between the government and Kurdish organizations have been predominantly of a political nature and not the result of ethnic discrimination (...) [because] Kurds are an inseparable and important part of Iranian civilization. Their ethnicity and language prove this (...).²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Tschanguiz H. Pahlavan, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: An Iranian View," in Henri J. Barkey (ed.) Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East (United States Institute of Peace Press: Washington D.C., 2005): 81

The Iranian government thus contends that Kurds enjoy rights as full members of the society, with Kurdish members of parliament and Kurdish-language TV and radio stations. The second view, on the other hand, argues that the Iranian government employs discriminatory policies against the Kurds. Although there are Kurdish MPs, it is believed that the regime deny them high government posts, and to make it impossible to operate as Kurds politically. Proponents of this view point out that the government regularly imprisons and sometimes executes members of Kurdish political organizations. In addition, Kurds are frustrated with their regional underdevelopment and cultural discrimination. They also assert that use of the Kurdish language in schools is still prohibited. Therefore, Iranian Kurds label the issue as one of state denial of Kurdish identity.²⁴¹ As in Turkey, the Kurdish issue has been caught between the demands for collective rights and PJAK terrorist attacks.

3.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE KURDISH ISSUE IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

The Kurdish issue has always been a determining factor in Turkish-Iranian relations; however, its nature has changed over time with respect to internal, regional and international developments. During the Ottoman/Safavid period, the two empires competed for dominance over Islamic world, making the Kurds and the territories they inhabit crucial. This made the nature of the Kurdish issue in bilateral relations more prone to conflict. By the First World War, it became

²⁴¹ Majid Hakki, “The Political System and the Kurdish Question in Iran,” in Majid Hakki and Sharif Behruz (ed.) Kurdish Issue of Iran, Journal of Ghasemlou Center for Research and Political Development, 1 (December 2008)

apparent that the European powers favored the creation of a “Kurdish state,” as revealed in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres:

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish people ... show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these people are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.²⁴²

Although the Treaty of Sevres was voided after the War of Independence, two important issues left their marks on the psyche of the military/bureaucratic elites of the newly established Republic of Turkey. The first was that hegemonic powers would again attempt to establish an independent Kurdish state in accordance with their imperialistic policies. As a consequence, fear about the intentions of the Western countries regarding the establishment of an “independent Kurdish state,” known as “Sevres Syndrome,” is still fresh. The second is that regional cooperation is needed to deal with the problems posed by the Kurdish issue. In this context, Turkey and Iran searched for cooperation, while still competed to maintain control over Kurdish tribes. On 22 April 1926, Turkey and Iran signed Treaty of Friendship in Tehran. Friendship, neutrality and mutual nonaggression were the basic principles of the agreement. This included possible joint actions against groups attempting to disrupt peace and security or to overthrow either country’s government.²⁴³ Despite the treaty of friendship, Kurdish unrest in eastern Turkey continued. Therefore, Turkey believed that Iran had failed in his

²⁴²Article 64 of Treaty of Sevres of 10 August 1920

²⁴³Baskın Oran (ed.), Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2001): 361; Ali Fuat Borovalı, “Kurdish Insurgencies, the Gulf War and Turkey’s Changing Role,” Conflict Quarterly (Fall 1987): 31; Mehmet Öğütçü, “Turkey: A Major Regional Power to Engage or Confront Iran,” http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cepmlp/journal/html/Vol17/Vol17_10.pdf

engagements since the insurgents could obtain supplies and launch attacks on Turkey from Iranian territory.²⁴⁴

By the end of the Second World War, Turkish-Iranian relations experienced a slow rapprochement in the shadow of the Cold War, as explained in the previous chapter. However, this trend lost momentum, partly because of Turkey's increasing concerns over the Kurdish issue in the 1960s. Although Olson argued that the Kurdish issue was not the focal point of bilateral relations during the Cold War years, Çetinsaya argued that Turkey was anxious over Shah's support of Iraqi Kurds and his attempts to influence Kurdish citizens of Turkey in the 1960s.²⁴⁵

According to Olson,

from 1932 to the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, there was no official support by Ankara or Tehran for Kurdish nationalist movements within either country [because] the geopolitic and geostrategic concerns of Turkey and Iran from 1920 to 1978 were so paramount that neither wanted each other or any other country or external organization to jeopardize their larger geopolitical interests by supporting Kurdish nationalist organizations or movements or by inciting the Kurds to rebellion, terrorism or war.²⁴⁶

On the contrary, the Kurdish issue re-appeared as a determining factor that slowed rapprochement in Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1960s. While Turkey worked to ease its relations with the Arab countries in this period, relations between Iran and Iraq began to tense. This meant Iranian-Iraqi relations became a determining factor in Turkish-Iranian relations during this period. As relations between Turkey and Iraq were improving, relations between Iran and Iraq were deteriorating. This situation triggered mutual suspicion between Turkey and Iran. And as Iranian-Iraqi

²⁴⁴ Mehmet Saray, *Türk-Iran İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1999): 114

²⁴⁵ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Türkiye-İran İlişkileri (1945-1997)" in *Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Sürec* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999)

²⁴⁶ Robert Olson, *The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998* (California: Mazda Publishers, 1998): 27

relations deteriorated, Tehran began to support Iraqi Kurds against the government, which heightened Turkey's concerns over regional stability. At that time, these concerns were related not only with spillover effects onto its own Kurdish citizens, but also with the pan-Persian policy of Shah that would lead Iran to back Kurdish citizens of Turkey.²⁴⁷ Since Shah viewed Kurds as Persians, Ankara was concerned over Tehran putting itself forward as the guardian of all Persians throughout the region. In this context, Turkey initiated a series of high-level visits, in an effort to resolve the crisis of confidence that had resulted from these factors.²⁴⁸ These mutual high-level visits served their intended purpose, and the Kurdish issue was once again waved aside in bilateral relations. The easing relations between Iran and Iraq resulting from the Algeria Agreement in 1975, wherein Iran agreed to cease its support to Iraqi Kurds, also played a role in improving Turkish-Iranian relations.

By the 1980s, however, the Kurdish issue was once again a major point of tension in Turkish-Iranian relations. The main source of tension was each country's efforts to control northern Iraqi Kurds as Baghdad's influence waned due to the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). For its part, Turkey was concerned with possible cooperation between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Masud Barzani, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani, and the PKK. Ankara had cause for concern because the KDP and PKK had signed an accord in July

²⁴⁷ Baskın Oran (ed.), Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılığı, 2001): 802

²⁴⁸ Turkey's President Cevdet Sunay made his first foreign visit to Iran in October 1966. In May 1967, Turkey's Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel also visited Iran. In 1973, Shah arrived in Turkey.

1983, called “Principles of Solidarity,” in which they agreed to cooperate against “every kind of imperialism, with American imperialism at the top of the list, and the struggle against the plans and plots of imperialism in the region.” The parties also agreed to “cooperate with other revolutionary forces in the region and the creation of new alliances.”²⁴⁹ Turkey received Baghdad’s approval for “hot-pursuit” and made several attacks on the PKK in northern Iraq during the 1980s. Turkey’s attacks irritated Iran, which perceived the attacks as part of a plan to control the Kirkuk oil field. Nader Entessar notes that Iran “is fearful that Turkey will seek either directly or indirectly to control the oil fields of northern Iraq, thus altering the balance of power in the region.”²⁵⁰ Although the two countries signed a security agreement in November 1984 each pledging to prohibit activities within its territory that could be detrimental to the security of the other, the lack of confidence continued throughout the 1990s.

Turkish-Iranian relations continued to experience cycles of tension during the 1990s, prompting bilateral efforts to cooperate on the Kurdish issue. However, each continued to accuse the other of harboring terrorists. On the one hand, Iran accused Turkey of supporting opponents of the regime, including Mojahedin-i Khalq that had been founded in Iran in 1965. On the other hand, Turkey accused Iran of supporting Turkish Hezbollah and the PKK. In the midst of this, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of an independent Azerbaijan

²⁴⁹Michael M. Gunter, “A de facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq,” *Third World Quarterly* 14, No. 2 (1993): 304

²⁵⁰Nader Entessar, “Kurdish Conflict in Regional Perspective,” in M.H. Ahrari (ed.) *Change and Continuity in the Middle East: Conflict Resolution and Prospects for Peace* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996): 66

triggered Iran’s fears about how the increasingly popular pan-Turkic nationalist view there would affect Iran’s own Azeri population. Therefore, Tehran primarily attempted to prevent the Kurdish and the Azeri problem from posing a challenge to its own security. The aforementioned regional developments that had taken hold in the post-Gulf War period, including the establishment of the “no-fly zone” by coalition forces, pushed Ankara and Tehran to seek joint solutions because this zone had also become a safe haven for anti-Turkish and anti-Iranian oppositional groups. In addition, the threat perceptions of Turkey, Iran and Syria regarding the potential establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Iraq led to a series of security protocols from 1993 in an effort to prevent this eventuality. According to the 1993 protocol, for example, neither country would permit any terrorist organization, namely the PKK, to exist in its territory.

As Turkey and Iran’s threat perceptions increased, Turkey’s biggest concern became PKK activities in northern Iraq. Turkish-Iranian counterterrorism cooperation accelerated, and officials from both countries took every opportunity to emphasize their cooperation on the issue. Iran, for example, was reported to have turned 24 PKK members over to Turkey in December 1993.²⁵¹ A few days later, Iranian Ambassador to Turkey Mohammed Reza Bagheri announced that Iran would accept neither the existence nor the activities of the PKK within Iranian territory.²⁵² In June 1994, Iranian Interior Minister Mohammad Besharati also reiterated that Iran was against any anti-Turkey action deployed from within

²⁵¹ “Iran, 24 PKK’lıyi Teslim Etti,” Milliyet, 15 December 1993

²⁵² “Iran’daki PKK Yok,” Milliyet, 19 December 1993

territory.²⁵³ In 1994, Turkey's President Süleyman Demirel asserted that Turkish-Iranian cooperation against the PKK was also reflected in Ankara's stance against the Mojahedin-i Khalq. Interior Minister Nahit Menteşe followed this up by announcing that Turkey would not allow any group intending to destabilize the Iranian government to operate within Turkish territory. Iranian President Rafsanjani then reiterated that Iran was in full cooperation with Turkey against the PKK, adding that the establishment of a “Kurdish state” was impossible.²⁵⁴

Despite the declarations and high-level official meetings, tensions were renewed in Turkish-Iranian relations regarding the Kurdish in 1995. Rapprochement had been damaged by Turkey's ongoing skepticism about the Iranian support for the PKK. The Border Security Research Committee of the Turkish parliament, for example, reported having discovered the locations of PKK training and logistic support camps in Iranian territory, as well as crossings over Turkey's Iranian and Iraqi borders, and mine-laying activities by militants who had penetrated its border with Iran.²⁵⁵ Turkey made the additional claim in 1997 that 1200 terrorists were being trained annually at fifty PKK camps in Iranian territory.²⁵⁶ While Iran continually denied these accusations, Turkish military/bureaucracy circles did not relent in

²⁵³ “Iran’dan Başka Dostumuz Yok,” Milliyet, 15 June 1994

²⁵⁴ Press Interview of Iran's President Rafsanjani at a meeting with Turkey's President Süleyman Demirel on 15-17 July 1994, Hürriyet, 22 July 1994

²⁵⁵ “Common Issues Affecting Turkey's Relations with Iraq, Iran and Syria” in Turkey and Its Middle Eastern Neighbors, Ankara Papers 8: 61

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 64

their accusations, mentioning that Iran had a proven track record of support for terrorism.²⁵⁷

Despite the agreement reached between Turkey, Iran and Syria, Iranian and Syrian support to the PKK continued in the mid-1990s. Their hands-off approach led Turkey to cooperate with Israel. Turkish-Israeli rapprochement became another factor limiting Turkish-Iranian relations during the 1990s due to a lack of mutual diplomatic recognition between Iran and Israel. Turkish-Israeli relations gradually improved through the post-Cold war era, especially during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, when Turkey and Israel were in the same camp. Turkey's need for more sophisticated weapons, equipment and intelligence in the 1990s to contain increasing terrorist activities by the PKK also brought Turkey and Israel closer. Turkish-Israeli relations during these years were described as a strategic partnership by Efraim Inbar, who noted,

[Turkey and Israel] share similar regional concerns regarding Syria, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the challenge of Islamic radicalism, concerns over potentially aggressive policies from Iran and Iraq, and geopolitical destiny of Central Asia. At the global level, they display a strong pro-American orientation in their foreign policy, have a problematic relationship with Europe and are suspicious of Russian schemes. The two states also publicize their high-level strategic dialogue.²⁵⁸

Ofra Bengio shares the view that common interests drove Turkish-Israeli relations in the 1990s. According to Bengio, “the agreement of Turkey and Israel over the necessity of the 1991 Gulf War, the hostility between Turkey and Syria due to the PKK issue and a common threat perception from Iran were triggers for

²⁵⁷ “Bir: Iran Tescilli Terörist,” Milliyet, 21 February 1997

²⁵⁸ Efraim Inbar, “Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership,” Middle East Review of International Affairs 5, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 48-49

rapprochement.”²⁵⁹ As Turkey and Israel shared similar concerns during the 1990s, diplomatic, economic and military ties expanded to an unprecedented degree. This included the conducting of joint naval search and rescue exercises, with Israeli pilots trained at Turkish airbases in Anatolia and Turks in the Negev. They also signed a military training agreement in 1996. Turkey’s primary motivation for making this agreement was its struggle with the PKK. Many in the General Staff hoped closer ties with Israel would grant them access to intelligence by way of Israel’s agents in Syria, and to US satellite imagery shared with Israel.²⁶⁰ This access, however, came at the expense of Turkish-Iranian cooperation against the PKK.

Even after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1998, Ankara continued to believe that Iran was backing the PKK, since attacks against Turkey continued. The Iranian authorities, however, denied allegations of support, and pleaded ignorance regarding the attacks, citing geographical challenges to border security. Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kemal Kharrazi, stated during his visit to Turkey in 2000 that

There is no doubt that neither country has ever permitted the activities of groups in its own land to cause harm to its neighbor. And of course there is an agreement between Turkey and Iran on this subject. The agreement was reached so that no destructive activity directed at Turkey could be carried out from Iranian land and vice versa. Iran has always remained faithful and bound by this agreement. You know that there is a long border between Iran and Turkey and roads over rugged ground. People who mistakenly cross our borders or pass over these roads could be PKK militants. But what is important is that Iran does not permit this activity and has been quick in informing Turkey on this matter. In addition, there is a security cooperation commission between Iran and Turkey. The members of both sides provide each

²⁵⁹ Ofra Bengio, “Altercating Interests and Orientations between Israel and Turkey: A View from Israel,” *Insight Turkey* 11, No. 2 (2009): 43

²⁶⁰ “Turkey Eyes the Middle East,” *Strategic Comments*. 10, Issue 6 (July 2004), www.iiss.org/stratcom

other with information when there is a border infringement. Work is also continuing to provide telephone communication between security forces at the border.²⁶¹

By the late 1990s, Turkey also accused Iran of supporting Turkish Hezbollah's terrorist activities on Turkish targets, and of being linked to the assassinations of several Turkish secular intellectuals. These claims, of course, increased tension in bilateral relations, but were denied by Kharrazi, who stated that

The group called Hezbollah in Turkey has no relationship with Iran. To put unrelated subjects on the agenda and indirectly tie this organization to Iran is a laughable claim. The media's attention to such a situation during this important visit means that there are some quarters which do not want Iran and Turkey to establish good relations.²⁶²

Although Iran reiterated its support of Turkey against the PKK, this did not inspire confidence among Turkish officials and the public²⁶³ because intelligence reports were revealing that Iran had sheltered 1800 PKK terrorists and assigned a security team to one of its leaders, Cemil Bayık.²⁶⁴ At the same time, the topic was receiving a lot of attention in the press, with many journalists calling the PKK a puppet of Iran.²⁶⁵ The Kurdish issue remained a factor when relations between Turkey and Iran were strained. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, for instance, stated that the degree of Iranian support in Turkey's struggle against the PKK and Hezbollah would determine the degree to which bilateral relations could be

²⁶¹ "Kharrazi: Iran Emphasizes its Relations with Turkey," Hürriyet Daily News, 20 January 2000

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Oktay Ekşi, "Hani Nerde o İran?," Hürriyet, 15 February 2001; Emin Çölaşan, "İran Komedisi," Hürriyet, 23 January 2002

²⁶⁴ Hürriyet, 12 May 2000

²⁶⁵ Emin Çölaşan, "İran" Hürriyet, 23 January 2000; Enis Berberoğlu, "Güneydoğu'nun üçüncü gülü soldu," Hürriyet, 22 January 2000; Hürriyet, 26 October 2000; "Molla'dan PKK'ya Destek Taktiği," Hürriyet, 5 September 2000; Hürriyet, 12 October 2000; Hürriyet, 23 December 2000; Hürriyet, 17 August 2001

successful.²⁶⁶ Interior Minister Sadettin Tantan also stressed that Turkey expected Iran to avoid supporting the terrorist organizations.²⁶⁷ In the meantime, Turkey's Foreign Minister İsmail Cem sent a letter to Tehran urging the Iranian authorities to take the necessary steps to stop anti-Turkish activities stemming from Iranian territory.²⁶⁸ Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also made known Ankara's dissatisfaction over the failure of the security mechanisms agreed upon in 1997,²⁶⁹ citing Iran's reluctance to respond to Turkish requests.

In the 2000s, Turkey and Iran began to seek ways for cooperating on the Kurdish issue. Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem visited Iran in February 2001, which was seen as an opportunity to initiate a new phase in bilateral relations. During the visit, Cem declared that "The problem of security is a joint problem. Important steps have been taken and it is getting better. We have talked about new measures to take them even further."²⁷⁰ Turkey's Interior Minister Sadettin Tantan also visited Iran, furthering attempts to improve Turkish-Iranian cooperation in counterterrorism efforts. At the end of the two-day meetings, Tantan announced that

Turkey and Iran have decided to work together against terrorist groups threatening of the two countries. This will be in the form of an exchange of information on these terrorist groups, and joint and simultaneous operations with the presence of observers. Turkish and Iranian officials

²⁶⁶ "Sezer'in İran'a PKK Şartı," Hürriyet, 24 August 2000

²⁶⁷ Hürriyet, 9 May 2001

²⁶⁸ "Cem's Letter Urges Iran to Take Measures," Hürriyet Daily News, 19 May 2000

²⁶⁹ "Ankara not Content over Security Mechanisms with Iran," Hürriyet Daily News, 24 May 2000

²⁷⁰ "Turkey and Iran; not Rivals but Partners," Hürriyet Daily News, 18 February 2001; For more information about Cem's views on Turkish-Iranian relations see: "Cem: İran'la Çok Şeyler Yapacağız," Yeni Şafak, 14 February 2001; Interview with Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem by Murat Akgün, NTV, 15 February 2001, <http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/64252.aspx> (Accessed 5 March 2010)

agreed that there have been some discrepancies in the application of signed agreements. But now they are determined to eliminate these discrepancies in a way that will be of benefit to the two sides.²⁷¹

As a result of bilateral cooperation efforts Turkish-Iranian relations appear to have reentered a rapprochement trend. Iranian authorities also turned three PKK members over to Turkey in November 2001.²⁷² At the beginning of 2002, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Muhsin Eminzade announced that the PKK issue was no longer a point of contention in bilateral relations, and that both countries had agreed on synchronous operations against it.²⁷³ In April 2002, Turkey and Iran took a significant step towards ending mutual allegations of harboring terrorists, and Iran recognized the PKK as a terrorist group.²⁷⁴

Despite the improvement in bilateral relations, Turkey faced Iran's reluctance to recognize KADEX as the successor of the PKK. Immediately after Iran's recognition of the PKK as a terrorist group, it changed its name to KADEX,²⁷⁵ and on July 2002, the security talks between Turkey and Iran that had been held every six months reached to a deadlock. Despite the demands of the Turkish side, and although KADEX was the successor of the PKK, the Iranian side refused to

²⁷¹ "Tantan Gives New Momentum to Improving Ties with Iran," Hürriyet Daily News, 13 May 2001; For more information about the visit of Turkey's Interior Minister, Sadettin Tantan, to Iran see: "İran'a 2 Terör Dosyası," Yeni Şafak, 8 May 2001; "İran'la Yakin Temas," Radikal, 9 May 2001; "Tantan, Teröre İran'da Çare Arıyor," Akşam, 9 May 2001

²⁷² "Iran Hands Over Three PKK Terrorists," Hürriyet Daily News, 1 November 2001

²⁷³ Hürriyet, 19 February 2002

²⁷⁴ "İran: PKK Terörist," Radikal, 3 April 2002

²⁷⁵ "Terör Örgütü PKK, İsmini KADEX olarak Değiştirdi," Zaman, 17 April 2002

acknowledge KADEK as a terrorist group.²⁷⁶ Turkish Interior Minister Muzaffer Ecemiş noted that

We have struggled against the PKK for years, it is a terror organization that wants to divide our country and to establish an independent state on a part of our soils. This separatist terror organization has understood that it will not reach its aim by using a gun. So, it wants to show itself with a new face by hiding its past [sic] bloody face, for this aim it has changed its name to KADEK. But, whatever will be the name of this terror organization, it will never save itself from its bloody and murderous, baby killer identity. All countries have to accept that the PKK could not save itself from its murderous and terrorist identity just by changing its name. I have no suspicion that all our neighbors including Russia will accept and confess that KADEK is a continuation of the terror organization PKK.²⁷⁷

Although Iran's stance raised question of whether the rapprochement trend was simply the result of the decreased role of the PKK in the aftermath of the unilateral ceasefire in 1998, the rapprochement process has continued, and relations have particularly improved since the end of the Iraqi War of 2003. Therefore, the next section of this chapter will contain an analysis of the reasons and extent of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement on the Kurdish issue in the post-Iraqi War period, looking at both factors that contribute to and limit cooperation on the Kurdish issue.

3.3. FACTORS THAT WORK IN FAVOR OF RAPPROCHEMENT

Since the 2003 Iraq War, Turkey and Iran seem to be actively engaged in seeking ways to cooperate on the Kurdish issue, realizing "whenever the internationally dominant powers wanted alteration, equation, or restoration of regional balance of power, they have used the Kurds."²⁷⁸ On the basis of this realization, the possibility of disintegration of Iraq in the post-Saddam era increased the security

²⁷⁶ "Security Talks with Iran Halted due to Iran's Reluctance on KADEK Issue," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 13 July 2002

²⁷⁷ "KADEK Intensifies Its Efforts to be Recognized," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 21 September 2002

²⁷⁸ A. Manafy, The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005): 32

concerns of both Turkey and Iran. Both also faced serious challenges in the form of increased Kurdish terrorist activities. The realization of a connection between Israel and Iraqi Kurds also played a significant role for the rapprochement in Turkish-Iranian relations regarding the Kurdish issue. Factors facilitating cooperation on the Kurdish issue in the post-Saddam era will be the first point of focus in this section.

3.3.1. Common Threat Perception from the Possibility of the Disintegration of Iraq

As discussed, Turkey and Iran have always attentively followed developments regarding the Kurdish issue in neighboring states, since these developments would influence their own Kurdish citizens. Their geopolitical interests have thus rested on the prevention of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the region. By time of the Iraq War, changes in the balance of power within Iraq, and US intervention with Iraqi Kurds had heightened the security concerns of Turkey and Iran, leading them to seek cooperation against a common threat.

In the preliminary stages of the Iraqi War, PUK/KDP leadership and the US senior officials held discussions from which Turkey was excluded. On 1 March 2003, the Turkish parliament voted not to grant permission to US troops to use its air bases and launch its ground offensive from its soil, and in so doing, forfeited its opportunity to take part in the reconstruction of Iraq. On 4 July 2003, US forces arrested Turkish special operation troops in Suleymaniyah on charges of

conspiring to assassinate the governor of Kirkuk.²⁷⁹ This episode was interpreted as a clear sign that the United States favored Iraqi Kurds over its strategic partner, Turkey.²⁸⁰

Unlike Turkey, Iraqi Kurds welcomed the US invasion of Iraq and cooperated with its officials. These close relations entitled the Kurds to participate in Iraqi politics on equal footing with Iraqi Arabs for the first time. Kurdish demands for substantial autonomy in and beyond the mainly Kurdish region in northern Iraq before drafting a constitution alarmed Turkey and Iran. For instance, Iraqi Kurdish leader, Barham Salih, stated that “We want Iraq to be a federal [state] consist of so many governorates.”²⁸¹ As a result, Iraqi Kurds were granted most of their demands in the constitution approved in 2005. The constitution recognized the Kurdish provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah as a legal region²⁸² with the power to amend laws not under federal purview, to maintain internal security forces and to establish representatives abroad.²⁸³ It also approved Kurdish as an official language, alongside Arabic.²⁸⁴ This development reinforced Turkish and Iranian concerns over US-backed Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq. The mutual

²⁷⁹ Derya Sazak, “Kuzey Irak Baskını,” Milliyet, 6 July 2003

²⁸⁰ Taha Akyol, “ABD Kimin Müttefiki?,” Milliyet, 8 July 2003; Hüsnü Mahalli, “Çirkin Amerikalı,” Yeni Şafak, 6 July 2003

²⁸¹ “Iraq Kurds Seek More Autonomy Before Constitution,” Hürriyet Daily News, 26 December 2003

²⁸² Iraqi Constitution, Article 117

²⁸³ Iraqi Constitution, Article 121

²⁸⁴ Iraqi Constitution, Article 4

desire to preserve Iraq's territorial integrity formed the foundation of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement.²⁸⁵

From the Turkish and Iranian perspectives, the disintegration of Iraq would most likely result in the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Both countries feared that this would trigger separatist demands among their own Kurdish citizens,²⁸⁶ backed by some regional and extra-regional countries that would benefit from such a development. In addition, the "Sevres Treaty" and the declaration of the "Mahabad Kurdish Republic" have remained fresh in the minds of Turks and Iranians. In this context, Massoud Barzani deepened their concerns, stating that "When the right time comes, an independent Kurdish state will be a reality."²⁸⁷ Both Turkey and Iran have stressed their concerns and pointed out the need to protect Iraq's territorial integrity on every occasion.²⁸⁸ Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kemal Kharrazi, for instance, cited these common concerns and interests as early as 2003.²⁸⁹ Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, likewise, announced that Syria, Iran, and Turkey had agreed to intervene to stop Iraq from breaking up,

²⁸⁵ "استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه" (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of the Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی 260 (February 2010): 36-37, <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011);
"روابط استراتژیک ایران و ترکیه در خاورمیانه" (Kayhan Bargezar), (The Strategic Relationship of Turkey and Iran in the Middle East), مرکز پژوهش‌های علمی و مطالعات استراتژیک خاورمیانه (The Middle East Strategic Research Center) 1388 (2009) <http://fa.merc.ir/archive/article/tabid/62/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/52/----.aspx> (Accessed 2 June 2011)

²⁸⁶ Fikret Bila, "Barzani'nin Hedefi Bağdat Değil, Güneydoğu," Milliyet, 13 December 2005

²⁸⁷ "Barzani: Kurdish State Inevitable," Hürriyet Daily News, 4 February 2005

²⁸⁸ "Iran and Turkey Stresses on Territorial Integrity of Iraq," Payvand News, 27 March 2003, <http://www.payvand.com/news/03/mar/1136.html>

²⁸⁹ "Türk-İran Görüşmesi Yararlı," Hürriyet, 06 April 2003

if necessary.²⁹⁰ The possibility of Kurdish statehood has drawn Turkey, Iran and Syria closer together.”²⁹¹

Turkey and Iran also worried about changes in the balance of political power within Iraq. In the post-Saddam era, Iraqis became divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, competing for political power. As the ethnic and sectarian divisions deepened, the concerns of Turkey and Iran motivated them to take active roles in this process. This situation had two core dimensions. The first of these consisted of increasing Iranian influence both within Iraq and throughout the Middle Eastern region, as Iraqi Shias garnered more political power. The impact of the increasing Iranian influence throughout the region on Turkish-Iranian relations was discussed in the previous chapter. The second dimension consisted of the Kurdish issue. In that respect, demographic changes in some strategically important places, namely Kirkuk and Mosul, in favor of Iraqi Kurds became cause for concern among neighboring countries. Turkey, Iran and Syria expressed their concerns that if Kurds accrued economic power from the oil wealth of these cities, their political demands for an independent state would also be triggered. PUK leader Jalal Talabani reacted to these concerns, stating that

If Syria opens the Mosul file [describes Mosul as an Arab city], the Kurds will also open the Qamishli file. If the Iranians open the door of Karbala and Najaf [describes Karbala and Najaf as Persian cities], the Kurds will open the doors of Sinandaj and Kirmashan. If Turkey opens the door of Kirkuk [describes Kirkuk as a Turkmen city], the Kurds will open the door of Diyarbakir and other cities. This will lead to anarchy in the Middle East.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ “Erdoğan: Kürtler Ateşle Oynaması,” Milliyet, 15 January 2004

²⁹¹ Murat Sömer, “Failures of the Discourse of Ethnicity: Turkey, Kurds, and the Emerging Iraq,” *Security Dialogue* 36, No. 1 (March 2005): 124

²⁹² “Talabani: If Turkey Talks about Kirkuk, then We Will Open the File of Diyarbakir,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 16 April 2003

This reaction was once again a reminder of the close regional relationships among Kurds in Turkey and Iran. Ahmet Türk, president of the Democratic Society Party in Turkey, declared that the formation of a federal Kurdish region in Iraq made Turkish Kurds proud.²⁹³ Such statements are perceived as signaling that northern Iraq would serve as a model for Kurds in Turkey and Iran. Fearing of the possible effect of these developments, both countries were thus motivated to work together to ensure Iraq's territorial integrity.

3.3.2. Common Threat Perception from Terrorism

As mentioned, Turkish-Iranian rapprochement against the PKK began in the early of 2000s and improved since the Iraq War. In December 2003 Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, declared that “Right now our neighbors [Iran and Syria] are showing cooperation in the fight against terrorism that we hadn’t seen in the past years. We’re pleased about that.”²⁹⁴ Deterioration of the relations between Iran and the PKK have played a significant role in the rapprochement process. In the post-Islamic Revolution era, Iran has had ties with the PKK, and in accordance with its national interests, supported or tolerated the PKK until 2003. However, circumstances changed following the war, and these relations deteriorated.²⁹⁵ Iranian President Mohammed Khatami was thus motivated to reiterate Iran’s support for Turkey’s fight against terrorism, declaring in January 2004 that “Turkey’s security is our own security. Turkey’s enemies, terrorist groups or

²⁹³ Milliyet, Interview with Ahmet Türk by Derya Sazak, 28 November 2005

²⁹⁴ “Iran, Syria Helping Turkey in Terror Fight,” Hürriyet Daily News, 5 December 2003

²⁹⁵ Şaban Kardaş and Nihat Ali Özcan, “PJAK, Iran and the United States, Kurdish Militants Designated Terrorists by the United States,” Terrorism Monitor 7, Issue 7 (26 March 2009)

others, cannot harm Turkey by using Iranian territory.”²⁹⁶ A few months later, a spokesman for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hamid Reza Asefi, also declared that “Iran is engaged in a positive and constructive cooperation in the field of security and common borders, and this cooperation is set to continue.”²⁹⁷

Another reason behind Turkish-Iranian rapprochement is the common threat perception of terrorism. When Iran was faced with terrorism after the formation of the PJAK in 2004, it began to cooperate with Turkey in counterterrorism efforts. The PKK restarted its attacks against Turkey in the same year. In such a context, Turkish-Iranian rapprochement took on greater significance. Although the PJAK disavowed links to the PKK, Iran believes that they operate under the same military and ideological umbrella. As Iranian operations against the PKK and PJAK increased in 2005 and 2006, the PKK started to threaten Iran as well. Cemil Bayık, de facto leader of the PKK, for instance, asserted that “We have the right to launch attacks against Iranian forces.”²⁹⁸ However, the rapprochement trend in bilateral relations in fighting against terrorism was not only caused by the terrorist activities against Iran. Turkey as well experienced the same increase in terrorism by the PKK, since it announced the end of its five-year unilateral ceasefire in 2004. As a result, Turkey and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding on security cooperation on 29 July 2004.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ “Iran Reassures Turkey on Border Security,” Hürriyet Daily News, 12 January 2004

²⁹⁷ “Iran Says Cooperating with Turkey on Security,” Hürriyet Daily News, 12 July 2004

²⁹⁸ “PKK Promises Hit-and-Run Attacks on Iran,” Hürriyet Daily News, 8 May 2006

²⁹⁹ Milliyet, 29 July 2004, Stephen Larabee, “Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East,” Foreign Affairs (July/August 2007)

Increasing terrorist attacks by the PKK and PJAK strengthened Turkish-Iranian cooperation in counterterrorism. The number of civilian deaths from PKK attacks was 144 in 2004, increasing to 274 in 2005 and reaching 472 in the first 7 months of 2006.³⁰⁰ The PJAK, on the other hand, benefited from the PKK's military and organizational expertise. Since 2005, its attacks have also increased, killing around 100 Iranians from security forces in a year.³⁰¹ In this context, Iranian Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs, Ali Mohagher, declared that the cooperation between Turkey and Iran in counterterrorism was continuing.³⁰² On February 2006, Turkey and Iran reinforced their cooperation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding, about which Turkish Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Minister, Sahabettin Harput, declared that "we're [Turkey and Iran] in full agreement concerning having tight and absolute cooperation against PKK terror and jointly fighting against any PKK activity in the region."³⁰³ Iranian Deputy Interior Minister, Abbas Mohtaj, also stated that "Iran looks at the PKK and PJAK as a single terrorist organization under two different names."³⁰⁴ Turkey and Iran signed another Memorandum of Understanding in 2008 to increase security cooperation and exchange intelligence to combat the PKK and PJAK, as well as to fight

³⁰⁰ <http://www.supermeydan.net/forum/forum359/thread37166.html>

³⁰¹ James Brandon, "PJAK Faces Turkish-Iranian Storm," Terrorism Monitor 5, Issue 21 (8 November 2007)

³⁰² Hürriyet, 10 June 2005

³⁰³ "Turkey, Iran Agree on Active Cooperation against Terror," Hürriyet Daily News, 23 February 2006

³⁰⁴ Hürriyet, 15 April 2008

organized crime, drug trafficking, extradition of criminals, and the maintenance of border security.³⁰⁵

Both countries declared the will to deepen cooperation with joint military operations. President Ahmadinejad, for instance, offered Turkey to conduct joint operations against the PKK in 2008.³⁰⁶ A few months later, Turkish Commander of Land Forces, later Turkish General Staff İlker Başbuğ announced that “Iran and Turkey are sharing intelligence and have been conducting coordinated, simultaneous operations on their respective borders.”³⁰⁷ Recently, Prime Minister, Erdoğan, restated Turkey and Iran’s commitment to cooperation in combating terrorism.³⁰⁸

3.3.3. THE PKK and PJAK: Low-Politics for the US and Iraq

Along with the increasing terrorist attacks of the PKK and PJAK, Turkey and Iran share the view that they are alone in their terror struggles. The increasing attacks reinforced the perception that the mountains of northern Iraq remained a safe haven for the PKK and PJAK due to the policies of the United States in the post-

³⁰⁵ Türkiye-İran Yüksek Güvenlik Komisyonu Toplantısı,” Radikal, 14 April 2008

³⁰⁶ Hürriyet, 12 April 2008

³⁰⁷ “Iran’la Ortak Operasyon,” Hürriyet, 6 June 2008

³⁰⁸ “Erdoğan Reiterates Turkey-Iran Cooperation in War on Terrorism,” Fars News Agency, 25 September 2011

Saddam era. It is believed that the PKK has around 5000 militants³⁰⁹ and the PJAK has around 3000 troops based in northern Iraq.³¹⁰

Turkey noticed that its alliance with the United States did not put an end to the PKK presence in northern Iraq.³¹¹ In autumn 2003, Washington agreed to take measures against the PKK presence in Iraq on behalf of Ankara, but Turkey saw no evidence. At the beginning of 2004, Deputy Head of the Turkish Armed Forces General İlker Başbuğ stated that “the US’s fight against the PKK is not meeting our [Turkey’s] expectation.”³¹² A year later, the general reminded the US that Turkey was waiting for concrete steps to be taken, stating that “on this subject, we are not at the same point as the United States. The PKK’s political and ideological supports must be cut, their leaders and members must be arrested, their financial and logistic supports must be cut, and their command control system must be cut.”³¹³ In the meantime, the increasing terrorist activities of the PKK, coupled with US opposition to Turkey’s military operations in Iraqi territory, obligated Turkey to search for ways to cooperate with the United States and Iraqi governments. The result was a tripartite mechanism, and in 2006, Ankara

³⁰⁹ Gareth Jenkins, “Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview,” Occasional Paper, February 2008, The Jamestown Foundation: 12

³¹⁰ James Brandon, “Iran’s Kurdish Threat: PJAK,” Terrorism Monitor, Volume 4, Issue 12, June 15 2006

³¹¹ Rasim Özgür Dönmez and Pınar Enneli, “The Changing Logic of Political Violence: The Case of the PKK in Turkey after the Invasion of Iraq – Violence for Violence’s Sake,” in Marika Guggisberg and David Weir (eds.) Understanding Violence: Contexts and Portrayals (Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-disciplinary Press, 2009): 125

³¹² “Genelkurmay’dan Açıklama: İncirlik’in Kullanımı” Uygun Buluyoruz,” Milliyet, 16 January 2004

³¹³ “General Başbuğ: We are Waiting for Concrete Steps from the US on the PKK Matter,” Hürriyet Daily News, 7 June 2005

appointed retired general Edip Başer, while Washington appointed retired general Joseph Ralston as special envoys in meetings about the PKK. However, Turkey was disappointed by the apparent hesitation of the US occupational forces to take action against the PKK. When Washington, Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurds offered an envoy from the autonomous Kurdish authority to the process, the talks became deadlocked. Turkey announced that it would not accept the envoy as long as the Kurdish authority continued to back the PKK. As a result, Edip Başer resigned in February 2007.

As with the United States government, the Iraqi government did nothing to counter the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül mentioned that “the saddening point here is that while Turkey has done everything it could to ensure security, prosperity, and stability in Iraq, Iraqi authorities have not shown any effort to prevent PKK activities from taking place on their own soil.”³¹⁴

Iran also perceived the United States as having adopted a hands-off policy towards the PKK. From the Iranian perspective, it is seen that the United States hope to use the organization, perhaps together with its counterparts in Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria, to launch clandestine operations for “regime change” in these two countries.³¹⁵ In that respect, Iran advocated that the United States had communication with PKK leaders. Ali Larijani, secretary of the Supreme National

³¹⁴ “FM Abdullah Gül: We are Witnessing an Increase in PKK Activities,” Hürriyet Daily News, 15 June 2007

³¹⁵ Author’s interview with an Iranian diplomat, who wished to remain anonymous, in May 2010.

Security Council, for instance, claimed that Iran has documents that prove US military commanders had met with PKK leaders in the spring of 2006.³¹⁶ Tehran also accused the United States of supporting terrorist organizations in Iraq, supplying arms and training.³¹⁷ Iran also accused the Iraqi government of failing to take action against the PKK and PJAK, which have bases in northern Iraq. In 2006, it was announced that a leading PKK member, Murat Karayılan, had been injured in an Iranian attack against the PKK in northern Iraq and the Iraqi government did nothing as Karayılan was being treated at the hospital.³¹⁸ As a result, Iran warned Iraqi leaders to take measures against the PJAK on March 2007, declaring that the Revolutionary Guard would take necessary measures by itself.³¹⁹ Although Iranian Vice Foreign Minister Mehdi Mostafavi denied the Iranian attacks, Iranian military advisor to the Supreme Leader, General Yahya Rahim Safavi, confirmed that Iran had attacked Kurdish camps in northern Iraq because Iraqi officials had not addressed its concerns. Safavi declared that

We issued warnings to the Iraqi government and told them to take them [the rebels] away from the border and respect its obligations. But unfortunately the Kurdistan region, the northern part of Iraq, did not listen, so we feel entitled to target military bases of PJAK and they have been under our artillery fire. Some of their bases are 10 kilometers (six miles) deep inside Iraqi territory. This is part of our natural right to secure our borders.³²⁰

³¹⁶ “Iran and Turkey Fire Salvo Over Iraq,” Asia Times Online, 13 May 2006

³¹⁷ “Tehran Accuses ‘Occupiers’ of Supporting Terror,” Hürriyet Daily News, 19 November 2007

³¹⁸ “PKK Leader Injured in Iranian Strike, Report Says,” Hürriyet Daily News, 17 July 2006

³¹⁹ “Iran Threatens to Pursue PEJAK Inside Iraq,” Hürriyet Daily News, 1 March 2007

³²⁰ “Iran Confirms Shelling Kurdish Militants in Iraq,” Hürriyet Daily News, 24 September 2007

To sum up, the lack of concrete steps taken by the United States and Iraqi governments against the PKK and PJAK worked for the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement in cooperating against terrorism.³²¹

3.3.4. Israeli-Kurdish and Israeli-PKK Relations

The relationship between Israel and the PKK/PJAK has been another factor behind the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement, since the officials of both countries expressed their concerns about this issue.³²² The tie between Israel and the Kurds dates back to the 1960s, when Israel's Alliance of the Periphery strategy, by which Israel attempted to build strong ties with non-Arabs in the region, was adopted. As with Israeli-Kurdish relations, the link between Israel and the PKK is not a new phenomenon. However, the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations in recent years has brought Turkey into the same camp as Iran, which has classified Israel as a great enemy since the Islamic Revolution.

According to Nihat Ali Özcan, Israeli-PKK relations have had three phases.³²³ The first phase covers the period from the PKK's establishment to 1992. In this period, Israeli-PKK relations were not on good terms. When Abdullah Öcalan escaped from Turkey on the eve of the military coup in 1980, he settled in Lebanon and

³²¹ "Inevitable Iran, Turkey, Syria and Russia Alliance," Fars News Agency, 5 November 2007

³²² (استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه) ("Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of the Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (February 2010), p. 56, <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

³²³ Nihat Ali Özcan, "On Israeli-PKK Relations – 1," Hürriyet Daily News, 14 September 2011 and "On Israeli-PKK Relations – 2," Hürriyet Daily News, 21 September 2011

received guerrilla training from Syrians and Palestinians, with whom Israel had tense relations. In this period, Israel and the PKK came face to face when PKK militants fought against Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The second phase was between 1992 and 2002. The final phase covers the period from 2002 onwards. During this final phase, as Turkish-Israeli relations have been deteriorating, Israeli-PKK relations have become a source of concern of Turkey, as Iran.

The aforementioned common denominators between Turkey and Israel of the 1990s have disappeared in the recent years of their bilateral relations. Among these, the Palestinian cause has become a more significant factor. From the very beginning, Turkey has sympathized with the Palestinian cause, and has always condemned the violent actions of Israel against Palestinians. For instance, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mümtaz Soysal, argued in 1994 that Palestinians were trying to defend their rights, not involving themselves in terrorism, as Israel has claimed.³²⁴ Turkey's approach to the Palestinian cause continued during the second intifada in late 2000. Throughout Turkey, demonstrations were held to denounce Israel's incursion into Palestinian controlled areas of the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, in October 2000, Turkey voted in favor of a UN resolution denouncing Israel for using excessive force against Palestinians. A year later, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit accused Israel of carrying out genocide against Palestinians during an address to his political party. The speech fostered discontent among Israeli leaders and Jewish lobby groups in Washington. In August of that year, when Ariel Sharon visited Ankara, he was protested by crowds shouting "Butcher of Palestine, go home!"

³²⁴ Cumhuriyet, 5 November 1994

The problems in Turkish-Israeli relations began to deepen in 2003, when Turkey and Israel stood on opposite sides of the US-led Iraq War. Although Israeli President Moshe Katsav and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom had visited Turkey in 2003 as a part of efforts to sustain good relations with Turkey, the deterioration of bilateral relations was clear. For instance, Prime Minister Erdoğan rejected an invitation by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for a meeting in November 2003. Also, in March 2004, after the assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin by Israel, Prime Minister Erdoğan accused Israel of making a state terrorism and called both Turkey's ambassador and its consul-general to Israel for consultation. In mid-July, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert visited Turkey as part of an effort to improve bilateral relations. However, Erdoğan did not accept a meeting with him, instead met with Syrian Prime Minister Naji Al-Otri just few hours before when Olmert arrived in Ankara.

The turning point in Turkish-Israeli relations occurred in 2006, when Turkey officially invited Khaled Meshal, the Syria-based leader of Hamas's militant wing. The invitation by Ankara was seen as a departure from Turkey's traditional policy, which recognized Hamas a terrorist and Islamist organization threatening the existence of Israel and secular governments in general.³²⁵ In addition, Israel's unexpected military operation against Gaza in late 2008 shocked the Turkish government because just before the Israeli operation, Turkey had been hosting indirect talks between Israel and Syria.

³²⁵ Soner Çağaptay, "Hamas Visits Ankara: The AKP Shifts Turkey's Role in the Middle East," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch, 16 February 2006

The deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations has reached a point of no return in 2009. During a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prime Minister Erdoğan accused Israel of transforming Gaza into an “open-air prison,” and said, “I know very well how you hit and killed children on beaches.” A day later, Turkish streets saw slogans like: “Erdoğan, the new Saladdin” (referring to the Muslim leader who recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187), “Erdoğan, our Conqueror,” and “Erdoğan, a new world leader.” Another important milestone in Turkish-Israeli relations occurred when Israeli commandos attacked the Mavi Marmara flotilla on 31 May 2010, which was owned by a Turkish charity, the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedom and Humanitarian Relief. The flotilla was carrying humanitarian aid to besieged Gaza. Nine activists died, and over 30 activists were wounded. For the first time in history, Turkish citizens were faced with Israeli aggression.

As Turkish-Israeli relations have continued to deteriorate in recent years, Turkey’s concerns about Israeli-PKK relations have increased as well. This development has brought Turkey and Iran closer. The Turkish General Staff, for instance, reported in January 2003 that Israel was forming closer ties with Iraqi Kurds in preparation for an independent Kurdish political entity in northern Iraq. Kurds were believed to be a reliable ally for Israel, lacking a fundamentalist movement, and without a political system or bureaucratic mechanism that would conflict with the US and Israeli interests.³²⁶ In addition, such a Kurdish entity would be beneficial for

³²⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Clash of Interest over Northern Iraq Derives Turkish-Israeli Alliance to a Crossroads,” *Middle East Journal* 59, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 262

Israel's security, by building a forward defense capability against potential and active threats from countries such as Iran, Pakistan and beyond.³²⁷ Iran shares Turkey's concern over Israel's policies towards northern Iraq, and this has contributed to the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement. Iran's Ambassador to Turkey Firuz Dolatabadi, for example, stated that

Although the issue has appeared on the agenda only recently, Israel has been carrying out activities in that region, together with U.S. and British intelligence services, for 20 years. They continue to train some Kurdish groups. These groups are not necessarily groups linked to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) or the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PYD), but mostly diverse Kurdish elements. (...) What is certain is that Israel and the United States are seeking to establish a Kurdish state.³²⁸

In the meantime, Turkish, Iranian and even international media outlets have covered news about the Israeli activities in northern Iraq. Seymour Hersh affirmed that Israel has been training Kurdish commandos in 'Kurdistan [northern Iraq]' and running covert operations in the Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria.³²⁹ Quoted in the *Hürriyet Daily News*, *Kayhan*, an Iranian daily newspaper, also claimed that

The fact that the Israelis and the Americans were engaged in efforts to create an autonomous region that would serve as a satellite for Washington and Tel Aviv together with some Iraqi Kurdish politicians in northern Iraq caused uneasiness in Ankara. These dangerous developments also aim to destroy the territorial integrity of Turkey and possibly Iran. Such a situation necessitates close cooperation between Turkey and Iran.³³⁰

Israeli and Kurdish leaders denied such a relationship. Ehud Olmert, who was in charge of the ministries of industry, trade and labor, denied reports that Israeli agents were operating in northern Iraq and providing training to Iraqi Kurdish peshmergas. He stated that "Israel has no relations with Kurds in northern Iraq. Turkish authorities know all about the details. We want a united Iraq. We would

³²⁷ Ibid, 247

³²⁸ "Iran to Declare Kongra-Gel as Terrorist," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 21 July 2004.

³²⁹ Seymour M. Hersh, "Plan B: As June 30th Approaches, Israel Looks to the Kurds," *The New Yorker*, 28 June 2004.

³³⁰ "Iranian Media Says Turkey, Iran Vow to Boost Ties," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 28 July 2004

never act against the interests of Turkey."³³¹ A year later, however, an Israeli newspaper made the same claim. It was reported that former Israeli security officials secretly trained Kurds in anti-terrorism tactics in northern Iraq. Israeli officials have since assured Turkey that any Israelis training Kurds in northern Iraq would have acted without their government's permission.³³² However, Israel seems not to have been able to convince Turkey.³³³ When the PKK attacked İskenderun on 31 May 2010, just after Israeli assault boats attacked the Mavi Marmara, Prime Minister Erdoğan was quoted as saying, "My beloved people know well whose subcontractor PKK is," implying it to be serving Israeli interests.³³⁴ With the recent news in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Israeli-PKK relations once again attracted a reaction from Turkey in 2011. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman is said to have decided to adopt a series of harsh measures in response to Turkey's anti-Israeli policies. To that end, he has reportedly assembled a team to discuss a possible retaliation against Turkey. It is reported that one recommendation by this team has been to schedule cooperation meetings with leaders of the PKK in Europe.³³⁵ As a result, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu condemned the proposed plan, by which Israel would punish Turkey by supporting the PKK, stating that "Every time someone wants to bother Turkey he uses the PKK. It is important that our Kurdish brothers pay attention to this. No one will be

³³¹ K. Gajendra Singh, "Israel Tries Mending Eroded Alliance with Turkey (Part 2)," *Hrriyet Daily News*, 28 July 2004.

³³² "Israelis Trained Kurds in Iraq," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 12 January 2005, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0_7340_L-3177712_00.html (Accessed 25 October 2011)

³³³ Metin Münir, "Gizli Tarih: İsrail-Kürt İlişkileri," *Milliyet*, 14 March 2007; İbrahim Karagül, "İsrail-PKK Bağlantısı Bu İşi Bozabilir mi?" *Yeni Şafak*, 24 September 2010,

³³⁴ Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "PKK İsrail'in Taşeronu mu?" *Milliyet*, 21 June 2010.

³³⁵ "Israel to 'Punish' Turkey," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 9 September 2011, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0_7340_L-4119984_00.html (Accessed 25 October 2011)

able to blackmail us. We hope that Israel's denial [of support to the PKK] will also be accompanied by actions.³³⁶

To sum up, the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations over the last decade has increased Turkey's security concerns over Israeli-PKK relations. Iran, as well, has perceived a threat from Israeli-Kurdish and Israeli-PKK relations. This has been a major factor contributing to Turkish-Iranian rapprochement over the last decade with respect to the Kurdish issue.

3.4. FACTORS THAT WORK AGAINST FURTHER RAPPROCHEMENT

The nature of the Kurdish issue in bilateral relations has transformed from conflictual to cooperative over the last decade, but Turkey and Iran continue to compete over regional power in the Middle East. In this competition, the Kurdish issue continues to be an area in which the two countries have contradictory interests.

3.4.1. The Continuation of Turkish-Iranian Geopolitical Competition

Even though Turkey and Iran have recently cooperated in fighting against terrorism, there are some who view the future of this rapprochement trend with suspicion because of the history of Turkish-Iranian regional competition. It is commonly argued, for example, that Iran would not fully support Turkey to destroy the PKK. Bahram Valadbeigi, for instance, who runs the Tehran-based Kurdish Cultural Center, argued that “The Islamic Republic of Iran is not

³³⁶ “Turkey FM Condemns Israeli ‘Plan’ to Support PKK,” Haaretz, 11 September 2011

completely against the PKK. It has always had some limited and vague relations with it. I don't believe Iran will take part in Turkey's plans.”³³⁷ This view is based on the argument that despite the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement in the last decade, they are still regional competitors, and the Kurdish issue would continue to be used in this competition. The first hint of the ongoing regional competition between Turkey and Iran, which was introduced in Chapter Two, was emerged with the rise of Iranian influence throughout the region in the post-Saddam era. During this period, a debate ensued over whether Turkey and Iran would take leadership of hypothetical Sunni and Shia blocs comprised of the Middle Eastern countries. The difference in perception between Turkey and Iran about the Arab Spring, which was also discussed in Chapter Two, has also contributed to the view that bilateral regional competition continues to exist between the two. The PKK issue is believed to be an important component of this competition because the more energy Turkey expends on dealing with Kurdish or PKK issues, the less energy it will have to strengthen its regional influence. Hasan Köni, for instance, mentioned that “When Turkey is busy with its domestic problems it would have no time to direct its attention either to Iran or to supporting groups in Arab countries.”³³⁸ In the meantime, the unconfirmed news of the capture of Murat Karayılan, a leading member of the PKK, by Iran also strengthened the view that the PKK is still in play as a possible trump card by Iran against Turkey. Although Iranian officials did not confirm they had captured Karayılan, Turkey’s Deputy Prime Minister

³³⁷ K. Gajendra Singh, “Turkey & Iran Coming Closer,” South Asia Analysis Group, Paper No. 1077, 3 August 2004

³³⁸ Aydin Albayrak, “Turkey-Iran Tension Escalates over NATO Radar System and PKK,” Today’s Zaman, 11 October 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=259556 (Accessed 1 November 2011)

Bülent Arınç stated that “the whereabouts of Karayılan had not yet been clarified.” and, “There have still been no news reports with recent images of or statements from Karayılan. There is something about this we don’t know, but we can’t explain what.”³³⁹ Arınç also noted that “There might have been bargaining between Iran and the PKK. It will come to light soon.”³⁴⁰ The PKK issue is thus still believed to be viewed by Iran as an instrument with which it can prevent Turkey from expanding its regional influence.³⁴¹ Although Arzu Celalifer Ekinçi argued that Iran would not risk itself by strongly backing the PKK because of the boomerang effect of terror, Sedat Laçiner advocated that Turkey should still keep in mind that Iran might use the PKK as leverage in the short run.³⁴² According to Laçiner,

Now the countries act mainly according to fast-paced daily developments. What is most important for Iran now is that the Arab Spring should not turn into an Iranian spring. That’s why it supports the PKK. It looks as if Iran and the PKK have reached a serious agreement, and it’s strongly probable that Iran has released Karayılan, the number two man in the PKK, after capturing him.³⁴³

In addition, as seen from the previous analysis of the contributing factors to the bilateral rapprochement trend, Turkish-Iranian cooperation is caused by current internal and regional factors. If the current conjecture will change, Turkish-Iranian rapprochement will inevitably be influenced. As a result, the presence of the

³³⁹ “Iran Captured but later Released PKK Leader Karayılan, Report Says,” Today’s Zaman, 11 October 2011, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-259497-iran-captured-but-later-released-pkk-leader-karayilan-report-claims.html> (Accessed 1 November 2011)

³⁴⁰ Abdulkadir Selvi, “Karayılan, Urumiye Hotel’de,” Yeni Şafak, 12 October 2011

³⁴¹ Author’s interview with a Turkish official, who wished to remain anonymous, from Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interview conducted in Ankara in February 2010

³⁴² Aydın Albayrak, “Turkey-Iran Tension Escalates over NATO Radar System and PKK,” Today’s Zaman, 11 October 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=259556 (Accessed 1 November 2011)

³⁴³ Ibid.

United States and its policies in Iraq have been among the most significant factors in Turkish-Iranian cooperation on the Kurdish issue. Therefore, the withdrawal of the United States from Iraq would re-trigger Turkish-Iranian competition over Iraq – especially over northern Iraq. Even though Turkey and Iran fear the disintegration of Iraq and its possible spillover effects on their own Kurdish citizens, they have different notions of what the Iraqi state should look like after the withdrawal of American forces. Turkey would like Iraq to be ruled by a broad-based coalition, while Iran would prefer a Shia state that is not closed to Western and Arab influences. The interests of Turkey and Iran also clash with regard to northern Iraq³⁴⁴, where both countries want to increase their political and economic influence. The Kurdish issue, therefore, could once again form the basis for conflicts between Turkey and Iran in the post-US era.³⁴⁵

Regarding the Iranian position on these regional developments, Turkish-Iranian rapprochement once again appears to be viewed as the result of the current conjecture. The isolation of Iran because of its nuclear program, for example, which will be analyzed in the following chapter, has been a significant motivation for Iran to cooperate with Turkey against the PKK. It needs Turkey's support more in its period of isolation. Cooperation on the Kurdish issue is thus seen as an appropriate way to ensure this. However, the situation also limits further bilateral cooperation against the PKK because it is believed that Iran views the continuation

³⁴⁴ Here “northern Iraq” refers to a geography which is located north of Baghdad.

³⁴⁵ Yoel Guzansky and Gallia Lindenstrauß, “Turkey and Iran: The Politics of Strange Bedfellows,” Strategic Assessment 14, No.1 (April 2011): 99

of the PKK issue as a factor motivating Turkey to cooperate with Iran. Emrullah Uslu, for instance, argues that

Iran would not provide full support to Turkey to end the PKK problem permanently because the PKK problem is the only issue that keeps Turkey close to Iran. If Turkey could successfully end the PKK problem with U.S. help, then there is no reason for Turkey to harm its relation with the United States by seeking Iran's support.³⁴⁶

As a result, the Kurdish issue will most likely continue to be used in the Turkish-Iranian geopolitical competition, despite the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement in the last decade.

3.5. Conclusion

Throughout history, the Kurdish issue has been a factor in Turkish-Iranian relations. By the 1980s, it had gained importance and caused serious tension in bilateral relations. This tension had two dimensions. The first included mutual accusations of harboring terrorists. On the one hand, Turkey was concerned over Iran's support to the PKK and aim to export revolution to Turkey. On the other hand, Iran was concerned about Turkey's policies towards the Mujahidin-i Khalq. The second dimension included the efforts of both countries to increase their influence over the Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. By extension, Turkish-Iranian relations were also affected by their relations with the Iraqi government. For instance, as Turkey, in accordance with a hot-pursuit agreement with Iraq, conducted attacks on the PKK in northern Iraq during the 1980s and the 1990s,

³⁴⁶ Emrullah Uslu, "Can Turkey's Anti-Terrorism Cooperation with Iran Lead to a Strategic Partnership?" *Terrorism Focus* 5, Issue 24 (24 June 2008) http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=5012 (Accessed 24 August 2010)

Iran became irritated because it perceived these actions as a sign that Ankara was making an attempt to control Kirkuk oil field.

With the establishment of a de facto Kurdish authority in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Turkey's "Sevres syndrome" and Iran's "Mahabad syndrome" were triggered. This change in context brought the countries closer, but their common threat perception relating to the Kurdish issue was not enough to sustain cooperation against the PKK, which ended up being one of the most conflictual issues in bilateral relations during the 1990s.

By the 2000s, however, the Kurdish issue had once again become a factor working in favor of the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations. This rapprochement was emerged after mutual accusations of harboring terrorists were ended and cooperative declarations on mutual opposition to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state took priority.

Four factors led to cooperation between Turkey and Iran on the Kurdish issue. First, the common threat perception by Turkey and Iran of the possibility of Iraqi disintegration after the Iraq War created grounds for cooperation towards the goal of preventing the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Second, their common threat perception also led to cooperation in counterterrorism issues, especially after Iran began to suffer by the activities of the PJAK. In the meantime, the increasing of terrorist attacks against Turkey and Iran also led them to seek the ways for cooperation. Third, both Turkey and Iran observed that neither

the United States nor the Iraqi government had taken measures against the PKK and PJAK, which had deployed attacks on both Turkey and Iran from Iraqi territory. Finally, Turkey and Iran shared concerns about Israeli-Kurdish and Israeli-PKK relations. As Turkey began distancing itself from Israel, it also began positioning itself closer to Iran.

Even though all these factors relating to the Kurdish issue contributed to Turkish-Iranian rapprochement in the 2000s, the continuation of Turkish-Iranian geopolitical competition would once again make the Kurdish issue a zone of conflict in bilateral relations. In this regard, two arguments have emerged. According to the first argument, the Kurdish issue will once again be used against Turkey to stem its regional influence. The more energy it expends dealing with the Kurdish issue or the PKK issue, the less energy it will have for other endeavors. According to the second argument, the continuation of the PKK problem favors Iran because otherwise Turkey would not have motivation to cooperate with Iran at the expense of the US. Therefore, the possible reappearance of the Kurdish issue as a zone of conflict in Turkish-Iranian relations would work against further rapprochement.

CHAPTER 4

THE NUCLEAR ISSUE IN BILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE 2000s

On 14 August 2002, the US Representative Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran revealed Iran's clandestine nuclear activities, in the form of a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and a heavy water production facility in Arak. The discovery of these facilities was perceived by the international community as an indication that Iran had elevated its nuclear program in the post-Islamic Revolution era despite sanctions by the United States. This revelation caused strong reactions in the United States and reinforced the view that Iran had been seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iranian nuclear program was rarely addressed in Turkish-Iranian relations.³⁴⁷ Since the revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear activities, the nuclear issue has also become a significant subject in Turkish-Iranian relations. Despite Turkey's stance against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, its approach to the Iranian nuclear program has been different from that of the US, Israel and partly the Western countries. In this context, Turkey has been dealing with Western economic sanctions and plans for military engagement against Iran as well as the possibility of the nuclearization of a neighbor. Even though the US government demanded Turkey to collaborate to counter the Iranian nuclear program, Turkey made it clear that it would endorse neither unilateral economic sanctions nor military intervention.

³⁴⁷ Bayram Sinkaya, "Turkey and the Iranian Nuclear Issue: From a Passive Stance to the Actual Contributor to the Peaceful Solution?" ORSAM, Foreign Policy Analysis, 3 December 2010

The nuclear issue is widely argued to become a subject in which the rapprochement process took place. This chapter will thus be an attempt to understand how the nuclear issue has affected bilateral relations in the 2000s. To that end, the first part of this chapter will introduce the historical background of Iran's nuclear policy in order to understand the roots of the nuclear issue. The second part will analyze Turkey's policies towards the Iranian nuclear program and its involvement in the negotiation process between Iran and the P5+1.³⁴⁸ The final part will focus on bilateral relations, examining the factors that worked both for and against the rapprochement process regarding the nuclear issue.

4.1. IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM: HOW DID IT BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE?

Iran's efforts in the area of nuclear science and technology go back to the years of the Shah, who had the US assistance against the communist Soviet regime. As part of intensifying bilateral relations during the Cold War years, the United States and Iran signed the Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Civil Uses of Atoms in 1957. A decade later the Nuclear Research Center at Tehran University was established by the United States. In the subsequent years, several Iranian universities established nuclear research and technology-related centers with the help of Western countries. During the 1960s, the technological foundations of the nuclear issue were laid and the associated scientific community gradually accumulated in Iran.

³⁴⁸ In 2004 and 2005, negotiations were held between Iran and the EU-3, made up of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. By 2006, China, Russia and the United States joined with the EU-3, at which point this negotiation partner started to be called the P5+1, in reference to the permanent five members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

In 1968, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a multilateral arms control agreement, was opened to signature, aiming first to stop the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons from nuclear-states to non-nuclear states, second to control the trend towards further vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons among nuclear-states, and third to control the transfer of technology among nuclear power facilities. Iran signed the treaty that year, and two years later the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) ratified it. In accordance with Article IV of the NPT, Iran continued its civilian nuclear efforts during the 1970s.³⁴⁹

As of the early 1970s, there were many trained scientists and technologists in Iran's nuclear industry. The increase in oil prices after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War further boosted the scope of the Shah's nuclear project. In March 1974, Shah announced his nuclear power program and the goal of establishing 23,000 MW of nuclear power capacity, to become operational within the next 20 years. To achieve this goal, he established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran in 1974. A year later, Iran purchased a 10 percent share in Eurodif, a joint venture uranium enrichment company by France, Belgium, Spain and Italy, and a 15 percent stake

³⁴⁹ Article IV of the NPT: 1. Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the 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. 2. All the Parties to the Treaty undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Parties to the Treaty in a position to do so shall also cooperate in contributing alone or together with other States or international organizations to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world.

in the RTZ uranium mine in Rossing, Namibia.³⁵⁰ In the meantime, a significant number of Iranian students, scientists and technicians were advancing their skills and knowledge in nuclear engineering, nuclear physics and other related fields in France and (West) Germany. In 1976, Iran and Germany signed an agreement on the establishment of six nuclear power reactors in Iran. It also made nuclear fuel contracts with Germany in 1976 and with France in 1977.³⁵¹ During these years, South Africa was another supplier of Iran's nuclear program, providing yellowcake, which is used in the preparation of uranium fuel for nuclear reactors.³⁵²

With the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran's nuclear program was interrupted. Iran stopped all nuclear activities, arguing that the nuclear program made Iran dependent on foreigners.³⁵³ In addition, foreign companies, which had contracts related to the nuclear program, left Iran immediately after the breakout of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980. Finally, nuclear science and technology transfer from the United States and European countries to Iran abruptly stopped due to US sanctions following the hostage crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran. From the US perspective, as described by Mustafa Kibaroglu, "what was good for the Shah was

³⁵⁰ Nuclear Threat Initiative, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/index.html (Accessed 10 October 2010)

³⁵¹ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, No. 22 (March 2007): 231

³⁵² Nuclear Threat Initiative, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/index.html (Accessed 10 October 2010)

³⁵³ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi* (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, Ocak 2009): 36

not good for the Imam.”³⁵⁴ However, the interruption of the nuclear program did not last long, as Iran realized the value of modern military technology and the deterrence capability of nuclear weapons during its eight-year war with Iraq. The energy crisis in the post-revolutionary period was another reason for the construction of a power plant that was returned to the top of the agenda. The Isfahan Nuclear Research Center was thus opened in 1984.

This time, when Iran decided to resume its nuclear program, it received a negative response from the West. As a result, it looked to other potential suppliers, such as Pakistan, Argentina, Spain, Czechoslovakia, China and the Soviet Union, and signed long-term nuclear cooperation agreements with Pakistan and China in 1987 and 1990, respectively.³⁵⁵ Fuel fabrication and conversion facilities were built in Isfahan with Chinese assistance. In 1995, Iran and Russia signed a bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement. According to that agreement, around 30 Iranian graduate students would be educated in nuclear science in Russia that would also complete the construction of a nuclear reactor in Bushehr.³⁵⁶ Despite US pressure, Russia refused to end cooperation with Iran on the nuclear issue, arguing that concerns about the Iranian nuclear program were the problem of the United States. Moreover, Moscow declared in 1998 that it reached an agreement in principle with

³⁵⁴ Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West,” Middle Eastern Studies 43, No. 22 (March 2007): 234

³⁵⁵ Joseph Cirincione, Jon Wolfsthal and Miriam Rajkumar, Deadly Arsenals: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Threats (Washington, D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 303

³⁵⁶ Michael Eisenstadt, Iranian Military Power: Capabilities and Intentions (Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1996): 106-107

Tehran to build two additional nuclear reactors.³⁵⁷ In subsequent years, cooperation between these two countries continued.

The first serious allegation by the United States about Iran's nuclear capacity came following a report made by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which predicted Iran might be able to make a nuclear weapon.³⁵⁸ Although the assessment was not based on concrete evidence about Iran's nuclear capacity, it still ended up determining US policies towards Iran. On 14 August 2002, the US Representative Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran exposed its uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and heavy water production facility in Arak. With this revelation, US concerns about a clandestine Iranian program grew more urgent.

The discovery of these facilities alarmed the international community as well. From the US perspective, the undeclared uranium enrichment facilities at Natanz were a clear indication of Iran's intent, and quickly pointed out that these activities were a violation of Article II of the NPT.³⁵⁹ The United States called upon Iran to give up its uranium enrichment activities, but Iran rejected the claim that it was building a weapons program, or that it had violated the NPT. Iran acknowledged that it had failed to report activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency

³⁵⁷ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, İran Nükleer Krizi (Ankara: USAK Yayımları, Ocak 2009): 40

³⁵⁸ James Risen and Judith Miller, "CIA Tells Clinton an Iranian A-Bomb can't be Ruled Out," The New York Times, 17 January 2000

³⁵⁹ Article II: Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

(IAEA) in time. In this regard, from the Iranian perspective, Natanz was a ‘failure’ rather than a violation of its safeguard obligations, as mentioned in the IAEA report.³⁶⁰

After the undeclared facilities were exposed, IAEA Director General Mohammed El Baradei and a group of inspectors made frequent visits to Iran and carried out inspections at designated and suspected sites. On 21-22 February 2003, El Baradei held talks with President Khatami and senior Iranian officials, during which, Iran confirmed its uranium enrichment program, including the facilities in Natanz and Arak, for the first time.³⁶¹ It also permitted the IAEA to sent inspectors to the facilities at Natanz “to conduct design information verification and to take environmental samples at the pilot enrichment plant.”³⁶² On 9 July 2003, El Baradei held more meetings in Tehran with Iran’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Kharrazi, Vice President Agazadeh and President Khatami to clarify doubts surrounding its nuclear activities. On 7 August 2003, IAEA experts returned to Iran to meet with senior governmental officials about its ongoing process of nuclear safeguard implementation. A series of reports published by the IAEA detailed the results of these inspections and talks. The IAEA Board Report dated 26 August 2003, for instance, announced that Iran had decided to begin

³⁶⁰ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2003/40, 6 June 2003, p. 7; Director General’s Intervention on Iran during the IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, 18 June 2003, <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/PressReleases/2003/dgiran180603.pdf> (Accessed 18 October 2010)

³⁶¹ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2003/40, (6 June 2003): 2-3

³⁶² Ibid, 6

negotiations with the Agency on the conclusion of the Additional Protocol.³⁶³

Although this was described as a positive step, the report also emphasized the need for further cooperation, which would be possible only with Iran's ratification of the Additional Protocol.³⁶⁴ Between September and October 2003, the IAEA carried out several inspections at Iranian facilities and met with Iranian authorities to determine the program's history.

Since the discovery of the Iran's undeclared nuclear activities, the European countries, namely United Kingdom, France and Germany, known as EU-3, have also been actively involved in the negotiation process. Regarding the Iranian nuclear program, US and European strategies differ significantly. While the United States pursues a containment and isolation policy, the EU-3 has pursued a "constructive engagement"³⁶⁵ or "conditional engagement"³⁶⁶ policy. Contrary to the United States, the Europeans do not contest Iran's right to acquire nuclear power for civilian purposes. Therefore, they oppose military action against Iran. Moreover, they argued that even the threat of a military strike would jeopardize Iran's cooperation with the IAEA and its membership of the NPT. In this context, Europeans pursued a policy of dialogue, to "convince Iran that the rewards of

³⁶³ The Additional Protocol is a legal document granting the IAEA complementary inspection authority to that provided in underlying safeguards agreements. A principal aim is to enable the IAEA inspectorate to provide assurance about both declared and possible undeclared activities. Under the Protocol, the IAEA is granted expanded rights of access to information and sites.

³⁶⁴ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2003/63, (26 August 2003): 10

³⁶⁵ Clara Portela, "The Role of the EU in the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: The Way to Thessaloniki and Beyond," Peace Research Institute, Frankfurt, PRIF Reports No. 65: 18

³⁶⁶ Gawdat Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran," International Studies Perspectives 7, Issue 2 (2006): 132

abandoning its nuclear ambition outweigh the benefits of maintaining it.”³⁶⁷ On the eve of the deadline set by the IAEA Director General for Iran to sign the Additional Protocol, the Foreign Ministers of the EU-3 countries visited Iran in October 2003. As a result of these meetings, Tehran agreed to resolve its issues with the IAEA, to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol, and even to suspend uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities. In November 2003, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution welcoming Iran’s decision, but also outlined a procedure for sanctions in the event Iran failed to fulfill its promises.³⁶⁸ On 18 December 2003, Ambassador Salehi of Iran and the Director General of the IAEA signed the Additional Protocol to Iran’s NPT Safeguards Agreement, allowing unannounced and more intense inspections of the Iranian nuclear facilities.

In early 2004, the IAEA announced that Iran had acquired P-2 centrifuge technology, which is an advanced design of a uranium enrichment centrifuge.³⁶⁹ It also called on Iran to be more cooperative and to answer all agency questions about the origins of its centrifuge technology.³⁷⁰ After a series of meetings

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/ 2003/81, (26 November 2003)

³⁶⁹ For more information see: David Albright and Jacqueline Shire, “Iran Installing More Advanced Centrifuges at Natanz Pilot Enrichment Plant: Factsheet on the P-2/IR-2 Centrifuge,” The Institute for Science and International Security, 7 February 2008, http://www.isis-online.org/publications/iran/ISIS_Iran_P2_7Feb2008.pdf (Accessed 28 October 2010)

³⁷⁰ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/ 2004/11, (24 February 2004)

between officials of the IAEA and Iran, an agreement was reached on a joint action plan with a timetable for dealing with outstanding issues.³⁷¹

In the meantime, the negotiation process between Iran and the EU-3 was also ongoing. On 15 November 2004, the Paris Agreement was signed, by which Iran agreed to continue its suspension of enrichment and conversion activities.³⁷² The EU-3, in return, recognized “Iran’s rights under the NPT exercised in conformity with its obligations under the Treaty, without discrimination.”³⁷³ The agreement also provided “firm guarantees on nuclear, technological and economic cooperation and firm commitments on security issues.”³⁷⁴ From the Iranian perspective, the Paris Agreement widened the gap between the United States and EU-3, as the former preferred permanent suspension of Iran’s enrichment activities. According to Ayetollah Hassan Rowhani, Iran’s top negotiator, the Paris Agreement demonstrated the European departure from US insistence on the “indefinite suspension” of Iran’s enrichment activities. In the summer of 2005, however, Iran halted negotiations, citing the EU’s inability to fulfill Iran’s political and economic expectations in accordance with the Paris Agreement. In addition, Iran announced its decision to resume uranium conversion activities at Isfahan on

³⁷¹ “IAEA and Iran Agree Action Plan,” IAEA Press Release, 7 April 2004, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/2004/prn200402.html> (Accessed 2 November 2010)

³⁷² “Iran-EU Nuclear Agreement Finalized,” Mehr News Agency, 14 November 2004 (Accessed 2 November 2010)

³⁷³ “Iran-EU Agreement on Nuclear Programme,” International Atomic Energy Agency, 14 November 2004, http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/eu_iran14112004.shtml (Accessed 2 November 2010)

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

1 August 2005.³⁷⁵ Ten days later, Tehran removed the seals at the facility. The subsequent months passed with calls by the IAEA for Iran to return to the negotiating table, re-establish full suspension of all enrichment related activities and re-instate the IAEA seals that had been removed from the facilities at Isfahan. However, the election of President Ahmedinejad in 2005, whose stance on the nuclear program is uncompromising, made it difficult to continue negotiations.³⁷⁶

With negotiations blocked, Russia put forward an offer to produce enriched uranium domestically, and to provide storage and reprocessing facilities for spent fuel from Iranian nuclear power plants.³⁷⁷ Its goal was to prevent Iran from acquiring enrichment technology and accumulating weapons-grade nuclear material. Although the US and the EU responded positively to the offer, Iran rejected it, insisting on producing enriched uranium on its own territory.

In January 2006, Iran informed the Agency that it had decided to restart its enrichment activity which had been stalled “as part of its expanded voluntary and non-legally binding suspension.”³⁷⁸ In the spring of 2006, the IAEA sent its report on Iran’s nuclear program to the UN Security Council, noting a continuing knowledge gap about the Iranian nuclear program and recommending full

³⁷⁵ IAEA Information Circular, Communication dated 1 August 2005, received from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency, INFCIRC/648, (1 August 2005)

³⁷⁶ For more information and analysis see: “Iran’ın Gerçek Yüzü,” Milliyet, 24 Haziran 2005, “Ahmedinejad’ın Seçilmesi Sorunlara Neden Olacak,” Anadolu Ajansı, 26 Haziran 2006, “Peres: İran’da Ahmedinejad’ın Seçilmesi Büyük Sorunlar Doğuracak,” Sabah, 26 Haziran 2005

³⁷⁷ Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, “Dances with Wolves: Russia, Iran and the Nuclear Issue,” Middle East Policy XIII, No. 4 (Winter 2006): 140

³⁷⁸ “Iran To Resume Suspended Nuclear Research and Development”, IAEA Press Release, 3 January 2006, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/2006/prn200601.html> (Accessed 2 November 2010)

transparency.³⁷⁹ In June 2006, the EU-3, together with the United States, Russia and China, and collectively known as the P5+1, offered to provide Iran with advanced civilian nuclear technology on the condition that it suspends enrichment activities and re-implement the Additional Protocol. On 31 July, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1696, demanding Iran to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, in return for the P5+1 offer. The resolution gave Iran one month to comply, and warned that it would face economic and diplomatic sanctions if it failed to do so.³⁸⁰ However, Iran actually accelerated its enrichment activities, opening the Arak Heavy Water facility, and thus paving the way for the next UN Security Council resolution.

Resolution 1737 was adopted on 23 December 2006, banning the international transfer of nuclear and missile technologies to Iran, and freezing the foreign assets of twelve individuals and ten organizations involved with the Iranian nuclear program.³⁸¹ Iranian leaders denounced the Resolution. President Ahmedinejad, for instance, called it “a piece of torn paper” that would not stop the Iranian nuclear program.³⁸² Spokesman to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Ali Hosseini also declared that “This resolution is a political act and an act that is

³⁷⁹ UN News Centre, “UN Security Council Considers Action on Iran’s Nuclear Programme,” (3 May 2006)

³⁸⁰ UN Security Council, Resolution 1696, SC/8792, (31 July 2006)

³⁸¹ UN Security Council, Resolution 1737, S/RES/1737, (27 December 2006)

³⁸² “Ahmedinejad: UN Resolution a Piece of Torn Paper,” Yedioth Ahronoth, 24 December 2006, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0_7340_L-3343828.00.html (Accessed 5 October 2010)

beyond law, it is discriminatory and unjust.”³⁸³ Iran immediately announced that it would install 3000 centrifuges at Natanz.³⁸⁴ Once again, Iran’s noncompliance with Resolution 1737’s 60-day order paved the way for yet another resolution by the UN Security Council.

On 24 March 2007, the Council passed Resolution 1747, imposing further sanctions on Iran and calling on it again to take the steps required by the IAEA Board.³⁸⁵ Iranian leaders once more criticized the resolution and declared that it would not suspend its nuclear program. At the same time, Iran did not close the doors on negotiations. On the contrary, it signaled it would step forward if its own conditions were met. That is, if the Iranian nuclear program would be dealt with through the IAEA instead of the UN Security Council, the Majlis would ratify the Additional Protocol.³⁸⁶ However, the Western powers refused Iran’s conditions, opting instead to pass additional sanctions.

Despite the UN Resolutions, negotiations between the EU-3 and Iran unexpectedly entered a new phase, and cooperation between Iran and the IAEA restarted after Turkey stepped in. In June 2007, the Director General of the IAEA El-Baradei and the Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani announced that they would begin drafting a plan of action to address outstanding issues

³⁸³ “Iran to Install 3000 Centrifuges at Natanz,” Payvand News, 24 December 2006, <http://www.payvand.com/news/06/dec/1253.html> (Accessed 5 October 2010)

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ UN Security Council, Resolution 1747, S/RES/1747, 24 March 2007.

³⁸⁶ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, İran Nükleer Krizi (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, Ocak 2009): 124

regarding Iran's nuclear program.³⁸⁷ After the resumption of cooperation, the new US National Intelligence Estimate about Iran's nuclear program reported that Iran had ended its nuclear weapon program in 2003 and had not restarted it. It also noted that even though it remained unknown whether Iran sought to build nuclear weapons, there remained no concrete evidence of plans of this.³⁸⁸ In fact, the report brought the Iranian nuclear issue back to the negotiation table. Since the report, several intelligence and defense experts have argued that Iranian nuclear ambitions can only be managed by ensuring the country's integration with the international community, rather than its isolation from it.³⁸⁹

Despite the US National Intelligence Estimate and Iran's continuing cooperation with the IAEA, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1803 on 3 March 2008. The Resolution called for Iran to suspend all nuclear activities within 90 days, and imposed additional sanctions, including the inspection of cargo suspected of carrying prohibited goods and the monitoring of financial institutions, namely Bank Melli and Bank Saderat.³⁹⁰ Iranian officials once again protested the UN Resolution. Iran's Ambassador to the UN, Mohammad Khazee, asserted that "Actions of some members of the Security Council against Iran's peaceful nuclear

³⁸⁷ "IAEA and Iran Agree to Draft 'Work Plan' to Address Nuclear Stand-Off," 22 June 2007, http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2007/iran_negotiator.html (Accessed 2 November 2010)

³⁸⁸ "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities," National Intelligence Estimate, November 2007, http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf (Accessed 31 October 2010)

³⁸⁹ Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, İran Nükleer Krizi (Ankara: USAK Yayınlari, Ocak 2009): 124.

³⁹⁰ UN Security Council, Resolution 1803, S/RES/1803, (3 March 2008)

program, along with the measures taken in this regard in the past, do not meet the minimum standards of legitimacy and legality.”³⁹¹

In the summer of 2008, a significant change in long-standing US policy occurred. While the US had previously opposed sending a US representative to even preliminary discussions with Tehran until it stopped enriching uranium, the Bush Administration sent a senior envoy to international talks.³⁹² Undersecretary of State William J. Burns joined a meeting in Geneva between the European Union’s High Representative for Foreign and Security Affairs Javier Solana and top Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili. The IAEA published a subsequent report on Iran’s nuclear program on 15 September 2008, according to which the IAEA verified the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran. However, the Agency was also reported not to have made any progress on its alleged studies and other outstanding issues, emphasizing Iran had continued enrichment related activities despite the Security Council decisions.³⁹³ In the meantime, Khamenei rejected the P5+1 proposal, which had included economic incentives, access to low-level water reactor technology and nuclear fuel in return for terminating enrichment efforts. Moreover, Iran informed the IAEA on 21 September 2009 that it was building a second enrichment facility.

³⁹¹ Statements by National Governments Regarding the Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1803 (2008), UN Department of Public Information, 3 March 2008, <http://wwwiranwatch.org/international/UNSC/unsc-govstatements-res1803-030308.htm> (Accessed 31 October 2010)

³⁹² Glenn Kesler, “American Envoy to Join Iran Talks,” Washington Post, 16 June 2008

³⁹³ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provision of Security Council Resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2008/38, (15 September 2008)

Arising from this context, Resolution 1835 was adopted by the UN Security Council on 27 September 2008. The resolution did not adopt further sanctions against Iran, but called on Iran to comply fully and without delay with its obligations under the previous resolutions, and to meet the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors.³⁹⁴ In the meantime, Iran and the P5+1 restarted talks, during which the IAEA's proposal to supply Iran with nuclear fuel for its research reactor was discussed. In the end, Iran rejected the deal and put forward a counterproposal, which was dismissed by the IAEA and the United States as inconsistent with earlier negotiations. Following the breakdown of negotiations, Iran informed the IAEA that it would begin enriching some of its low-enriched uranium to 20%.

In 2010, the negotiation process on Iran's nuclear program was totally blocked. The UN adopted Resolution 1929 in response, which enacted further sanctions against Iran. Diplomatic efforts were stalled, including an initiative by Turkey and Brazil on a nuclear fuel swap, which will be discussed later. A week later after the UN Resolution, on 16 June 2010, Iranian Vice-President and Head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization Ali Akbar Salehi announced that Iran was planning to design a new research reactor.³⁹⁵ In December 2010, in a note from the Permanent Mission of Iran to the IAEA, Iran announced that it had not suspended enrichment activities, pointing out that it had implemented the Additional Protocol

³⁹⁴ UN Security Council, Resolution 1803, S/RES/1835, (27 September 2008)

³⁹⁵ "Nuclear Weapons-2010 Developments," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/iran/nuke2010.htm> (Accessed 3 May 2011)

voluntarily for more than 2.5 years as a confidence building measure, despite it not being a legally binding instrument.³⁹⁶

In June and July 2011, Iranian and IAEA officials held several meetings in Vienna. At Iran's invitation, the IAEA Deputy Director General also visited Iran on August 2011. In November 2011, the IAEA published a report on Iran's nuclear program. The report revealed that "the Agency is increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile, about which the Agency continues to receive new information."³⁹⁷ As of November 2011, the concerns of the international community about the Iranian nuclear ambitions appear to have increased as a result of this latest report, which went on to say, "The Agency has serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme."³⁹⁸ The Iranian government again reacted negatively to the leaked information, and Iranian President Ahmedinejad stated that "The bullying powers of the world should know that Iran will not allow them to take any measures against the country."³⁹⁹ Iran's Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, also labeled the latest IAEA report "baseless

³⁹⁶ IAEA Information Circular, Communication dated 14 September 2010 received from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency Regarding the Report of the Director General on the Implementation of Safeguards in Iran, INFCIRC/805, (15 December 2010)

³⁹⁷ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2011/54, (2 September 2011)

³⁹⁸ IAEA Board Report, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2011/65, (8 November 2011)

³⁹⁹ "President Ahmedinejad: Israel, Transplanted Organ Body Rejects," Ettela'at International, 9 November 2011

and false.”⁴⁰⁰ As a result, further sanctions or a military strike against Iran could be adopted in the near future, although the concrete evidence about the Iran’s attempt to produce nuclear weapons has still not been acquired.

4.2. TURKEY’S POLICIES ON IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

As a member of the NPT since 1980, as well as other nonproliferation agreements related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems, Turkey has declared its support of establishing a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East.⁴⁰¹ A NWFZ is a group of neighboring states and/or extra-regional states with territorial interests in the region that mutually agree not to test, manufacture or stockpile nuclear weapons. By extension, Turkey is not in favor of Iran accumulating nuclear weapons. However, since nuclear energy should be permitted for peaceful use within a NWFZ, Turkey does not oppose to a peaceful nuclear program of Iran.

Turkey’s policy towards the Iranian nuclear program has been based on two principles. First, since the NPT does not ban civilian nuclear programs, Turkey acknowledges that Iran has a right to use nuclear energy for civilian purposes. More importantly, Turkey accepts Iran’s claim that its current nuclear program is

⁴⁰⁰ Reza H. Akbari, “Iran Rejects Allegations of Trying to Reach Nuclear Weaponization,” Inside Iran, 7 November 2011, <http://www.insideiran.org/media-analysis/iran-rejects-allegations-of-trying-to-reach-nuclear-weaponization/#more-3113> (Accessed 8 November 2011)

⁴⁰¹ So far, four specified zonal agreements have been reached. The first was the Antarctica Treaty of 1959, which demilitarized and denuclearized the continent. The second was the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which prohibited the introduction of nuclear weapons in Latin America in 1967. The third was the Treaty of Rarotonga, which established a South Pacific NWFZ in 1985. The last was the Treaty of Semipalatinsk, which was signed in 2006 and entered into force in 2009, establishing an NWFZ in Central Asia.

intended for civilian purposes. Taking into account the concerns of the international community about Iranian nuclear capacity, Turkey has also called on Iran to implement transparency measures and cooperate with the IAEA. Spokesperson for Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Namık Tan, for instance, explained that "We do not disregard the fact that Iran should engage in full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA [to] take additional confidence-building measures to prove that its nuclear program is exclusively designed for peaceful purposes."⁴⁰² Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül also mentioned that "As a signatory of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Iran has 100 percent responsibility to show transparency on the nuclear issue."⁴⁰³

Second, Turkey believes a diplomatic solution is the only viable option for convincing Iran to respond fully to the concerns of the international community. A broad consensus has developed among Turkish elites that any military action against Iran will have catastrophic consequences, therefore Turkish officials have taken every opportunity to express its opposition to the possibility of a military strike. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for instance, criticized the possibility, observing that even though the Iraq War had accomplished nothing, the world was discussing using the same tactics against Iran.⁴⁰⁴ He also underlined that "We do not want any strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. This would be a grave mistake."⁴⁰⁵ Turkey

⁴⁰² "Ankara Shares International Concerns over Iran," Hürriyet Daily News, 3 February 2006

⁴⁰³ "Gül: Turkey against WMDs in Mideast," Hürriyet Daily News, 3 May 2006

⁴⁰⁴ Hakan Albayrak, "Türkiye İran'ı Satmıyor," Yeni Şafak, 28 September 2009

⁴⁰⁵ "Turkey's Prime Minister Warns Against Attack on Iran's Nuclear Facilities," Inside Iran, 30 September 2009, <http://www.insideiran.org/media-analysis/turkey%e2%80%99s-prime-minister-warns-against-attack-on-iran%e2%80%99s-nuclear-facilities/> (Accessed 25 December 2009)

opposes not only military measures, but also economic sanctions, because Turkey is familiar with the challenges of the sanctions that had been imposed on Iraq.⁴⁰⁶

Murat Mercan, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, noted,

As it has been observed in many countries, international sanctions and measures always affect ordinary people more than ruling elite. This is valid for Iran as well. Turkey has deep-rooted historical, cultural and religious ties with Iran. In other words, Iranians are not only our neighbors, but also our friends and brothers. Not a single Turkish citizen can accept that his/her friends or brothers/sisters suffer from unfair treatment by the international community. Indeed, compared to other countries in the region, Iranians live under poor economic conditions. They do not have access to latest technology in general and are deprived of basic infrastructure facilitating daily life. There is no reason to degrade the existing life standard but enough reason to increase it.⁴⁰⁷

At the same time, Turkey pays attention not to appear to support the Iranian nuclear program unconditionally, thus it repeated calls for Iran to be more transparent and to continue to work with the IAEA. Turkey has also stressed the importance of Iran's nuclear program remaining within the limits of the NPT.

4.2.1. Turkey's Active Involvement in the Negotiation Process: Facilitator or Mediator?

Before analyzing Turkey's active involvement, it is worth mentioning the debate over the definition of Turkey's role in the Iranian nuclear program negotiation process. In the literature on this issue, two terms – *facilitator* and *mediator* – are commonly used in this characterization, partly as a result of semantics, and partly because Iran and the United States object to label Turkey as a *mediator*. The Dictionary of International Relations states that “the would-be mediator is

⁴⁰⁶ Kadir Üstün “Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions,” *Insight Turkey* 12, No. 3 (2010)

⁴⁰⁷ Murat Mercan, “Turkish Foreign Policy and Iran,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 8, No. 4 (Winter 2009/2010): 19

primarily a facilitator who seeks to establish or restore communication between the parties.”⁴⁰⁸ Taking into account this definition, it can be argued that a *mediator* must also be a *facilitator*, but that a *facilitator* cannot be a *mediator*. Although both *facilitators* and *mediators* work towards the settlement of conflict between parties, the term *facilitator* does not qualify as an official role in the negotiation process. *Mediator*, however, has official responsibilities and obligations while working for the settlement of conflict between parties.

It is observed that there are three significant constraints on the Turkish mediating role. The first is caused by the absence of a call from the parties for Turkey to act as mediator. As noted by Wall and Lynn, the primary condition of the *mediator* role is the call by parties involved in a dispute, negotiation, or interaction, for a third party’s assistance in the negotiation process.⁴⁰⁹ In this respect, Ghahremanpour rejects characterizing the Turkish role as one of mediation because neither side of the dispute accepts it in this role.⁴¹⁰ Turkey can thus only function the role of a facilitator in the Iranian nuclear program controversy. When negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 were blocked in May 2006 due to Iran’s rejection of the P5+1 offer, Turkey announced its willingness to take an active role

⁴⁰⁸ Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, Dictionary of International Relations, (Penguin Books, 1998): 319

⁴⁰⁹ James A. Wall, Jr. and Ann Lynn, “Mediation: A Current Review,” The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 37, No. 1 (March 1993): 164

⁴¹⁰ ”ترکیه میان ایران و غرب منافع ملی را می بیند” (Turkey looks for its national interests between Iran and the West) فهرمانپور با رحمن گفت و گو (Interview with Rahman Ghahremanpour), <http://irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/4/bodyView/7029/0/%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%DB%8C%D9%87.%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86.%D8%A7%D9%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86.%D9%88.%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8.%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B9.%D9%85%D9%84%D9%89.%D8%B1%D8%A7.%D9%85%D9%89.%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AF.html> 1388 اسفند 14 (Mart 2009) (Accessed 3 June 2011)

in helping to pursue a diplomatic solution, implying a mediator role. Although welcomed by the United States, Turkey's involvement was not accepted as mediation. US State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack stated, for instance, that

We welcome the input of other countries from around the globe who have an interest in seeing that Iran is not able to obtain nuclear weapons, or know-how, or the technology to produce nuclear weapons. We welcome discussions with our Turkish colleagues on Iran and welcome their suggestions. (...) Our view at this point [about Turkey taking on a mediating role] is that there are plenty of channels of communication, if the Iranians want to pass information to us or we want to pass information to them.⁴¹¹

As is clear in the statement above, Washington did not see any need for Turkish mediation with Iran. Neither did Iran see any need for Turkish mediation, which will be discussed further. The IAEA as well backed Turkey's role, but it did not clarify in which terms. IAEA Director General Mohammed El Baradei, for instance, stated that Turkey can use its unique position, being a Muslim-majority country and a NATO member, to persuade and encourage Iran to return to the negotiation table.⁴¹² Turkey remained actively involved in the negotiation process without an officially defined role.

⁴¹¹ Ümit Enginsoy, "US Cold to 'Turkish Mediation' on Iran," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 19 May 2006

⁴¹² "El Baradei Calls for Turkish Action in Iranian Nuclear Row," *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 6 July 2006, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/34594/el-baradei-calls-for-turkish-action-in-iranian-nuclear-row.html> (Accessed 8 May 2010). The same argument was also made by Alon Ben Meir. According to him, Turkey could play a unique role within NATO by advancing diplomatic initiatives such as re-engaging Iran, while representing the collective concerns and interests of fellow members. Its membership of NATO enhances its credibility in communicating with both Iran and the West. He argues that as a Muslim majority state, Turkey, and especially the current Islamic-oriented AKP government, is likely to be more trusted by Iran than others. Alon Ben Meir, "Turkey and Iran's Nuclear Challenge," *The World Today*, November 2010 www.theworldtoday.org

The second constraint on Turkey regarding the mediator role relates to its capacity.

According to the mediation literature, the role of mediator is deeper than one of persuasion or of conveying messages between parties. Wall and Lynn note that

A mediator might actually take steps to set up the interaction or negotiation between parties and then pressure them to accept mediation. (...) The mediator manages their power [the parties' power] – usually attempting to strike a power balance – and proposes or dictates specific agreement points. In addition, (...) mediators can determine what points are negotiable, reframe the dispute, bring pressures to bear from other third parties, use personal power to exact an agreement, and, in general, fine-tune various approaches to fit the particular negotiation.⁴¹³

Taking these factors into account, it is hard to say that Turkey could act as a mediator between the United States and Iran. Bonab's argument is also useful for conceptualizing Turkey's capacity to mediate between Iran and the international community. According to him,

Arms control issues are among the contents of high politics and mediation in these issues is not an easy undertaking even for great powers. (...) [Therefore] it is clear that the great powers may not be ready to accept the mediation of a regional actor like Turkey. (...) [Furthermore,] mediation on Iran's nuclear activities in 2006 was not the outcome of a long-term confidence building measures [sic] between Iran and Turkey. On the contrary, this mediation can mostly be regarded as one factor in the increasing improvement in the bilateral relationship between two countries.⁴¹⁴

The third constraint on Turkey's mediation stems from Iran's question about Turkey's neutrality. Since impartiality and neutrality are seen as prerequisites, Iran's doubts about Turkey's regional ambitions, which will be explained later as a factor working against rapprochement, created a serious challenge to Turkey's acceptance as a mediator.

⁴¹³ James A. Wall, Jr. and Ann Lynn, "Mediation: A Current Review," The Journal of Conflict Resolution 37, No. 1 (March 1993): 165

⁴¹⁴ Rahman G. Bonab, "Turkey's Emerging Role as a Mediator on Iran's Nuclear Activities," Insight Turkey 11, No. 3 (2009)

Despite these challenges, Turkey was still willing to take an active role in the negotiation process on the Iranian nuclear program. To that end, a number of high-level visits were realized between Turkey and Iran in 2006. On 24 June 2006, for instance, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül visited Tehran to talk about the P5+1 incentive package offered to Iran. Turkey did not see itself only as a messenger, and Gül specified that Turkey was not conveying the message of the West, but a message of its own after having heard all sides of the dispute. He added that Turkey would continue its facilitating role towards a diplomatic solution.⁴¹⁵ From the Iranian side, however, Turkey's involvement was perceived as an effort to bring the sides together as a facilitator. Larijani, Secretary of Supreme National Security Council of Iran, said that "Turkey could be a bridge between Iran and some countries," in a press conference on 24 June 2006 with the Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül.⁴¹⁶ Turkey thus hosted the European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Affairs Javier Solana, Director of the IAEA Mohammed El-Baradei and Iran's nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani in Turkey on 25 April of 2007.⁴¹⁷ Although the meeting did not yield concrete results, Turkey successfully played a facilitator role on this occasion.

Escalation of tensions between the West and Iran with adoption of further sanctions by the UN Security Council in 2008 encouraged Turkey to continue its active role. In this context, Turkey declared it would fulfill a "mediating" role in

⁴¹⁵ "Türkiye'den İran'a Nükleer Alanda Beş Mesaj," Hürriyet, 26 June 2006

⁴¹⁶ Rahman G. Bonab, "Turkey's Emerging Role as a Mediator on Iran's Nuclear Activities," *Insight Turkey* 11, No. 3 (2009): 170

⁴¹⁷ Hakkı Uygur, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions and Turkey," SETA Policy Brief, n. 7 (2008): 6

the negotiation process. To that end, Turkey hosted Stephen Hadley, assistant to the US President on National Security Affairs, and Manoucher Mottaki, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, on consecutive days in June 2008. Turkey called on both sides for dialogue as a confidence-building measure.⁴¹⁸ The timing of both visits to Turkey attracted attention, since they took place just 48 hours before the meeting in Geneva. After the meeting with Stephen Hadley, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan announced that "Turkey is ready to do whatever the parties expect it to do. Indeed, we have been in intense contacts over the past month. We want this issue to be handled through dialogue."⁴¹⁹

Although the visits of Iranian and American officials increased expectations among the Turkish officials, in the subsequent months it became clear that Iran's stance on a Turkish mediating role had not changed. Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Monoucher Mottaki, for instance, assessed his visit to Ankara as just an opportunity to exchange ideas on further cooperation in regional issues between two prominent countries in the region.⁴²⁰ Iran's President Ahmedinejad also described Turkey's attempts as "friendly efforts,"⁴²¹ but Turkey's role did not extend into mediation.⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ "Iran'dan ABD'ye Sıcak Mesaj," Zaman, 19 July 2008

⁴¹⁹ "Turkey has been Involved in Iran Nuclear Talks, Babacan Says," Today's Zaman, 18 June 2006

⁴²⁰ Kerem Yıldırım and Çağlar Dölek, "Turkey to 'Bridge' Iran and the US over the Nuclear Impasse," Caspian Weekly (13 October 2008)

⁴²¹ "Ahmedinejad says Turkey Engaged in 'Friendly Effort,'" Hürriyet Daily News, 15 August 2008

⁴²² "ترکیه میان ایران و غرب منافع ملی را می بیند" (Turkey looks for its national interests between Iran and the West)

گفتگو با رحمن قهرمانپور (Interview with Rahman Ghahremanpour),
<http://irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/4/bodyView/7029/0/%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%DB%8C%D9%>

Despite this reluctance by the US and Iran for Turkey's mediation role, the issue of Turkish mediation was once again brought to the table when Obama came to power in the United States. From the Turkish perspective, the election of Barack Obama created new opportunity for it to mediate between the US and Iran because President Obama accepted entering negotiations without any preconditions, unlike his predecessor. Turkey persistently offered itself as a potential mediator in accordance with its secure neighborhood philosophy, as articulated by Davutoğlu.⁴²³ Prime Minister Erdoğan reiterated that Turkey was ready and willing to take on this role.⁴²⁴ However, Washington once again declined Turkey's offer. US State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack commented again that there was no need for Turkey's mediation because communication channel with Iran were already open. He also emphasized that the negotiation process between Iran and the P5+1 was the only process that had the support of the UN.⁴²⁵

Like the United States, Iran also remained reluctant about Turkish mediation. However, the reason for Iran's opposition changed. With the election of Obama, Iran saw an opportunity to resolve problems relating to its nuclear program through dialogue. However, when it became clear that the Obama Administration's

[87.%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86.%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86.%D9%88.%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8.%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B9.%D9%85%D9%84%D9%89.%D8%B1%D8%A7.%D9%85%D9%89.%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AF.html](#) 1388 اسفند 14 (Mart 2009) (Accessed 3 June 2011)

⁴²³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkish Vision of Regional and Global Order: Theoretical Background and Practical Implementation," Political Reflection 1, No. 1 (June-July-August 2010): 44-45

⁴²⁴ Sabrina Tavernise, "Turkish Leader Volunteers to be US-Iran Mediator," The New York Times, 11 November 2008

⁴²⁵ "Ankara'nın Önerilerine ABD'den Ret," Hürriyet, 20 November 2008

policies had remained unchanged from those of the Bush Administration, Iran declared there to be no need for Turkey's mediation because of the complexity of the problem between Iran and the United States. From the Iranian perspective, Iran and the Western countries cannot compromise on Iran's nuclear program because they cannot fulfill Iran's economic and political expectations due to their double standard. In this context, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Hassan Qashqavi, stated that although Tehran would not obstruct Ankara's efforts to mediate nuclear talks, their issues and problems went beyond the usual political problems between two states.⁴²⁶ The Iranian Ambassador to Turkey, Bahman Hosseinpour, also declared that "We understand Erdogan's good will and thank him. But the problems between Iran and the US are so grave that they cannot be resolved through a mediator. Regarding the nuclear issue, US and Iranian demands are clear, so mediation is not needed."⁴²⁷ Iran's President Ahmedinejad, as well, passed up Turkey's offer, saying that "There is no need for mediation. Our stances are clear: if there is justice and respect, no issue would remain."⁴²⁸ Once again Turkey's offer of mediation was declined.

4.2.2. The Road to the Tehran Declaration

The ongoing controversy over Iran's nuclear program and the extension of sanctions against Iran motivated Turkey to remain actively involved. On 14 November 2009, Turkey offered to store enriched uranium for use in Iranian

⁴²⁶ "Iran Accepts Turkish Mediator for Obama Talks," Press TV, 17 November 2008

⁴²⁷ "ABD'den Sonra İran'dan da Ret," Hürriyet, 22 November 2008

⁴²⁸ "No Mediator Between Iran and the US," Iran Review, 14 March 2009, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/No_Mediator_between_Iran_US.htm (Accessed 20 March 2011)

atomic power plants. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both Turkey and Iran thus conducted several mutual visits to discuss the fuel swap plan, but their efforts also ended in no result.

When the negotiations process between Iran and the P5+1 deadlocked again in 2010, at the Nuclear Security Summit, held on 12-13 April 2010 in Washington, this situation led the US to pursue further sanctions against Iran. However, Turkey and Brazil opposed the proposed new sanctions and decided to pursue a joint diplomatic initiative to prevent further sanctions and to find a diplomatic solution.⁴²⁹ From the Turkish perspective, its nonpermanent membership in the UN Security Council made it a good candidate to take on a mediating role in the ongoing nuclear issue,⁴³⁰ and Turkish and Brazilian officials met several times with Iranian officials to help find diplomatic solutions.

In fact, Turkey and Brazil claimed to have intervened to the negotiation process as a broker. As mentioned by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of each, their initiative was conducted in consultation with the United States and other allies,⁴³¹ leading them to conclude that they had full support from the international community. However, the United States had cautioned them over whether or not Iran was negotiating in good faith. Iran's rejection of the IAEA's proposal to enrich and

⁴²⁹ "İran için Ortak Hareket," *Hürriyet*, 14 April 2010; "Davutoğlu'ndan BM'ye İran Eleştirisi," *Hürriyet*, 15 April 2010; "Brezilya: Türkiye ile Arabuluculuk Yapabiliriz," NTVMSNBC, 28 April 2010

⁴³⁰ Kadir Üstün, "Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions," *Insight Turkey* 12, No. 3 (2010): 21

⁴³¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu and Celso Amorim, "Giving Diplomacy a Chance," *The New York Times*, 26 May 2010

stockpile uranium as a third party had raised questions. The United States also perceived the nuclear fuel swap deal as risky. US President Obama sent a letter to Brazilian President Lula da Silva, in which he expressed that

We understand from you [Brazil], Turkey and other that Iran (...) would retain its LEU [low-enriched uranium] on its territory until there is a simultaneous exchange of its LEU for nuclear fuel. As General Jones noted during our meeting, it will require one year for any amount of nuclear fuel to be produced. (...) First, Iran would be able to continue to stockpile LEU throughout this time, which would enable them to acquire an LEU stockpile equivalent to the amount needed for two or three nuclear weapons in a year's time. Second, there would be no guarantee that Iran would ultimately agree to the final exchange. (...) Throughout this process, instead of building confidence Iran has undermined confidence in the way it has approached this opportunity. (...) To begin a constructive diplomatic process, Iran has to convey to the IAEA a constructive commitment to engagement through official channels – something it has failed to do. Meanwhile, we will pursue sanctions on the timeline (...)⁴³²

Despite US concerns, the foreign ministers of Iran, Brazil and Turkey signed the Tehran Declaration on 17 May 2010. The Tehran Declaration emphasized two main principles. First, Turkey, Brazil and Iran reiterated their commitment to the NPT and “the rights 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 without discrimination.” Second, the declaration commented on the strong conviction of the three countries:

the nuclear fuel exchange is a starting point to begin cooperation and a positive constructive move forward among nations. Such a move should lead to a positive interaction and cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear activities replacing and avoiding all kinds of confrontation through refraining from measures, actions and rhetorical statements that would jeopardize Iran’s rights and obligations under the NPT.⁴³³

As a result, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast announced that Tehran had agreed to a draft proposal whereby Iran would send

⁴³² US President Barack Obama’s letter to Brazilian President Lula, 20 April 2010, Politica Externa Brasileira, <http://www.politicaexterna.com/11023/brazil-iran-turkey-nuclear-negotiations-obamas-letter-to-lula> (Accessed 15 June 2011)

⁴³³ “17.05.2010 Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Iran and Brazil,” Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17_05_2010-joint-declaration-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-turkey_-iran-and-brazil_en.mfa (Accessed 8 June 2011)

some 1200 kg of its 3.5 percent enriched uranium over to Turkey in exchange for a total of 120 kg of 20 percent.⁴³⁴ Based on the agreement, the fuel swap would take place nearly a month after receiving official approval from the Vienna Group, which consists of representatives from Iran, France, Russia and the US, as well as the IAEA.

From the Turkish and Brazilian perspectives, the deal represented an important achievement towards promoting a diplomatic solution to the ongoing debate over Iran's nuclear program. In addition, both Turkish and Iranian officials perceived the agreement as a sign of Iran's good will, which would be the first step to resolving the problem through diplomatic means. Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu commented that "The swap deal shows that Tehran wants to open a constructive path. There is no more ground for new sanctions and pressures."⁴³⁵ In addition, Turkey did not want Iran to justify developing nuclear weapons on the pretext of not receiving enough support from the rest of the world for its diplomatic efforts.⁴³⁶ The foreign ministers of Turkey and Brazil thus sent a letter to the UN Security Council declaring, "Brazil and Turkey are convinced that it is time to give a chance for negotiations and to avoid measures that are detrimental to a peaceful solution of this matter."⁴³⁷ However, the nuclear fuel swap agreement

⁴³⁴ "Salehi: Acceptance of Turkey-Brazil Offer Signifies Iran's Good Will," Fars News Agency, 17 May 2010

⁴³⁵ Yigal Schleifer, "Turkey's Approach to Iran a Calculated Gamble," Iran Review, 22 May 2010, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkey_s_Approach_to_Iran_a_Calculated_Gamble.htm (Accessed 8 May 2011)

⁴³⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Position: Resuscitate the Nuclear Swap Deal," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 66, No. 6 (2010): 107

⁴³⁷ "Brazil, Turkey Urge Delay in UN Sanctions Vote on Iran," BBC, 19 May 2010,

did not convince the West. Catherine Ashton, a spokeswoman for the European Union's foreign policy stated that "If Iran has now accepted the IAEA proposal, this is welcome, but it [the nuclear fuel swap deal] does not solve the fundamental problem, which is that the international community has serious concerns about the peaceful intention of the Iran nuclear program."⁴³⁸

European concerns were mainly about the continuation of Iran's enrichment activities. The P5+1 voiced its deep concern over the nuclear fuel swap, which it perceived as an attempt by Iran to sidestep further sanctions without actually taking steps to address international concerns about its nuclear program.⁴³⁹

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10126252> (Accessed 19 May 2010)

⁴³⁸ Yigal Schleifer, "Turkey's Approach to Iran a Calculated Gamble," Iran Review, 22 May 2010, http://wwwiranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkey_s_Approach_to_Iran_a_Calculated_Gamble_.htm (Accessed 8 May 2011)

⁴³⁹ "Text: Powers Dismiss Iran Fuel Offer Before UN Vote," Reuters, 9 June 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/09/us-nuclear-iran-response-text-idUSTRE6582W120100609> (Accessed 9 June 2010)

"The Joint Declaration (JD) does not address Iran's production or retention of 19.75 percent enriched uranium. The cessation of such enrichment and the removal of the 19.75 percent uranium already produced (at the same time as the removal of the 1,200 kg of 3.5 percent LEU) should be an integral part of any TRR refueling arrangement.

-- The JD asserts a right for Iran to engage in enrichment activities despite the fact that several U.N. Security Council resolutions prohibit Iran from pursuing such activities.

-- The JD does not indicate that Iran is willing to meet with the P5+1 countries to address the international community's concerns about its nuclear program. Although Iran agreed last October to meet again soon with those countries to focus on the nuclear issue -- including proposals previously put forward by both sides -- Iran has never agreed to hold this meeting. A P5+1 meeting to focus on the nuclear issue is an essential step to address the international community's concerns regarding Iran's overall nuclear program, which have been well-documented in numerous UNSC resolutions and IAEA reports.

-- Unlike the IAEA's October proposal, the JD does not set a date certain for removal of the 1,200 kg of 3.5 percent LEU from Iran. The JD states that the LEU would be removed within one month of the conclusion of an implementation agreement. But because there is no timeframe specified for completing that agreement, there is no deadline for removal of the LEU.

-- The timeline for the full delivery of the fuel assemblies to Iran is unrealistic. The IAEA's Project and Supply Agreement called for initial delivery of fuel within about one year to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the TRR, with remaining fuel to be delivered at a later date. The JD calls for all the fuel to be delivered in one year, which we are confident would be impossible to meet.

The JD indicates that, if Iran decided unilaterally that the provisions of the arrangement were not being respected, Turkey would be obliged, upon the request of Iran, to "return swiftly and

Regarding the P5+1 criticism, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Davutoğlu, stated that

Turkey's and Brazil's role was to negotiate the swap deal to build confidence between sides. The enrichment activity of Iran is a topic of the negotiations between P5+1 and Iran. Turkey and Brazil are not in a position to negotiate the suspension of enrichment activities on behalf of P5+1 or the IAEA.⁴⁴⁰

While diplomatic efforts continued, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the United States had agreed with other Western countries on a draft resolution on further sanctions against Iran, despite the nuclear fuel swap deal. As a result, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1929, which demanded Iran suspend enrichment activities. It cited the risk of proliferation posed by the program and noted that Iran had failed to cooperate with the IAEA. The Resolution dictated that all states work to prevent the supply, sale or transfer to Iran of battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems. It also asked states to take all necessary measures to prevent the transfer of technology or technical assistance related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons to Iran. In addition, the resolution contained provisions blocking Iran's use of the international financial system, particularly its banks, which would be used to fund

unconditionally Iran's LEU to Iran." Under the previous "escrow" proposal, the return of LEU would be justified if the parties failed to deliver fuel assemblies to Iran as agreed.

-- The JD states that Iran's LEU would be the "property" of Iran while in Turkey. The IAEA proposal stated the IAEA would maintain "custody" of the LEU throughout the process.

-- Important technical details of the fuel resupply arrangement are not addressed in the JD. For example, it does not specify what happens to the 1,200 kg of LEU held in escrow in Turkey after the fuel assemblies are delivered to Iran.

-- The JD does not account for Iran's accumulation of LEU since the IAEA first proposed the TRR deal. Removal of 1,200 kg at present would leave Iran substantial stocks, decreasing the confidence-building value of the original proposal. The JD provides no alternative means of ensuring that the confidence-building element of the arrangement would be maintained."

⁴⁴⁰ "Dışşleri Bakanı Davutoğlu'nun İran ile Varılan Nükleer Uzlaşı ile Güncel Dış Politika Gelişmeleri Hakkında Basın Toplantısı Metni," Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 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 (Accessed 8 June 2011)

proliferation activities.⁴⁴¹ As a result of the UN Resolution, the initiative of Turkey and Brazil was negated.

Brazil and Turkey voted against the resolution, realizing that any further sanctions would undermine the diplomacy track. Ertuğrul Apakan, Turkey's Ambassador to the UN, who spoke before the vote, stated that

Turkey wished to see a restoration of international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. To that end, seeing no viable alternative to a diplomatic and peaceful solution, Turkey had signed, with Brazil and Iran, the Tehran Declaration, which aimed to provide nuclear fuel to the Tehran Nuclear Research Reactor. It had created "a new reality" with respect to Iran's nuclear program. The agreement was designed as a confidence-building measure, which, if implemented, would contribute to the resolution of substantive issues relating to that nuclear program in a positive and constructive atmosphere. Sufficient time and space should be allowed for its implementation. Turkey was therefore deeply concerned that the adoption of sanctions would negatively affect the momentum created by the Tehran Declaration and the overall diplomatic process.⁴⁴²

Stressing Turkey's wishes to find a diplomatic solution, Apakan added that

Our expectation from Iran is that to work towards implementation of the Tehran Declaration [it] must remain on the table and Iran should come to the negotiating table with the 5+1 [five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany] to take up its nuclear program, including the suspension of enrichment.⁴⁴³

Mohammed Khazee, Iran's Ambassador to the UN, also addressed to the Council, saying that

there was robust cooperation with IAEA, with more than 4,500 person-day inspections permitted since 2003. But even so, a few Western countries continued their provocative behavior, exemplified by the politically motivated reactions to the deal for the supply of fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor. However, Iran still responded positively to the efforts of Turkey and Brazil, which had pursued that deal in good faith, leading to a declaration on the exchange of fuel. But instead of welcoming that agreement, the hostile Powers had immediately introduced the current resolution.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ UN Security Council, Resolution 1929, S/RES/1929, (9 June 2010)

⁴⁴² "Security Council Imposes Additional Sanction in Iran, Voting 12 in Favor to 2 Against, with 1 Abstention: Brazil, Turkey, Lebanon Say Tehran Declaration could Boost Diplomatic Efforts, While Sanctions Represent Failure Diplomacy," UN Security Council, Department of Public Information, SC/9948, 9 June 2010, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm> (Accessed 13 November 2010)

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ "Security Council Imposes Additional Sanction in Iran, Voting 12 in Favor to 2 Against, with 1 Abstention: Brazil, Turkey, Lebanon Say Tehran Declaration could Boost Diplomatic Efforts,

By the adoption of the Resolution 1929 while diplomatic efforts continued, it became clear that the West did not consider the nuclear fuel swap deal between Iran, Turkey and Brazil to be a confidence-building measure.

4.3. FACTORS THAT WORK IN FAVOR OF RAPPROCHEMEENT

As seen, Turkey's stance towards the Iranian nuclear program brought the two countries closer to each other. This section of the chapter will analyze four factors that have facilitated this rapprochement. The first factor is Turkey's approach to Iran's nuclear program, which is based on the view that it has civilian rather than military purposes. The second factor is the absence of threat perception in Turkey from Iran. The third factor is common opposition to the current nonproliferation policies of the Western countries. The final factor relates to Turkey's plans to establish its own nuclear program in the coming years.

4.3.1. Iran's Nuclear Program: Not for Weapons, but for Energy

Although the United States, Israel and some Western countries argue that Iran seeks to accumulate nuclear weapons with its current nuclear program, Iran has rejected this, emphasizing that its nuclear program is only to use the technology for energy production. Iranian President Ahmedinejad, for instance, insisted that “Iran's nuclear activities are in the framework of the NPT and under the supervision of the IAEA, besides we are enriching uranium to a level of 5 percent

While Sanctions Represent Failure Diplomacy,” UN Security Council, Department of Public Information, SC/9948, 9 June 2010, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm> (Accessed 13 November 2010)

and no more which could only be used as fuel for power plants.”⁴⁴⁵ Iran’s Defense Minister, Brigadier General Mostafa Mohammed-Najjar, also attested that Tehran has never sought nuclear weapons at any point in time.⁴⁴⁶ As the concerns of the international community have increased, President Ahmedinejad has expressed its purpose in stronger terms, saying that “the cultured and civilized Iranian nation has no need to make atomic bombs.”⁴⁴⁷ Iran’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Manoucher Mottaki, has also underscored the same sentiment, mentioning that “We believe that if atomic weapons had been able to prevent crisis, they would have prevented many crises in the past.”⁴⁴⁸ Recently, Iran’s Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, also commented that weapons of mass destruction have no place in Iran’s defense doctrine, as Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, had declared them “un-Islamic” and “religiously forbidden.”⁴⁴⁹ Most importantly, the IAEA inspectors had as yet found no concrete evidence that Iran had been developing nuclear weapons. From the Iranian perspective, this should have been sufficient evidence of the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities.

⁴⁴⁵ “President: Iran’s N-Activities Peaceful,” Iran Review, 6 October 2007, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/President_Iran_s_N_activities_peaceful.htm (Accessed 15 June 2010)

⁴⁴⁶ “Iran Seeks Nuclear Technology for Peaceful Purposes,” Iran Review, 12 December 2007, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/Iran_Seeks_Nuclear_Technology_for_Peaceful_Pur_poses.htm (Accessed 15 June 2010)

⁴⁴⁷ “Iranian Nation Need No Atomic Bomb,” Iran Review, 10 November 2011, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/Iranian_Nation_Need_No_Atomic_Bombs.htm (Accessed 17 November 2011)

⁴⁴⁸ “Nuclear Weapon Has No Place in Iran’s Defensive Doctrine,” Iran Review, 27 January 2008, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/Nuclear_Weapon_has_no_Place_in_Iran_s_Defensi_ve_Doctrine.htm (Accessed 15 June 2010)

⁴⁴⁹ “No Place for WMDs in Iran’s Defense Doctrine,” Iran Review, 15 November 2011, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/No_Place_for_WMDs_in_Iran_s_Defense_Doctrin_e.htm (Accessed 17 November 2011) This view was also expressed by an Iranian official, who wanted to remain anonymous, at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ankara. Interview conducted on 14 May 2009.

Like Iran, Turkey supports the rights of every country to access nuclear capability for civilian purposes in accordance with Article 4 of the Nonproliferation Treaty. On the basis of the ruling party's belief that the program had only civilian purposes, then, it has supported Iran's right to nuclear energy.⁴⁵⁰ After he visited Tehran in October 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, explained, "I have talked to key Iranian officials about the nuclear issue. I'm convinced that Iran is only developing nuclear energy, not weapons."⁴⁵¹ He also expressed the belief that every country has the right to peacefully use nuclear energy.⁴⁵² In 2010, Erdoğan reiterated this stance, asserting that "It's only rumors that Iran is making nuclear weapons. I believe it is Iran's most natural right to employ nuclear energy for civilian purposes."⁴⁵³ President Abdullah Gül also supported Iran's right to use nuclear energy, while emphasizing the need for transparency.⁴⁵⁴ Since Turkey is convinced that Iran does not seek to acquire nuclear weapons, the issue is one of low politics for Turkey that is vastly different from those of the United States, Israel and some Western countries. This fact has brought Turkey and Iran closer to each other.

⁴⁵⁰ As will be seen in the next part of this chapter, military/bureaucratic circles have more doubts about Iranian nuclear ambitions than the current ruling elites. For more information on the variety of views in Turkey, see: Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Nilsu Goren, "Turkish Perceptions and Nuclear Proliferation," Strategic Insights VIII, Issue 2 (April 2009)

⁴⁵¹ "Erdoğan: Nükleer Enerji Çalışması Barışçı," Radikal, 27 October 2009

⁴⁵² "Erdogan: Iran has the Right to Use Peaceful Nuclear Energy," Islamic Republic News Agency, 28 July 2010. (Accessed 29 July 2010)

⁴⁵³ "Erdoğan: Only Rumors that Iran is Making Nuclear Weapons," Hürriyet Daily News, 17 March 2010

⁴⁵⁴ Press TV, 17 February 2011 (Accessed on 9 May 2011 through the official website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/mulakatlar/360/79019/preb-tv-iran.html>)

4.3.2. Absence of a Threat Perception from Iran

In the literature on International Relations, a threat is defined as a situation in which an actor has either capability or intention to cause a negative impact on another actor.⁴⁵⁵ As seen from the definition of a threat, the capability and intent of a nation are the main elements in other states' threat perceptions. Singer formulates the relationship between threat perception, capability and intent with a quasi-mathematical formula that follows:

$$\text{Threat Perception} = \text{Estimated Capability} \times \text{Estimated Intent.}^{456}$$

By this formulation, estimated capability and estimated intent determine a threat perception. According to a realist view, asymmetries in power will automatically trigger perceptions of threat. They advocate that if State A has more power than State B, State B should feel at risk because in an anarchical international system, there is nothing to prevent that state from using force. From this point of view, Turkey should perceive a threat from Iran's nuclear program even though it has not been proven that its nuclear program has military purposes. However, the constructivist approach is more appropriate for understanding Turkey's current stance on Iran's nuclear program. According to the constructivists, a shared sense of identity can reduce and in some cases eliminate threat perception. As a result of this shared identity, it is believed that neither intends to create negative consequences for the other, which in turn increases willingness to cooperate.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ David L. Rousseau, "Identity, Power and Threat Perception: A Cross-National Experimental Study," Journal of Conflict Resolution 51, No. 5 (October 2007): 743

⁴⁵⁶ J. David Singer, "Threat Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma," The Journal of Conflict Resolution 2, No. 1 (March 1958)

⁴⁵⁷ David L. Rousseau, "Identity, Power and Threat Perception: A Cross-National Experimental Study," Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 51, No. 5 (October 2007): 750

Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu attests to the fact that Turkey does not perceive a threat from Iran or any of its neighbors.⁴⁵⁸ This view was also reflected in the National Security Document of 2010, where Iran was crossed off the list of threats to Turkey, in contrast to its earlier version.⁴⁵⁹ Moreover, most of the ruling elite argue that even if Iran produced nuclear weapons, Turkey would not be its target, leading a Turkish official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to describe Iran's nuclear program a risk, but not a threat.⁴⁶⁰

The lack of threat perception is also caused by the belief that American and Israeli intelligence estimations on Iran's nuclear capability are exaggerated as a part of psychological propaganda towards opponents of war both within their own societies and in other countries. In the early 2000s, Israeli intelligence reports estimated Iran would make a nuclear bomb before the end of the decade. In 2009, Israel's Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, contended Iran could possess a nuclear weapon by 2011. Finally, Israel's former intelligence chief, Meir Dagan, predicted Iran would not be able to build a nuclear weapon before 2015 at the earliest.⁴⁶¹ In addition to these Israeli estimates, conflicting US assessments about Iran's nuclear program have also raised questions among Turkish ruling elites. For instance, US National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program, released in 2007, noted

⁴⁵⁸“Davutoglu'ndan 6 Kritik Mesaj”, Hürriyet, 23 December 2009

⁴⁵⁹ Siamak Kakaei, “Iran in Turkey's National Security Document,” Iran Review, (15 February 2011); News on Turkey, http://www.tusiad.org/_rsc/shared/file/SNT-No13-Nov-2010.pdf, November 2010 (Accessed 5 September 2011)

⁴⁶⁰ Author's interview with a Turkish official who wished to remain anonymous from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interview conducted in Ankara on 11 October 2009

⁴⁶¹ Isabel Kershner, “Israeli Ex-Spy Predicts Delay for Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,” The New York Times, 7 January 2011

that there was no concrete evidence for an ongoing nuclear weapons program or undeclared nuclear facilities in Iran.⁴⁶² Such changing and conflicting estimates about Iran's nuclear capability have been a major source of doubt on the part of Turkish ruling elites that the program has a military purpose, or that it poses a threat.

4.3.3. The Non-Proliferation Policies of Western Countries

In light of the Iranian argument that its nuclear program has no military purposes, its criticism of the non-proliferation policies of Western countries can be described as having two dimensions. First, US opposition to Iran's nuclear program is claimed to be discriminatory.⁴⁶³ Since the NPT grants Iran the right to use nuclear energy for civilian purposes, efforts to force the country to suspend its program are viewed with suspicion. Iran also expects to be treated the same as other NPT member states, such as Argentina, Brazil, Japan and Belgium, all of which possess enrichment and reprocessing capabilities, but are not subject to accusations that they are developing nuclear weapons.⁴⁶⁴ In addition, nuclear energy is widely regarded by Iranians as being an important part of their country's long-term development. Therefore, US opposition is perceived as part of a containment policy. Expediency Discernment Council Member Mohammad-Javad Larijani, for instance, asserted that

⁴⁶² "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities," National Intelligence Estimate, November 2007, http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf (Accessed 31 October 2010)

⁴⁶³ Gawdat Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran," International Studies Perspectives, Vol. 7, Issue 2 (2006): 133

⁴⁶⁴ Author's interview with an Iranian diplomat who wished to remain anonymous, at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ankara. Interview conducted on 14 May 2009 in Ankara.

Nuclear energy has a vital role in the overall development of the country, but no investment had previously been made in the field of nuclear energy in Iran. By dividing countries into first-degree and second-degree nations, the arrogant powers are trying to deprive Iran and other freedom-seeking nations of access to peaceful nuclear energy. They must come to realize that the Iranian people are first-degree citizens.⁴⁶⁵

Iran's second criticism is based on the view that the Western powers have double standards on the nuclear issue. Since the nuclear powers are also obligated under the NPT to end nuclear armament, Iran advocates that the nuclear powers should begin by reducing their own nuclear arsenals.⁴⁶⁶ In this respect, President Ahmedinejad posed the rhetorical question: "How could a producer of atomic bombs accuse us?"⁴⁶⁷ Since the United States is perceived to maintain a huge nuclear arsenal in the name of security, and since it plans to add more tactical weapons to this arsenal, from the Iranian perspective, it is the US that is in violation of the NPT. Iranian Ambassador Eshaq Alehabib notably observed that "Washington claims that it leads the fight against weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and yet it admits that nuclear weapons have a high place in its military doctrine. This trend has contributed to the lack of world confidence, which will undoubtedly have severe consequences if left unaddressed."⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ "Iran Not After Nuclear Bomb," Iran Review, 17 November 2007, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/Iran_not_after_nuclear_bomb.htm (Accessed 15 July 2010)

⁴⁶⁶ Article VI of the NPT: Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

⁴⁶⁷ "President: Iran's N-Activities Peaceful," Iran Review, 6 October 2007, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/President_Iran_s_N_activities_peaceful.htm (Accessed 15 June 2010)

⁴⁶⁸ "US Nuclear Arsenal, A Blatant Example of Non-Compliance to NPT," Iran Review, 18 October 2008, http://wwwiranrevieworg/content/Documents/US_Nuclear_Arsenal_A_Blatant_Example_of_Non_Compliance_to_NPT.htm (Accessed 15 June 2010)

Alongside these criticisms, the acceptance of Israel's nuclear weapons by the international community became a focal point of Iran's indignation. From the Iranian perspective, this exemplified a major double-standard in Western nonproliferation policies. It is widely believed among Iranian officials that the policies of Western powers towards the Iranian nuclear program are politically biased. Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Ali Larijani, for instance, noted that "Iran's nuclear issue is encumbered by the political bias of the US and certain Western countries."⁴⁶⁹ As seen in Bonab's analysis, when Western-oriented governments were in power in Iran in the past, its nuclear program was not perceived as a threat to international and regional security. Bonab adds that although Western countries had accepted the possibility that having nuclear reactor technology might encourage its possessors to develop other technologies based on nuclear power, they had no issue transferring nuclear knowledge to Iran in the 1970s. At that time it was also known that Iran had vast oil and gas resources. However, Iranian will to have nuclear energy was not questioned. Both the Shah and the West had justified nuclear cooperation in the context of Iran's long-term development. Moreover, despite warnings by the US intelligence community over the possibility that Iran's peaceful nuclear program could be diverted towards military use, the US government continued its nuclear cooperation with Iran. Bonab thus argued that the Iranian nuclear program was not taken as a serious threat by the United States at those years.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, the changes in the US policies towards the Iranian

⁴⁶⁹ "Iran's Nuclear Program Politically Judged," Iran Review, 3 July 2011, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran_s_Nuclear_Program_Politically_Judged.htm (Accessed 4 July 2011)

⁴⁷⁰ Rahman G. Bonab, "Turkey's Emerging Role as a Mediator on Iran's Nuclear Activities," Insight Turkey 11, No. 3 (2009): 162-163

nuclear program were seen as an outcome of the political opposition of the US to Iran.

Like Iran, Turkey also noted the double standard in Western nonproliferation policies. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for instance, commented that “there is a style of approach which is not very fair because those who accuse Iran of pursing nuclear weapons have very strong nuclear infrastructures and they don’t deny that.”⁴⁷¹ In this respect, he has repeatedly linked the debate over Iran’s nuclear program with Israel’s undeclared nuclear weapons,⁴⁷² and argued that the international community should treat both equally on the nonproliferation issue.⁴⁷³ Since Turkey has supported the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East, it is on record with the opinion that “neither Iran nor any other country in the region should acquire or possess nuclear weapons.”⁴⁷⁴ President Abdullah Gül, for instance, stated that “We are against any weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East. We don’t want any neighbor to acquire nuclear weapons.”⁴⁷⁵ Turkey’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu also articulated Turkey’s position on Iran and the nuclear issue, stating that “We don’t want nuclear proliferation in the region, we don’t want nuclear weapons in Iran or Israel or anywhere. Second, every country has the right to pursue nuclear power for

⁴⁷¹ Robert Tait, “Turkish PM Exposes Nuclear Rift in NATO,” Guardian, 26 October 2009

⁴⁷² “Erdoğan: İran’da da, Diğer Ülkelerde de Nükleer Silah İstemiyoruz,” Milliyet, 27 May 2010

⁴⁷³ “Erdogan: Israël Menace la Paix Régionale,” Le Figaro, 8 April 2010 (Accessed 8 April 2010)

⁴⁷⁴ “Iran’s Nuclear Program: The Turkish Perspective,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, June 2010

⁴⁷⁵ Al Arabia TV, 13 February 2009. (Accessed in 9 May 2010 through the official website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/mulakatlar/360/56332/al-arabia-tv.html>)

peaceful purposes. Third, we also don't want more sanctions on Iran. Sanctions hurt ordinary people and neighboring countries.”⁴⁷⁶ As a result, the common criticism of Turkey and Iran about the nonproliferation policies of the West brought them closer, regarding the nuclear issue.

4.3.4. Turkey’s Own Nuclear Program

Turkey has endorsed Iran’s nuclear program because it also desires to produce nuclear energy. In this context, there are two important factors that lead Turkey to support Iran’s right to use nuclear energy. The first is that the Turkish ruling elite think that if Turkey supports the attempts to counter the Iranian nuclear program without proof that Iran has been developing weapons, it would face the same rejection – and similar sanctions – by the international community against its own future peaceful nuclear program. Prime Minister Erdogan, for instance, commented that “Our Iranian colleagues tell us they want energy for peaceful purposes to satisfy their energy needs, not nuclear weapons. I’m afraid in the future some people may accuse us [Turkey] of having ambitions for weapons of mass destruction.”⁴⁷⁷ Experience has taught Turkey that the creation of barriers by the West would impede its access to nuclear energy.

Over the last four decades, Turkey has been making attempts to build nuclear plants for the purpose of generating energy. In 1956, the Turkish Atomic Energy Commission (TAEC) was established under the auspices of the prime minister to

⁴⁷⁶ Simon Tisdall, “Turkey Starts to Love its Neighbours,” The Guardian, 12 January 2010 (Accessed 13 January 2010)

⁴⁷⁷ Erdogan’s Press Speech at annual Munich Security Conference, 9 February 2008

coordinate nuclear-related studies and to issue licenses for nuclear power plants. In 1961, Çekmece Nuclear Research and Training Center was established as a first attempt. Five years later, Ankara Nuclear Research and Training Center was established. In 1967, the first feasibility studies on the construction of a reactor to generate electricity using Turkey's natural uranium reserves were begun. However, this plan was halted in 1970 for domestic political and economic reasons. Between 1972 and 1974, feasibility, site selection and bid specification studies were launched. In 1972, Turkey's Nuclear Power Plants Department, which operated under the Turkish Electrical Authority, conducted nuclear energy studies, selected a site in the Akkuyu district of Mersin province and issued a license. In 1980, however, plant construction negotiations were interrupted by the 1980 military coup. In early 1980, a site selection survey for a second nuclear power plant had restarted, and Sinop was selected as a suitable location for a plant supplementing the two planned for Akkuyu. However, this attempt was also ended in failure when participating companies withdrew from negotiations. In 1982, the TAEC was succeeded by the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority, a governmental organization under the auspices of the prime minister. In 1983, Turkey invited seven major suppliers to submit bids on the construction of nuclear power plants in Turkey, but negotiations were unsuccessful.⁴⁷⁸ In addition to internal challenges, Western fear of the possibility that Turkey might re-transfer nuclear material and technology to third parties played a crucial role in these failures.⁴⁷⁹ A possible Turkish-Pakistani

⁴⁷⁸ For a further analysis and information, see Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey's Quest for Peaceful Nuclear Power," The Nonproliferation Review (Spring-Summer 1997)

⁴⁷⁹ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey's Quest for Peaceful Nuclear Power," The Nonproliferation Review (Spring-Summer 1997): 33

connection during these years exacerbated this fear, leading the US to pressure supplier countries and firms to refuse transfers of nuclear technology to Turkey.

Despite the concerns of Western countries, Turkey insisted on its need for nuclear energy based on a predicted energy shortage. In 1995, Turkey called for tenders in the construction at the Akkuyu site, but the government cancelled the plan in 2000 for financial reasons. In 2005, nuclear energy came back onto the government agenda. In 2006, the head of the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority, Okay Çakıroğlu, announced Sinop had been chosen as a suitable location for the establishment of a nuclear technology center.⁴⁸⁰ In 2007, the “Law on Construction and Operation of Nuclear Power Plants and Energy Sale” was ratified and entered into force. The government also called for tenders in the construction of a nuclear power plant at Akkuyu. Only one firm – a Russian-Turkish consortium including Atomstroyexport, Inter Rao and Park Teknik, applied. However, due to disagreement over the proposed price, the Council of State withdrew the proposal process in November 2009.⁴⁸¹ Meanwhile, negotiations with Japan over construction of the Sinop plant were interrupted following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami disaster. These interruptions, however, do not appear to have deterred the AKP’s effort to access nuclear energy.

⁴⁸⁰ Sabah, 16 August 2006

⁴⁸¹ “Yargı Nükleer Santral İhalesi Yönetmeliğinin Üç Maddesine Yürütmeye Durdurma Kararı Verdi,” TMMOB Press Release, 10 November 2009

The possibility of cooperation with Iran on the nuclear issue has thus become a motivation for Turkey not to oppose Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful means. Iran's nuclear know-how and technology are considered essential for the success of its own nuclear plant projects. According to Mehmet Ali Birand, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu alluded to the possibility of future cooperation between Turkey and Iran on the nuclear issue.⁴⁸² Although Turkey did not clearly declare the prospect of the cooperation with Iran on the nuclear issue, Turkish officials sometimes implied this possibility. Iranian officials, however, declared their will cooperate with other countries, including Turkey, on the nuclear issue. For instance, Foreign Affairs Advisor to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamanei, Mohammad Javad Larijani, said that Iran was willing to share its nuclear technology with neighboring countries, suggesting that it could help Turkey build an atomic power plant. He also said that "Turkey is for years trying to have a nuclear power plant but no country in the West is willing to build that for them." However, it seems that Turkey does not want to appear to be cooperating with Iran on the nuclear issue at a time when the concerns of the international community about Iranian nuclear ambitions have escalated. Turkey's Minister of Energy, Taner Yıldız, thus emphasized that "Iran is an important neighboring country. We have oil and gas trade, but cooperation in the area of nuclear power stations is not currently on our agenda."⁴⁸³ Although Turkey has not yet declared its will to cooperate with Iran on the nuclear issue, it does not seem averse to the possibility of cooperation, if needed.

⁴⁸² Mehmet Ali Birand, "Türkiye Başkaldırıyor, Nükleer Yakıt Üretecek," Hürriyet, 29 December 2010

⁴⁸³ "Turkey: No Nuke Alliance with Iran," Hürriyet Daily News, 16 November 2011

4.4. FACTORS THAT WORK AGAINST FURTHER RAPPROCHEMEENT

Even though Iran's current nuclear program has been one of the fields in which Turkish-Iranian rapprochement has occurred, two factors could work against this process. First, Iran will most likely attempt to use nuclear capability – apart from the issue of armament – as a tool to increase its power at the regional and international levels. This was already evident in the debate over Turkey's involvement in the negotiation process. Second, a nuclear Iran would pose a great challenge to Turkey's own security. In the case of nuclear armament, the Iranian nuclear issue would be transformed from an issue of low to high politics for Turkey.

4.4.1. Nuclear Capability as a Bargaining Tool?

One of the reasons of Iran that has always been so reluctant to accept Turkey's mediating role in the controversy over its nuclear program comes from the belief that Turkey's active involvement would negate its own power. According to Siamak Kakaei, Turkey wants to prove that it can take on an international mediation role in order to show its value to the West.⁴⁸⁴ Uslu argues that for Iran to call on Turkey would not only be detrimental to its own goal of regional influence,

⁴⁸⁴ “ترک‌ها هم رفیقند هم رقیب” (Turks are both Ally and Competitor) Interview with Siamak Kakaei, 23 فروردین 1390 (April 2011) <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/60/bodyView/11810/%D8%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7.%D9%87%D9%85.%D8%B1%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%D9%86%D8%AF.%D9%87%D9%85.%D8%B1%D9%82%DB%8C%D8%A8.html> (Accessed 3 June 2011); Siamak Kakaei, “Turkish Mediation Between Iran and the West: A Dream for Mounting Diplomatic Weight,” Iran Review, 28 July 2008, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkish_Mediation_between_Iran_West_A_Dream_for_Mounting_Diplomatic_Weight.htm (8 May 2011)

but could pave the way for Turkey to be viewed as the principal regional peace broker and policymaker.⁴⁸⁵ Keyhan Barzegar agrees that if Turkey's relations with the great powers increase, Iran's regional importance will decrease. In light of this, Ghahremanpour postulates that Iran wants to solve the nuclear issue directly with the great powers⁴⁸⁶ since mediators tend to think of their own national interests. He adds that Iran's nuclear capability strengthens its hand at the negotiation table, which it should not easily hand over to Turkey or anyone else. According to Barzegar, Turkey should only be acceptable by Iran in a mediator role if continuation of its nuclear program could be assured. However, he also contends that Turkey would not act in Iran's interests because of the competition between the two countries to maximize their regional and global power.⁴⁸⁷

As a result, the nuclear issue would bring the geopolitical competition between the two countries to the fore. Since Iran has serious concerns about Turkey's increasing role in the Middle East, it is thus seen in Iran's best interest not to lose its nuclear card, which inevitably change the balance of power in favor of Iran, in maximizing its influence and power in the both regional and world politics.

⁴⁸⁵ Emrullah Uslu, "Iran Wants Chess, not American Football," Asia Times, 12 March 2009

⁴⁸⁶ "ترکیه میان ایران و غرب منافع ملی را می بیند" (Turkey looks for its National Interests between Iran and the West)

گفت و گو با رحمن قهرمانپور (Interview with Rahman Ghahremanpour)

http://irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/4/bodyView/7029/0%DB%AA%D8%B1%DA%A9%DB%8C%D9%87.%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86.%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86.%D9%88.%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8.%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B9.%D9%85%D9%84%D9%89.%D8%B1%D8%A7.%D9%85%D9%89.%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86%D8_AF.html 1388 14 (Mart 2009) (Accessed 3 June 2011)

⁴⁸⁷ "روابط استراتژیک ایران و ترکیه در خاورمیانه" (Keyhan Barzegar), کیهان برزگر (Strategic Relationship between Turkey and Iran in the Middle East), 1388/12/29 (2010), <http://fa.merc.ir/archive/article/tabid/62/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/52/----.aspx> (Accessed 3 June 2011)

4.4.2. The Possibility of a Nuclear Iran

Many scholars have noted that Iran's foreign policy on the nuclear issue has been changing under the rule of Ahmedinejad. Lindsay and Takeyh, for instance, argued that while nuclear weapons were seen as tools of deterrence against the United States and Saddam's Iraq during the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami, they became a critical means of ensuring Iran's preeminence in the region during the presidency of Ahmedinejad. According to them, Iran feels the need for a robust and extensive nuclear infrastructure in order to accrue and maintain power.⁴⁸⁸ The Ahmedinejad Administration thus adopted a confrontational foreign policy, believing that if Iran avoids surrendering to pressure from the West, the West will finally retreat.⁴⁸⁹ The changing meanings of the nuclear issue in Iran's foreign policy have also intensified Turkey's security concerns.

Although Ankara seems to have remained relatively unconcerned about Iran's nuclear program, some military and bureaucracy circles are more reserved in the support for Iran's right to access nuclear energy because they believe in that Iran will finally develop nuclear weapons. If Iran's efforts will advance its existing nuclear capability towards weaponization, it will reach a significant strategic advantage at the expense and tip the regional balance of power in Iran's favor.⁴⁹⁰ According to Kibaroglu and Çağlar, since Turkey would be the most negatively

⁴⁸⁸ James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and its Complications," Foreign Affairs (March/April 2010)

⁴⁸⁹ Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, "Iran's Foreign Policy During Ahmedinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation," Presented to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, (Concordia University, Montreal, Canada), 2-3 June 2010

⁴⁹⁰ Gündüz Aktan, "Bölgelin İstikrarı," Radikal, 22 March 2005

affected country by a nuclear Iran,⁴⁹¹ “consensus among the Turkish political and security elite is that, contrary to its official stance, Turkey cannot stay aloof from Iran’s nuclearization for long, even under the AKP government.”⁴⁹² In line with this argument, Former Deputy Chief of General Staff, İlker Başbuğ, stated that Turkey was closely following Iran’s nuclear activities, and that Ankara would not welcome an Iran in possession of nuclear weapons, which would constitute a major security risk for Turkey.⁴⁹³ Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül also added that “weapons of mass destruction in the hands of neighbors would be a threat for Turkey.”⁴⁹⁴ Secretary-General of the National Security Council, Ambassador Yiğit Alpogan, also commented, “We would not enjoy having a neighbor that has nuclear weapons. We believe that this would not be useful either for peace in the world or for regional stability.”⁴⁹⁵ The former chief of the General Staff, General Yaşar Büyükanıt, also warned that

Iran is under the spotlights of Turkey and the rest of the world. Iran’s nuclear program should be limited to civilian purposes and Iran should assure the international community about its intentions. It is important for a nuclear-free, peaceful and stable Middle East to follow commonsense policies to avoid new problems.⁴⁹⁶

Even though the ruling elites do not believe the current Iranian nuclear program has military purposes, they do not ignore the possibility of a nuclear Iran. This is why they have insistently emphasized the need for greater transparency, as when

⁴⁹¹ Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Barış Çağlar, “Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey,” Middle East Policy XV, No. 4 (Winter 2008): 59

⁴⁹² Ibid, 65

⁴⁹³ Hürriyet Daily News, 8 June 2005

⁴⁹⁴ Hürriyet Daily News, 6 October 2005

⁴⁹⁵ “A Neighbor Possessing Nuclear Weapons would Annoy Turkey, Alpogan says,” Hürriyet Daily News, 26 May 2006

⁴⁹⁶ Star, 5 June 2008

Prime Minister Erdogan commented that Iran's activities will always be pivotal, for good or ill, in the maintenance of regional security and stability.⁴⁹⁷

Iran's non-nuclear missile capability has also heightened Turkey's security concerns. Although Iranian Ambassador Mohammed Hossein Lavasani claimed that Iran's missile test did not present any threat to other countries, the second test of the medium-range Shahab-3 missile created sensitivity in Turkey.⁴⁹⁸ In the following years, concerns over the Iranian missile capability continued. Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gul, for instance, said that "the presence of long-range missiles [in Iran] raises the question whether they would contain nuclear warheads."⁴⁹⁹ According to Turkish daily *Yeni Safak*, Turkish officials once again warned Iranian authorities over these concerns.⁵⁰⁰ In fact, it is observed that the possibility of a nuclear Iran could lead Ankara to decrease its support for the Iran's nuclear program in the near future.

4.4.2.1.The NATO Radar System in Turkey: A Serious Challenge to the Rapprochement Process

Ankara's acceptance of the deployment of the NATO early-warning radar system on Turkish territory can also be looked at as having partly resulted from Turkey's increasing concerns about Iran. This decision also signaled the beginning of problems in Turkish-Iranian relations on the nuclear issue. Mohammad Kowsari, a

⁴⁹⁷ Star, 28 October 2009; Semih Idiz, Milliyet, 29 October 2009

⁴⁹⁸ "Turkey Conveys Its Sensitivity over Iranian Missile Test," Hürriyet Daily News, 20 July 2000; "Turkey Expresses Concern over Iranian Missile Tests," Hürriyet Daily News, 6 June 2002

⁴⁹⁹ Şükrü Küçükşahin and Uğur Ergan, "Komşumuza Bizden Saldırı İzni Vermeyiz," Hürriyet, 10 February 2006

⁵⁰⁰ Duygu Güvenç, "'Nükleer Şahap' Endişelendiriyor," Yeni Safak, 8 May 2006

member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Majlis, warned that “If implemented, the decision will greatly damage Turkey’s relations with Iran, (...) and thus Tehran will make every effort to inform Ankara about its detrimental consequences.”⁵⁰¹ After approving the NATO radar system deployment, former Turkish diplomat Sinan Ülgen argued that rapprochement in Turkish-Iranian relations had come to an end, arguing that “I think we can talk about a new phase. So indeed we are entering a period of more realistic assessment.”⁵⁰²

From the very beginning of the negotiation process over the NATO defense system, Turkey declared that it was sensitive to the concerns of its eastern neighbor. Turkey’s Ambassador to Tehran, Ümit Yardım, for instance, explained that

In all different political trends when we evaluate the process, we certain [sic] consider our relations with Iran and look at that given issue or trend through that perspective. (...) In any process and in any place and time, the most important issue is the ties with Iran and this is Turkey’s main and prime position.⁵⁰³

During the negotiation process, Turkey went to great lengths not to name Iran as a threat to be countered by the NATO system. To that end, Turkey’s Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said, “Mentioning one country, Iran, is wrong and will not happen. A particular country will not be targeted. We will definitely not accept that. We do not perceive any threat from any neighbor countries and we do not

⁵⁰¹ Mohammad Kowsari, “Turkey’s Strategic Mistake,” Mehr News, 24 September 2011 <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1415572> (Accessed 25 September 2011)

⁵⁰² Dorian Jones, “Turkey and Iran: The End of the Affair,” Radio Free Europe, 19 October 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/turkey_iran_end_of_the_affair/24364900.html (Accessed 21 October 2011)

⁵⁰³ “Turkey: Ties with Iran Highly Important in Talks over Deployment of NATO Missile Shield,” Fars News Agency, 24 April 2011

think our neighbors form a threat to NATO.”⁵⁰⁴ Contrary to Turkey, “the US wants the summit to name Iran as the main current missile threat – partly in a bid to reassure other powers, especially Russia, that the system is not aimed at them.”⁵⁰⁵ During the negotiations between NATO and Ankara, Iran’s Foreign Minister declared that “We [Iran] consider the whole matter a game and the regional countries have become alert enough not to fall into their trap.”⁵⁰⁶ Turkey had claimed the decision to host the radar system was not motivated by any one specific country, and that it should be seen as its contribution to the NATO’s strategic defense system developed in Lisbon in 2010.⁵⁰⁷ However, it is commonly believed that the primary aim of this radar system is to protect NATO members against missile attacks, potentially from Iran.

Immediately after Ankara’s decision, Iran’s reactions began signaling the probable deterioration of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement process. It is seen that the acceptance of Turkey to the deployment of NATO radar system on Turkish territory was not expected by Iran that perceives Turkey as “a friendly Muslim neighbor.”⁵⁰⁸ Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hassan Ghashghavi commented that “Iran and Turkey are neighbors and friends and fully capable of maintaining

⁵⁰⁴ Press TV, 8 November 2010

⁵⁰⁵ “Turkey Main Obstacle for NATO Missile Defense System, Diplomats Say,” Haaretz, 3 November 2010

⁵⁰⁶ “Deployment of Missile System in Turkey is a ‘Game’,” Iran Review, 21 November 2010

⁵⁰⁷ “Turkey’s Role in NATO Missile-Defense Annoys Iran,” Today’s Zaman, 5 September 2011

⁵⁰⁸ Assoc. Prof. Hassan-Khani: “Iran and Turkey Can Adopt a Cooperative Competition,” in an interview with ORSAM Middle East Advisor Pinar Arikan, ORSAM, ORSAM Guest, 19 December 2011, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showOrsamGuest.aspx?ID=263> (Accessed 11 January 2012)

their security by themselves and without any interference by foreigners.”⁵⁰⁹ A day later, Iran’s Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi warned, “We [Iran] regard the presence of America and the West as a troublesome and harmful presence for the Islamic countries.”⁵¹⁰ Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast also noted that Iran expected its friends and neighbors to be more cautious and not to involve the West in policies that would have complicated consequences.⁵¹¹ Iran’s President Ahmedinejad also reacted to Ankara’s decision, stating that “Turkey is one of our brothers and close friends, but when enemies deploy a missile shield there and admit that this deployment is a measure against Iran, caution is necessary.”⁵¹² Finally, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi called on Ankara to explain their decision.⁵¹³

As seen from the sharp reactions by the Iranian officials, the deployment of the NATO radar system on Turkish territory most likely worked against the rapprochement trend in bilateral relations. First, it negatively affected Turkey’s credibility; from the Iranian perspective, Turkey’s relatively independent policies had worked in favor of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement on the nuclear issue. With the deployment of NATO radar system, Turkey was once again perceived as an unconditional ally of Western powers. Second, the decision raised questions over

⁵⁰⁹ “Turkey’s Role in NATO Missile-Defense Annoys Iran,” Today’s Zaman, 5 September 2011

⁵¹⁰ “Iran Warns Over NATO’s Anti-Missile Radar in Turkey,” Reuters, 6 September 2011

⁵¹¹ “NATO Missile System Endangers Regional Security,” Iran Review, 9 September 2011

⁵¹² “Iran Cautious about NATO M-System in Turkey,” Iran Review, 10 September 2011

⁵¹³ “Deployment of NATO Missile System in Turkey Not to Solve Zionists’ Problems,” Fars News Agency, 22 September 2011

Turkey's stance on Israel. Iranian analysts, like Talal Atrissi, for instance, commented that

Although Turkish media are trying hard to portray Ankara as a hostile state to the Zionist regime, Ankara's consent in this regard puts the honesty and validity of Turkey's stance on Tel Aviv under a question mark. (...) Turkey's real stance on Israel has not been changed because the country is one of the key members of the NATO and shares interests with the West, the US and Israel.⁵¹⁴

Mohammad Kowsari, member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Majlis, also asserted that

Turkish officials have repeatedly declared their opposition to the Zionist regime and have demanded the highest level of punishment for the perpetrators of the attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, which left nine Turkish citizens dead on May 31, 2010. But paradoxically, they have also agreed to allow NATO to establish an early warning radar system in Turkey, exactly in line with the U.S. policy of protecting Israel, which is currently in a precarious situation in the region. This is a clear example of Turkey's double standards on sensitive foreign policy issues.⁵¹⁵

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Brigadier General Masoud Jazayeri also added that "Turkey should be aware that it has utilized all of its capacities to support the Zionist regime by making such a decision [by accepting the deployment of NATO defense shield]."⁵¹⁶ In response to these critiques from Iran, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu declared that "Turkey will not allow any country to use its soil to take a measure meant to defend the Zionist regime."⁵¹⁷ Taking into consideration Iran's reactions, the deployment of the NATO radar system will most likely create a serious problem in Turkish-Iranian relations in the near future.

⁵¹⁴ "Analyst Views NATO Missiles in Turkey as 'Direct Support for Israel,'" Fars News Agency, 23 September 2011

⁵¹⁵ Mohammad Kowsari, "Turkey's Strategic Mistake," Mehr News, 24 September 2011 <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1415572> (Accessed 25 September 2011)

⁵¹⁶ "Turkey should Consider Repercussions of NATO Missile Shield," Mehr News, 10 September 2011, <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1428664> (Accessed 11 September 2011)

⁵¹⁷ "Ankara Will Stand Against any Aggression on Iran from Turkish Soil," Mehr News, 8 October 2011, <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1427626> (Accessed 10 October 2011)

4.5. Conclusion

Iran's nuclear program became an issue in bilateral relations after the 2002 revelation of its undeclared nuclear activities in Natanz and Arak. Although Iran has argued that these activities have civilian purposes, the concerns of international community over Iran's nuclear ambitions have gradually been increasing. The United Nations and the United States initiated economic sanctions against Iran in order to force it to stop its uranium enrichment activities. Since Iran has continued its nuclear program, the United States and Israel have suggested various additional counter-proliferation measures, including military options. Turkey, however, endorsed neither further economic sanctions nor military intervention against Iran. Therefore, Turkey has actively involved itself in the negotiation process. Although it initiated a nuclear fuel swap deal with Brazil in order to help build confidence between Iran and the international community, results became inconclusive after the UN Security Council adopted further sanctions. As a result, its role in the negotiation process did not extend beyond being a facilitator, conveying messages to both sides.

Regarding Turkey's policies towards the Iranian nuclear program, the nuclear issue became a field in which Turkey and Iran became closer. Four factors pushed the two together. The first factor was Turkey's approach to Iran's nuclear program, which was based on the belief that the Iranian nuclear program had exclusively civilian purposes. Turkey recognized Iran's right to nuclear energy for civilian purposes in accordance with the NPT. The second factor was the absence of threat perception by Turkey from Iran. Turkish ruling elites appeared not to have

perceived a threat from the current state of the Iranian program. The third was their common opposition to the current nonproliferation policies of the Western countries. Iranian authorities want to be treated as any other NPT member state with enrichment and reprocessing capabilities that are not subject to accusations that they are developing nuclear weapons. Turkey also opposes the presence of all nuclear weapons in the region and has called upon the international community to treat all states by the same standards, including both Israel and Iran. The fourth consisted of Turkey's plans to build its own nuclear program in the coming years. Over the last four decades, Turkey has attempted to build its own nuclear program for energy needs, but has thus far been successful. The AKP government has apparently been more decisive about establishing a nuclear program. In this respect, Turkey's support of Iran's current nuclear program has thus been partly aimed at ensuring future potential benefits from Iran's nuclear know-how and technology.

Even though these factors contributed to Turkish-Iranian rapprochement on the nuclear issue, there are also factors that limit further cooperation. The first factor is the prediction that Iran's usage of nuclear capability would become a bargaining tool to improve its power at the regional and international levels. In this context, Iran's reluctance to Turkey's mediation was partly caused by Iran's motivation not to lose the nuclear card for its own interests. The nuclear issue is thus predicted to become a determinant of Turkish-Iranian competition in the near future. The second factor is the possibility of a nuclear Iran. Although most of the Turkish ruling elites do not perceive a threat from ongoing Iranian nuclear program, some

military/bureaucrat circles in Turkey apparently have serious concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions. In this context, Ankara's acceptance of a proposal to deploy a NATO early-warning radar system on Turkish territory is seen as a signal of probable Turkish-Iranian estrangement in the near future.

CHAPTER 5

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAN IN THE 2000s

Willingness over the last decade from both Turkey and Iran to strengthen economic ties has attracted the attention of the international community, especially the United States, which perceives this willingness as a challenge to the economic sanctions on Iran. During the 2000s, Turkey and Iran made great efforts to increase their ties in the commercial and energy fields. However, their efforts and willingness have not yet resulted in an explosion in bilateral economic relations, since there are also factors at play working against the possibility of further economic rapprochement. This chapter will examine improvements in bilateral economic relations over the last decade. It will also analyze factors that work both for and against the rapprochement process in order to understand its extent. The first part of this chapter will provide a historical background of Turkish-Iranian economic relations in order to see changes and the continuities. The second part will analyze the determining factors in bilateral economic relations in the last decade.

5.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter Two, security issues at the border were an ongoing factor in bilateral relations after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and the Pahlavi Dynasty in Iran. In April 1926, both countries reached a friendship and security agreement in order to solve these issues. This effort was unsuccessful, however,

ending in a rupture in diplomatic relations. In 1928, another protocol was signed, by which for the first time Turkey and Iran attempted to develop economic relations.⁵¹⁸ The protocol dictated rapid formalization and development of bilateral economic relations and recognized freedom of transit over the territories of each country.⁵¹⁹ Despite both of these agreements, the problematic issues remained unsolved until 1932, when an agreement on friendship and security, neutrality and economic cooperation was reached. According to the agreement, which came into force in July 1935, each country granted most favored nation status to the other.⁵²⁰ Yet, bilateral economic relations from the 1920s to the end of Second World War remained limited. The increase in trade volume between Turkey and Iran in the second half of the 1920s did not offset the general downward tendency of bilateral trade. In addition to trade limitations, there was also an imbalance in the bilateral trade relations. For instance, Iran's share of Turkey's exports totaled 0.03% whereas Iran's share of Turkey's imports was 0.34%.⁵²¹ With the Second World War, economic relations between Turkey and Iran came to a halt.

During the Cold War years, Turkish-Iranian economic relations remained insufficient, despite being in the same camp against the Soviet Union. During this period, both countries focused on acquiring assistance and support from the West,

⁵¹⁸ Melek Fırat, İran İslam Devrimi ve Türk-İran İlişkileri: 1979-1987, Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi: 49

⁵¹⁹ 22.04.1926 Tarihli Türkiye-İran Muahedenet ve Emniyet Muahedenamesine Merbut Protokol, <http://ua.mfa.gov.tr/detay.aspx?826> (Accessed 5 August 2011)

⁵²⁰ Baskın Oran (ed.), Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılığı, 2001): 363

⁵²¹ Esra Eruysal, Economic Relations between Turkey and Iran from 1990 to 2010: A Turkish Perspective, Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Middle East Technical University, (Ankara, December 2011)

rather than on developing and strengthening bilateral economic relations in accordance with long-term goals. During the 1960s, Turkey's trade relations with Iran were floating. Turkey's exports to Iran increased from \$4 million in 1960 to \$5 million in 1961, then nearly stopped in 1962 and 1963. Meanwhile, Turkey's imports from Iran reached their peak in 1963 with \$15.2 million, then nearly halted between 1965 and 1968.⁵²²

As a result of import-substitution policies implemented during the 1960s, Turkey's energy consumption and demand began to increase. The twin oil crises of the 1970s posed a serious challenge to Turkish economy. Iran, however, enjoyed the increase in oil prices. This situation changed the balance of power in favor of Iran, as the Shah used oil revenues for armaments. His assertive foreign policy also increased Ankara's concerns of Ankara. As a result, Turkish-Iranian economic relations in the 1970s were based mainly on Ankara's requests for cheap oil and Iran's rejection of these requests. Bilateral trade volume was also limited. Although Iran's share in Turkey's total exports increased from 1% in 1970 to their highest at 3% in 1977, they decreased to 0.5% in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution in Iran. On the import side, Iran's share in Turkey's total imports increased during the second half of the 1970s, from 1% to 11%. With the Islamic Revolution, imports from Iran also fell to 3%.⁵²³

Despite the sudden and negative impact of the Islamic Revolution on bilateral economic relations, domestic and systemic factors led both Turkey and Iran to

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

continue bilateral economic relations in spite of the ideational problems between them. It was in this context that Turkey also rejected the US demand to participate in the economic sanctions enacted against Iran in reaction to the hostage crisis. In 1980, with the January 24 Decisions, Turkey replaced its import-substitution policy, which had been implemented since the establishment of the Republic, with an export-led growth policy that integrated the Turkish economy with the global market. This shift in economy policies necessitated Turkey to find new markets for selling its goods. In this context, Turkey's export thus grew rapidly throughout the Middle East and North Africa during the 1980s. The outbreak of Iran-Iraq War gave Turkey an opportunity to increase its exports and to achieve the objectives of export-led growth. In addition, the danger of oil supply disruption which emerged with the outbreak of Iran-Iraq War alarmed Turkey and led it to bring the economic and commercial issues at the top of the agenda. In this context, Iran-Iraq War was turned to an opportunity by Özal, who believed that building economic links and networks would eventually promote the resolution of political problems.⁵²⁴ Moreover, the influence of the newly emerging elite from business circles, who supported an economy-oriented foreign policy, began to be increasingly felt in foreign policymaking processes. With the introduction of the economy-oriented foreign policy approach, Turkey emphasized the improvement of economic relations with its neighbors, including Iran, so the official visits between the two countries increased in the 1980s. In 1982, Özal visited Iran and approximately a hundred Turkish businessmen accompanied him for the first time. The main purpose of this visit was to enhance bilateral economic cooperation.

⁵²⁴ Atila Eralp, "Facing the Challenge: Post-Revolutionary Relations with Iran," in Henri J. Barkey (ed.) Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East (Washington D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press, 1996): 98

During this visit, increasing the volume of bilateral trade, realizing of Ahvaz-İskenderun oil pipeline project, purchasing natural gas from Iran and the project of sending Iranian natural gas to Europe via Turkey were discussed. Moreover, approximately \$600 million worth export deals were signed.⁵²⁵

The establishment of Turkish-Iranian Joint Economic Commission, which was signed on March 1982, became an important mechanism, aiming to increase trade volume between the two countries. During the 1980s, every year, Turkey and Iran came together at the meetings of this Commission in order to enhance bilateral economic cooperation in the fields of trade, banking, investments, transportation, industry and agriculture. Despite these meetings and several memorandums of understanding, the objectives were not achieved totally.

As with Turkish foreign policy, economic considerations began to dominate Iran's foreign policy in the 1980s as well.⁵²⁶ This trend, labeled the "economization of foreign policy"⁵²⁷ by Korany, prompted Tehran to adopt a more conciliatory approach in its foreign policy. In line with this policy, Iran tried to secure its economic relations with Turkey in the post-Revolutionary era despite the problems caused by ideational factors. The first motivation of Iran was to secure Turkish neutrality towards its problems with the United States in the aftermath of the hostage crisis. One way Iran pursued this goal was to offer much better terms for

⁵²⁵ Milliyet, 11 March 1982

⁵²⁶ R.K. Ramazani, "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* 58. No. 4 (Autumn 2004)

⁵²⁷ Bahgat Korany, "From Revolution to Domestication: The Foreign Policy of Algeria," in Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hilal Dessouki (eds.) *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change* 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991): 103-155

oil purchases to Turkey. The Iranian Foreign Minister, for instance, announced on 11 June 1980 that Iran had decided to increase its credit line to Turkey. A few months later, the Turkish press announced that Turkey and Iran had reached an agreement on the exchange of wheat for oil.

The second reason for Iran to maintain its economic relations with Turkey resulted from the outbreak war between Iran and Iraq in 1980. During the war years, Iran relied on Turkish commodities to meet its needs, and bilateral trade relations reached their peak in 1985. In the meantime, Turkey and Iran revived the Regional Cooperation and Development (RCD) organization in January 1985, renaming it the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). However, declining oil revenues after 1985 hit the Middle East, and Turkey's exports to the region fell by over 20% in 1986. Moreover, the end of the Iran-Iraq war negatively affected Turkish-Iranian economic relations, when Iran revived its traditional trade routes, thus decreasing trade volume between the two countries.

Regarding the influence of systemic factors on bilateral economic relations, the emergence of newly independent states in the Central Asia and the Caucasus following the collapse of the Soviet Union created new grounds for Turkish-Iranian economic relations. As was explained in Chapter Two, Turkey and Iran competed fiercely to fill the void of power left here in the post-Soviet era. However, this situation also triggered bilateral economic cooperation. According to Ertan Efegil and Leonard Stone, both Turkey and Iran realized they possessed too little political and economic power to establish autonomous spheres of

influence in the region, so they took concrete steps to improve their economic relations beginning in 1993.⁵²⁸ The Iranian and Turkish Chambers of Commerce agreed to accelerate mutual trade exchanges in February 1993. As a result, border transactions rose to \$50 million in 1994. In November 1995, the Iranian Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs came to Turkey. After negotiations, both sides agreed on the establishment of an Iran-Turkey Economic Cooperation Commission to provide grounds for the improvement of bilateral economic relations. Most importantly, Turkey and Iran signed a natural gas agreement in 1996, despite the objections of the United States.

The outbreak of the Gulf War also influenced Turkish-Iranian economic relations. With the War, Turkey faced with serious economic challenges. It lost one of its biggest energy supplier and export market, Iraq. In addition, the effects of the UN embargo on Iraq were heavily felt in the southeastern part of Turkey where the economy mostly dependent on the border trade with Iraq. Turkey also lost the revenues coming from the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline. Moreover, the influx of Iraqi refugees further complicated the situation. In this context, high interest rates, overvalued currency and borrowing based on short term capital flows made the Turkish economy more vulnerable and created an economic crisis in 1994. Regarding the Turkish-Iranian economic relations in those years, it is seen that the main determinants in bilateral economic relations were politics, rather than

⁵²⁸ Ertan Efegil and Leonard A. Stone, "Iran and Turkey in Central Asia: Opportunities for Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era," Journal of Third World Studies XX, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 58

economic.⁵²⁹ In this regard, the mutual efforts to improve economic cooperation were slowed down with the increasing political problems between the two countries, especially regarding the Kurdish issue.

The efforts of both countries to improve their bilateral economic relations in the 2000s were seen as having resulted from the emergence of a positive atmosphere in bilateral relations towards the end of the 1990s. Aydin and Aras viewed the era's improving political relations as being a contributor to the rapprochement process in bilateral economic relations in the 2000s.⁵³⁰ However, it is observed that political tension in Turkish-Iranian relations continued during the early 2000s. Even after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1998, Ankara believed that Iran was still backing the PKK. In addition, as seen in Chapter Two, the link between Iran and the Turkish Hezbollah and the assassinations of Turkish intellectuals caused serious tension in bilateral relations. It thus became difficult to discuss the positive impact of the political atmosphere on bilateral economic relations in the early 2000s. However, the bilateral economic relations continued since both Turkey and Iran were economically interdependent. On the one hand, Turkey has been dependent on Iran's energy supplies and Iran's market for its products. On the other hand, Iran has been dependent on Turkey in order to reach both Turkish and European markets to sell its hydro-carbon resources. As a result, issues of crude oil

⁵²⁹ Mustafa Aydin and Damla Aras, "Ortadoğu'da Ekonomik İlişkilerin Siyasi Çerçevezi: Türkiye'nin İran, Irak ve Suriye ile Bağlantıları," Uluslararası İlişkiler 1, No. 2 (Yaz 2004): 103-106

⁵³⁰ Mustafa Aydin and Damla Aras, "Political Conditionality of Economic Relations between Paternalist States: Turkey's Interaction with Iran, Iraq and Syria," Arab Studies Quarterly 27, Number 1&2 (Winter/Spring 2005)

and natural gas trade and pipelines were on the top of the bilateral economic agenda during the 1990s.

Since bilateral economic relations continued in the 1990s despite political tensions, it can be argued that there has been continuity in bilateral economic relations going into the 2000s. In this context, Turkey's Undersecretary of Foreign Trade Kürşad Tüzmen declared that “political events will no longer influence trade with neighbors; it is trade that will direct politics.”⁵³¹ In line with this approach, Turkey and Iran continued to hold meetings of the Joint Economic Committee in order to boost trade.⁵³² On January 2000, both countries signed a protocol agreement at the 15th session of the Joint Economic Cooperation meeting, by which they agreed to continue developing existing economic relations.⁵³³ In the following months, the mutual visits of Turkish and Iranian officials and businessmen accelerated. For instance, both ministers of foreign trade attended the first meeting of the ministers of trade of Economic Cooperation Organization members, held in Tehran on March 2000. Turkish firms subsequently visited Iran in 2000 at the invitation of Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kemal Kharrazi, to look for long-term investment opportunities. A year later, Turkish Foreign Minister İsmail Cem visited Tehran. During this visit, Turkey and Iran took concrete steps towards improving bilateral relations. They signed an agreement on cultural cooperation that established a cultural exchange program between 2001 and 2003. Turkish

⁵³¹ “Official Urges More Trade with Neighbors,” Hürriyet Daily News, 14 June 2000

⁵³² John Calabrese, “Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship,” British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 25, No. 1 (May 1998)

⁵³³ “Turkey and Iran signed KEK Protocol Agreement,” Hürriyet Daily News, 29 January 2000

Interior Minister Saadettin Tantan's subsequent visit to Tehran kept up the momentum of bilateral economic relations. Then, Iranian Trade Minister Mohammed Shariatmadari visited Turkey in order to discuss opportunities to improve economic relations.⁵³⁴ In the meantime, Turkish and Iranian businessmen came together at the Iranian Chamber of Commerce in order to seek ways to enhance mutual economic cooperation. The Turkish-Iranian Business Council was established at this meeting.

Since 2003, Turkey and Iran have endeavored to improve their economic relations through various measures, including forming joint economic commissions and easing border trade. In this respect, Turkey and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding that opened the Bazergan, Khoy, Sero and Maku border points to trade.⁵³⁵ They also agreed on the creation of a joint industrial town on their shared border.⁵³⁶ In addition, Iran signed preferential and free trade agreements with 12 countries, including Turkey.⁵³⁷ These mutual efforts resulted in an increase in trade volume between the two countries. As Figure 1 shows, the volume of trade between Turkey and Iran has increased tenfold, from \$1 billion in 2000 to \$10 billion in 2010. Secretary General of the Iran-Turkey Joint Trade Council, Reza Kami, predicted that “Based on an agreement between the Iranian and Turkish presidents, the volume of exchanges between the two countries should raise to \$30 billion of which \$10 billion has already been materialized in the first 6 months of

⁵³⁴ “Iranian Trade Minister Visits Turkey,” Hürriyet Daily News, 11 June 2001

⁵³⁵ “Tehran, Ankara Sign Customs Co-op MOU,” Mehr News Agency, 21 February 2010

⁵³⁶ “Iran, Turkey discuss joint industrial estate,” Mehr News Agency, 28 February 2010

⁵³⁷ “Iran Inks 12 Trade Agreements,” Turkish Weekly, 23 February 2010

the current year [2011].”⁵³⁸ In addition, the number of Turkish companies trading with Iran has also increased from nearly 1500 companies in the early 2000s to nearly 7000 companies in 2010.⁵³⁹

Figure 1: Trade Volume between Turkey and Iran (\$ billion)

Year	Export	Import	Volume	Balance
2000	235.784	815.730	1.051.515	-579.945
2001	360.535	839.800	1.200.336	-479.264
2002	333.962	920.971	1.254.934	-587.009
2003	533.786	1.860.682	2.394.469	-1.326.896
2004	813.031	1.962.058	2.775.090	-1.149.027
2005	912.940	3.469.706	4.382.646	-2.556.766
2006	1.066.901	5.626.610	6.693.512	-4.559.708
2007	1.441.190	6.615.394	8.056.584	-5.174.204
2008	2.029.759	8.199.689	10.229.448	-6.169.929
2009	2.024.863	3.405.985	5.430.849	-1.381.122
2010	3.042.957	7.644.782	10.687.739	-4.601.825

Source: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁵⁴⁰

Tourism has been another sector on the rise that has contributed to bilateral economic relations in the last decade. In 2010, Turkey’s Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ertuğrul Günay, observed that Turkey and Iran have common religious, historical and cultural heritage, which provides opportunities for improving their ties in tourism.⁵⁴¹ As seen in Figure 2, the number of Iranians visiting Turkey has been increasing over the last decade. In line with this figure, statics provided by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs show the number has increased from

⁵³⁸ “Iran-Turkey Keen to Increase Trade Exchanges,” Fars News Agency, 28 September 2011

⁵³⁹ Esra Erusyal, Economic Relations between Turkey and Iran from 1990 to 2010: A Turkish Perspective, Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Middle East Technical University, (Ankara, December 2011): 155

⁵⁴⁰ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-iran-ekonomik-iliskileri.tr.mfa> (Accessed 11 April 2011)

⁵⁴¹ Press TV, 07 February 2010

1,383,261 in 2009 and to 1,885,097 in 2010.⁵⁴² Moreover, Iranian authorities recently declared their will to open a route for pilgrimage visits to Karbala via Turkey, in addition to those originating in Iraq and Syria.⁵⁴³ If Iran and Turkey cooperate on the Karbala pilgrimage project, it will most likely positively affect bilateral economic relations.

Figure 2: Number of Iranian Tourists to Turkey

Years	Numbers of Iranian Tourists	Changes %
2009	1,383,261	21.9
2008	1,134,965	7.25
2007	1,058,278	22.21
2006	865,926	-9.51
2005	956,978	52.21
2004	628,726	27.06
2003	494,809	14.46
2002	432,282	32.14
2001	327,146	-14.10
2000	380,866	8.22

Source: İran Turizm Pazar Raporu (Report of Iran Tourism Market), Association of Turkish Travel Agency, February 2010

Despite the efforts to improve bilateral economic relations, Turkey feels discomfort due to the imbalance in these relations. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for instance, predicted this imbalance will have a negative effect on bilateral economic relations.⁵⁴⁴ The main reason for the imbalance comes from Turkish energy imports from Iran. Turkish exports to Iran consist mainly of machinery, motor

⁵⁴² “Turkey-Iran Economic and Trade Relations,” Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-iran.en.mfa (Accessed 5 August 2011)

⁵⁴³ Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu, İran Ülke Bületeni, (Ocak 2011): 21

⁵⁴⁴ “İran’la Ticarette ‘Gaz Dengesizliği,’” Hürriyet, 26 April 2003

vehicles, iron and steel products, boilers, electric devices, and tobacco products. 83% of Turkey's exports to Iran are made up of industrial products, 13% are agricultural products and 2% are mining products.⁵⁴⁵ Meanwhile, 90% of Iranian exports to Turkey are made up of crude oil and natural gas.⁵⁴⁶ Therefore, the trade balance has steadily been growing in favor of Iran, especially since Turkey's first purchase of natural gas in 2001. Kürşad Tüzmen, Minister of State of Turkey responsible for foreign trade at the time, estimated the value of Iran's exports to Turkey at \$900 million, while of Turkey's exports to Iran were valued at only \$100 million.⁵⁴⁷ Regarding the imbalance, Tüzmen also mentioned that high tariffs adopted by Iran on the Turkish industrial goods, ranging from 40 to 100 percent for some items, Turkish tariffs averaged less than 4 percent. He then asserted that "Trade with Iran is very important for us. What we expect you [Iran] to do is to pull down tariffs on industrial goods to 4 percent."⁵⁴⁸ The Iranian foreign minister replied that "There is no issue between Turkey and Iran that cannot be resolved. We are determined to improve and expand our relations."⁵⁴⁹

In fact, although Turkey's exports to Iran have been increasing in recent years, the volume of these exports is still behind that of its imports from Iran, as seen in Figures 3 and 4.

⁵⁴⁵ "Turkey to Send Trade Mission to Iran," Hürriyet Daily News, 14 September 2002

⁵⁴⁶ "Turkey-Iran Economic and Trade Relations," Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-iran.en.mfa (Accessed 5 August 2011)

⁵⁴⁷ "İran'la Ticarette 'Gaz Dengesizliği,'" Hürriyet, 26 April 2003

⁵⁴⁸ "Turkey Urges Iran to Cut Tariffs to Balance Trade," Hürriyet Daily News, 21 February 2007

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

Figure 3: Exports to Iran and Share of Total Exports

Year	Iran (Thousand \$)	%
1995	268,434	1.2
1996	297,521	1.3
1997	307,007	1.2
1998	194,696	0.7
1999	157,815	0.6
2000	235,785	0.8
2001	360,536	1.2
2002	333,962	0.9
2003	533,786	1.1
2004	813,031	1.3
2005	912,940	1.2
2006	1,066,902	1.2
2007	1,441,190	1.3
2008	2,029,760	1.5
2009	2,024,865	2.0

Source: “İstatistik Göstergeler: 1923-2009,” (Statistical Indications: 1923-2009) Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistical Institute)⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁵⁰ www.tuik.gov.tr (Accessed 5 August 2011)

Figure 4: Imports from Iran and Share in Total Imports

Year	Iran (Thousand \$)	%
1995	689,476	1.9
1996	806,335	1.8
1997	646,402	1.3
1998	433,026	0.9
1999	635,928	1.6
2000	815,730	1.5
2001	839,800	2.0
2002	920,972	1.8
2003	1,860,683	2.7
2004	1,962,059	2.0
2005	3,469,706	3.0
2006	5,626,610	4.0
2007	6,615,394	3.9
2008	8,199,689	4.1
2009	3,405,986	2.4

Source: “İstatistik Göstergeler: 1923-2009,” (Statistical Indications: 1923-2009) Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, (Turkish Statistical Institute)⁵⁵¹

The lists of main origins of Turkish imports and exports, seen in Figures 5 and 6, also demonstrate the trade imbalance between Turkey and Iran. While Iran is not

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

included among the main countries Turkey exports to, it is on the list of the main countries Turkey imports from.

Figure 5: Main Origins of Turkish Imports (CIF, Million USD)

Countries	2005	%	2006	%	2007	%	2008	%	2009	%
Russian Fed.	13.634	11.7	17.806	12.8	23.508	13.8	31.364	15.5	19.710	14.0
Germany	12.906	11.1	14.768	10.6	17.539	10.3	18.687	9.3	14.076	10.0
China	6.885	5.9	9.669	6.9	13.234	7.8	15.658	7.8	12.655	9.0
USA	5.376	4.6	6.260	4.5	8.366	4.8	11.975	5.9	8.568	6.1
Italy	7.566	6.5	8.663	6.2	9.967	5.9	11.011	5.5	7.666	5.4
France	5.888	5.0	7.239	5.2	7.849	4.6	9.022	4.5	7.084	5.0
Spain	3.555	3.0	3.832	2.7	4.342	2.6	4.548	2.3	3.774	2.7
UK	4.696	4.0	5.137	3.7	5.477	3.2	5.323	2.6	3.465	2.5
Iran	3.469	3.0	5.626	4.0	6.615	3.9	8.199	4.1	3.402	2.4
Ukraine	2.651	2.3	3.059	2.2	4.519	2.7	6.106	3.0	3.155	2.2
EU (27)	49.220	42.1	59.400	42.6	68.611	40.3	74.800	37.0	56.513	40.1
OECD	66.107	56.6	77.812	55.7	91.856	54.0	102.899	51.0	75.054	53.3
TOTAL	116.774	100	139.576	100	170.062	100	201.960	100	140.75	100

Source: “Turkey in Figures with International Comparisons,” Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu (Foreign Economic Relations Board)⁵⁵²

Figure 6: Main Destinations of Turkish Exports (FOB, Million USD)

Countries	2005	%	2006	%	2007	%	2008	%	2009	%
Germany	9.455	12.9	9.686	11.3	11.993	11.2	12.951	9.8	9.800	9.6
France	3.806	5.2	4.604	5.4	5.974	5.6	6.615	5.0	6.212	6.1
UK	5.917	8.1	6.814	8.0	8.626	8.0	8.158	6.2	5.923	5.8
Italy	5.617	7.6	6.752	7.9	7.480	7.0	7.814	5.9	5.893	5.7
Iraq	2.750	3.7	2.589	3.0	2.844	2.7	3.916	3.0	5.126	5.0
Switzerland	553	0.8	901	1.1	935	0.9	2.857	2.2	3.931	3.8
USA	4.911	6.7	5.060	5.9	4.170	3.9	4.290	3.3	3.225	3.2
Russian Fed.	2.377	3.2	3.237	3.8	4.726	4.4	6.481	4.9	3.203	3.1
BAE	1.675	2.3	1.985	2.3	3.240	3.0	7.975	6.0	2.899	2.8
Spain	3.011	4.1	3.720	4.3	4.579	4.3	4.043	3.1	2.826	2.7
EU (27)	38.400	52.3	47.934	56.0	60.398	56.3	63.379	48.0	47.014	46.0
OECD	44.355	60.4	54.480	63.7	65.674	61.2	70.472	53.4	54.256	53.1
TOTAL	73.476	100	85.534	100	107.271	100	132.002	100	102.165	100

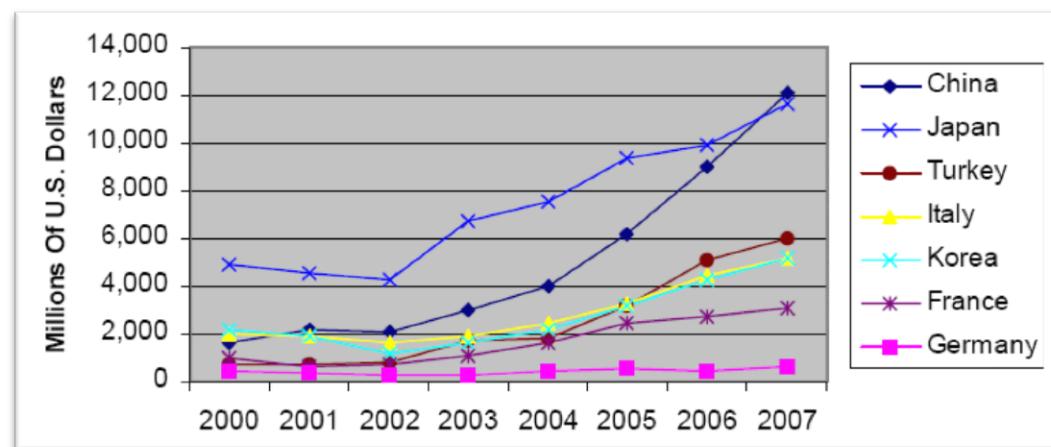
Source: “Turkey in Figures with International Comparisons,” Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu (Foreign Economic Relations Board)⁵⁵³

⁵⁵² http://www.deik.org.tr/Lists/FaydalıBilgiler/Attachments/46/Turkey%20In%20Figures_TR.pdf (Accessed 12 April 2011)

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

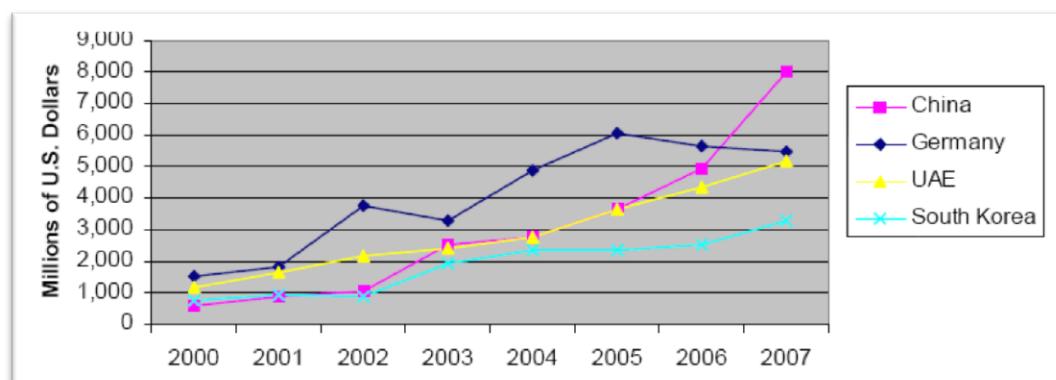
Figures 7 and 8, which display the main countries Iran exports to and imports from, also confirm Turkey's trade deficit with Iran. While Iran's exports to Turkey have been increasing in recent years, Turkey still does not belong on the list of the main countries Iran imports from.

Figure 7: Iran's Export to Selected Countries between 2000 and 2007



Source: Shayerah Ilias, "Iran's Economy," CRS Report for Congress, Order Code RL34525, (22 August 2008)

Figure 8: Iran's Imports from Selected Countries between 2000 and 2007



Source: Shayerah Ilias, "Iran's Economy," CRS Report for Congress, Order Code RL34525, (22 August 2008)

5.2. FACTORS THAT WORK IN FAVOR OF IMPROVING ECONOMIC RELATIONS

As had been the case in previous decades, economic considerations remained a priority for Turkey and Iran in the 2000s, and this contributed to the rapprochement process in bilateral relations. In this respect, Murat Mercan, then-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, observed that the Turkish and Iranian economies are complementary in many ways. First, Turkey is a transit country for Iranian goods to the West, while Iran is a gateway for Turkish exports to the East. Second, Turkey is an energy importing country while Iran is an exporting one.⁵⁵⁴

In addition to economic considerations by both countries, other factors have also worked in favor of the rapprochement process. For Turkey, the transition towards an economy-oriented foreign policy model that had begun in the 1980s had continued into the 2000s, despite the interruption during the 1990s. For Iran, on the other hand, the economic sanctions posed by the UN Security Council and the United States posed serious challenges to its economy. Therefore, minimizing the challenges of the economic sanctions became a priority of Iranian foreign policy. To that end, it attempted to improve its economic relations, with neighboring states in particular, and began enacting economic reforms in the early 2000s. These factors that have worked in favor of rapprochement over the last decade will be analyzed in the next section.

⁵⁵⁴ Murat Mercan, “Turkish Foreign Policy and Iran,” Turkish Policy Quarterly 8, No. 4 (Winter 2009/2010): 17.

5.2.1. Economic Considerations in Turkish and Iranian Politics

5.2.1.1. Turkey's "Trading State" Policies

As mentioned, economic considerations have been influential in Turkish foreign policy over the last 30 years. This process began with the liberalization of the Turkish economy and the adoption of the Washington Consensus, which led to the emergence of the export-oriented small-scale family businesses in Anatolia in the 1980s, known as the Anatolian Tigers. In the meantime, they formed MÜSİAD (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), which conducted Islamic values into the business community, adopted mainly Eastern-looking strategy by which it aims to access to the Middle Eastern markets. This trend was interrupted in the 1990s when Turkey's security concerns increased due to developments in Iraq after the Gulf War. By the late 1990s, the influence of economic considerations returned to prominence in as a factor in the Turkish foreign policy approach under İsmail Cem. Economic crisis in 2001, which significantly affected Turkish economy, also influenced Turkish foreign policy. That year, Turkey adopted a stabilization program that prioritized a market economy and minimum intervention. In addition, according to Kutlay, Anatolian Tigers that had previously been excluded from the benefits of the state mechanisms were encouraged to invest abroad.⁵⁵⁵

The coming to power of the AKP reinforced the influence of economic considerations in the Turkish foreign policy. During the AKP period, the number of overseas commercial counselor cadres doubled to 250 and number of foreign

⁵⁵⁵ Mustafa Kutlay, "Economy as the Practical Hand of "New Turkish Foreign Policy": A Political Economy Explanation," Insight Turkey 13, No.1 (2011)

missions increased to 100.⁵⁵⁶ State Minister responsible for Foreign Trade, Zafer Çağlayan, described the commercial counselors as the hand, arm and eye of the private sector in respective countries.⁵⁵⁷ This is an indication of increasing business-state interaction. In addition, Gümüşçü and Sert argue that the AKP has been a party of business, representing foremost the interests of business with its emphasis on macro-economic stability, economic growth and expansion of private investment.⁵⁵⁸ Since the AKP has treated the private sector much more favorably than any government to date, in return it gained the supports of small- and medium-sized business units that came together under the umbrella of several nation-wide business associations, such as TİM (Turkish Exporter's Assembly), TOBB (The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey), DEİK (Foreign Economic Relations Board), MÜSİAD(Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), TUSKON (Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey) and ASKON (Anatolian Lions Business Association).⁵⁵⁹

Until 2005, DEİK, which had been formed by the state in the mid-1980s, coordinated the business community's foreign economic relations by providing

⁵⁵⁶ Esra Eruysal, Economic Relations between Turkey and Iran from 1990 to 2010: A Turkish Perspective, Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Middle East Technical University, (Ankara, December 2011): 123

⁵⁵⁷ "Ticaret Müşavirleri Özel Sektörün Eli Kolu Olacak," Dünya Gazetesi, 25 April 2011

⁵⁵⁸ Şebnem Gümüşçü and Deniz Sert, "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey," Middle Eastern Studies 45, No. 6 (November 2009): 965

⁵⁵⁹ TUSKON has been actively engaging with the African and East Asian markets. ASKON was founded in 1998 with an Erbakan-style, pro-Islamic discourse of economy and trade. It has been focused primarily on the neighboring countries. TİM has conducted several activities from lobbying in the country and abroad to take part in the process of determining export policies and targets, from organizing trade missions and fairs to provide foreign trade consultancy services in order to defend the interests and rights of the exporters. It has focused on all profitable regions.

information, organizing official visits and facilitating foreign economic relations between states through bilateral cooperation councils. Since 2005, TUSKON, which was created in 2005 by mostly of small- and medium-sized businesses in order to represent and enable Turkish businessmen to develop economic relations with other countries and to penetrate Turkey into global markets in several industries, has been working closely with state institutions. What is important with these associations is their contribution to the rapprochement process of Turkey's relations with neighboring states, including Iran. As these institutions support and never challenge the government's policies, they have backed Turkey's attempt to ensure order in the Middle East through economic interdependence. They also forced the AKP to adopt the policy of "zero-problems-limitless trade with neighbors," aiming to reach new markets. Mustafa Kutlay argues that "the Turkish business elite have begun to explore economic and financial opportunities in neighboring countries, and have backed the state in its efforts to stabilize the region for the sake of their interests, *inter alia*."⁵⁶⁰ In this respect, MÜSİAD became a significant actor in Turkish foreign policy. Gümüşçü and Sert state that "MÜSİAD played a critical role at the organizational level as numerous members of the association joined the AKP to complete the organization of the local offices of the party in Anatolian cities."⁵⁶¹ MÜSİAD also played an important role in improving Turkish-Iranian economic relations. In June 2011, for instance, 60 MÜSİAD members from many sectors, including construction, tourism and

⁵⁶⁰ Mustafa Kutlay, "Economy as the Practical Hand of 'New Turkish Foreign Policy': A Political Economy Explanation," Insight Turkey 13, No. 1 (2011): 71

⁵⁶¹ Şebnem Gümüşçü and Deniz Sert, "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey," Middle Eastern Studies 45, No. 6 (November 2009): 964

machinery, visited Iran in search of investment opportunities.⁵⁶² In this respect, not only MÜSİAD, but also other associations contributed to the improvement of Turkish-Iranian economic relations. For instance, Vice President of TÜSİAD (the Turkish Industry and Business Association), Haluk Dinçer, emphasized that Iran is Turkey's natural trading partner in response to US criticism over their ever-improving economic relations.⁵⁶³

Regarding the link between the AKP and business circles, Kirişçi argues that “Turkish foreign policy behavior in the last couple of years has increasingly been shaped by economic considerations – such as export markets, investment opportunities, tourism, energy supplies and the like.”⁵⁶⁴ In this regard, Kirişçi labels Turkey a “trading state,” using Rosecrance’s term. Rosecrance argued that the world was transforming from a “military political and territorial system” into a “trading world” characterized by economic interdependence.⁵⁶⁵ In his view, this system favors countries that cooperate rather than emphasize military capabilities and struggle for power. It thus becomes preferable to resolve disputes with neighbors in order to promote trade and investment.⁵⁶⁶ Based on Rosecrance view, Kirişçi argues that Turkey has become a “trading state.” It seems that the

⁵⁶² “ MÜSAİD’S [sic] Visit to Iran”, <http://www.musiad.org.tr/en/detayHaber.aspx?id=985> (Accessed 9 August 2011)

⁵⁶³ Murat Sabuncu, “Iran, Doğal Ticari Partnerimiz,” Patronlar Dünyası (23 September 2010) <http://www.patronlardunyasi.com/haber/TUSIAD-%E2%80%98Iran-dogal-ticari-partnerimiz-91370> (Accessed 9 August 2011)

⁵⁶⁴ Kemal Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State,” New Perspectives on Turkey No. 49 (2009): 39

⁵⁶⁵ Richard Rosecrance, The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World (New York: Basic Books, 1986): 40

⁵⁶⁶ Richard Rosecrance, The Rise of the Virtual State: Wealth and Power in the Coming State (New York, Basic Books, 1999)

declaration of the National Security Council (NSC) in 2002 that it supports Turkey's efforts to improve its economic relations with neighboring states was the beginning of this process.⁵⁶⁷ The AKP's “zero-problems” policy and references to economic interdependence also confirm the principle of a trading state’s foreign policy and contributed to improving Turkey’s economic relations with neighbors, including Iran.

The participation of business people in mutual visits between Turkey and Iran also seems to have contributed to the improvement of bilateral economic relations. Members of business circles not only participate in official visits, but also notably play an important role in improving Turkish-Iranian economic relations. According to Kirişçi as well, today the Ministry of Foreign Affairs institutionally cooperates much more with the business world, which increases the influence of business people foreign policy. In this sense, Kirişçi agrees with Putnam’s view that even though interest groups may not assert power in an official setting or at the negotiating table, their influence is felt at the highest levels.⁵⁶⁸ As a result, the interaction and mutual interdependence between Turkish businessmen and their counterparts have become a “practical hand” of Turkish diplomacy in the 2000s.⁵⁶⁹

In line with this argument, the interaction of Turkish and Iranian businessmen contributed to the rapprochement process in bilateral relations in the 2000s. Since

⁵⁶⁷ “MGK: Komşularla Barışı Ticaretle Geliştirelim,” *Hürriyet*, 1 February 2002

⁵⁶⁸ Kemal Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 49, 2009

⁵⁶⁹ Mustafa Kutlay, “Economy as the Practical Hand of ‘New Turkish Foreign Policy’: A Political Economy Explanation,” *Insight Turkey* 13, No. 1 (2011)

the beginning of 2000, Turkish businessmen have participated in nearly all visits by the Turkish Prime Minister or President to Iran. In May 2000, Turkish Undersecretary of Foreign Trade Kürşad Tüzmen visited Iran with 120 businessmen. During the visit, the establishment of the Turkish-Iranian Business Council was agreed upon. In the same year, the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey, along with the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mining, signed an agreement to establish a business council in order to create new opportunities for cooperation.⁵⁷⁰ A year later, when President Ahmet Necdet Sezer visited Iran, the Council organized its first meeting. Joint Economic Commission meetings, which are a platform for negotiating bilateral commercial, economic and industrial agreements, created opportunities for improving bilateral economic relations. As has happened in recent years, 100 businessmen accompanied to President Abdullah Gül on his visit to Iran in 2011. In fact, it is observed that the involvement of businessmen in official visits created new opportunities for improving bilateral economic relations.

5.2.1.2. Economic Sanctions Against Iran

The challenges posed by the economic sanctions of the UN Security Council and the United States pushed Iran to look for new trading partners. In this context, Turkey, which opposed the sanctions, became a reliable economic partner for Iran.

The first formal US sanction against Iran that Turkey declined to participate in was posed in 1980 in the aftermath of the hostage crisis. This was followed by the Iran-

⁵⁷⁰ Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu (Foreign Economic Relations Board) , http://www.deik.org.tr/pages/TR/IK_AnаТSayfa.aspx?IKID=80 (Accessed 12 April 2011)

Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) in 1996, which provided trade and financial sanctions on foreign investment, including non-US companies, in Iran's energy sector in order to halt the development of Iran's oil and gas industries. In 2001, the economic sanctions against Iran were renewed and the name ILSA changed to the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA). In 2011, ISA was further extended as a part of the US policies of "Iran Freedom and Support Act." In response to the US sanctions, Iran searched for new non-Western markets. As result, as seen in Figures 7 and 8, Iran increased its trade volume with non-Western countries.

In addition to the United States' unilateral sanctions, the United Nations Security Council has also passed four resolutions since 2006 directed at Iran's nuclear program. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Resolution 1696, which was adopted in 2006, demanded Iran suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities – including research and development, giving Iran a month to comply. Resolution 1696 also mentioned Iran would face economic and diplomatic sanctions if it failed to meet the demands of the international community. The deadline for Iranian compliance with the Security Council's demands passed without any result. The UN thus adopted Resolution 1737 in December 2006, calling on states to block attempts by Iran to import and export sensitive nuclear material and equipment, and to freeze the financial assets of those involved in Iran's nuclear activities. Due to the continuation of Iran's nuclear program, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1747 in March 2007. Resolution 1747 toughened the sanctions, banning all arms exports from Iran. It also froze the assets and restricted the travel of people who might become involved in the nuclear program, and called upon all

states and financial institutions not to approve new grants, loans or financial assistance to the Iranian government. In March 2008, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1803, which warned of the possible nuclear-related activities of Iranian banks. In June 2010, the UN Security Council approved new sanctions with the Resolution 1929, which prohibited Iran from buying heavy weapons, such as attack helicopters and missiles. It also strengthened the rules on financial transactions with Iranian banks and increased the number of Iranian individuals and companies whose financial assets were frozen and travel were banned.

Although Turkey has engaged with the binding resolutions adopted by the UN, it stands against the unilateral sanctions of the United States. Turkey's Minister of Finance, Mehmet Şimşek, commented that "We will fully implement UN resolutions but when it comes to individual countries' demands for extra sanctions we do not have to."⁵⁷¹ In addition, Turkish politician Volkan Bozkır, who heads Parliament's foreign affairs committee, criticized the US policies, stating that "Countries should be careful in warning Turkey. (...) Is there any rule in the world that the US can impose any sanctions without any UN support or legal institutions? It's only the UN which can impose sanctions. We will abide by the UN sanctions."⁵⁷² In rejecting the unilateral sanctions, Turkey positioned itself as a reliable economic partner for Iran.

⁵⁷¹ Roula Khalaf and Delphine Strauss, "Turkey Throws Sanctions Lifeline to Iran," Financial Times, 25 July 2010

⁵⁷² "Turkey's Growing Ties with Iran Angers Washington," Fars News Agency, 28 September 2011

US pressure on Turkey not to allow its banks to work with Iran has accelerated since 2006.⁵⁷³ At the end of January 2008, the US Treasury blocked transactions with two Turkish nationals and three Turkish firms, claiming that they were supplying goods and services to Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization. When the United States warned Turkey about its banks, Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister Ali Babacan announced that Turkish banks and businesses were free to trade with Iranian firms.⁵⁷⁴ Minister of Foreign Trade Zafer Çağlayan also noted that the US decision only binds the US. Çağlayan additionally noted that twenty-three percent of global trade is conducted between neighbors, implying that trade between Turkey and Iran, which share a long border and good neighborly relations, was inevitable.⁵⁷⁵ The United States also accused Turkey of violating UN economic sanctions by continuing trade relations with Iran. Çağlayan rejected all such accusations by the United States, asserting that "Turkey's exports to Iran in 2009 totaled only 2 billion USD while Iran's total imports were worth of 68 billion USD. And the remaining 66 billion USD was owed by the American and European countries. There is no way that Turkey would breach sanctions on Iran."⁵⁷⁶

As seen from senior US Treasury official Roger Cohen, who argued that "As trade increases, as financial ties expand, it runs counter to the international community's

⁵⁷³ "ABD'den Türkiye'deki Bankalara 'Iran ile Çalışmayın' Baskısı," Hürriyet, 22 May 2006

⁵⁷⁴ "Turkey Defies Unilateral Sanctions Against Iran," Fars News Agency, 30 September 2010

⁵⁷⁵ "Turkish Minister Rules out Measures against Blacklisted Firms," Hurriyet Daily News, 8 February 2011

⁵⁷⁶ "US, EU Grab Big Share in Iran Trade, not Turkey: Minister," Dünya Times, 22 September 2010, <http://www.dunyatimes.com/en/?p=5263> (Accessed 16 July 2011)

desire to constrain Iran and to ensure the choice that has been put to the Iranian leadership between continued defiance and integration with the international community,”⁵⁷⁷ the isolation of Iran had become a priority of US foreign policy. Meanwhile, Turkey’s willingness to maintain, and even to improve economic ties provided Iran with a means of breaking out of its international isolation.

5.2.2. Economic Reforms in Iran

Since Iran has realized the importance of economic integration with the international system, it has made efforts to accelerate its integration through economic adjustments. It has been seen as willing to attract foreign direct investment to promote economic growth in the last decade, for example.

The Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act (FIPPA) has been in force in Iran since 1950. However, some legal and moral impediments on foreign direct investments have remained. According to Article 81 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the establishment of foreign companies and institutes active in the trade, industry, agriculture, mines and service sectors is forbidden. As a result, Iran has approached foreign investment with suspicion. The Khatami administration, however, made an effort to eliminate legal impediments in order to attract foreign investment for economic growth. In May 2001, the National Assembly, which was dominated by reform-oriented MPs, passed a bill aiming to attract and protect foreign investment. The following month, the Council of Guardians rejected it as too liberal. It was amended by the National Assembly in

⁵⁷⁷ “US Angered by Turkey’s Growing Cooperation with Iran,” Fars News Agency, 17 September 2011

November 2001, but rejected again one month later. Ultimately, a watered down version of the bill was finally approved by the Council of Guardians, entering into force in 2002 as the Law on the Attraction and Protection of Foreign Investment.⁵⁷⁸

Despite the problems caused by these legal impediments, the amount of foreign direct investment in Iran increased from \$700 million in 2007 to \$3 billion in 2009.⁵⁷⁹ In reference to this, the head of Iran's Organization for Investment and Economic and Technical Assistance, Behrouz Alishiri, announced that "In 2010, the country has broken a record in attraction of direct foreign investment, and statistics indicate that we had the highest investment attraction rate compared with all the previous years."⁵⁸⁰

The reforms to attract foreign direct investments were also being monitored attentively by Turkey. Immediately afterwards, Minister of State for Customs and Foreign Trade Kürşad Tüzmen visited Tehran on 27 January 2003 to look for new opportunities to expand economic relations. A few months later, Abdullah Gül, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, underscored the importance of setting better economic and political relations with Iran in order to improve regional security and

⁵⁷⁸ Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu (Foreign Economic Relations Board), İran Ülke Bületeni (Iran Country Report), (Ocak 2011): 145 (Accessed 12 April 2011); Reza Molavi, Oil and Gas Privatisation in Iran (UK: Ithaca Press, 2009): 145

⁵⁷⁹ Yusuf Türkoğlu, "2011 Yılı Hedef Ülke İran: Pazar Fırsatları, Potansiyel İşbirliği Alanları," Ortadoğu Analiz 2, Sayı 24 (Aralık 2010): 75

⁵⁸⁰ "Iran Foreign Investment Hits Record," Press TV, 12 June 2011

stability.⁵⁸¹ In accordance with this, State Minister Kürşad Tüzmen visited Iran in October 2003 with 300 businessmen and signed \$200 million worth of contracts.⁵⁸² Iranian authorities welcomed the Turkish businessmen in a letter from Vice President Mohammed Reza Aref to Prime Minister Erdoğan.⁵⁸³ Ömer Bolat, then-Vice President of MÜSİAD, noted that Turkish firms had made investments in Iran worth \$45 million and looked forward to positive indications from Iran.⁵⁸⁴ As of 2004, Turkey was the third country to directly invest in Iran.⁵⁸⁵ However, Turkish investments in Iran have still problems. Although Turkey and Iran signed an investment agreement in 1996, which has entered into force in April 2005, the mutual efforts on investments were interrupted in 2004 when the Iranian Parliament rejected a TAV contract to build Imam Khomeini airport in Tehran, and a Turkcell contract to build a GSM network in Iran.

The Iranian energy sector became a field both that Turkey was willing to invest in, and in which Iran sought foreign investment. Despite the statement by US Undersecretary of Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs, Reuben Jeffrey III, in which he announced US opposition to investments in the Iranian energy sector,⁵⁸⁶ Turkey's Minister of Energy, Hilmi Güler, signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran's Minister of Oil Vaziri Hamanei, in 2007. According to

⁵⁸¹ "Suriye ve İran'la İşbirliği Yapacağız," NTV, 26 April 2003

⁵⁸² "Tüzmen: İran Gezisinde 200 milyon Dolarlık Yeni Kontrat İmzalandı," Milliyet, 3 October 2003

⁵⁸³ Hürriyet, 4 June 2004

⁵⁸⁴ "Türk Ürünleri İran'da Aranan Marka Oldu," Yeni Şafak, 23 October 2003

⁵⁸⁵ Hürriyet, 29 July 2004

⁵⁸⁶ "US Offers Caspian Gas to Turkey in Place of Iran's Alternative," Today's Zaman, 24 September 2007

the agreement, the Turkish Petroleum Corporation was allowed to produce 20 billion cubic meters of gas in Iran's South Pars field.⁵⁸⁷ Turkey would thus be assisting Iran in developing South Pars field in exchange for cash or natural gas, which would be used in Turkey, with the rest being delivered to Europe via a new pipeline. In line with this plan, a Turkish firm signed an agreement with Iran to build a gas pipeline from Iran to Turkey.⁵⁸⁸

Although Turkey and Iran were unable to reach a final agreement on investment in South Pars, willingness by both parties to increase mutual investments has continued. In May 2010, Turkey's Minister of Agriculture Mehdi Eker declared that Turkish agricultural enterprises had made \$680 million worth of investments in Iran.⁵⁸⁹ It has also been announced that Iran's Commercial Center is preparing an informational book on Turkey to inform and attract investments by Iranian firms to Turkey.⁵⁹⁰ The Head of the Association of Strategic Business Development of Iran and Turkey, Majid Dhasemi, has also announced that Iran will provide cheap energy to Turkish traders and will not tax those who invest for 15 years.⁵⁹¹ MÜSİAD has also encouraged its members to invest in Iran.⁵⁹² In fact,

⁵⁸⁷ "Iran, Turkey to Discuss Gas Project," Turkish Daily News, 5 May 2008

⁵⁸⁸ "Iran Sets Turkish Pipeline Project," The Wall Street Journal, 24 July 2010

⁵⁸⁹ "Türkiye'den İran'a 680 Milyon Dolarlık Yatırım," Patronlar Dünyası (15 May 2010) <http://www.patronlardunyasi.com/haber/Turkiye-den-Iran-a-680-Milyon-Dolarlik-yatirim/83917> (Accessed 5 September 2011)

⁵⁹⁰ "İran'dan Türkiye İhracat Özel Kitabı," Hürriyet, 15 September 2011

⁵⁹¹ "İran'a Yatırıma 15 Yıl Vergi Yok," Hürriyet, 11 July 2011

⁵⁹² "The Interest of Turkish MUSIAD Association to Increase Investment in Iran," Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines, (3 August 2011) http://en.iccim.ir/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4168:the-interest-of-turkish-

Iran's economic adjustments are observed to have encouraged Turkish investment, and that this has in turn worked in favor of the rapprochement process in bilateral relations.

5.2.3. Turkey Needs Energy, Iran Needs Markets

The trade of energy is another influential factor on the increasing economic ties between Turkey and Iran in the last decade. While Turkey depends on energy suppliers, Iran seeks to export its resources, and these complementary needs have motivated the two countries to maintain economic relations even during periods of political tension, as during the early 2000s. The natural gas was the most significant component of bilateral economic relations in this period. Iranian Deputy Minister of Oil, Hamdullah Mohammednejad, declared that

There are some accusations and charges about Iran created by certain circles. But I am sure that these sorts of accusations will have no impact whatsoever on the bilateral relations. Turkey and Iran are neighboring countries with friendly relations with each other. I strongly believe that the natural gas contract will further reinforce our relations.⁵⁹³

Turkey's energy strategy rests on three pillars. The first is to guarantee diversified, reliable and cost-effective supplies for domestic needs. The second is to liberalize its energy market and the third is to become a transit country and energy hub.⁵⁹⁴ With respect to these aims, Iran presents itself as an appropriate partner for cooperation in the energy field, holding the world's second largest gas reserves

[musiad-association-to-increase-investment-in-iran&catid=13:iran-chamber&Itemid=53](#) (Accessed 5 September 2011)

⁵⁹³ “Iranian Deputy Oil Minister: Baku-Ceyhan is not Feasible,” Hürriyet Daily News, 4 August 2000

⁵⁹⁴ Tuncay Babali, “Turkey at the Energy Crossroads: Turkey, Present and Past,” The Middle East Quarterly (Spring 2009)

after Russia, and the world's third largest proven petroleum reserves after Saudi Arabia and Canada. In August 2000, Turkey and Iran signed into effect protocols making possible the flow of natural gas from Iran to Turkey beginning on 30 July 2001.

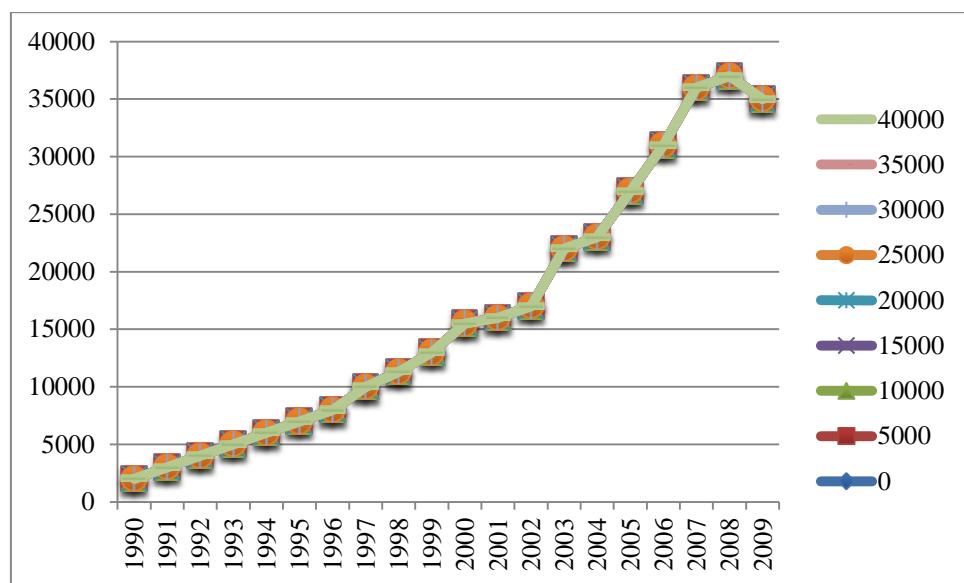
As seen in Figure 9, natural gas has been the fastest growing energy need in Turkey, which has been supplying major parts of its natural gas demand with imports. In 2009, for instance, Turkey imported 98% of its demand,⁵⁹⁵ which is strong motivation to maintain close economic relations with Iran.⁵⁹⁶ Turkey's foreign dependency made it vulnerable to supply disruptions, and this has influenced the government's decisions about energy imports. Russia, for example, had at one point been Turkey's primary supplier, but efforts to avoid Russia's use of its energy exports as a tool of political power led it to pursue natural gas agreements with other suppliers. Iran took on the role of alternative supplier, preventing Turkey's over-dependency on a single provider. The ratio of Iranian gas among Turkey's imports has been growing in recent years, as demonstrated in Figure 10. Between 2004 and 2010, Turkey's natural gas imports from Iran increased 5 times and reached to \$2,5 billion in 2010. As a result, Iran has improved its share in Turkey's total natural gas imports from 12% in 2004 to 18% in 2010.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵Doğalgaz Piyasası Sektör Raporu 2009, Enerji Piyasası Denetleme Kurulu, (Energy Market Regulatory Authority) <http://www.epdk.gov.tr/documents/10157/bdd19718-9390-49c1-9681-8e79e53d3f32> (Accessed 16 April 2011)

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

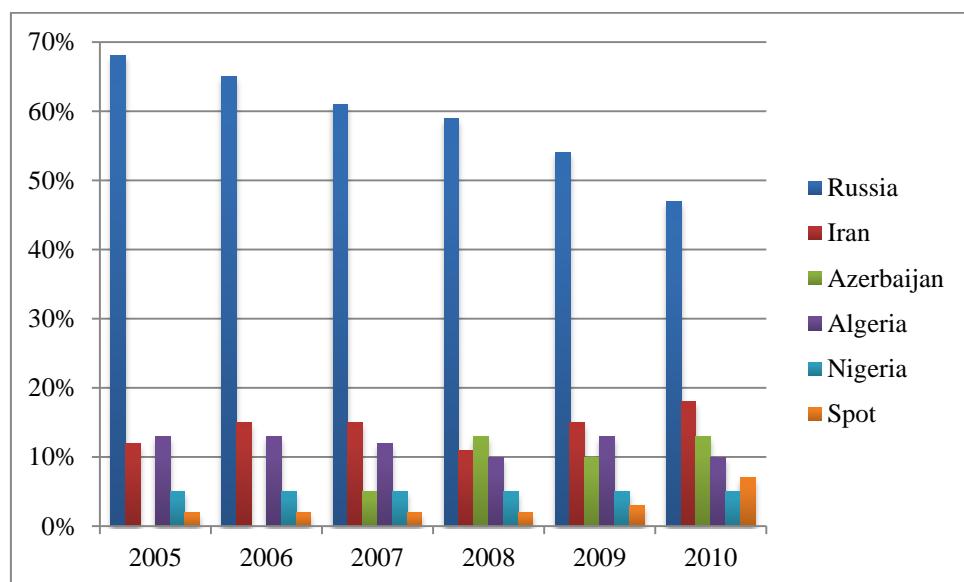
⁵⁹⁷ Esra Eruysal, Economic Relations between Turkey and Iran from 1990 to 2010: A Turkish Perspective, Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Middle East Technical University, (Ankara, December 2011): 135

Figure 9: Consumption of Natural Gas between 1990 and 2009



Source: Adapted from Doğalgaz Piyasası Sektör Raporu 2009, Enerji Piyasası Denetleme Kurulu (Energy Market Regulatory Authority)⁵⁹⁸

Figure 10: Changes in Ratio of Natural Gas Supplies, by Supplier



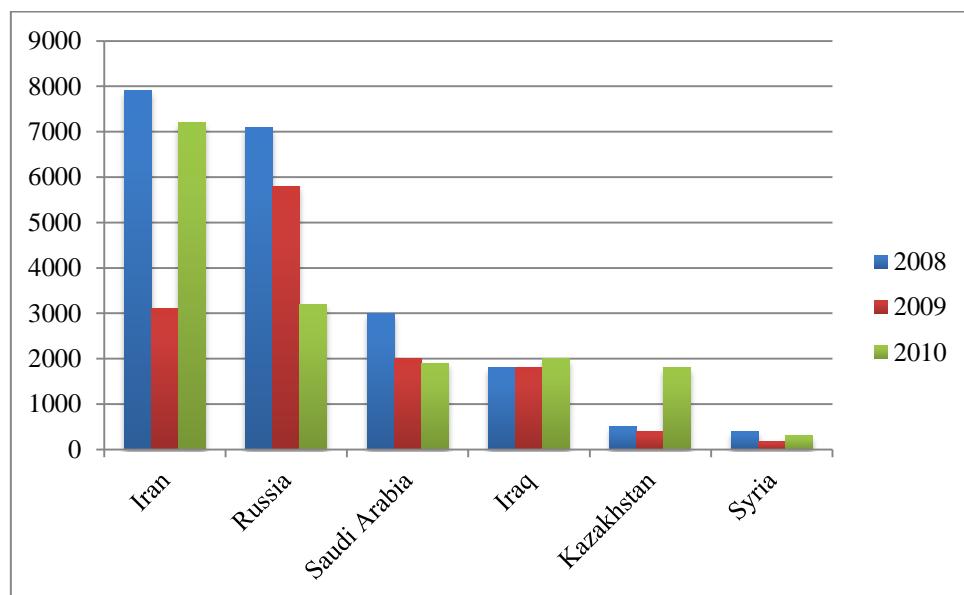
Source: Adapted from Doğalgaz Piyasası Sektör Raporu 2010, Enerji Piyasası Denetleme Kurulu, (Energy Market Regulatory Authority)⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ <http://www.epdk.gov.tr/documents/10157/bdd19718-9390-49c1-9681-8e79e53d3f32> (Accessed 16 April 2011)

⁵⁹⁹ <http://www.epdk.gov.tr/documents/10157/5240dd6f-6c54-4096-89f1-dd91337259b6> (Accessed 12 August 2011)

In addition to natural gas, oil constitutes an important source of Turkish-Iranian economic relations. Turkey imports nearly 90% of its oil needs. For instance, Onur Öymen, former Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry, admitted that Turkey's dependence on oil imports made good relations with Iran essential.⁶⁰⁰ As Figure 11 demonstrates, Iran has been at the top of the list of Turkey's oil exporters in recent years.

Figure 11: Amount of Oil Imported to Turkey by Its Top Seven Suppliers (100 tons)



Sources: Adapted from Petrol Piyasası Sektör Raporu 2010, Enerji Piyasası Denetleme Kurulu, (Energy Market Regulatory Authority)⁶⁰¹

As seen, Turkey's increasing energy hungry and Iran's rich natural gas and crude oil reserves have provided the strategic common ground for cooperation. However, the disputes between the two countries about either the volume or the price of the

⁶⁰⁰ Robert Olson, The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998 (USA: Mazda Publishers, 1998): 58

⁶⁰¹ <http://www.epdk.gov.tr/documents/10157/8144ba40-42cc-42ef-8a0a-920a7b67249b> (Accessed 12 August 2011)

gas have continued since the beginning of natural gas imports from Iran. Therefore, gas flows from Iran to Turkey have interrupted in 2002, 2003 and 2004 because of gas pricing dispute; in 2005 because of the technical reasons; in 2006 due to the cold weather; in 2007 as a result of explosions on both sides of the border caused by the PKK and PJAK and lastly in 2008 after the cut off gas deliveries from Turkmenistan to Iran which led the latter to use its own gas for domestic demand.⁶⁰²

Regarding the improvement of Turkish-Iranian relations in the energy sector, it is noted that not only is the Turkish market important to Iranian economy, but its geographical location also provides important opportunities for the transportation of Iran's resources to European energy importers. In the last decade, being an interregional energy hub became a priority in Turkey's energy policies. In line with this policy, Prime Minister Erdoğan pointed out that

Turkey is a natural bridge between energy providers and suppliers. We recently completed significant projects that aim to transfer the energy sources of the Middle East and Caspian regions to world markets. We have operationalized the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipelines. We have also completed the Turkey-Iran, Blue Stream and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipelines, and the natural gas interconnection project between Turkey and Greece. All these projects indicate Turkey's importance not only on the regional stage, but on the global stage⁶⁰³

On 14 July 2007, Turkey and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding by which the two sides agreed to build a gas pipeline to transport Iranian gas to

⁶⁰² Elin Kinnander, "The Turkish-Iranian Gas Relationship: Politically Successful, Commercially Problematic," Oxford Institute for Energy Studies No. 38 (January 2010): 9-11; Yelda Ataç "İran Gazı Sorunu Çözülemiyor, 18 Şirketin Gazı Kesildi," Hürriyet 2006; Gülçin Üstün "İran Gazı Kesti, BOTAŞ Rus Gazına Güveniyor," Milliyet, 4 January 2007; "İran Doğalgazı Kesti," Hürriyet, 7 January 2008; Servet Yanatma, "İran Gazı Yine Kesti, Sıkıntı Bekleniyor," Zaman, 9 February 2008

⁶⁰³ Erhan Seven, "21. Yüzyılın Projesi Nabucco'da Tarihi İmza," Yeni Şafak, 14 July 2009

Europe via Turkey.⁶⁰⁴ On the basis of this, Turkey's Energy Minister Taner Yıldız specified that Iran may export gas to Switzerland via Turkey.⁶⁰⁵ He also reiterated that Turkey's desire to transfer Iranian gas to Europe through Nabucco,⁶⁰⁶ and urged the EU to work with Iran to secure Nabucco's economic viability, noting the pipeline had not yet reached its natural gas capacity of around 30 billion cubic meters.⁶⁰⁷ According to the managing director of the Nabucco consortium, the engagement of countries like Iran, Iraq, Turkmenistan or Egypt would secure the needed supplies for the project.⁶⁰⁸ Mahmut Mücahit Fındıklı, Head of the Energy Committee of Turkey's Parliament, claimed that "There is no reason to ignore or reject Iran's importance in our energy policy. We need Iran not only for Turkey's energy security, but also for Europe's as well."⁶⁰⁹ Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Taner Yıldız, also reiterated Turkey's support for the transfer and supply of Iran's natural gas to Europe at a meeting with the ambassador from Iran.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁴ "Iran, Turkey near \$5.5 billion Gas Deal," Press TV, 24 March 2010

⁶⁰⁵ "Iran's Gas Exports to Turkey Sees [sic] 98% Growth," https://www.menafn.com/qn_news_story_s.asp?StoryId=1093328094&src=MOEN, 3 May 2010. (Accessed 5 August 2010)

⁶⁰⁶ Erhan Seven, "21. Yüzyılın Projesi Nabucco'da Tarihi İmza," Yeni Şafak, 14 July 2009

⁶⁰⁷ Deirdre Tynan, "Iran Should Participate in Nabucco Pipeline," Iran Review, 27 January 2009, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran_Should_Participate_in_NABUCCO_Pipeline.htm (Accessed 17 May 2010)

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ "Turkish MP Stresses Significance of Iran-Turkey Energy Ties," Fars News Agency, 23 August 2011

⁶¹⁰ "Turkey Renews Support for Iran-Europe Gas Pipeline," Fars News Agency, 28 September 2011

5.3. FACTORS THAT WORK AGAINST FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Even though Turkish-Iranian economic relations have been improving, the competition between them over energy routes will work against the further improvement of these relations.

5.3.1. Competition over Energy Routes

Although both Turkey and Iran realized the need for economic cooperation in order to secure their spheres of influence in the Central Asia and the Caucasus, competition over the role of energy hub to these regional energy resources will work against further improvement of bilateral relations.

Since the Caspian region is land-locked, construction of long-distance pipelines to Western countries is necessary. However, the issue is more complex than simply exporting oil and gas reserves from resource-rich Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iran and Russia. Moradi argues that “the problem with pipeline politics is that it must combine often opposing economic and political interests. Oil companies want the cheapest route to the best market. (...) Other actors seize upon such anxieties to press their favored alternatives.”⁶¹¹ In line with the argument of Moradi, the main problem is caused by the geo-strategic concerns of these states, since the countries along the chosen transit routes will benefit not only from heavy capital inflows in terms of investments and transit fees, but also will acquire significant influence throughout the region. The United States has also

⁶¹¹ Manouchehr Moradi, “Caspian Pipeline Politics and Iran-EU Relations,” UNISCI Discussion Papers, No. 10, (January 2006): 176

become involved in the dispute over energy routes due to its own geopolitical concerns.

From the very beginning, Russia has opposed to the involvement of extra-regional countries, namely the United States, and to the construction of alternative pipelines. Russia prefers to transfer regional oil and natural gas via its own territory to Europe. The United States has also attempted to control regional energy sources, blocking any project in which Iran has a major role. In accordance with the aforementioned Iran Sanctions Act, the United States has aimed to prevent the construction of energy routes to or through Iran, since such routes would help Iran to develop its petroleum resources. Based on this argument, the Clinton Administration blocked energy routes involving Iran and promoted the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project. To that end, US Secretary of Commerce William Daley publicly declared that Iran cannot be a part of the Caspian oil equation because Washington thinks “Tehran continues to support terrorism and the development of weapons mass destruction.”⁶¹²

In this context, Turkey and Iran have become geopolitical competitors over regional energy sources.⁶¹³ As mentioned, Turkey’s energy policy aimed to secure new energy supplies, as well as to establish itself as a transit country for energy flows from Central Asia to Europe. From the Iranian perspective, Turkey as an

⁶¹² “Daley: ‘Iran Cannot be Part of the Caspian Oil Equation,’” Hürriyet Daily News, 20 January 1998

⁶¹³ دکترین تعامل سازنده در “(Manoucher Mohammadi and Ibrahim Mottaki، ابراهیم متکی) منوچهر محمدی، فصلنامه راهبردی یاس (Constructive Doctrine in Iranian Foreign Policy)،” سیاست خارجی کشور (Strategic Journal of Yas), 1385 4 شماره (2006, No. 4)

energy hub contradicts Iranian interests.⁶¹⁴ Turkey had thus faced Iranian opposition to the construction of the BTC pipeline project, which was inaugurated by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey in 2002.

Iranian opposition to the pipeline projects that pass through Turkey is based on two arguments. According to the first argument, pipelines via Turkey are not economically feasible. For instance, as Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Hamdullah Mohammednejad argued that the BTC pipeline project was not feasible⁶¹⁵ because, while a route via Iran would cost Iran not more than \$300 million, a pipeline via Turkey would cost \$4 billion.⁶¹⁶ Iranian oil experts have also insisted that Iranian territory is “the cheapest, most efficient, and most secure route for the transport of Caspian oil to world markets.”⁶¹⁷ In line with this argument, Tehran proclaimed that “Iran is the logical route (one of the shortest) for transport of Caspian oil to world markets.”⁶¹⁸ From the Iranian perspective, the southern route is a cheaper and more secure way than others, like Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, where ethnic and political tensions still exist.

⁶¹⁴ ”استراتژی همکاری ایران و ترکیه“ (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), مرکز پژوهش‌های مجلس شورای اسلامی (The Report of the Research Commission of Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635، بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260، <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

⁶¹⁵ “Iranian Deputy Oil Minister: Baku-Ceyhan is not Feasible,” Hürriyet Daily News, 4 August 2000

⁶¹⁶ Asia Times, 23 May 2002, <http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/DE23Ag04.html> (Accessed 21 August 2011)

⁶¹⁷ Fiona Hill, “Caspian Conundrum: Pipelines and Energy Networks,” in Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis (eds.) The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2004): 232

⁶¹⁸ Enayatollah Yazdani, “Competition over the Caspian Oil Routes: Oilers and Gamers Perspective,” Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations 5, Number 1&2 (Spring & Summer 2006): 53

The second argument is based on the view that US support to Turkey creates “unequal competition” between Turkey and Iran.⁶¹⁹ From the Iranian perspective, although oil companies have admitted that the Iranian route is a quick and cheap solution, the US sanctions have made this unfeasible because private investors will not take the risk building a pipeline that might be disputed.⁶²⁰ As a result, the pipelines via Turkey, which are backed by the United States, are seen as working in Turkey’s regional interest, to the disadvantage of Iran.

Although the Iranian route, a pipeline from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf, is not taken into consideration by the great powers, Iran continues its efforts to actualize it. Maleki emphasizes that Iran has sought means and routes of escaping the US pressures that excluded it from the transportation of the Caspian energy.⁶²¹ To that end, Iran conducts two main strategies. The first is to cooperate with Turkey and participate in existing projects, namely Nabucco. The second is to work on a new pipeline projects that excludes Turkey. This brings Iran into cooperation with Russia and China. The proposed Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran pipeline, for instance, is seen as an alternative. Iran has also been working on a new pipeline to supply gas from Iran to Ukraine and European markets. Feasibility studies for an

⁶¹⁹ اسناد اتحاد همکاری ایران و ترکیه (Strategic Cooperation between Iran and Turkey), (The Report of the Research Commission of the Iranian Parliament), شماره مسلسل: 10635 بهمن ماه 1389، دفتر: مطالعات سیاسی، کد موضوعی: 260 (February 2010): 51, <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/785826> (Accessed 31 May 2011)

⁶²⁰ Manouchehr Moradi, “Caspian Pipeline Politics and Iran-EU Relations,” UNISCI Discussion Papers, No. 10, (January 2006): 182, 183

⁶²¹ Abbas Maleki, “Energy Supply and Demand in Eurasia: Cooperation between EU and Iran,” China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly 5, No. 4 (2007): 108

Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Ukraine-Europe pipeline were completed in 2000.⁶²² In addition, Iran has begun to re-export gas to Azerbaijan since 2006, which will be used to send gas to the European market in the future. Iran has also attempted to build confidence in its efforts to influence pipeline politics. Moradi observes that this careful process of confidence building measures began in 1999 with an ad hoc working group, followed by a committee of experts and a working group on INOGATE, Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe.⁶²³

As the global demand for oil and natural gas increases, the willingness of both Turkey and Iran to be an energy hub will trigger competition between Turkey and Iran, which will work against the rapprochement process in bilateral relations in the near future.

5.4. Conclusion

The economic considerations of both Turkey and Iran have been determining factors in bilateral relations. Despite the ideological factors that had caused serious tension in the previous decades, both countries had remained willing to continue improving economic ties. In the 2000s, this enhancement of ties contributed to the rapprochement process.

⁶²² Ibid, 109

⁶²³ INOGATE is an international cooperation program aimed at promoting the regional integration of pipeline systems and facilitating the transport of oil and gas both within the greater region of the newly independent states regions and towards export to European markets. Gökhan Bacık, “Turkey and Pipeline Politics,” *Turkish Studies* 7, No. 2 (June 2006): 296

Three factors related with political economy appear to have worked in favor of the rapprochement process. The first is the increasing influence of economic considerations in both countries' politics. Turkish foreign policy has been observed to be more rapidly transforming towards an economic orientation over the last decade. In Kirişçi's terms, Turkey has become a "trading state," guided by the AKP's "zero-problems" policy and an emphasis on economics in foreign policy. The influence of business circles in foreign policy has also been growing since the early 2000s. Iranian foreign policy has also been increasingly economically oriented. The challenges it faced as a result of sanctions pushed it to intensify its economic relations with non-Western countries, including Turkey. Improving economic relations with Turkey was thus a means by which Iran could break free of its international isolation. The second factor that helped improve bilateral economic relations, from the Iranian side, was the adjustments that was made to attract foreign direct investment in Iran. The last factor is the mutuality of Turkey's dependence on energy imports, along with Iran's dependence on energy exports. Since Turkey lacks sufficient resources for its domestic use and Iran possesses the world's second largest gas reserves and third largest oil reserves, bilateral cooperation in the energy field was inevitable. In addition, Turkey's geographical location makes it a good route for Iran's energy to reach European markets, which was a source of common interest with respect to participation in pipeline projects.

Despite these factors working in favor of improvement in bilateral economic relations, competition between Turkey and Iran over serving as a regional energy

hub could be a factor working against further improvement, since their interests in these pipeline projects clash. While Turkey is actively involved in East-West pipeline projects, Iran has proposed a North-South route. So far, Iran's proposal has not been seriously considered, due to the pressure from the United States, but the growing energy needs of Europe and China could trigger competition between Turkey and Iran over energy routes in the near future.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an analysis of Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s, and an attempt to understand the reasons and extent of the rapprochement process in bilateral relations. The main aim has been to discover whether this rapprochement has been a structural change or merely conjectural. With respect to this, three issues, the Kurdish issue, the nuclear issue and economic relations, have been analyzed in order to understand the nature of the changes in Turkish-Iranian relations. Each of these three issues makes a good case study because built into each are both facilitating and limiting factors for rapprochement.

As seen in the literature, the improvement in Turkish-Iranian relations in the last decade had been defined as a rapprochement process. Since the term rapprochement means the renewal of normal relations between states, in this thesis the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations has been used to define a state of bilateral relations that evolved from conflict to cooperation through both diplomatic and civil initiatives, with multiple actors at multiple levels. As seen in the first chapter, bilateral relations entered a transitional period, defined as fragile détente, in the late 1990s. During this period, the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1998 and the mutual efforts of Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem and Iran's President Mohammad Khatami contributed improvement of bilateral relations at the intergovernmental level. Even though political tensions in Turkish-Iranian relations were ongoing in the early 2000s due to allegations of

links between Iran and Turkish Hezbollah, and to the assassinations of members of the Turkish secular elite, the domestic factors and regional developments created by the Iraq War of 2003 accelerated the rapprochement trend in this period.

This thesis adapted concepts introduced by Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz to the rapprochement process in the Turkish-Iranian relations. As explained in the Chapter One, Öniş and Yılmaz described the Turkish-Greek rapprochement using three categories: “fragile détente,” “sustainable rapprochement” and “durable partnership.” Based on these categories, this thesis sees that the Turkish-Iranian relations moved from a *fragile détente* between 1998 and 2002, to a *sustainable rapprochement* between 2003 and 2011. At the *sustainable rapprochement* stage, the enhancement of bilateral relations takes place at various levels, including the inter-governmental, non-governmental and societal levels. As a result, the majority of domestic and international actors generally support the rapprochement process. Since rapprochement occurs at multiple levels, the mutual confidence level between the two countries increases. The zero-sum mentality is thus minimized on both sides as a result of the realization of mutual benefits to rapprochement. The duration of a *sustainable rapprochement* between two states, however, is medium-to long-term, since the process is still vulnerable to internal and external challenges from ongoing security-related issues.

Regarding Turkish-Iranian relations in the 2000s, the improvement of bilateral relations not only occurred at the intergovernmental level, but also at the non-governmental and societal levels. In this regard, Hassan-Khani argues that “the

state of relationship between Iran and Turkey goes beyond one administration or cabinet. There are much more significant and deeper factors here which all call for a very good relationship between Tehran and Ankara.”⁶²⁴ At the intergovernmental level, the numbers of high-level meetings between Turkey and Iran significantly increased. Relations have also enhanced at the non-governmental level, with both countries’ business communities taking on a significant role. At the societal level as well, rapprochement in bilateral relations had positive reflections. For instance, the number of Turks who held a favorable view of Iran doubled from 2002 to 2006.⁶²⁵ Although it is hard to argue international actors supported the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations because of doubts over Iranian nuclear ambitions, it is seen that the majority of domestic actors in both countries were in favor of the process. From the Iranian perspective, the enhancement of bilateral relations with Turkey mainly meant an opportunity to minimize the challenges brought about by the West’s isolationist policies against it, which also had a negative impact on its regional power. From the Turkish perspective as well, the improvement of bilateral relations was largely seen as an opportunity to enhance its regional power through cooperation with its main regional competitor. In accordance with this aim, Turkey conducted a pro-active foreign policy based on the idea of zero-problems with neighbors and on securing regional stability through economic interdependence. Improvement in bilateral relations with Iran has even been seen as a card Turkey would be able to play

⁶²⁴ Assoc. Prof. Hassan-Khani: “Iran and Turkey Can Adopt a Cooperative Competition,” in an interview with ORSAM Middle East Advisor Pinar Arikan, ORSAM, ORSAM Guest, 19 December 2011, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showOrsamGuest.aspx?ID=263> (Accessed 11 January 2012)

⁶²⁵ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, America’s Image Slips, But Allies Share US Concerns over Iran, Hamas, June 2006, www.pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/252.pdf (accessed 7 February 2010)

towards its efforts to be accepted as an important regional actor. As a result, significant domestic actors in both Turkey and Iran have supported the rapprochement process in bilateral relations, especially in the early of 2000s. The regional context that emerged in the aftermath of the Iraq War of 2003 also worked in favor of rapprochement, creating overlapping interests. The process has, however, recently lost some of its early momentum due to challenges from internal, regional and international factors.

Three issues, each containing within it both the overlapping and contradictory interests of Turkey and Iran, have been tested in this thesis towards confirmation of the description of this process as *sustainable rapprochement*. Regarding the Kurdish issue, Turkey and Iran became closer and began to cooperate. As seen, the Iraq War of 2003 created grounds for Turkey and Iran to cooperate in accordance with the overlapping interests of each. In this context, the two countries became closer as a way to balance the effects of US policies in the Middle East. With the Iraq War, the possibility of Iraq's territorial disintegration increased concern for Turkey and Iran over the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. Both countries feared the spillover effects of developments related to the Kurdish issue into their own Kurdish citizens. In this context, Turkey and Iran cooperated in order to secure Iraq's territorial integrity, being especially vocal at the meetings of the ministers of foreign affairs of Iraq's neighboring countries. The Iraq War also created grounds for the PKK and PJAK to be deployed in northern Iraq as a result of the power vacuum in post-Saddam Iraq. In 2004, the PKK ended its unilateral ceasefire, which had been declared after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan. In the

same year, the PJAK, as an extension of the PKK, was founded to pursue greater rights for Iranian Kurds. Faced with the increasing terrorist activity, the common threat perception of terrorism brought Turkey and Iran closer. The unwillingness of the United States and the Iraqi governments to take action against the presence of the PKK and PJAK in northern Iraq reinforced Turkey and Iran's motivations for cooperation as well. In contrast with the 1990s when each state was accusing the other of harboring terrorists, Turkey and Iran started to cooperate in counterterrorism efforts in the 2000s, which is an evidence of their increasing mutual confidence and of the realization of mutual benefits. The High Security Commission and the Turkey-Iran Joint Security Commission have been the most significant security mechanisms in this cooperation. However, regional challenges to further rapprochement on the Kurdish issue appear to continue. Since Iran and Turkey compete with one another over regional influence, they are not likely to remain long-term partners on the Kurdish issue. The possibility that Iran could play the Kurdish card in order to curb Turkey's regional power is considered likely by Turkish elite and scholars.

Secondly, the nuclear issue was another contributor to the rapprochement process in bilateral relations. Although the nuclear issue became a subject in Turkish-Iranian relations only after the revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear activities in 2002, it has not caused any tension in bilateral relations. The two countries have actually appeared united, despite the increased doubts of the international community about Iranian nuclear ambitions. Both have supported Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and have criticized the double standards

in US nonproliferation policies towards Iran and Israel. In addition, Turkey's emphasis on the need to find a diplomatic solution, rejecting any military attacks against Iran, and its opposition to further economic sanctions, particularly the US unilateral sanctions, are perceived as significant elements in the rapprochement process, with respect to the nuclear issue. Close Turkish-Iranian relations on the nuclear issue have also had reflections at the international level, since Turkey, Brazil and Iran having reached a nuclear swap deal. However, some internal and international challenges to further rapprochement on the nuclear issue are perceived to remain. Internally, some domestic actors in Turkey do have reservations about Turkey's policies towards the Iranian nuclear program, and are more skeptical about Iranian nuclear ambitions than the ruling elite. Some from military and bureaucracy networks focused on the possibility that Iran may eventually extend its nuclear goals beyond energy production into weapons manufacturing, which will change the balance of power between Turkey and Iran in favor of the latter. Internationally, the same concerns about the Iranian nuclear program are considered to be prevalent. Further economic sanctions or military measures against Iran would thus inevitably damage Turkish-Iranian rapprochement. As seen, the first signals of a possible deterioration in relations became apparent after Ankara's approval of the deployment of a NATO early-warning radar system on Turkish soil.

Finally, bilateral economic relations are seen as a contributor to the rapprochement process. Although economic relations between Turkey and Iran had never been permanently damaged, mutual efforts to improve economic ties have worked in

favor of further rapprochement in bilateral relations over the last decade. As a result of these efforts, the trade volume between Turkey and Iran has increased tenfold, from \$1 billion in 2000 to \$10 billion in 2010. Aiming to enhance bilateral economic ties, Turkey and Iran have established joint economic commissions and looked for opportunities to boost mutual investments. Moreover, interaction between Turkish and Iranian business people has increased in the last decade through these commissions, and in their participation in high-level meetings between the two countries. Therefore, this rapprochement has also occurred at the non-governmental level. Moreover, the realization of mutual benefits from economic cooperation has become more apparent in the energy field. In this context, each country has declared its willingness to participate in the Nabucco pipeline project. However, challenges to further rapprochement on the energy field are also observed to remain, as in the cases of the Kurdish and nuclear issues. Since Turkey and Iran are in competition to become the regional energy hub, their economic and political interests on the pipeline politics will inevitably contradict each other. In addition, since the United States opposes to the participation of Iran in pipeline projects, Turkish and Iranian willingness to both participate in Nabucco is an unrealized potential for rapprochement.

In conclusion, *sustainable rapprochement* in Turkish-Iranian relations during the 2000s is an outcome of conjectural change. As seen, internal and regional factors have contributed to the rapprochement process, which began in the early 2000s with mutual efforts by both countries' leaders following the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, and which accelerated in the mid-2000s with the Iraq War. In this context,

Turkey and Iran's geopolitical interests have also overlapped due to the conjectural changes. However, the rapprochement process started to lose some of its momentum towards the end of 2010 as a result of their contradictory geopolitical and security interests. This situation became significant with the inconclusive outcome of the nuclear swap deal, with their opposing stances towards the Arab Spring and with Ankara's approval of the deployment of a NATO early-warning radar system in Turkey. With these challenges in mind, moving from the existing *sustainable rapprochement* to a state of *durable partnership* is increasingly unlikely. Moreover, the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement process is reversible. Since Turkey and Iran continue to compete for regional power and influence, their contradictory interests could lead to a return of *fragile détente*, wherein the mutual confidence level between the two states is low and security issues remain unresolved, as between 1998 and 2002. Furthermore, it is also possible to predict that regional and international developments could aggravate the conflictual issues in bilateral relations, triggering contradictory interests of both countries.

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Interview with an Iranian diplomat, who wished to remain anonymous, in May 2010.

Interview with a Turkish official, who wished to remain anonymous, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in February 2010.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Chronology of Turkish-Iranian Relations in the 2000s

2000

17-19 January 2000: Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Kemal Kharazzi visits Ankara. A Memorandum of Understanding is signed establishing the Advisory Body of Politics.

18 February 2000: Iranian reformists win parliamentary elections.

5 May 2000: Ahmet Necdet Sezer is elected, becoming the 10th president of Turkey.

30 May 2000: Undersecretary of Foreign Trade Kürşad Tüzmen visits Iran with 120 businessmen.

1 August 2000: Iranian Oil Ministry Undersecretary Hamdullah Mohammednejad visits Turkey to finalize an agreement on Turkey buying Iran's natural gas.

22 August 2000: Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Muhsin Eminzade visits Turkey upon the invitation of Faruk Loğ oğlu, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary, in order to hold political consultations between the two countries.

2001

13 February 2001: Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem visits Iran.

9 May 2001: Turkey's Minister of Interior Sadettin Tantan visits Iran.

11 June 2001: Iranian Trade Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari visits Turkey.

22 October 2001: Iranian Deputy Interior Minister Bulendiyan visits Turkey to

attend Turkish-Iranian Security Committee talks.

2002

19 February 2002: Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Muhsin Eminzadeh arrives in Ankara for regular talks with his Turkish counterparts. Fears of escalation in the region following the Bush Administration's characterization of Iran as being a member of the "axis of evil" are discussed.

16 June 2002: President Ahmet Necdet Sezer visits Iran.

2003

January 2003: Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül visits Tehran. Turkey and Iran call for Muslim countries to act together to peacefully resolve the Iraqi crisis.

06 April 2003: Iranian Foreign Minister Kemal Kharrazi visits Ankara. He expresses concerns over attempts by Iraqi Kurds to control oil rich Kirkuk.

April 2003: Iran's First-Vice President Mohammed Reza Aref arrives in Ankara to attend the Turkey-Iran Joint Economic Committee.

03 October 2003: State Minister Kürşad Tüzmen visits Tehran with 300 businessmen. They sign \$200 million worth of contracts.

2004

11 January 2004: Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül visits Tehran.

12 July 2004: An Iranian delegation arrives in Ankara to discuss steps to take against PKK terrorists.

25 July 2004: The 8th session of the Iran-Turkey Joint Economic and Trade

Commission is held.

28-29 July 2004: Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoan visited Iran.

24 December 2004: Iran's Foreign Minister Kemal Kharrazi arrives in Ankara to exchange views with Turkey about the developments in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

2005

28 November 2005: Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki visits Turkey.

01 December 2005: Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki visits Turkey to talk about the nuclear issue and developments in Iraq.

2006

08 May 2006: Iran's top nuclear negotiator holds talks with Turkish leaders in Ankara.

28 June 2006: Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gl visits Iran.

4 September 2006: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoan visits Iran to discuss opportunities to improve bilateral relations.

10 December 2006: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoan holds talks with top Iranian officials in Tehran on Iran's nuclear program, increasing tension in the Middle East and on bilateral issues. The prime minister is met by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Vice President Parviz Davudi before returning to Turkey later in the day.

2007

19 February 2007: Iranian Parliament Speaker Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel begins

his visit to Turkey in the Central Anatolian city of Konya. He then arrives in Ankara.

21 February 2007: Senior Iranian officials visit Ankara. They give assurances that they have no plans to produce nuclear weapons, citing incompatibility with their religious ideology.

17 April 2007: Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki arrives in Ankara to seek greater cooperation from Turkey ahead of a ministerial-level summit that will take place in Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh with the participation of Iraq's neighbors and five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, including the United States, on 2-3 May.

20 July 2007: Iranian Minister of Petroleum Seyyed Kazem Vaziri-Hamaneh visits Ankara and meets with Energy Minister Hilmi Güler.

07 August 2007: Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Pacific Affairs Mehdi Safari visits Turkey to meet with top Turkish officials, including Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül.

21 October 2007: Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan visits Iran to talk with his Iranian counterpart about bilateral relations and regional issues.

2 November 2007: Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki arrives in Turkey to attend talks on the ongoing PKK terror problem in northern Iraq.

20 November 2007: The Turkish and Iranian Ministers of Energy sign a cooperation agreement that includes the construction of power plants and improvement of infrastructure for electricity transfers.

4 December 2007: A delegation from Iran arrives in Van, a city in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey, in order to attend a Turkey-Iran border security

meeting.

26 December 2007: A group of deputies from Parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission hold talks in Iran. The delegation, led by Murat Mercan, meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

2008

15-16 August 2008: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visits Turkey.

November 2008: Turkey and Iran sign a Memorandum of Understanding whereby Iran agrees to transfer 35 million cubic meters of gas to Europe through Turkey.

December 2008: Turkey and Iran make plans to create a joint company to build a natural gas pipeline from Iran to Turkey.

The National Iran Gas Company offers to supply Turkey with more natural gas after Russia shuts off gas to Europe.

2009

January 2009: Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Ali Larijani arrives in Turkey and meets with President Abdullah Gül.

10 March 2009: President Abdullah Gül attends the Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Tehran. The two countries have declared 2009 “Iran-Turkey Culture Year” and begun holding cultural relations conferences since January 2009. In addition, Turkey and Iran sign Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to cooperate in air, land and sea transportation, as part of an effort to raise the two countries’ bilateral trade to \$20 billion.

12 June 2009: Presidential elections are held in Iran.

August 2009: Iran takes a decision to open departments of Turkish Language and Literature in Iranian universities.

Turkey hosts a meeting of the Friends of Democratic Pakistan. Representatives of several international organizations and senior officials from twenty countries, including Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki attend. Mottaki meets with Turkey's Foreign Minister Davutoğlu.

3 August 2009: The second presidential term of Mahmoud Ahmedinejad is ratified by Khamenei.

September and October: Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu visits Iran.

October 2009: Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visits Tehran.

November 2009: Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visits Turkey.

Iranian and Turkish officials hold talks on a proposal put forward by IAEA Director-General Mohammed El-Baradei for Iran's uranium to be sent to Turkey for temporary safekeeping.

2010

March 2010: Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announces his belief that Iran's nuclear program is only for civilian purposes. He speaks of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad as a "friend".

May 2010: Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visits Tehran.

December 2010: President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visits Turkey and participates in the meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

2011

January 2011: Iranian President Ahmedinejad and Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki visit Turkey.

21-22 January 2011: A meeting on the Iranian nuclear program is organized in Istanbul. Officials from the P5+1 countries, Iran and Turkey attend.

14 February 2011: Turkey's President Abdullah Gül and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu visit Iran to discuss ways to further bilateral cooperation.

April 2011: The first trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran and Azerbaijan takes place was placed in Urmia, Iran.

9 May 2011: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visits Istanbul.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. It is widely stated that there is a rapprochement between Turkey and Iran in the 2000s. Do you agree with that?
2. Some Iranian analysts mention that there are still limitations in Turkish-Iranian relations despite the cooperation on several fields. Among these limitations, competition over the energy routes, different stances of Turkey and Iran towards the recent developments in the Middle Eastern states (namely Syria), the competition for maximizing their regional power vis-à-vis each other and the maintenance of Turkey's alliance with the Western powers (in that respect the acceptance of Turkey to deploy NATO early-warning radar system) are emphasized. Are there such limitations in Turkish-Iranian relations? Or are there any potential issues that would limit the rapprochement process in Turkish-Iranian relations?
3. How do you describe the current Turkish-Iranian relations? (e.g. complementary, competitor, partnership, ally,?)
4. How do the policies of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) influence Turkish-Iranian relations?
 - a. Do you perceive any changes in Turkey's foreign policies towards Iran during the AKP period?
 - b. Many analysts argue that AKP's Islamic affinity is an important factor behind the improvement of bilateral relations in the last decade. Do you agree with that?
 - c. How do the principles of AKP's foreign policy- namely multilateral approach, active involvement in Middle Eastern affairs and zero-problem with neighbors- influence Turkish-Iranian relations?
5. How do you perceive Turkey's active policy in the Middle East? (military operations against PKK in Iraqi territory, Turkey's active involvement in the Palestinian issue and Turkey's policies towards "Arab Spring")
6. How do you perceive the increasing influence of Iran in the post-Iraqi War of 2003?
7. How do you perceive Turkey's positive stance on Iran's nuclear program?
8. How do you approach to Turkey's mediating role in the negotiation process on the Iranian nuclear program?

9. It seems that Turkish-Iranian economic relations improved in the last decade. Would Turkey and Iran be an economic partner?
10. Most of the economic relations between Turkey and Iran are related with oil and natural gas sector. What are the views of Iran about its economic relations with Turkey excluding oil and natural gas?
11. What do you view the deployment of NATO early warning-radar system on Turkish territory? Would it negatively influence bilateral relations?
12. Is there any differentiation between Turkey's and Iran's stance on the "Arab Spring"?
13. How do you perceive Turkey's position on the "Arab Spring"?
14. How do you perceive Iran's position on the "Arab Spring"?

CURRICULUM VITAE

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WORK EXPERIENCE

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2004-2009	Global Strategy Institute, then renamed as Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies	Researcher on the Middle East
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Advanced English, Fluent French, Intermediate Persian

PUBLICATIONS

Özüm S. Uzun, "Turkmen Women in Iraqi Politics," in Judith Barr Bachay and Raul Fernandez-Caliennes (eds.) Women Moving Forward: Volume 3: Justice, Toward a System of Right Relationships, (Miami, FL.: Peace Education Foundation), 2008.

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CERTIFICATES

Women in International Security, Georgetown University, 2007
Nonproliferation, Monterey Institute of International Studies, 2004
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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROJECTS

Established a website to connect those who needs books and who wants to donate books. (www.kitapagaci.org)

TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu tez, 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin bir analizi olup söz konusu dönemde ikili ilişkilerde yaşanan yakınlaşma sürecinin nedenlerini ve boyutunu incelemektedir. Tezin asıl amacı, ikili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşmanın nedeninin yapısal mı yoksa sadece konjonktürel değişimler mi olduğunu anlamaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, şu sorulara cevap aranmıştır: 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki yakınlaşmanın sebepleri nelerdir? Söz konusu yakınlaşma yapısal mı yoksa konjonktürel bir değişim midir? Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki yakınlaşmanın boyutu nedir? Söz konusu yakınlaşmaya katkı sağlayan ya da bu süreci engelleyen faktörler nelerdir? 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-İran ilişkileri nasıl tanımlanabilir? Bu nedenle, temel olarak söz konusu yakınlaşmaya katkı sağlayan ya da bu süreci engelleyen faktörlere odaklanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, yakınlaşma sürecinde öne çıkan üç konu ele alınmıştır. Bu üç konu; Kürt konusu, nükleer konu ve ikili ekonomik ilişkilerdir.

Tez, 6 bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm giriş bölümü olup, tezin amacını, argümanını, Türkiye-İran ilişkileri üzerine yazılmış olan kaynakların incelenmesini, tezde kullanılan metodolojiyi ve tez bölümlerinin planını kapsamaktadır. Bu tezde, nitel çözümleme metodolojisi kullanılarak Türk-İran ilişkilerindeki yakınlaşma sürecine katkı sağlayan ya da bu sürecin ilerlemesini engelleyen unsurlar araştırılmıştır. Bu çerçevede dört temel veri kaynağından yararlanılmıştır. Birinci kaynak, Türkçe, Farsça ve İngilizce resmi raporlardır. Bu raporlar, Türkiye ve İran Dışişleri Bakanlıkları, Meclis Dış İlişkiler Komisyonları ve İstatistik Kurumlarından temin edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda Uluslararası Atom

Enerjisi Ajansı (UAEA) raporları ve Bileşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi (BMGK) kararları da incelenmiştir. İkinci kaynak, Türkçe, Farsça ve İngilizce akademik dergilerdir. Üçüncü kaynak, belirtilen üç dildeki basın yayınları ve düşünce kuruluşlarının raporlarıdır. Bu kaynaklar kullanılarak, Türk ve İranlı yetkililerin demeçlerine ulaşılmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Tezin son veri kaynağı, konuya ilgili yetkililer ve gazetecilerle yapılan röportajlardır. Tez konusunun araştırılması sürecinde iki temel zorlukla karşılaşılmıştır. Birincisi, Farsça kaynaklara ve gazete arşivlerine ulaşmadaki zorluktur. Farsça gazetelerin elektronik arşivlerinin birçoğu son üç yılı kapsadığından daha eski tarihli haberlere ulaşmada zorluk yaşanmıştır. Aynı zamanda söz konusu gazetelerin internet sitelerinde çoğu zaman teknik sorunla karşılaşmıştır. Bu nedenlerden dolayı, İran gazetelerindeki bazı haberler, Türk veya uluslararası gazetelerden alıntı yapılarak kullanılmıştır. Karşılaşılan ikinci zorluk, her iki ülkenin üst düzey yetkililerinin tezin konusuyla ilgili konuşmaya istekli olmamaları olmuştur. Görüşme yapılmış olan yetkililerin de bekleniği gibi diplomatik bir dil kullanmaları, teze katkılarının sınırlı kalmasına neden olmuştur.

Giriş bölümünde açıklandığı gibi, bu tez Türkiye-İran ilişkilerine yaklaşma terimi üzerinden kavramsal bir açıklamayla yaklaşmaktadır. 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-İran ilişkileri üzerine yazılmış olan kaynaklar dikkate alındığında, ikili ilişkileri normalleşme ve yakınlaşma olarak tanımladıkları görülmüştür. Ancak hiçbir kaynakta kavramsal bir çalışma yapılmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu tezde, Ziya Önış ve Şuhnaz Yılmaz'ın Türk-Yunan ilişkilerinin gelişmesini inceledikleri

makalede kullanmış oldukları kavamlar, 2000'li yillardaki Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini incelemeye kullanılmıştır.

Öniş ve Yılmaz, söz konusu çalışmalarında üç kavramı kullanmaktadır. Birincisi, kırılgan yumuşama (*fragile détente*), ikincisi sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma (*sustainable rapprochement*), üçüncüsü sürekli ortaklıktır (*durable partnership*). Öniş ve Yılmaz'a göre, kırılgan yumuşama süreci, genellikle tek bir düzeyde, genellikle devletlerarası düzeyde yaşanmaktadır. İç ve uluslararası politikada tüm aktörler bu yumuşama sürecini desteklemediği için, genellikle bu süreç devlet dışı ve toplumsal düzeylere yayılmamaktadır. Bu safhada, önemli konularda, özellikle güvenlikle ilgili konularda sorunlar çözülemediğinden iki ülke arasındaki temas sınırlı ve karşılıklı güven düzeyi düşük olup, sıfır toplamlı oyun (*zero-sum game*) algısı devam etmektedir. Dolayısıyla, çatışmaların çözümü zorlaşmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, kırılgan yumuşama süreci siyasi liderlerin karşılıklı jestleri ve beyanatlarının ötesine geçememektedir.

Sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma, devletlerarası, devlet dışı ve toplumsal düzeylerde yaşanmaktadır. Yerel ve uluslararası aktörlerin çoğu bu süreci desteklemektedir. Bu süreçte, birçok düzeyde gerçekleşen temasların artması, karşılıklı güven seviyesinin yükselmesi ve yakınlaşma sürecinin yararları konusunda farkındalıkın olması, askeri bir çatışma olasılığını en aza indirmektedir. Sonuç olarak, sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma süreci orta ve uzun vadeli olmakla birlikte süreç, iç ve dış zorluklara karşı zayıftır.

Sürekli ortaklık, tüm yerel, uluslararası ve kamuoyu düzeylerinde yakınlaşmayı gerektirmektedir. Bu süreçte, devletlerle toplumlararası etkileşimin yoğunlaşması sonucunda tüm çatışmalar çözümlenmiştir. Kazan-kazan (win-win) algısı arttığından, devletler ortak siyasi ve ekonomik girişimleri gerçekleştirerek uzun süreli ortaklık kurmaktadır.

Tezde 2000'li yillardaki Türkiye-İran ilişkileri yakınlaşma olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Yakınlaşma terimi, çatışmacı ilişkiden işbirliğine evrilen bir süreci tanımlamaktadır. İkinci bölümde değindiği gibi, Türkiye-İran ilişkileri 1998-2002 yılları arasında kırılgan yumuşama dönemi yaşamıştır. Bu dönemde, PKK lideri Abdullah Öcalan'ın 1998 yılında yakalanması ve dönemin Türk Dışişleri Bakanı İsmail Cem ve İran Cumhurbaşkanı Hatemi'nin karşılıklı çabaları, devletlerarası düzeyde ikili ilişkilerin gelişmesine katkı sağlamıştır. 2000'li yılların başında İran'ın Türk Hizbullahı ve Türk laik aydınlarına yönelik yapılan suikastlar arasında bağlantısı olduğu iddiaları, iki ülke arasında bazı siyasi problemlere neden olmuş olsa da 2003 Irak Savaşı'ndan sonra ikili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma süreci hız kazanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, tezde 2003-2011 yılları arasında Türkiye-İran ilişkileri sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma olarak tanımlanmıştır.

Sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma sürecinin bazı özellikleri vardır. Birincisi, ikili ilişkilerdeki ilerlemenin devletlerarası düzeyden, devlet dışı ve toplumsal düzeylere yayılmasıdır. 2003-2011 yılları arasında Türkiye-İran ilişkileri dikkate alındığında iki ülke arasındaki devletlerarası düzeyde gerçekleşen üst düzey ziyaretlerin sayısı artmıştır. Aynı zamanda devlet dışı düzeyde, her iki ülkedeki iş

çevrelerinin ikili ilişkiler üzerindeki artan etkisi oldukça dikkat çekicidir. Toplumsal düzeyde de her iki toplumun birbirine olan sempatisinin arttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma sürecinin bir diğer özelliği, bu sürecin ulusal ve uluslararası aktörler tarafından desteklenmesidir. İran'ın nükleer programına karşı duyulan güvensizlikten dolayı, söz konusu dönemde Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin yakınlaşmasına uluslararası aktörlerin koşulsuz destek verdiği söylemek mümkün değildir. Ancak her iki ülkenin ulusal aktörlerinin söz konusu yakınlaşma sürecini desteklediği görülmüştür. İran açısından Türkiye ile geliştirilen ilişkiler, Batı'nın uyguladığı yalnızlaştırma politikalarının olumsuz etkilerini en aza indirmek için bir fırsat oluşturmaktadır. Türkiye açısından İran ile geliştirilen ilişkiler, en önemli bölgesel rakibiyle işbirliği yaparak bölgesel gücünü artırmak için bir fırsattır. AKP döneminde Türk dış politikasının temel ilkeleri olan “komşularla sıfır sorun” ve bölgesel istikrarı karşılıklı ekonomik bağımlılık yaratarak koruma çabaları, Türkiye'nin aktif bir dış politika uygulamasını doğurmuş, bu da Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin gelişmesine katkı sağlamıştır. Ancak 2010 yılının sonlarına doğru, yakınlaşma süreci hız kaybetmeye başlamıştır.

İkinci bölüm, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin tarihsel arka planını sunmaktadır. Bu bölümde ikili ilişkiler, Osmanlı-Safevi döneminden başlayarak günümüze kadar incelenmiştir. Tarih boyunca uluslararası sistemin ve iç politikanın ikili ilişkileri şekillendirdiği görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda iki önemli unsur dikkati çekmektedir. Birinci unsur, Türkiye ve İran'ın ideolojik yönelimleri, ikinci unsur ise her iki ülkenin jeopolitik çıkarlarıdır. İdeolojik unsurlar Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde Osmanlı-Safevi döneminden beri etkili olmuştur. Osmanlı'nın Sünni inancına

dayalı bir imparatorluk olması, Safevi'nin ise Şii inancına dayalı bir hanedanlık olması bölgenin iki önemli gücü olan Osmanlı'yı ve Safevi'yi karşı karşıya getirmiştir. Bir yandan Osmanlı Sultan Selim kendisini halife ilan ederek Müslümanların lideri olduğunu duyurmuştur. Diğer yandan ise Şah İsmail kendisini kayıp on ikinci imamın dünyadaki temsilcisi ilan etmiştir. İdeolojik unsurların yanı sıra, Osmanlı imparatorluğu ve Safevi hanedanlığı arasındaki geopolitik rekabet, ikili ilişkilerde zaman zaman zor dönemlerin yaşanmasına neden olmuş, ekonomik ilişkilerin kesilmesinden askeri çatışmalara kadar varan inişli çıkışlı dönemler zinciri yaşanmıştır. Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında Türkiye ve İran'da ulus devletler kurulmuş, her iki ülke de reform programlarına odaklanılmışlardır. Türkiye'de Atatürk'ün, İran'da da Rıza Han'ın reformlarıyla her iki ülkede emperyal karşıtı ulus devletlerin kurulmuş olması, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini yakınlaştırmıştır. Bu çerçevede ilk resmi temas, İran Eğitim Bakanı'nın 1922 yılında Ankara'ya gelmesiyle gerçekleşmiştir. Aynı yılın haziran ayında da İran, Ankara hükümetini tanıldığını ilan etmiş ve Türkiye'ye ilk büyükelçisini göndermiştir. Akabinde Türkiye de İran'a büyükelçisini göndermiştir. 1934 yılında Rıza Şah Pehlevi'nin Türkiye'de bir aya yakın kalması da karşılıklı algının gelişmesine katkı sağlamıştır. Ancak reformlarla yakınlaşma yaşayan Türkiye-İran ilişkileri, İran'da Türkiye'deki gibi laik ve cumhuriyetçi bir devlet yapısının kurulamaması sonucunda, ideolojik farklılığın rejim farklılığı boyutunda devam etmesi nedeniyle olumsuz yönde etkilenmeye başlamıştır. Bu dönemde Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkileyen bir diğer unsur Kürt konusu olmuştur. Türkiye-İran sınırında devam eden Kürt ayaklanmalara karşı iki ülke 22 Nisan 1926 tarihinde Dostluk Anlaşması imzalamıştır. Ancak ayaklanmaların devam etmesi ve İran

toplaklarını kullanmaları, Türkiye'nin İran'ın anlaşmaya bağlı kalmadığını düşünmesine neden olmuştur. Ağrı Ayaklanmasıyla da iki ülke savaşın eşiğine gelmiştir. İlerleyen yıllarda da Kürt konusu Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde önemini korumuş, iki ülke arasındaki hem işbirliği hem de rekabetin unsurlarından bir olmaya devam etmiştir.

Soğuk Savaş yıllarında Türkiye ve İran, komünist Sovyetler Birliğinden algıladığı ortak tehditten dolayı ABD yanında aynı blokta yer almıştır. Ancak 1950'li yılların başlarında İran'da Mussadık liderliğinde artan ulusallaşma hareketleri, Batı karşıtı görüşlerin yayılmasına neden olmuştur. Batı'yla ittifak içerisinde olan Türkiye'de ise İran'daki bu gelişmeler sıcak karşılanmamıştır. Hatta İran'daki Batı karşılığı söylemleri, Türkiye karşılığı olarak algılanmıştır. Dolayısıyla Musaddık'ın Başbakan olduğu 1951-1953 yılları arasında Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde soğuma olmuştur. 1953 yılında Rıza Pehlevi'nin tekrar iş başına gelmesiyle ikili ilişkiler düzelmıştır. Ancak ideolojik faktörler ve Kürt konusu, ikili ilişkilerde sorun yaratmaya devam etmiştir. Bu sorunlar, ekonomik ilişkilere de yansımış, 1970'li yıllar boyunca ikili ekonomik ilişkilerde enerji alanında anlaşmazlıklar yaşanmıştır.

1979 yılında İran'da yaşanan İslami Devrim, sadece İran dış politikasında değil ikili ilişkilerde de yeni bir dönemin başlamasına neden olmuştur. Bazı akademisyenler, İslami Devrimin İran dış politikasında geopolitik ve ekonomik alanlarda geçmişten bir kopuş olmadığını savunsalar da, Devrimden sonra İran dış politikası İslami model temeline oturtulmuş ve dini söylemler İran dış

politikasında baskın olmaya başlamıştır. Bu çerçevede, “kibirli güçler” ve “ezilmiş devletler” ayrımı ve bağlantısızlık politikası, İran dış politikasının önemli bir unsuru olmaya başlamıştır. Dolayısıyla, Soğuk Savaş yıllarında Türkiye ve İran’ı ortak paydada buluşturan Batı yanlısı dış politikaları, Devrimle birlikte ortadan kalkmıştır. Ancak İslami Devrimin ikili ilişkilere yansması hemen olmamıştır. Genel kanının aksine, Devrimin ilk yıllarda Türkiye “bekle ve gör” politikası uygulamamıştır. Akademisyenler, Türkiye’nin bu politikasında farklı gerekçeleri ortaya koymuşlardır. Bu sebepler içerisinde en önemlisi, Türkiye’nin İslami Devrimden ilk yıllarda tehdit algılamamış olmasıdır. İlerleyen yıllarda ise devrim politikaları, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki laik devlet-İslami devlet ayrimini derinleştirmiş, ikili ilişkilerin çatışmacı bir hal alınmasına zemin hazırlamıştır.

Devrimin ilk yıllarda Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkileyen iki önemli konu olmuştur. Birincisi, 1980 yılında başlayıp sekiz sene süren İran-Irak savaşıdır. Bu süreçte Türkiye-İran ekonomik ilişkileri zirveye ulaşmıştır. Savaşan İran ekonomisinin Türk mallarına olan bağımlılığı, Türkiye’nin de İran pazarını kaybetmemeye gayretleri ikili ekonomik ilişkilerin gelişmesini sağlamıştır. Bu dönemde Türkiye’de Özal yönetimiyle liberal ekonomiye geçilmesi ve iş çevrelerinin dış politika karar alma sürecinde etkinliğinin artması da Türkiye-İran ekonomik ilişkilerinin gelişmesine katkı sağlamıştır. İran-Irak savaşının ikili ilişkileri etkilediği bir diğer alan Kürt konusu olmuştur. Savaşın başlamasıyla İran, geleneksel politikasına geri dönerek Irak hükümetine karşı Iraklı Kürtleri desteklemeye başlamıştır. Bu da Türkiye-İran ilişkilerine olumsuz yansımıştır.

Soğuk Savaşın bitmesiyle Türkiye-İran ilişkileri de yeni bir döneme girmiştir. 1990 yılında Sovyetler Birliği'nin yıkılması sonucunda Orta Asya ve Kafkasya'da bağımsız yeni devletler kurulmuştur. Bu gelişme, Türkiye ve İran'ın bölgesel rekabetini arttırmıştır. Her iki ülke de bağımsızlığını elde eden yeni devletler için kendilerini “model ülke” olarak kabul ettirmek istemişlerdir. Türkiye modeli, halkın çoğunluğu Müslüman olan laik bir devlet yapısını ve siyasi ve ekonomik olarak dünyayla entegre olmuş bir modeli temsil etmektedir. İran modeli ise İslami devlet yapısıyla Batılılar tarafından izole edilmiş bir modeli temsil etmektedir. Orta Asya ve Kafkasya'da Türkiye ve İran'ın bu rekabeti sonuçsuz kalmış olsa da ekonomik rekabetleri zaman zaman işbirliğine zaman zaman da çatışmaya neden olmuştur.

Aynı dönemde Orta Doğu bölgesinde meydana gelen Körfez Savaşı da Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkilemiştir. Saddam Hüseyin'in Kuveyt'i işgal etmesiyle başlayan Körfez Savaşı, Irak'ın kuzeyinde, 36. Paralelin kuzeyinde uçaşa yasak bölge oluşturulmasına neden olmuştur. Bu durumu, fiili Kürt devletinin kurulması olarak algılayan ve uçaşa yasak bölgenin Türkiye ve İran karşıtı Kürt grupları için güvenli bir barınağa dönüşeceği endişesi, Türkiye-İran işbirliğini kolaylaştırmıştır. Bu çerçevede, Türkiye, İran ve Suriye bir dizi güvenlik protokolleri imzalamıştır. Ancak Kürt konusu, 1990'lı yılların ortasından itibaren Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde yakınlaşmanın değil, çatışmanın yaşandığı bir konu haline geri dönmüştür.

1990'lı yılların son dönemi ise Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde yumuşama döneminin başlangıcı olmuştur. 1998 yılında PKK lideri Abdullah Öcalan'ın yakalanması ve

dönemin Türk Dışişleri Bakanı İsmail Cem ve İran Cumhurbaşkanı Hatemi'nin karşılıklı çabaları ikili ilişkilerde yumuşama yaşamasına katkı sağlamıştır. Tezin asıl konusunu oluşturan 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-İran ilişkileri ise, AKP hükümeti ve politikaları, İran'ın nükleer programından dolayı uluslararası politikadaki durumu, 11 Eylül saldırıları ve 2003 Irak savaşından sonra ortaya çıkan uluslararası ve bölgesel gelişmeler dikkate alınarak incelenmiştir.

2002 yılında Türkiye'de AKP hükümetinin iş başına gelmesi, Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasına olumlu katkı yapmıştır. AKP hükümetinin ikili ilişkilere etkisinde iki önemli tartışma konusu göze çarpmaktadır. Birincisi, AKP'nin İslami kimliğidir. Her ne kadar AKP'li yetkililer, her fırسatta muhafazakar demokrat bir parti olduklarını yineleseler de, Türkiye'de ve yurt dışında bazı çevreler AKP'nin gizli İslami hedefleri olduğunu düşünmekte ve AKP'nin İslami kimliğinin Türkiye'nin İran dahil diğer Müslüman ülkelerle işbirliği yapmasının nedenlerinden biri olarak görmektedirler. İranlı yetkililerin de AKP'nin iş başına gelmesinin ikili ilişkilere olumlu katkıda bulunduğu kabul ettikleri görülmektedir. Hatta, AKP dönemi öncesinde İran karşıtı olarak algılanan Kemalist yönetimlerle güven tesis edilemediğinden ikili ilişkilerin sınırlı kaldığı ifade edilmiştir. AKP hükümetinin İslami kimliği, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki yakınlaşmaya olumlu etki etmiş olsa da yakınlaşma sürecinin hız kaybetmesine de neden olmuştur. Öncelikle İran, AKP döneminde daha fazla kabul edilen İslami kimliğin Türk dış politikasını etkinleştirmesinden rahatsızlık duymustur. İran açısından, Batı ile ittifakını koruyan, aynı zamanda da Müslüman dünyayla daha fazla ilgilenen Türkiye, İran'ın bölgesel çıkarlarıyla uyumlu değildir. Her ne kadar

İranlı yetkililer “Türk İslam’ı” ya da “İran İslam’ı” gibi kavramları reddederek, İslam’ın tek olduğunu vurgulasalar da son dönemde yayımlanan İran kaynaklarında “Türk İslâmçıları” ve “İran İslâmçıları” ayrimı dikkat çekmektedir. İran bakış açısından AKP hükümeti liberal İslam’ı yaymakta ve Batılı güçlerin ürünü olan “İlîmlî İslâm” ya da “liberal İslâm” adı altında İran’ın temsil ettiği İslami devlet modeliyle çatışmaktadır. Bu görüş, Türkiye’nin ve İran’ın, 18 Aralık 2010 yılında Tunus’ta başlayan, daha sonra Mısır, Libya, Bahreyn, Yemen ve Suriye’ye yayılan muhalif güçlerin ayaklanması olan Arap Baharı’na karşı farklı politikalarıyla daha da fark edilir hale gelmiştir. Türkiye, uzun zaman alsa da Orta Doğu ülkelerinin demokrasiye doğru evrilmesinin kaçınılmaz olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bu süreçte mevcut rejimlerin, halklarının talep ettilerini karşılayabilmek için gerekli reformları yapmalarını savunmakta, herhangi bir dış müdahaleye karşı çıkmaktadır. İran ise Arap Baharı olarak tanımlanan bu süreci 1979 İslami Devrimin bir devamı olarak görmekte, Arap sokaklarında yaşanan ayaklanmaları “Arap İslami Uyanışı” olarak tanımlamaktadır. Özellikle Suriye olaylarında Türkiye’nin ve İran’ın farklı politikaları daha fazla görülür olmuştur. Türkiye, Suriyelilerin daha fazla özgürlük ve demokrasi talep ettilerini ve Esad rejiminin bu talepleri yerine getirecek改革ları bir an önce uygulamaya koyması gerektiğini savunmuştur. İran ise Suriye’deki muhalif hareketin Batılı ülkelerin bir ürünü olduğunu ve Suriye’nin, Esad rejimini yıkmak isteyen Batılı güçlerle işbirliği yapan muhaliflerin kurbanı olduğunu düşünmektedir. Arap Baharı’nın başlangıcından günümüze kadar olan süreç dikkate alındığında, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkileyen asıl meselenin iki ülke arasındaki jeopolitik mücadele ve bu mücadele içinde her iki ülkenin temsil ettiği rejim modeli olduğu görülmektedir.

Bu durum, Başbakan Erdoğan'ın Mısır'a yapmış olduğu son ziyaret sonrasında daha da belirginleşmiştir. Başbakan Erdoğan, Mısır ziyareti öncesinde Mısır'ın özel bir televizyon kanalına vermiş olduğu röportajda laiklikten korkulmaması gerektiğini ve Mısır'da laik bir devletin kurulmasını temenni ettiğini söylemiştir. Bu demeç, İran'da Türkiye'nin Mısır'ın içişlerine karışmak olarak algılanmış, Türkiye'nin ABD'nin çıkarlarını gözeten bir ülke olduğu iddia edilmiştir. Mevcut durumda Türkiye ve İran, Orta Doğu coğrafyasındaki son gelişmelere karşı farklı tutumlarını başarılı bir şekilde yönetebilseler de yakın gelecekte Arap dünyasındaki rejim değişiklerinin Türkiye ve İran'ın çatışan çıkarlarını, projelerini ve vizyonlarını tetikleme ihtimali yüksektir.

AKP döneminde Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkileyen bir diğer tartışma konusu, Türk dış politikasında “yeni-Osmanlıcılık” anlayışının var olup olmadığıdır. AKP yetkilileri, özellikle Başbakan Erdoğan ve Dışişleri Bakanı Davutoğlu, “yeni Osmanlıcılığı” kabul etmediklerini her firsatta vurgulamış olsalar da genel kanı, Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu ve İslam dünyasındaki olaylarla daha fazla ilgilenmesinin ardında dış politikadaki “yeni-Osmanlıcı” vizyonu olduğu yönündedir. AKP döneminde Türk dış politikası, bir dönem Başkan Danışmanı ve şimdi Dışişleri Bakanı olan Ahmet Davutoğlu tarafından inşa edilmiştir. Davutoğlu, Stratejik Derinlik adlı kitabında yeni Türk dış politikasının temel prensiplerini ortaya koymustur. Bunlardan en önemlileri tarih derinliği ve coğrafya derinliğidir. Bu çerçevede Türkiye'nin konumunun coğrafi konum ve tarihi değerleri dikkate alınarak yeniden tanımlanması gerektiğini savunmuş, Türkiye'nin Doğu ve Batı arasında bir köprü olmadığını, Asyalı ve Avrupalı olup aynı zamanda Afrika ve

Doğu Akdeniz'e yakın olan merkez ülke konumunda olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Bundan dolayı, Türkiye'nin farklı kimlikleri içinde barındırdığını ve çok yönlü bir dış politika uygulaması gerektiğini ifade etmiştir. Sonuç olarak, AKP döneminde Türk dış politikası, çevresindeki tüm bölgelerde istikrarı hedefleyen ve bu doğrultuda bölgesel konularda aktif bir politika uygulayan bir yapıya dönüşmüştür. Bu yeni yapılanma, bazıları tarafından "yeni Osmanlıcılık" olarak tanımlanarak, Osmanlı imparatorluğunun hakim olduğu coğrafyada Türkiye'nin yumuşak gücünü artırma çabası sorgulanmaktadır. İran da Türk dış politikasında yeni-Ösmanlı vizyon olup olmadığıyla yakından ilgilenmektedir, çünkü Türkiye'nin Osmanlı'nın hakim olduğu coğrafyada yumuşak gücünü artırma çabası, en fazla bölgesel rakibi olan İran'ı etkileyecektir. İddia edilen "yeni Osmanlıcılık" vizyonunun, 2003 Irak Savaşından sonra Orta Doğu coğrafyasında artan İran etkinliğiyle çalışma ihtimalinin yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. Irak Savaşından sonra artan İran etkinliği, "Şii uyanışı" veya "Şii hilali" gibi terimlerle ifade edilmiştir. Akademisyenler arasındaki ortak kanı, Irak Savaşından sonra İran'ın Orta Doğu coğrafyasında etkinliğinin artmış olduğunu söylemektedir. Ancak İran'ın kenara itilen Şii'leri bir araya getirerek bölgesel bir bloklaşmaya liderlik edip edemeyeceğine dair tartışmalar devam etmektedir. Bu tartışmada Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkileyen önemli unsur, bölgede Sünni ve Şii ayrışmaya dayanan bir bloklaşma olursa bu ayrışmada Türkiye ve İran'ın liderlik ederek çatışabilecekleri ihtimalinin dillendirilmiş olmasıdır. Bu tartışmaların başından beri Türk ve İranlı yetkililer mezhepsel bir bölünmeye karşı olduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Türk yetkililer, böyle bir senaryonun Türk dış politikasının prensiplerinden olan "komşularla sıfır sorun" ilkesiyle uyuşmadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Aynı zamanda

Türkiye'de bu tartışma, Batı'nın bir ürünü olarak algılanmakta, bu tür senaryoların Amerika'nın bir planı olduğu, en azından Orta Doğu'daki Amerikan çıkarlarının yararına olduğu düşünülmektedir. İran açısından da aynı şekilde algılanmakta, bu spekülasyonların dış güçler tarafından yaratıldığı düşünülmektedir. Hatta bazı İranlı akademisyenler, İslam dünyasının mezhepsel bazda ayırtılmasının Amerikan ve bazı Arap ülkelerinin çıkarına hizmet ettiğini savunmaktadır.

AKP döneminde Türkiye-İran ilişkileri incelendiğinde ideolojik faktörler ön plana çıksa da ikili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşmayı ya da bu süreci kısıtlayan unsurları sadece ideolojik nedenlere bağlamak indirimci bir yaklaşım tarzı olacaktır. Bu nedenle, Türk dış politikasının, İran dış politikasının ve bölgedeki gelişmelerin de dikkate alınması gereği değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede, AKP döneminde Türk dış politikasının önemli bir prensibi haline gelen “komşularla sıfır sorun” ilkesi Türkiye'nin İran dahil komşu ülkeleriyle geliştirdiği ilişkilerin arkasındaki önemli nedenlerden biridir. Bu ilkenin özellikle ikili ekonomik ilişkilere olumlu yansısı, hatta “komşularla sıfır sorun, sınırsız ticaret” söyleminin de hayatı geçirilmeye başlandığı görülmüştür. AKP döneminde oluşturulan bir diğer dış politika prensibi olan “güvenlik ve demokrasi arasında dengenin sağlanması” ilkesinin de Türk-İran ilişkilerine olumlu etkisi olmuştur. Siyasal İslam'ın yükselişi ve Kürt konusu, 1980 ve 1990'lı yıllarda Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişelerinin merkezinde bulunmaktaydı ve her iki konu, İran'ın Türkiye'yi istikrarsızlaştmak için manipule ettiği konular olarak algılanmaktaydı. Bu süreçte, askerin dış politika yapım sürecindeki etkinliği dikkate alındığında bu iki konuya sadece güvenlik perspektifinden bakılması Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin gelişmesinde önemli bir engel

olmuştur. 2000'li yıllarda askerlerin dış politika yapım sürecindeki etkinliği azalmış, siyasal İslam'ın yükselişi ve Kürt konusu sadece güvenlik perspektifinden değil Türkiye'nin demokratikleşme süreci açısından da algılanmaya başlanmıştır. Söz konusu iki konunun güvenlik alanından çıkarılıp siyasi alana çekilmesiyle (desecuritization process) daha önce Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde çatışma yaratan iki unsur ortadan kalkmış, böylece ikili ilişkilerin gelişebilmesi için zemin oluşmuştur.

2000'li yıllarda İran'da yaşanan gelişmeler de ikili ilişkilerin gelişmesine katkıda bulunmuştur. 2005 yılında Mahmud Ahmedinejad'ın Cumhurbaşkanı seçilmesiyle İran dış politikası yeni bir döneme girmiştir. Cumhurbaşkanı Ahmedinejad'ın İsrail karşılığı ve İran'ın nükleer programı konusunda taviz vermez tutumu, İran dış politikasının agresif, saldırgan, yayılmacı ve ideolojik olarak algılanmasına neden olmuştur. Aynı zamanda Bush yönetiminin 2002 yılında İran'ı "şer ekseni"ne dahil etmesiyle, Batılı güçler İran'ı siyasi açıdan yalnızlaştırmaya ve İran'a ekonomik yaptırımlar uygulamaya başlamışlardır. Yalnızlaştırma politikalarının olumsuz sonuçlarını en aza indirmeye çalışan İran, Türkiye dahil birçok ülkeyle ilişkilerini geliştirme çabası içeresine girmiştir. Türkiye'nin İran'a uygulanan ekonomik yaptırımlara karşı çıkması da ikili ilişkilerin gelişmesinde önemli rol oynamıştır. Dolayısıyla, İran dış politikasındaki gelişmeler ve buna bağlı olarak İran'ın Batılı güçlerle, özellikle ABD ile olan ilişkileri, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerini etkilemiştir.

Tezin üçüncü bölümünde Kürt konusu incelenmiş, bu bölüm üç alt bölüme ayrılmıştır. İlk kısımda Türkiye'de ve İran'daki Kürt konusu analiz edilmiştir. İkinci kısımda Kürt konusunun ikili ilişkilerdeki tarihsel süreci incelenmiştir. Son kısımda ikili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma sürecini olumlu ya da olumsuz etkileyen Kürt konusuyla ilgili olan faktörler üzerinde durulmuştur.

Kürt konusu, Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasının yaşandığı önemli alanlardan biri olmuştur. Tezin ikinci bölümünde degenildiği gibi, 1990'lı yıllar, Türkiye ve İran'ın karşılıklı olarak birbirlerini teröristleri barındırdığı iddialarıyla suçladığı bir dönem olup, bu dönemde Kürt konusu, ikili ilişkilerde ciddi gerginliklere sebep olmuştur. Ancak 2000'li yıllarda Kürt konusu Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasının yaşandığı alanlardan biri olmuş, bu yakınlaşma iki ülkenin Irak'a karşı dış politikalarını koordine etmesinden terörle mücadelede işbirliği yapmaya kadar geniş bir yelpazede gerçekleşmiştir. 2003 Irak Savaşı bu konuda dönüm noktası olmuştur. Irak Savaşı, Türkiye ve İran'ın ortak çıkarları doğrultusunda işbirliği fırsatları doğurmuştur. Irak Savaşıyla birlikte her iki ülkenin Irak'ın toprak bütünlüğünün korunamayacağına dair endişesi artmıştır. Türkiye ve İran, Irak'ın toprak bütünlüğünün korunamadığı taktirde Irak'ın kuzeyinde bağımsız bir Kürt devletinin kurulmasından ve bu durumun kendi Kürt vatandaşları arasında ayrılıkçı istekleri tetikleyebileceğinden endişe duymaktadır. Türkiye ve İran'ı yakınlaştıran bir diğer unsur da terorden algıladıkları ortak tehdit olmuştur. Saddam rejiminin yıkılmasıyla oluşan güç boşluğu PKK ve PEJAK'ın Irak'ın kuzeyinde konuşlanmasına ve güçlenmesine zemin hazırlamıştır. 2004 yılında PKK tek taraflı ilan etmiş olduğu ateşkesini sona erdirmiştir. Aynı yıl, PEJAK kurulmuştur.

PEJAK, PKK ile bağlantısını reddetse de İran, PEJAK'ı PKK'nın bir uzantısı olarak görmektedir. 2004 yılından sonra artan terör olayları, Türkiye ve İran yakınlaşmasını sağlayan faktörlerden biri olmuştur. Aynı zamanda ABD'nin ve yeni Irak hükümetinin, Irak'ın kuzeyindeki PKK ve PEJAK varlığına karşı herhangi bir önlem almaması, Türkiye ve İran'ın terörle mücadeledeki işbirliğine zemin hazırlamıştır. Türkiye, Amerika ve Irak'la üçlü bir mekanizma kurarak PKK'ya karşı işbirliği fırsatlarını değerlendirmiş olsa da bu girişimlerin sonuçsuz kaldığını fark etmiş, Türk yetkililer ABD'nin PKK konusunda Türkiye'nin bekłentilerini karşılamadığını her firsatta dile getirmiştir. İran ise ABD'nin PKK ve PEJAK'ı kullanarak İran'daki rejimi değiştirmeye çabası içerisinde olduğunu, bu nedenle bu örgütlerin liderleriyle temas kurduğunu iddia etmiştir. Terörle mücadelede yalnız bırakılan Türkiye ve İran işbirliğine yönelmişlerdir. Bu işbirliğinde Yüksek Güvenlik Komisyonu ve Türkiye-İran Ortak Güvenlik Komisyonu önemli mekanizmalardan olmuştur. Son olarak Türk ve İranlı yetkililerinin İsrail'le Kürtlerin ve PKK'nın ilişkilerine dair ortak iddiaları, iki ülkeyi birbirine yakınlaştırmıştır. İsrail'le Kürtlerin ve PKK'nın ilişkileri yeni bir mevzu olmamakla birlikte Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin 2009 yılında Davos'ta yaşanan olaylardan sonra hızla kötüleştiği bir dönemde Türkiye ve İran'ı birbirine yakınlaştıran bir faktör olmuştur. İsrail'in Irak'ın kuzeyinde bağımsız bir Kürt devletini desteklediği ve bu amaçla Kürtlere askeri eğitim verdiği iddiaları, hem uluslararası medya hem de Türk ve İranlı yetkililer tarafından gündeme getirilmiştir. Aynı zamanda Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin kötüleştiği bir dönemde İsrail'in PKK'yi Türkiye'ye karşı kullanabileceği iddialarının gündeme gelmesi de Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasına etki etmiştir.

Irak savaşından sonra, Kürt konusunda Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasına katkı sağlayan faktörler olmuş olsa da bu süreci kısıtlayan unsurların da olduğu gözlenmiştir. Türkiye ve İran'ın bölgesel güç olma konusunda rekabet ettiğini dikkate alındığında bölgesel çıkarlar doğrultusunda iki ülkenin ortaklık kurmasının zor olduğu, hatta Kürt ya da PKK kartının İran tarafından Türkiye'nin bölgesel gücünü zayıflatmak için kullanılabilecek bir koz olmaya devam edebileceğini iddia edenler vardır. Aynı zamanda Kürt konusunda, Türkiye ve İran'ı yakınlaştıran faktörlerin Irak savaşıyla meydana geldiğini unutmamak gereklidir. Amerika'nın Irak'tan çekilmesiyle konjontürün yeniden değişeceği ve Irak'ta Türkiye-İran rekabetinin artma ihtimalinin yüksek olduğu düşünülmektedir. Diğer taraftan, İran'ın PKK sorununu tamamen çözmeyi istemeyebileceği yönünde görüşler mevcuttur. Bu görüşü savunanlar, Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasını sağlayan PKK sorununun devamını, Türkiye'nin İran'a nükleer programı çerçevesinde sunduğu destekle irtibatlandırmaktadırlar. Bu çerçevede, PKK sorununun Türkiye'yi İran'a yaklaştırılan tek konu olduğu, bu nedenle İran'ın Türkiye gibi PKK sorununu tamamen çözmek istemeyeceği savunulmaktadır.

Tezin dördüncü bölümünde nükleer konu incelenmiş, bu bölüm üç alt bölüme ayrılmıştır. Birinci kısımda İran'ın nükleer programına dair bilgiler verilmiş, İran'ın nükleer programının nasıl uluslararası bir soruna dönüştüğü anlatılmıştır. İkinci kısımda Türkiye'nin İran'ın nükleer programına yönelik politikaları incelenmiş ve müzakere sürecindeki rolü üzerinde durulmuştur. Son kısımda ikili

ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma sürecini olumlu ya da olumsuz etkileyen nükleer konuya ilgili olan faktörler üzerinde durulmuştur.

İran'ın nükleer programı, 2002 yılında İran'ın gizli nükleer faaliyetlerinin açığa çıkışlarıyla Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinde önem kazanmaya başlamıştır. Türkiye, Nükleer Silahların Yayılması Önlenmesi Anlaşması (NPT) dahilinde İran'ın sivil amaçlı nükleer enerji üretme hakkını savunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda İran'ın nükleer programının şeffaf olması gerektiğini ve Uluslararası Atom Enerjisi Ajansıyla işbirliğine devam ederek uluslararası kamuoyunun güvenini kazanması gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, Türkiye İran'a karşı askeri müdahalelere ve daha fazla ekonomik yaptırımlara karşı çıkmakta, İran'ın nükleer programıyla ilgili sorunun sadece diploması yoluyla çözülebileceğini savunmaktadır. Türkiye'nin diplomasiden yana olan bu tutumu, İran ve Avrupa Birliği Üçlüsü (Fransa, İngiltere, Almanya), daha sonra 5+1 grubuyla (BM Güvenlik Konseyi daimi üyesi 5 ülke ve Almanya) ile yürütülen müzakere sürecinde aktif rol üstlenme isteyini gündeme getirmiştir. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin müzakere sürecindeki rolü üzerine bir tartışma yaşanmıştır. Türkiye, kendisini arabulucu olarak sunmaya çalışmış olsa da kolaylaştırıcı olmaktan ileriye gidemediği bir gerçektir. Türkiye'nin arabuluculuk rolünü üstlenmememesi konusunda üç önemli engel tespit edilmiştir. Birincisi konuya müdahale olan tarafların hiçbirisi Türkiye'ye arabulucu rolünü üstlenmesini resmi olarak teklif etmemiştir. İran, ABD ve Uluslararası Atom Enerjisi Ajansı, Türkiye'nin diplomasıyla sorununun çözümüne katkı sunmak istemesini hoş karşılamış olsalar da resmi olarak arabuluculuk rolünü kabul etmemişlerdir. İkinci engel, Türkiye'nin

arabuluculuk için yeterli olmadığı yönündeki genel kanıdır. Müzakere sürecindeki arabulucunun, tarafları ikna etme ve her iki tarafın mesajlarını karşı tarafa iletmenin ötesinde, güçlü konumunun çözümü kolaylaştırması beklentiği dikkate alındığında Türkiye'nin bu rolü üstlenemeyeceği görüşleri gündeme gelmiştir. Sonuncu engel ise İran'ın Türkiye'nin tarafsızlığı konusundaki soru işaretleridir. Arabulucunun tarafsız olması gerektiği dikkate alındığında, İran'ın Türkiye'nin bölgesel planları ve emelleri konusundaki şüpheleri, Türkiye'nin arabuluculuğunu kabul etmesini engellemektedir. Bazı İranlı akademisyenler de İran'ın bölgesel gücünü ve etkinliğini arttıran nükleer gücünü, arabuluculuk rolü üstlenmek isteyen Türkiye'ye kaptırmaması gerektiğini, İran'ın Batılı güçlerle nükleer müzakereleri kendisinin yürütmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye İran'ın nükleer programıyla ilgili yürütülen müzakere sürecinde arabulucu rolünü üstlenemese de diplomatik çözüm arayışlarına aktif bir şekilde müdahale ettiğini açıktır. Brezilya'yla birlikte öncülük ettikleri Tahran Deklarasyonu, bu çabaların bir sonucudur. Ancak Türkiye, İran ve Brezilya tarafından imzalanan Tahran Deklarasyonu ABD ve Batılı güçlerin İran'ın nükleer emelleri hakkındaki şüphelerini gidermediğinden, Deklarasyondan hemen sonra BM Güvenlik Konseyi tarafından İran'a yeni yaptırımların uygulanmasına karar verilmesi, Türkiye'nin bu süreçteki rolünü olumsuz etkilemiştir.

Nükleer konuda, Türkiye ve İran'ın yakınlaşmasını sağlayan dört faktör gözlemlenmiştir. Birincisi, Türkiye, İran'ın nükleer programının sivil amaçlı olduğuna inanmaktadır. Bu algıda, Uluslararası Atom Enerjisi Ajansının raporlarında İran'ın nükleer programının silahlanmaya yönelik bir amaç taşıdığını

dair kanıtların bulunamadığına işaret etmesi etkili olmaktadır. İkincisi, Türkiye İran'dan herhangi bir tehdit algılamamaktadır. İran'ın nükleer silah elde edebileceği ihtimali olmasına rağmen, Türkiye'nin İran'dan tehdit algılamaması son yıllarda ikili ilişkilerde artan karşılıklı güven duygusuyla açıklanabilir. Aynı zamanda, İran'ın nükleer programına yönelik yapılan tahmini istihbarat raporlarının çelişkili olması, Türkiye'de İran'ın nükleer programının Amerikan ve İsrail çıkarlarına hizmet edecek şekilde abartıldığı yönündeki inancı güçlendirmektedir. Üçüncü faktör, Türkiye ve İran'ın Batı'nın nükleer silahların yayılmasını önleme politikalarındaki çifte standarda karşı ortak tutumlarıdır. İran, NPT'ye üye olan ve enerji amaçlı nükleer programlarına sahip olan diğer ülkelere davranışıldığı gibi davranışmayı, dolayısıyla onlar gibi yaptırımlara maruz kalmamayı talep etmektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, Batılı ülkelerin nükleer silahların yayılmasının önlenmesi politikalarındaki çifte standarda karşı çıkmaktadır. Türkiye de İran gibi bu çifte standarda vurgu yapmakta, İran'ın nükleer silahlanması karşı olduğu kadar belirsizlik politikasına rağmen nükleer silahı olduğu bilinen İsrail'in de nükleer silahlarına karşı olduğunu belirtmektedir. Bu çerçevede, Orta Doğu'nun nükleer silahlardan arındırılmış bölge olmasını talep etmektedir. Dolayısıyla, Batılı güçlerin nükleer silahlanmayı önleme konusunda İran'ın nükleer programına karşı önyargılı yaklaştığına dair olan inanç, Türkiye ve İran'ı birbirine yakınlaştıran bir unsur olmuştur. Sonuncu faktör, Türkiye'nin kendi nükleer programına dair planlarıdır. Türk yetkililer, mevcut durumda İran'la nükleer alanda işbirliğinin gündemde olmadığını vurgulasalar da ileriki yıllarda İran'ın nükleer bilgisi ve teknolojisinden yararlanma ihtimalinin saklı tutulduğu görülmüştür.

Nükleer konuda Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasını sağlayan faktörler olduğu kadar kısıtlayan unsurlar da bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan birincisi İran'ın nükleer silah yapabileceği gerçeğidir, ki bu durum Türkiye-İran arasındaki güç dengesini İran lehine değiştirecektir. İkili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma sürecini kısıtlayan en somut örnek NATO erken uyarı füze sisteminin Türkiye'ye konuşlandırılmasına karar verilmesiyle ortaya çıkmıştır. Türkiye'nin NATO füze sisteminin kendi topraklarında konuşlandırılmasına izin vermesinin hemen sonrasında İranlı yetkililer tarafından sert bir şekilde eleştirilmiş, ikili ilişkilerin olumsuz yönde etkileneceğine dair uyarılar yapılmıştır.

Tezin beşinci bölümünde ikili ekonomik ilişkiler incelenmiş, bu bölüm iki alt bölüme ayrılmıştır. Birinci kısmda Türkiye-İran ekonomik ilişkilerinin tarihsel gelişimi anlatılmıştır. İkinci kısmda ise ikili ilişkilerdeki yakınlaşma sürecini olumlu ya da olumsuz etkileyen ekonomik faktörler üzerinde durulmuştur. İlk defa 1935 yılında yürürlüğe giren anlaşmayla Türkiye-İran arasında ekonomik işbirliğinin gerekliliğine vurgu yapılmış, o günden bugüne inişli çıkışlı ikili ilişkilere rağmen ekonomik ilişkilerde devamlılık sağlanmıştır. Ancak yine de Türkiye-İran ekonomik ilişkileri istenilen seviyeye ulaşamamıştır.

2000'li yıllarda ekonomik ilişkiler Türkiye-İran yakınlaşmasının yaşandığı önemli bir alan olmuştur. İki ülke arasındaki ticaret hacmi artmış ve karşılıklı yatırım fırsatları arttırmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu çerçevede, Türk-İran İş Konseyi kurulmuştur. Türkiye'nin ve İran'ın ekonomik öncelikleri, ekonomik ilişkilerin

gelişmesine olumlu katkı sağlamıştır. Türkiye'nin 1980'li yıllarda liberal ekonomiye geçişyle ekonominin dış politikadaki yeri ve önemi artmıştır. Bu süreç, AKP döneminde de devam etmiştir. Kemal Kirişçi'nin deyimiyle Türkiye'nin "ticaret devleti"ne dönüşmesi, iş çevrelerinin dış politikadaki etkinliğinin artmasına neden olmuş, bu da İran dahil komşu ülkelerle Türkiye'nin ekonomik ilişkilerinin gelişmesine katkı sağlamıştır. Nitekim, AKP döneminde "komşularla sıfır sorun, sınırsız ticaret" söylemi, Türk dış politikasının önemli prensiplerinden biri haline gelmiştir. 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-İran arasında gerçekleşen üst düzey resmi ziyaretlere iş çevrelerinden de geniş katılımının olması, işadamlarının Türk dış politika yapım sürecindeki önemini ve etkinliğini göstermektedir. Bu dönemde, ekonomik yaptırımlardan etkilenen İran da Türkiye ile ekonomik ilişkilerini geliştirme gayreti içerisinde girmiştir. Türkiye'nin Amerika'nın tek taraflı olarak uyguladığı ekonomik yaptırımlara karşı çıkması, BM tarafından uygulanacak olan ek yaptırımlara da karşı olduğunu açıklaması, Türkiye'yi İran için önemli ve yeni bir ticaret ortağı haline getirmiştir. İran'da başlatılmış olan ekonomik reformlar da ikili ilişkilere olumlu katkı sağlamıştır. Türkiye, İran'ın dış yatırımları artırmak amacıyla yapmış olduğu bu改革ları dikkatle takip etmiş, 2004 yılı itibariyle de İran'a yatırım yapan üçüncü ülke olmuştur. Aynı yıl İran meclisi, TAV ve Turkcell kontratlarını onaylamayarak karşılıklı yatırımları artırma çabalarını kesintiye uğratsa da son yıllarda her iki ülke yatırımları teşvik politikaları uygulamaktadır. Bu çerçevede İranlı yetkililer, İran'da yatırım yapacak Türk işadamlarına ucuz enerji sağlayacaklarını ve vergi indirimi uygulayacaklarını açıklamışlardır. Son olarak, enerji bağlamında Türkiye ve İran ekonomilerinin karşılıklı bağımlılıkları, ikili ekonomik ilişkilerin

gelişmesine katkı sağlamaktadır. Türkiye'nin enerji stratejisinin üç temel dayanağı vardır. Birincisi, yerel enerji ihtiyacını çeşitli ve güvenilir üreticilerden görece ucuz fiyata satın almaktır. İkincisi, enerji piyasasını liberalleştirmek ve sonuncusu enerji geçiş ve terminal ülkesi olmaktadır. İran, doğalgaz rezervlerine göre dünyada Rusya'dan sonra ikinci sırada ve petrol rezervlerine göre Suudi Arabistan ve Kanada'dan sonra üçüncü sıradadır. Türkiye'nin de doğalgaz ihtiyacının %98'ini, petrol ihtiyacının da %90'ını ithal ettiği dikkate alındığında İran'ın Türkiye için önemi daha iyi anlaşılmaktadır. Son yıllarda Türkiye'nin enerji ihtiyacının artması ve enerji temin ettiği ülkeleri çeşitlendirme gayretleri, Türkiye-İran ekonomik ilişkilerinin gelişmesinde önemli bir unsur olmuştur. 2004-2010 yılları arasında Türkiye'nin İran'dan ithal ettiği doğal gaz miktarı beş kat artmıştır. Aynı zamanda 2011 yılında İran, Türkiye'nin geleneksel olarak petrol ithalatında birinci sırada yer alan Rusya'nın yerini almıştır.

Diğer konularda olduğu gibi, ekonomik ilişkilere katkı sağlayan faktörlerin yanı sıra ekonomik ilişkilerin daha fazla yakınlaşmasını sınırlayan unsurlar vardır. Türkiye ve İran'ın enerji güzergahları konusundaki rekabeti, söz konusu yakınlaşma sürecinin önünde önemli bir engel oluşturabilir. Türkiye ve İran'ın, özellikle Hazar bölgesi enerji kaynaklarının dünya pazarlarına ulaştırmada enerji geçiş ve terminal ülke olma çabaları, aralarındaki rekabeti kıyasıtmaktadır. Her ne kadar Nabuko gibi bazı projelerde iki ülke işbirliği fırsatlarını kollasa da, Türkiye'nin içinde yer aldığı doğu-batı enerji hattı projeleri ve İran'ın savunduğu kuzey-güney enerji güzergahı arasındaki çatışmanın, gelecek yıllarda ikili ekonomik ilişkilerdeki rekabeti de kıyasıtmak olasılığı vardır.

Sonuç olarak, bu tez, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin 1998-2002 yılları arasındaki kırılgan yumuşama sürecinden 2003-2011 yılları arasında konjonktürel değişimler sonucunda sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma evresine girdiğini savunmaktadır. Analiz edilen her üç konunun; Kürt konusu, nükleer konu ve ekonomik ilişkilerin, 2000'li yıllardaki Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma süreciyle uyumlu olduğu görülmektedir. Bu tez, mevcut durumdaki sürdürülebilir yakınlaşma evresinden sürekli ortaklık safhasına geçme olasılığının düşük olduğunu da iddia etmektedir. Aynı zamanda kırılgan yumuşama sürecine geri dönüş ihtimalinin yüksek olduğunu, hatta 1990'lı yıllardaki gibi kırılgan yumuşama süreci öncesine damgasını vuran çatışmacı ilişkilere geri dönülebileceğini göz ardı etmemektedir.

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