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DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
İNGİLİZCE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI  
İNGİLİZCE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER PROGRAMI  
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

**ANALYSIS OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR TURKEY**

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2008

## Yemin Metni

Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak sunduđum “Analysis of Iran’s Nuclear Programme and Implications for Turkey” (İran’ın Nükleer Programının Analizi ve Türkiye Üzerindeki Etkileri adlı çalışmanın, tarafımdan, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuđunu, bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve bunu onurumla doğrularım.

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İran'ın nükleer programının uluslararası, bölgesel ve ulusal olmak üzere üç farklı boyutu vardır. Bu tez, İran'ın nükleer programının uluslararası, bölgesel ve ulusal boyutunu sorgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Uluslararası boyutuna ilişkin olarak, uluslararası toplumun İran'ın nükleer programı karşısındaki tutumu ABD, AB, Rusya ve Çin gibi başlıca güçlerin yaklaşımlarının detaylı incelenmesi suretiyle analiz edilmektedir. Ulusal boyuta ilişkin olarak, bu tez nükleer konuya dair İran'ın iç dinamiklerini, özellikle nükleer faaliyeti sürdürme yönündeki tartışmalar ve radikal ve ılımlı muhafazakarlar, pragmatikler ve reformistler gibi siyasi gruplar ile İran kamuoyunun konu ile ilgili tutumları üzerine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Şu anda, gerek farklı siyasi gruplar arasında gerekse İran toplumu içerisinde nükleer konunun ne şekilde ele alınması gerektiği yönünde herhangi bir mutabakat bulunmamaktadır. Yine de tüm bu siyasi gruplar ve İran kamuoyu, İran'ın nükleer programına barışçıl amaçlarla devam etmesi konusunda anlaşmaktadır. Son olarak, bölgesel boyuta ilişkin olarak, Türkiye'nin İran'ın nükleer programı karşısındaki tutumu ve bu tutumu benimsemesinin arkasındaki nedenler analiz edilmektedir. Nükleer konunun diğer belli başlı konulardan ayrı tutularak incelenmesinin zorluğu göz önünde bulundurularak İran'ın nükleer programının etkileri etraflı bir yaklaşım çerçevesinde incelenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İran'ın nükleer programı, uluslararası toplum, İran iç siyaseti, Türk-İran ilişkileri, IAEA.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Master's Thesis**

**Analysis of Iran's Nuclear Programme and Implications for Turkey**

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**Iranian nuclear issue has three divergent dimensions as international, regional and domestic. This thesis aims to address the international, regional and domestic dimensions of the Iranian nuclear issue. With respect to its international dimension, attitude of the international community toward Iran's nuclear programme is analyzed with a detailed overview of the approaches of major powers such as the USA, the EU, Russia and China. With respect to its domestic aspect, this thesis analyzes Iranian domestic dynamics on the nuclear issue, focusing particularly on the domestic arguments for assertion on the nuclear activity and the attitudes of political factions –radical and mainstream conservatives, pragmatists and reformists, and the Iranian public toward the nuclear activity. Presently, there is no agreement either among divergent political factions or within the public on how to handle the nuclear issue, though they all agree on the right of Iran to continue its nuclear programme for peaceful purposes. Finally, with respect to its regional dimension, the Turkish attitude toward the Iranian nuclear issue and motives for adopting this attitude is analyzed by particularly focusing at the recent relations between the two countries in relation to the nuclear issue. Accepting the difficulty to address one issue in isolation from other major bilateral issues, repercussion of the nuclear issue is analysed by adopting a comprehensive approach.**

**Key Words:** Iran's nuclear programme, international community, Iranian domestic politics, Turkish-Iranian relations, IAEA.

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FOR TURKEY**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CENTO</b>	Central Treaty Organization
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IAEA</b>	International Atomic Energy Agency
<b>JDP</b>	Justice and Development Party
<b>NPT</b>	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
<b>OPEC</b>	Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries
<b>SOFA</b>	Status of Forces Agreement
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of Mass Destruction



## INTRODUCTION

Iranian nuclear programme has three dimensions as international, regional and domestic. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the concerns of the international community regarding Iran's nuclear programme, leading to a parallel increase in the literature questioning the international dimension of the issue. In this regard, there has been an attempt to analyze the attitudes of major powers on the Iranian nuclear issue including the US, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China. Regional dimension of the issue has as well attracted broad attention. There has been strong emphasis on the potential expansion of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, since Iranian nuclear programme have resulted in the "sudden awakening of several Middle Eastern countries that, now feeling threatened by Iran, see the urge to jump onto the nuclear bandwagon."<sup>1</sup> Other than international and regional dimensions, domestic dimension of the Iranian nuclear issue has also been significant since the Iranian nuclear dispute can only partially be solved externally as the interplay of internal dynamics are critical as well in determining the direction of the nuclear dispute.

It is true that external pressure via sanctions or incentives has been influential in promoting change in the attitude of the Iranian regime toward its nuclear programme. However, this change has been temporary since an alteration in Iran's political administrative structure resulted in Iran's restarting its uranium enrichment programme that was suspended in the aftermath of the negotiations with the EU/EU3, accompanied by the Paris agreement. Thus, permanent solution to Iranian nuclear dispute also requires a change in the attitude of the Iranian regime to be sponsored by internal pressure. Thus it is difficult to analyze Iranian nuclear dispute without any one of these three dimensions. This thesis aims to examine each of these dimensions of the Iranian nuclear issue at length.

In an attempt to address the international, regional and domestic dimension of Iranian nuclear issue, this thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Salhani, "Analysis: Middle East Nuclear Renaissance?" **Middle East Times**, 23.06.2008, [http://www.metimes.com/Security/2008/06/23/analysis\\_middle\\_east\\_nuclear\\_renaissance/0214/](http://www.metimes.com/Security/2008/06/23/analysis_middle_east_nuclear_renaissance/0214/) (28.06.2008)

chapter, titled “Attitudes of the Major Countries Toward Iran’s Nuclear Programme,” aims to interrogate the attitudes of the US, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China on Iran’s nuclear programme. The underlying question in the chapter is whether there can be a consensus in the international community for a comprehensive settlement. In trying to provide answer to this question first, the first chapter briefly reviews foreign assistance in the development of Iran’s nuclear programme until the halt of the Western assistance. Secondly, focusing separately on the US, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China, a comparative analysis is employed for delineating similarities and differences in their attitudes and concerns since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. This chapter arrives at a tentative conclusion on the basis that the debate is likely to continue, as there is no common attitude toward Iran’s nuclear puzzle in the international community.

The second chapter titled “Iranian Nuclear Issue: Domestic Debates,” analyzes Iranian domestic dynamics on the nuclear issue, focusing particularly on the domestic arguments for assertion on the nuclear activity and the attitudes of political factions –radical and mainstream conservatives, pragmatists and reformists, and the Iranian public toward the nuclear activity. Presently, there is no agreement either among divergent political factions or within the public on how to handle the nuclear issue, though they all agree on the right of Iran to continue its nuclear programme for peaceful purposes. Iranian government rejects any nuclear deal offered by the major world powers that demands a suspension of its uranium enrichment. Iran repeatedly has called for resumption of talks to resolve the nuclear issue within the framework of the IAEA and without preconditions. This chapter argues that with the modification of Iran’s official attitude with the coming elections in 2009 the course of negotiations with the international community might improve.

The third chapter titled “Iranian Nuclear Issue: Implications for Turkey,” aims to analyse the Turkish attitude toward the Iranian nuclear issue and motives for adopting this attitude by particularly focusing at the recent relations between the two countries in relation to the nuclear issue. Accepting the difficulty to address one issue in isolation from other major bilateral issues, repercussion of the nuclear issue is analysed by adopting a comprehensive approach. After a short review of the historical problems and cooperation between the two countries, geopolitical concerns

of Turkey in the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia are explained. Then two major fields of concern, which are significant in their recent bilateral relations, namely security and energy are evaluated. This chapter concludes that the Turkish attitude toward the Iranian nuclear issue is closer to the European than the American approach. Accordingly, Ankara supports the EU-3's efforts to provide a negotiated solution through diplomacy and Iran's cooperation with the IAEA in finding a solution to the nuclear issue.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**ATTITUDES OF THE MAJOR COUNTRIES TOWARD IRAN'S NUCLEAR  
PROGRAMME**

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Iran's nuclear programme –which Iran has stated is for peaceful/non-military purposes, that is energy production, whereas the Western countries regard it to be driven by military ambitions, has been a subject of international concern. In fact, since 2002 the present and future capacity of Iran's nuclear programme is questioned and evaluated by the international community. In this regard, considerable attention has been paid to Iran's nuclear programme in security and strategic studies in the last years.

Iran has started investing in nuclear technology at the late 1950's. During monarchy under the Shah, the Western countries had assisted Iran in acquiring nuclear infrastructure, whereas with the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there was a sudden halt in assistance, which led Iran to look for other potential suppliers such as China and the former Soviet Union. Iran's nuclear programme became a critical issue for the USA, particularly since the 1990's with the Russian assistance to Iran's nuclear programme and critical for the EU and the international community when the IAEA (the International Atomic Energy Agency) of the UN started inspections to document whether Iran has produced uranium sufficient for nuclear weapons–after the discovery in August 2002 that Iran had hidden its nuclear activities for eighteen years.

Today, there is a significant nuclear dispute between the USA and Iran, while France, Germany and the United Kingdom, abbreviated as the EU-3, are trying to resolve the confrontation by using diplomacy. The Bush administration claims that Iran enriches uranium and hides information, thus poses a threat, though US intelligence declared in December 2007 that Iran has stopped active involvement in its nuclear weapons programme in 2003, which has complicated things for US argument to escalate sanctions on Iran. The UN Security Council has already passed

two sets of sanctions against Iran for its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment—a process that can provide fuel for a nuclear reactor or fissile material for a nuclear bomb. More than eighteen months after the first UN sanctions were imposed, little has been achieved. Thus recently, the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany agreed on a draft of the new sanction package, which was approved in February 2008.<sup>2</sup>

The response of Iran to outside pressure regarding the nuclear issue is highly important in determining the nature and scope of attitude of the international community. The Iranian President Ahmadinejad claims that the sanctions were based on false information, since Iran's nuclear programme seeks only to generate electricity, and thus Iran accepts the IAEA as the only body with jurisdiction over the nuclear issue.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the rhetoric of President Ahmadinejad, particularly on Iran's nuclear programme and toward Israel—what US Secretary of State Nicholas Burns calls 'the most abhorrent, irresponsible rhetoric of any global leader in many years,' has brought Iran closer to a confrontation with the USA.<sup>4</sup> Lately, State Radio of Iran reported that Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamani said on 18 February 2008, 'God would punish Iranians if they do not support the country's disputed nuclear programme.' Furthermore, he said, 'They (the USA) know that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon, and they (the USA) are just trying to block the Iranian nation from achieving advanced technology.'<sup>5</sup>

There are several explanations of Iran's insistence to continue with the uranium enrichment programme. First, the Iranian officials argue that Iran's oil and gas reserves are sufficient to meet its public energy demands in the short-term, however, in the long-term it is argued that Iran's oil and gas reserves will be not be sufficient. Thus, Iran needs alternative energy resources to meet its domestic demand. A second impetus in Iran for the nuclear programme is security. There is a

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<sup>2</sup> John Heilprin, "UN Powers: More Sanctions on Iran", **TIME**, 24.01.2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1706827,00.html> (04.02.2008)

<sup>3</sup> "Iran: Bush is 'Confrontational'", **TIME**, 17.01.2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1704786,00.html> (04.02.2008)

<sup>4</sup> Scott MacLeod, "Iran's War Within", **TIME**, 15.03.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1599710,00.html> (05.02.2008)

<sup>5</sup> 'Iran's Supreme Leader: God will Reprimand Iranians if They Give up Nuclear Activity', **International Herald Tribune**, 18.02.2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/02/17/news/Iran-Nuclear.php> (12.06.2008)

belief that Iran must have sufficient deterrence against outside forces.<sup>6</sup> Yet, Iran's military intent was much clearer in the pre-1979 nuclear programme, whereas after the regime change in Iraq, Iran has been stressing the peaceful purpose of the programme for energy production.<sup>7</sup> Apart from these rationalist accounts, the quest for nuclear programme has become a matter of international prestige and pride—recognition of Iran's high status among other regional actors. Iran's insistence on international respect is also supported by its strong desire for self-reliance and independence.<sup>8</sup> In this respect, Iran's nuclear discourse has been expressed as an element of three main discourses, including independence, justice and resistance. Iran emphasizes self-sufficiency within the discourse of independence, and demand for the recognition of its right to nuclear technology within the discourse of justice. However, recently there is more emphasis on resistance within Iran's nuclear discourse.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever the real intentions of Iran are in enriching uranium, the international community's suspicion over Iran's nuclear intentions has not changed since 2003. As noted in the *Economist* on 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February 2008, 'the Americans and Europeans, supported by Russia and China, promised that halt to enrichment would win Iran improved political and economic ties, talks on regional security and help with advanced, but less suspect, nuclear technology.' Hitherto, we cannot talk about a common approach of the international community toward Iran in general, and toward Iran's nuclear programme in particular, and thus in this respect, this article aims to interrogate the attitudes of the USA, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China on Iran's nuclear programme. The underlying question is whether there can be a consensus in the international community for a comprehensive settlement that could bring positive outcomes for regional peace. In trying to provide answers to this question first, we have briefly reviewed historical foreign assistance in the development of Iran's nuclear programme. Since there has been growing literature

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<sup>6</sup> Ray Takeyh, "Iran Build the Bomb", *Survival*, Vol.46, No.4, , 2004-05, pp. 52-54.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Guldemann, "The Iranian Nuclear Impasse", *Survival*, Vol.49, No.3, 2007, p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> Guldemann, p. 172

<sup>9</sup> Homeria Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy", *Security Dialogue*, Vol.38, No.4, 2007, pp. 521-543.

on the history of Iran's nuclear programme<sup>10</sup>, we have preferred not to analyse at length but focus on the literature in this context. Secondly, we have examined in depth the international community's attitudes toward Iran's nuclear programme after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. In so doing, focusing separately on the USA, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China, which are the parties mainly concerned on the issue, we employ a comparative analysis for delineating similarities and differences in their attitudes and concerns. This essay arrived at a tentative conclusion regarding the strategic debate on Iran's nuclear programme and what strategies should be chosen to deal with it, on the basis that the debate is likely to continue as there is no common comprehensive agreement in the international community, whether Iran is capable of acquiring a nuclear capability and if endangering the peace in the Middle East as much of the globe. Yet, it seems that there is a common agreement in the Western international community that Iran must not have nuclear weapons. Although Russia and China have some concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, they prefer US unilateral action towards Iran rather than participating in a US-led pressure group. Besides, China and Russia favor dialogue rather than containment. Meanwhile Iran consistently insists that its purposes are peaceful.

## **1.2 HISTORICAL VIEW OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME**

Several characteristics can be identified on foreign assistance in the evolution of Iran's nuclear programme. First of all, it was the USA that encouraged Iran to acquire nuclear energy under the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah, since during the Cold War containing the Soviet expansionism and securing oil reserves were two main concerns of US foreign policy in the Middle East. During the monarchy a nuclear programme was designed to give the Shah an option of assembling a nuclear bomb if his regional competitors move in that direction.<sup>11</sup> "Iran's initial nuclear programme started in the mid-1950s, when Mohammad Reza Shah signed a civilian

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<sup>10</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol.43, No.2, 2007, pp. 223-245; Gawdat Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran," **Iranian Studies**, Vol.39, No.3, 2006, pp. 307-327.

<sup>11</sup> Colin Dueck and Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge," **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol.122, No.2, 2007, p. 190.

‘atoms for peace’ agreement with the Eisenhower administration and later received an American research reactor for the Tehran Nuclear Research Center.”<sup>12</sup> Following the civil nuclear cooperation agreement of 1957 between the USA and Iran, the USA provided Iran with technical assistance along with the first experimental nuclear reactor.<sup>13</sup> The USA has established a thermal reactor in 1967 at the Tehran Research Center and trained Iranian technicians.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore in 1968, Iran signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which allowed Iran to develop research concerning production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In addition to US assistance, France and Germany have also contributed in the development of Iran’s nuclear infrastructure during the monarchy. For example, in 1974 the French company Framatome in Darkhovin initiated construction of two water reactors. In 1975, Iran purchased a 10 percent share in Eurodif, a joint venture uranium enrichment company of France, Belgium, Spain and Italy. In 1976, the German Siemens firm constructed two nuclear facilities in Bushehr. Iran accomplished nuclear fuel contracts with Germany in 1976 and with France in 1977.<sup>15</sup>

However, in the beginning of the 1980’s and during the war with Iraq, Iran did not continue with the nuclear programme.<sup>16</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Islamic revolution of 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of Iran, froze nuclear energy development, claiming that nuclear power was against the Islamic beliefs. Yet, with the recognition that modern military technology could make a difference in war with Iraq and due to the severe energy crisis in the post-revolutionary period, Iran renewed its intention to develop nuclear energy<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, the USA decided to end all the nuclear agreements with Iran in 1979.<sup>18</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup> Jahangir Amuzegar, “Nuclear Iran: Perils and Prospects,” **Middle East Policy**, Vol.13, No.2, 2006, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Zunes, “The US and Iran: Democracy, Terrorism and Nuclear Weapons,” **Foreign Policy in Focus (FPiF)**, 25.07.2005, <http://www.fpiif.org> (10.11.2006).

<sup>14</sup> Sherifa D. Zuhur, “Iran, Iraq, and the US: The New Triangle’s Impact on Secterianism and the Nuclear Threat”, **Strategic Studies Institute**, 2006, p. 54, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil> (05.02.2008).

<sup>15</sup> Kibaroglu, “Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West,” p. 231.

<sup>16</sup> Dueck and Takeyh, p. 190.

<sup>17</sup> Kibaroglu, “Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West,” p. 234

<sup>18</sup> Zuhur, p. 54



particular, US encouragement of Iran's nuclear policy under the Shah regime turned into a preventive policy.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this brief review is foreign assistance has played a crucial role in building Iran's nuclear programme. Yet, attitude of the Western countries has changed toward Iran's search for nuclear power technology after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.<sup>19</sup> Due to this radical shift in the role of the West in the construction of nuclear infrastructure of Iran, Iran turned its face to other potential states such as Pakistan, Argentina, Spain, Czechoslovakia, China and the Soviet Union. For example, Iran signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Pakistan and Argentina in 1987. Yet, particularly the former Soviet Union and China emerged as possible alternatives for nuclear assistance. However, the Chinese assistance in the beginning of the 1990's has not last long due to US protests to China and thus, Russia has become the only potential supplier.<sup>20</sup>

### **1.3 ATTITUDE OF THE WEST TOWARD IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME**

The Western attitudes toward Iran's nuclear programme is analyzed not as total, but as the US attitude and the EU/EU-3 attitude in order to differentiate similarities and differences. Analysing first the US attitude toward Iran in general, it is observed that the US-Iranian relations have changed after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and US embassy take over by militants in Tehran. Particularly, the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme has kept tensions between Iran and the US high. Since the Reagan administration, the USA has tried to delay Iran's nuclear programme and tried to prevent substantial international cooperation with Iran's nuclear industry. For instance, the US President Reagan has terminated German cooperation with Iran.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the US President Clinton banned US companies from investing in Iran's oil industry. He signed the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act to impose sanctions against foreign firms investing more than 20 million dollars

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<sup>19</sup> Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," pp. 223-245.

<sup>20</sup> Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," p. 235; Bahgat, **Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran**, p. 310.

<sup>21</sup> Dueck and Takeyh, p. 190.

in Iran's oil and gas industry.<sup>22</sup> In 1998, the US President Clinton waived sanctions against the French and Russian companies planning to develop Iran's south gas field.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Clinton administration applied a policy of 'dual containment' to control both Iran and Iraq until 1998. According to this strategy the USA would no longer attempt to play Iran and Iraq off against each other, and instead would contain both. Moreover, the USA has included Iran in the list of 'rouge states' during the Clinton administration and among the states sponsoring terrorism.

Yet, with the election of reform-minded moderate Iranian President Khatami in 1997, the USA shifted its policy from 'dual containment' to 'limited rapprochement'. Thus, there was more optimism about improvement of relations between the USA and Iran. Nonetheless, this optimism has ended six years ago when the US President George W. Bush has labeled Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea as the 'axis of evil'—endangering peace in the globe. After 11 September 2001 concerned with terrorism, proliferation and availability of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime and regional conflicts, the US President Bush has changed US policy toward Iran back to containment.

Iran's nuclear programme became more a confrontational issue between the USA and Iran with the 2005 presidential election in Iran. The new Iranian President Ahmadinejad has given up President Khatami's 'dialogue of civilizations' for more confrontational rhetoric, particularly on the USA and Israel. In his speeches President Ahmadinejad has indicated that Iran supports Hizballah and Hamas in their confrontation with Israel, accused the USA over the occupation of Iraq and teased the USA on military action against Iran. Furthermore, President Ahmadinejad repeatedly said that Iran has right and will not abandon uranium enrichment despite the Western fears. Thus, in 2006 the National Security Strategy of the USA, Iran is considered as the main country challenging the USA by seeking to develop nuclear weapons, refusing to provide the IAEA access to nuclear sites and also, due to aggressive statements of the Iranian President Ahmadinejad. Furthermore, in the

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<sup>22</sup> Robert O. Freedman, "US Policy Toward the Middle East in Clinton's Second Term," **The Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol 3, No 1, 1999, p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> Freedman, pp. 55-79.

same strategy it is indicated that the USA is concerned about Iran's violation of the NPT, sponsoring terrorism, and threatening Israel.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, within the framework of active containment policy over the past few years, the Bush administration has argued for both 'regime change' and for the increase of economic sanctions towards Iran.<sup>25</sup> Another characteristic of the active containment policy was the USA's search for the support of the other major powers to contain Iran. Hitherto, though the USA did not have any diplomatic relations with Iran, has allowed alternative diplomatic track carried by the EU-3 toward Iran.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the USA and Iran held their first official direct talks in May 2007 to discuss the security situation in Iraq.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice offered Iran direct talks on Iran's disputed nuclear programme in 2006 on the condition that Iran suspends its nuclear enrichment, which was rejected by Iran.

Besides the search for the support of the other major powers to contain Iran, the USA has also applied unilateral action, particularly in the international financial system. In mid 2007, the USA prohibited transactions with three Iranian financial institutions; Bank Melli, Bank Mellat and Bank Saderat. To convince the European allies to intensify the UN sanctions on Iran, in October 2007 the USA charged the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps of providing material support for terrorist organizations. US pressure on credit institutions has particularly effected Germany, France, Japan and India's trade relations with Iran.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, in October 2007, N. Burns, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, told in a briefing on Iran 'Now, we very much hope that the Security Council will take up its responsibilities and pass a third Security Council resolution on the nuclear issue in the shortest possible time. But the United States, of course, has always reserved the right to act independently.'<sup>29</sup> Above and beyond, in his speeches the US President Bush

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<sup>24</sup> "The National Security Strategy of the US", 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf> (03.04.2008)

<sup>25</sup> Guldemann, p. 173.

<sup>26</sup> Dueck and Takeyh, p. 202.

<sup>27</sup> "US, Iran Open Dialogue on Iraq", **Washington Post**, 29.05.2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/28/AR2007052800080.htm> (05.02.2008).

<sup>28</sup> Adam Zagorin, "Still Trying to Squeeze Iran", **TIME**, 31.01.2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1708789,00.html> (04.02.2008).

<sup>29</sup> "Briefing on Iran," 25.10.2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/94178.htm> (10.02.2008).

mentioned several times that all options including military option are ‘on the table’ with respect to the Iran’s nuclear issue. Furthermore, the US National Security Strategies of 2002 and of 2006 have shown the Bush administration’s willingness to act preemptively vis-à-vis imminent threats.

Furthermore, the USA searches for the collaboration of Arab allies in active containment policy. Burns stated, ‘Iran has transferred arms to Hamas and to Hezbollah in Lebanon and to the Shia militant groups in Iraq and to the Taliban in Afghanistan. And so Iran has willfully violated the UN Security Council resolution.’<sup>30</sup> Thus, the US administration has accused Iran of destabilizing the Iraqi government by supporting radical Shiite militant groups-which is denied by the Iraqi government, and accused of destabilizing the Karzai government in Afghanistan by channeling weapons to Taliban –which is denied by the Karzai government.<sup>31</sup> In January 2008, the US President Bush has visited the Middle East to get support from Arab allies against Iran. During the Middle East trip, the US President Bush told that the extremists supported by the Iranian regime are threatening the stability in the Middle East. He blamed Iran of sponsoring the terrorists groups, intimidating its neighbors and refusing to be open and transparent about its nuclear programme and ambitions.<sup>32</sup>

However, in November 2007, the American National Intelligence Estimate stated that in 2003 Iran halted its nuclear weapons programme in response to foreign pressure, and as of mid 2007 had not restarted. Regarding this report, it can be argued that Iran currently does not have a nuclear weapon, thus threat is not imminent. If Iran were to restart the stalled programme, it would not be before late 2009, and probably a lot more, technically capable of producing enough nuclear material to construct a bomb.<sup>33</sup> This information contradicts the Bush administration’s remarks on Iran pursuing the technology of uranium enrichment<sup>34</sup>, which might lead to World War III, and reduces significance of the argument that

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<sup>30</sup> “Briefing on Iran,” 25.10.2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/94178.htm> (10.02.2008).

<sup>31</sup> Tony Karon, “US Though Talk on Iran: A sign of Isolation,” **TIME**, 16.08.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1653490,00.html> (05.02.2008).

<sup>32</sup> “President Bush discusses Importance of Freedom in the Middle East”, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/2008011-1.html>. (12.03.2008).

<sup>33</sup> “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities,” **National Intelligence Estimate**, November 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Rosemary Hollis, “Iran and the US,” **The World Today**, 2008, p. 5, <http://www.theworldtoday.org> (05.02.2008).

military action is necessary to stop Iran developing nuclear weapons.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, on 8 February in the International Herald Tribune it is reported that Iran has begun to deploy a new generation of machinery—centrifuges known as IR-2, to produce nuclear fuel. This development is expected to be included in the IAEA report in February 2008.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, despite the NIE findings, there are hesitations in the USA about Iran’s nuclear programme. Furthermore, the US President Bush has made it clear that he disagreed with the idea that the recent intelligence estimate report lowered the threat coming from Iran.<sup>37</sup>

To conclude, so far tension between Iran and the USA has remained high over Iran’s nuclear activities. Whereas, Iran claims that the NPT permitted Iran to enrich uranium for civilian use, the USA insists that Iran’s so-called ‘peaceful’ programme is in reality ‘a cover for the ultimate development of nuclear weapons and a threat to its interests in the region as well as Israel’s security and survival.’<sup>38</sup> Iran is a signatory of the NPT and it is legal for any signatory of the NPT to enrich uranium for civilian purposes under the IAEA monitoring, but the USA is concerned that once technology is mastered, Iran might withdraw from the NPT. Today, the USA considers that heightened sanctions, tougher sanctions and increased isolation of Iran besides diplomacy are required to stop Iran’s quest for nuclear capability.<sup>39</sup> As the draft of third UN Security Council sanctions resolution against Iran is prepared lately, the US administration officials publicly say that the Security Council members plus Germany remain united in maintaining pressure on Iran. The Bush administration officials are trying to convince the international community to increase the pressure on Iran. Nonetheless, the Bush administration keeps the military option -including air strikes to nuclear facilities on the table.

The literature on other options besides military strikes is diverse, presenting several positions and approaches to prevent a military confrontation between Iran

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Baer, “Commentary: Was Bush Behind the Iran report?”, **TIME**, 04.12.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1690696,00.html> (05.02.2008).

<sup>36</sup> “New centrifuges in Iran intensify the Nuclear weapons debate,” **International Herald Tribune**, 08.02.2008.

<sup>37</sup> “US agrees to turn over data on Iran’s nuclear programme,” **International Herald Tribune**, 15.02.2008.

<sup>38</sup> “The National Security Strategy of the United States (NSS)” issued by the Bush Administration (September 2002), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html> (28.01.2007).

<sup>39</sup> For more information on recent US policy toward Iran see: “United States Foreign Policy Toward Iran,” 29.03.2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/82374.htm> (10.02.2008).

and the US: (i) starting a ‘grand bargain’ with Iran<sup>40</sup>; (ii) starting a limited nuclear deal; (iii) accepting Iran’s nuclear capability and trying to deter nuclear Iran. Carpenter has considered that the third option is problematic, and identifies a ‘grand bargain’ as the best option to get Iran to give up its quest for nuclear weapons. Yet, Carpenter also has stated that if Iran turns down the proposal for a ‘grand bargain’, the US could rely on deterrence.<sup>41</sup> ‘Grand bargain’ is based on the belief that the Iranian regime will honestly provide a complete list of their nuclear facilities and will agree to dismantle them; however, Iran’s deceptions caused the USA to mistrust Iran. Furthermore, Hollis has considered that the potential for the USA and Iran to achieve a ‘grand bargain’ is remote, since both sides still have wider regional confrontation in other issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>42</sup> Takeyh, the top Iran analysts at the US Council on foreign relations, has argued that rather than ‘grand bargain’ the US should prefer the second option, i.e. a targeted nuclear deal and more concerted negotiations.<sup>43</sup> The Swiss Ambassador Guldemann has also preferred a dialogue rather than increasing sanctions.<sup>44</sup> However, a deal with Iran that accepts some level of domestic enrichment activity has its own costs and dangers as suggested by Fitzpatrick. A deal would confer a right to enrichment, preventing the Western allies’ ability to obstruct Iran’s foreign procurement effort, and the IAEA’s ability to detect the presence of undeclared enrichment activity will slow down. Furthermore, whether or not the Western allies employ a deal, Iran might continue its enrichment programme since Iran has already refused to comply with the UN Security Council decisions.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, the National Committee on American Foreign Policy has advised the third option, i.e. the USA should try to form a deterrence policy in the Middle East region, and discuss forming an association with NATO in the Middle East.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Masoud Kazemzadeh stated that the most detailed proposal for ‘grand bargain’ is articulated by Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann. For more details see Masoud Kazemzadeh, “The Perils and Costs of a Grand Bargain with the Islamic Republic of Iran,” **American Foreign Policy Interests**, Vol 29, 2007, pp. 301-327.

<sup>41</sup> Ted Carpenter, “Toward a Grand Bargain with Iran,” **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol 18, No 1, 2007, pp. 12-27.

<sup>42</sup> Hollis, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Takeyh, “Iran Build the Bomb,” pp. 51-64.

<sup>44</sup> Guldemann, pp. 169-178.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Fitzpatrick, “Can Iran’s Nuclear Capability be Kept Latent?,” **Survival**, Vol.49, No.1, 2007, p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> “US Policy Toward Iran,” **American Foreign Policy Interests**, Vol.29, No.2, 2007, pp. 161-163.

Analysis of another part of the Western attitudes, the relationship between the EU and Iran in general and the attitude of the EU-3 toward Iran's nuclear programme in particular since the Islamic Revolution, can be divided into three phases. The first phase began with the Islamic revolution of 1979 and continued until the election of Rafsanjani as the Iranian President. Even though the EU Member States were still interested in the Iranian natural resources along with the Iranian market, in the immediate aftermath of the Islamic revolution a sense of deterioration dominated this relationship, owing to the overall hostile attitude of the new Iranian regime toward the West, arising from the support of the West to the former Shah regime. Furthermore, the radical rhetoric of the outstanding spiritual guide Ayatollah Khomeini against the West and Israel, along with the cases of human rights abuses contributed to the worsening of the relations between Iran and the EU. Overall, throughout this first phase, the EU had been critical about Iran's human rights record, support given to terrorist activities and its nuclear programme.

The second phase in the Iran–EU relationship began in 1989 with the new Iranian President Rafsanjani. Some improvement in the Iran-EU relations occurred during Rafsanjani's Presidency (1989-1997), which was marked by economic pragmatism through the realization of a number of economic reforms.<sup>47</sup> At the European Council Meeting in Edinburgh, in December 1992, the EU Member States decided to follow a common approach toward Iran, called 'Critical Dialogue'. Through 'Critical Dialogue,' the EU Member States, particularly France, Germany and the UK, aimed to moderate Iran with respect to its posture in a number of issues such as its nuclear programme, human rights record and terrorism, organizing regular meetings between Iran and the EU. However, the EU's official policy of 'Critical Dialogue' toward Iran halt with the Mykonos Case in 1997, which revealed the connection between the Iranian government and the assassination of political opponents to the Iranian regime in Germany.<sup>48</sup>

Thirdly, the attitude of the EU-3 toward Iran's nuclear programme entered into a new phase with the election of moderate Mohammed Khatami as the President in 1997. During Khatami's Presidency, a number of political and economic reforms

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<sup>47</sup> For more details see Aylin Unver Noi, "Iran's Nuclear Programme: The EU Approach to Iran in Comparison to the US' Approach," *Perceptions*, Vol.10, No. 1, 2005, p. 85.

<sup>48</sup> Noi, p. 87.

were implemented in Iran, which led to the declaration of a 'Comprehensive Dialogue' by the EU-3 toward Iran. Satisfied with the brand new reforms in Iran, the EU-3 believed that comprehensive engagement with Iran would further curb any extremism in Iran's attitude in the nuclear issue. In fact, Iran's nuclear programme had not caused any serious concern from the EU-3's perspective until 2002. Following the IAEA's alarming findings, the EU-3 tried to persuade Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment programme and to sign the Additional Protocol with the IAEA—allowing further inspections in return for not taking the issue before the UN Security Council and providing Iran with civil nuclear technology.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the EU-3 intensively conducted negotiations with Iran to reach an agreement. During negotiations, the major strategy followed by the EU-3 negotiators was offering Iran economic incentives to suspend uranium enrichment and allowing inspection by the IAEA.

In this respect, in November 2004, with the Paris Agreement among the Iranian government and the E3/EU, negotiations between Iran and the EU were concluded. With this agreement the Iranian government agreed to suspend its uranium enrichment and reaffirmed its commitment to the NPT, as well as to full cooperation and transparency with the IAEA, whereas the EU-3 agreed to respect to Iran's rights under the NPT. As Afrasiabi and Kibaroglu pointed out 'the Paris Agreement was nonetheless an important benchmark that set the European standards for dealing with Iran.'<sup>50</sup> Yet, the Paris Agreement was able to accomplish suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment programme temporarily, and therefore what the EU-3 countries achieved with the Paris agreement was not a long-term solution to the problem. Iran has restarted uranium enrichment at the Esfahan plant in August 2005.<sup>51</sup> In order to convince Iran to freeze its uranium enrichment programme permanently, the EU-3 sought to improve trade relations between Iran and the EU. Here, the underlying logic was that through intensive cooperation in the field of

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<sup>49</sup> Robert J. Einhorn, "A Transatlantic Strategy on Iran's Nuclear Programme," **The Washington Quarterly**, Vol.27, No.4, 2004, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> Kaveh Afrasiabi and Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Negotiating Iran's Nuclear Populism," **The Brown Journal of World Affairs**, Vol.12, No. 1, 2005, p. 260.

<sup>51</sup> "The EU's Relations with Iran," [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/iran/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iran/intro/index.htm) (05.02.2007)



trade, credibility of each side would gradually increase in the eyes of the other, thus enabling further negotiations on the nuclear issue more fruitful.

Yet, in contrast to the expectations of the EU-3, with the election of Admadinejad as the Iranian President in 2005, the negotiations between the two sides have no more been productive given the uncompromising stance of the Iranian President Admadinejad with respect to the nuclear issue. In fact, the EU-3 has preferred diplomacy to convince Iran to act in a transparent manner complying with the international treaties. The EU-3's method of diplomacy included reciprocal negotiations, trade relations and cooperation on a number of issues. In this respect, the EU-3 has differed from the USA as the EU-3 has argued that sanctions would not be effective in dealing with Iran's nuclear programme. In fact, even though the EU is accepted as a 'soft power', pragmatism still has its share in shaping the EU's attitude toward Iran, since 'Europe is Iran's largest trading partner and has much to lose if the present linkage diplomacy translated in the future to an EU trade embargo on Iran.'<sup>52</sup> Yet, following Iran's violation of the Paris Agreement the EU reviewed its approach to Iran and issued a statement condemning in the strongest terms the comments made by President Ahmadinejad.<sup>53</sup>

The analysis of the EU/EU-3 attitudes shows that overall, the EU/EU-3 wants Iran to act in accordance with the decisions of the IAEA and the UN Security Council and continues to exert pressure on Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities permanently. Despite Iran's insistence on the peacefulness of its nuclear programme, like the USA, the EU/EU-3 fears that Iran would use its nuclear technology to construct nuclear weapons. However, unlike the USA, which keeps on to argue on the efficiency of tough sanctions and even military operation option against Iran, the EU/EU-3 has avoided a hot conflict with Iran believing that an isolated Iran would be radicalized. Thus, instead of punishing Iran with harsh economic sanctions and with the threat of a military option, the EU has used diplomacy and economic tactics to persuade Iran. This strategy of the EU has also been influenced by the attractiveness of 'Iranian oil, the large market it offers, and its

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<sup>52</sup> Afrasiabi and Kibaroglu, p. 261.

<sup>53</sup> "The EU's Relations with Iran," [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/iran/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iran/intro/index.htm) (05.02.2007)

strategic location in the Persian Gulf and as a gateway for natural resources from Central Asian countries.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, recognizing that diplomatic option was far from helping to build any cooperation between the international community and Iran and worried by the Iran's attitude, the EU has recently changed its attitude. Consequently, for the first time, the EU acted along with the USA and has supported a UN resolution in November 2005 on the human rights situation in Iran.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the EU has agreed with the USA to impose economic sanctions on Iran in line with a UN 1737 resolution<sup>56</sup> adopted on 23 December 2006, banning trade with Iran in all items, materials, equipment, goods and technology which could contribute to country's enrichment activities.<sup>57</sup> Yet, with respect to the option of military action, the High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana told that the EU is not considering military action.<sup>58</sup> The second UN Security Council Resolution 1747 passed on 24 March 2007<sup>59</sup>, including a ban of Iranian arms sales and freezing of assets of several Iranian revolutionary leaders. In March 2007, the Council of EU emphasized the fact that Iran had not complied with the terms of the UN Security Council Resolution 1737 and reasserted its support for the UN Security Council process. At the same time, the Council of EU reaffirmed its continuing support for efforts to find a negotiated long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. Solana, the EU High Representative for the CFSP, emphasized the commitment of the EU to a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear dispute.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Reza Simbar, "The Prospect for Crisis Management and Non-Violent Sustainable Cooperation," **Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations**, Vol.4, No 4, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>55</sup> UN resolution on the Human Rights situation in Iran, 21.11.2005, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/gashc3841.doc.htm> (12.03.2008)

<sup>56</sup> Invoking Article 41 under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, this resolution calls for the enforcement of sanctions mainly including measures to prevent the provision to Iran of technical assistance of training, financial assistance or other services and the transfer of financial resources or services related to Iran's nuclear programme, while excluding any military action.

<sup>57</sup> For more details see, "US differs with Europeans on Iran sanctions draft," **Washington Post** (26.10.2006) <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (12.11.2006).

<sup>58</sup> "US, EU split on handling nuke defiance," **The Washington Times**, 30.04.2006, <http://www.washingtontimes.com> (17.03.2007).

<sup>59</sup> Resolution 1747 aimed at imposing further sanctions on Iran and it reaffirmed that Iran must take the steps required by the IAEA Board.

<sup>60</sup> Speech of Javier Solana, EU high representative for the CFSP, Brussels, 24.03 2007, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/93281.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/93281.pdf) (18.03.2007)

Here, it would be appropriate to give brief information about the latest situation on Iran's nuclear dispute. On 10 April 2007, Iran was claimed to have made a dramatic leap forward in its nuclear programme by enriching uranium 'on industrial scale'.<sup>61</sup> Thus, it seems that the two packages passed by the UN Security Council so far did not stop Iran from uranium enrichment. As stated above, the IAEA will visit Iran to resolve outstanding issues over the country's nuclear programme in February 2008.<sup>62</sup> Recently, the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany have agreed on a draft of the new sanction package, which is likely to be approved after the IAEA receives more answers from Iran in February 2008.<sup>63</sup> For the first time this resolution is going to ban trade of items that can be used for nuclear purposes and also require countries to reject entry of any person involved in Iran's nuclear programmes.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, the NIE report produced an unexpected softening in the positions of Russia and China on the new sanctions package. In the meantime, though France has been rejecting US efforts to isolate Iran, recently the new French President Sarkozy has indicated that Iran's nuclear programme would be the cause of the biggest crisis on the international scene and that they will work jointly with the US President Bush to convince Iran to give up its nuclear programme.<sup>65</sup> His latest declarations have puzzled the attitude of the EU-3 toward Iran.

#### **1.4 THE ATTITUDE OF RUSSIA TOWARD IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fading away of communism as an ideological threat, the relations between Iran and Russia had experienced a significant progress. The underlying reason behind this progress had been multidimensional mutual benefits in a number of issues including Iran's nuclear programme. As mentioned above, Iran's nuclear programme was frozen for a while

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<sup>61</sup> The Guardian, 10.04.2007.

<sup>62</sup> "UN atomic watchdog chief wraps up visit to Iran," 14.01.2008, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25291&Cr=iran&Cr1=iaea> (05.02.2008).

<sup>63</sup> "UN Powers: More Sanctions on Iran," 24.01.2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1706827,00.html> (04.02.2008)

<sup>64</sup> John Heilprin, "UN Powers: More Sanctions on Iran," 24.01.2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1706827,00.html> (04.02.2008).

<sup>65</sup> "Bush and Sarkozy declare Iran aim," **BBC News**, 07.11.2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/7083339.stm> (11.11.2007).

after 1979. In the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran decided to reinitiate the programme, but deprived of any Western assistance, looked for new partners to develop its nuclear energy technology. In this respect, Russia appeared to be the most appropriate partner from the Iranian perspective on three grounds. First of all, Russia has been one of the leading countries in nuclear energy technology and was seeking to ‘enhance its role as a global supplier of nuclear energy technology.’<sup>66</sup> Secondly, since Iran was experiencing a deterioration of its relations with the USA, Russia - concerned about unipolar world system and hegemony of the USA- might be more positive about Tehran’s will of having nuclear energy programme. Lastly, as Russia was not worried about human rights issues, Tehran’s poor human rights record might not bother Moscow, and hence Russia could be an ideal ally from Iran’s vantage point that would not interfere in Iran’s internal affairs, whereas the USA and the EU were emphasizing the issues of democracy and human rights.<sup>67</sup>

In August 1992, Tehran and Moscow established a long-term trade and cooperation agreement, involving also the Russian assistance in developing Iran’s nuclear programme and construction of a nuclear power plant in Iran. As it is stated;

*Nuclear cooperation would consist of constructing nuclear power plants for Iran, cycling nuclear fuel, supplying research reactors, reprocessing spent fuel, producing isotopes for use in scientific and medical research and training Iranian nuclear scientists at the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute.*<sup>68</sup>

Following the 1992 long-term trade and cooperation agreement, in January 1995, a contract was signed among Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization and a Russian company, Zarubezhatomenergostroi to complete construction of the Bushehr<sup>69</sup> nuclear power plant.<sup>70</sup> The nuclear plant in Bushehr is separate from Iran’s own enrichment facility at Natanz. The Bushehr nuclear plant has started under the Shah

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<sup>66</sup> Sanam Vakil, “Iran: Balancing East Against West,” **The Washington Quarterly**, Vol.29, No.4, 2006, p. 58.

<sup>67</sup> Arif Keskin, “Iran’ın Yeni Guvenlik Konsepti ve Degisen Kuresel Konumu [Iran’s New Security Concept and Its Changing Global Position],” **Global Strateji**, Vol.3, No. 10, 2007, p. 136.

<sup>68</sup> Vladimir A. Orlov and Alexander Vinnikov, “The Great Guessing Game: Russia and the Iranian Nuclear Issue,” **The Washington Quarterly**, Vol.28, No.2, 2005, p. 50.

<sup>69</sup> Construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant was initially held by Siemens, a German company before the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, in the aftermath of the revolution Germany had to abandon its cooperation with Iran due to Western pressures.

<sup>70</sup> Orlov and Vinnikov, p. 50.

of Iran and stopped with the Islamic Revolution until the 1990s.<sup>71</sup> Russia agreed to complete the project and to supply the enriched uranium needed as fuel, recognizing that the Bushehr project including the construction of two nuclear reactors would grant a huge amount of money into the Russian economy. In this respect, assistance of Iran's nuclear programme coincided with Russian economic interests. Also, over 300 Russian companies have taken part in the Bushehr project, thus activating the Russian industries in nuclear research and aerospace that would in return offer a serious input into the Russian economy.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, this project provided many Russians with divergent employment opportunities.

Besides having economic interests, Russia has had political considerations in becoming the leading country in assisting Iran's nuclear programme. Political benefits of Russia can be approached from three points. First point is that with encouraging relationship with Russia, Iran has avoided sponsoring the Islamist ideology in the former Soviet Republic, hence enabling Russia to preserve its influence over these former Soviet Republics. Accordingly, 'Tehran has largely stayed out of the Islamist struggle in Chechnya,' 'keeping quite about Chechnya.'<sup>73</sup> Secondly, since Iran has a considerable weight in the Islamic world, Tehran has defended Moscow against 'hostile resolutions passed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.'<sup>74</sup>

Finally, Iran and Russia have acted in harmony sharing common interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Despite above-mentioned benefits determining the Russian approach toward Iran in general and its nuclear programme in particular, a major constraint in this relationship has been reaction of the Western States, particularly response of the USA. Primarily, support of Iran's nuclear programme has brought Russia into a confrontational position with the USA. As it is pointed out by Orlov and Vinnikov;

*Since the mid-1990s, Russia had featured in virtually every mention of Iran's nuclear programme. Indeed, Russia is the only state to have openly*

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<sup>71</sup> "Russia Ignores West's Iran Fears," **BBC News**, 17.12.2007 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7147771.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7147771.stm) (13.04.2008).

<sup>72</sup> Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Calculations," **World Policy Journal**, Vol.20, No.2, 2003, p. 26.

<sup>73</sup> Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Calculations," p. 26-27 and Orlov and Vinnikov, p. 57 respectively.

<sup>74</sup> Orlov and Vinnikov, p. 57.

*cooperated with Iran in the nuclear field and has spent the better part of the last decade at the receiving end of fierce US criticism for its efforts.*<sup>75</sup>

In order to prevent the Russian involvement in Iran's nuclear programme both the Senior Bush and Clinton administrations employed a number of different deterrence strategies against Russia including warnings to implement sanctions in the field of trade. The Clinton administration exerted pressure on the Yeltsin administration to suspend its support for the Bushehr energy reactor. Yet, despite the pressure of Washington, throughout the 1990s Moscow resisted Washington's demands on isolating Iran, instead has kept its cooperation with Tehran.

2002 can be regarded as a decisive moment in the attitude of Russia toward Iran's nuclear programme, because Russia was really astonished to learn about Iran's secret nuclear programme. Besides Moscow was deeply disappointed with the Iranian attitude of not revealing this information to Russia earlier. In this respect, Russia decided to slow down the completion of the Bushehr nuclear energy reactor project pointing out technical shortcomings.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, Russia completed the Bushehr nuclear energy project in October 2004 and 'in February 2005, Moscow and Tehran signed an agreement on the return of spent fuel from the Bushehr reactor to Russia,<sup>77</sup> which is expected to provide electricity towards the end of the 2008.<sup>78</sup> Russia itself has enriched the uranium for Bushehr. Though the Western countries had hoped that Russia would delay the delivery of enriched uranium it appears that there is less fear in Russia about Iran's nuclear intentions.<sup>79</sup> Yet, both the Western countries and Russia prefer to offer enriched uranium needed as a fuel rather than self-enrichment of Iran with the suspicion that Iran's nuclear programme is intended to produce weapons.

Regarding the Russian attitude toward Iran's nuclear programme, two contradictory positions are observed together. On the one hand, Russia is Iran's main nuclear partner and accepts its right provided by the NPT, even one might say that Russia defends Iran's nuclear programme in order to maximize Russia's national

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<sup>75</sup> Orlov and Vinnikov, p. 49.

<sup>76</sup> Orlov and Vinnikov, p. 55.

<sup>77</sup> Afrasiabi and Kibaroglu, p. 258.

<sup>78</sup> "Iran'da yerli nükleer santral," 30.12.2007, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2007/05.02.2008>).

<sup>79</sup> "Russia Ignores West's Iran Fears," **BBC News**, 17.12.2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7147771.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7147771.stm) (11.05.2008).

interests. On the other hand, Russia reserves hesitations about the intentions of Iran, yet prefers negotiations rather than sanctions and military option. Particularly Russia has been against implementing sanctions against Iran, since mutual relationship has been beneficial for Russia both economically and politically. Thus, Russia might not easily agree with an increase in the UN sanctions on Iran in February 2008. Russia argues that cooperation with Iran in the nuclear field would make it easier for the international community monitoring Iran's nuclear programme. In this regard, together with China, Russia voted for the referral of Iran's nuclear programme in the IAEA Meeting to the UN Security Council that was held on 4 February 2006, on the condition that the Council took no action before March.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, when pressures against Iran rose in the aftermath of the February 2006 IAEA vote against Iran's nuclear activities, Russia offered Iran to continue its nuclear programme in the Russian territory.<sup>81</sup> Iran refused this proposal claiming that it was Iran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes in its own territory, yet looking positively that some, but not all of its nuclear fuel can be produced outside Iran.<sup>82</sup> To conclude, economic and political partnership with Iran is noteworthy from the Russian vantage point, hence although Russia has some concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, prefers to remain silent about Iran's nuclear programme despite growing US pressure.

### **1.5 THE ATTITUDE OF CHINA TOWARD IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME**

China's relations with Iran has accelerated in the mid 1990s owing to significant increase in its need for energy resources, particularly oil and gas, with rapid economic and population growth. As it is pointed out, 'China surpassed Japan to become the second largest international oil consumer after the US.'<sup>83</sup> There are several factors determining China's attitude toward Iran's nuclear programme. First factor is China's wish to secure continuous flow of oil and gas from Iran to China. Thus, China's growing demand for energy security had a large impact in forming its

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<sup>80</sup> "Iran reported to Security Council," **BBC News**, 04.02.2006, <http://www.bbc.co.uk> (17.05.2007).

<sup>81</sup> Vakil, p. 58.

<sup>82</sup> "Iran Rejects Russian Nuclear offer," **CNN**, 02.01.2006, <http://www.cnn.com2006/WORLD/meast/01/01/iran.nuclear/index> (04.04.2008).

<sup>83</sup> Jin Liangxiang, "China and the Middle East: Energy First," **Middle East Quarterly**, Vol.12, No.2, 2005, p. 3.

foreign policy toward Iran. From the Chinese perspective, Iran has not only been a major energy supplier with ‘the world’s fourth largest reserves of oil and second largest reserves of natural gas,’ but also ‘its strategic proximity and increasing economic and political impact, given its location between the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf, enhanced its viability.’<sup>84</sup> As it is put forward, oil imports from Iran to China amounted 2 billion dollars in 2003, representing more than 15 percent of its total oil imports, and it is expected that this amount would further increase.<sup>85</sup>

Bilateral economic relations among China and Iran are another factor determining the Chinese attitude toward Iran and its nuclear programme. China is now Iran’s top trade partner and has committed to invest more in Iran’s oil and natural gas industry.<sup>86</sup> There has been an intensive trade relationship between the two states that amounts approximately 10 billion dollars per year. In addition, China has made a large amount of investment in Iran. Thus, maintaining economic ties with Iran has been a crucial concern for China. As Shen states, ‘Iran is an important source of outsourcing for China. Iran is also China’s biggest overseas market for large projects and labor export.’<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, maintaining cooperation with the USA has also been important for China, as the US is China’s major trade partner. In this respect, it is rather difficult for China to keep both sides—Iran and the USA as its partner, since it has required a delicate balancing. The dispute between the USA and Iran has reflected as a challenge to China because the rapprochement policy of China has been annoying the US administration. China neither wishes to risk its trade relations with the USA, nor to risk its energy and trade cooperation with Iran. Accordingly, there have been several instances in which China had to overview its relations with both sides. One of these instances was observed when China’s state-owned company the Sinopec-Chinese Petroleum and Chemical Corporation, had decided to make an investment in Iran in 2004 for more than 20 million dollars, although the USA

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<sup>84</sup> Vakil, p. 54.

<sup>85</sup> Liangxiang, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Adam Zagorin, “Still trying to Squeeze Iran,” 31.01.2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1708789,00.html> (04.02.2008).

<sup>87</sup> Dingli Shen, “Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions Test China’s Wisdom,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.2, 2006, p. 61.



declared that it would penalize foreign companies, which invest more than 20 million dollars in Iran.<sup>88</sup>

What was more challenging is this investment was made at a time tension has been dominating Washington-Tehran relations due to US efforts in bringing Iranian nuclear issue to the UN Security Council. On October 28, 2004 a 'Memorandum of Understanding' was signed in Tehran between the Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister and the Iranian Oil Minister about an agreement on oil and gas.<sup>89</sup> According to this agreement, the Chinese government was going to purchase 10 million tons of the Iranian oil each year for the next twenty-five years in exchange for allowing Sinopec to develop Iran's Yadavaran oil field 'giving China a 50 percent interest in the field's estimated 17 billion barrel reserve.'<sup>90</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the 'Memorandum of Understanding,' China declared its opposition to bring the issue of Iran's nuclear programme to UN Security Council.<sup>91</sup> Consequently, China has opposed a draft resolution discussed in the IAEA Meeting that was held on September 20, 2005, arguing that a solution has to be found by the IAEA.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, to avoid from getting into conflict with the US, China voted for the referral of Iran's nuclear programme in the IAEA Meeting to the UN Security Council,<sup>93</sup> on 4 February 2006, on the condition that the Council took no action before March.<sup>94</sup>

Other than Washington's continuous pressure on Beijing, China's adherence to the NPT was also influential in its voting attitude on the IAEA's meeting.<sup>95</sup> It appears that China wishes to be perceived by the international community as a reliable state contributing to nuclear nonproliferation. Moreover, China wants to demonstrate itself as a powerful state contributing to international security, and thus remaining passive regarding Iran's nuclear programme might contradict with its global image. On the other hand, since China has also been sensitive about external

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<sup>88</sup> Mehmet Ogutcu and Xin Ma, "Growing Links in Energy and Geopolitics: China and the Middle East," *Insight Turkey*, Vol.9, No.3, 2007, p. 111.

<sup>89</sup> Shen , p. 61.

<sup>90</sup> Liangxiang, pp. 4-5.

<sup>91</sup> Dan Blumenthal, "China and the Middle East: Providing Arms," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol.12, No.2, 2005, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Shen, p. 64.

<sup>93</sup> 35 Member Board of Governors of IAEA voted 27 against 3 to report Iran to the UN Security Council.

<sup>94</sup> "Iran reported to Security Council," *BBC News*, 04.02.2006, <http://www.bbc.co.uk> (17.05.2007).

<sup>95</sup> China signed NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) in 1992.

interference into its internal affairs arising from its human rights record, China is more tolerable towards Iran's concerns on its rights to produce nuclear energy.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, China has respected Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for civilian purpose while remaining committed to regulations defined by the IAEA, under its commitment to the NPT.

The analysis of the Chinese attitude toward Iran's nuclear programme has shown that today China faces a serious dilemma with respect to Iran's nuclear programme. On the one hand, China's growing demand for energy and its economic interests makes Iran a strategic partner from the Chinese perspective. In addition, China shares concerns of Iran about sovereignty. Hence, China does not want to be a part of US-led pressure group for deterring Iran from developing its nuclear capacity by means of implementing divergent sanctions, since that might risk its national interests. On the other hand, maintaining good relations with Washington also carries vital importance for China, as the USA has been China's key trading partner. Acting apart from the USA on Iran's nuclear programme would challenge China's relations with Washington, which might also damage the Chinese national interest. Thus, until now, China has abstained from using its veto power to remove any US-backed measure at the UN Security Council.<sup>97</sup> To conclude, similar to Russia, China appears to give support to Iran's nuclear programme and prefers the Iranian nuclear issue to be settled by diplomatic efforts and dialogue rather than sanctions.

## **1.6 OVERVIEW**

The way out from Iran's nuclear puzzle necessitates common efforts from the international community including Iran working for a long-term comprehensive solution. This analysis on the attitudes of the USA, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China has shown that there is no common comprehensive agreement on the solution toward Iran's nuclear puzzle. The USA sees a mature and serious Iranian nuclear threat to come by the year 2010. Official US policy is to leave all the options on the table, as well as using diplomatic activity through the EU-3 and the sanctions through the UN Security Council. Yet, the USA in particular has problems in convincing the

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<sup>96</sup> Shen, p. 58.

<sup>97</sup> Vakil, p. 56.

international community that Iran is a grave threat to the Middle East security as well as to global security, due to mistakes done in Iraq case. The EU, though acknowledges right to the Iranian civil nuclear energy, also considers that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons. The EU has been the main international actor offering coercive diplomatic approach to contain the Iranian nuclear programme, which did not succeed until today. Yet, this cannot be announced as a complete failure. The EU is in a position to push the international community's attitudes on this issue towards more dialogue, even if it cannot impose its will in Tehran.

The EU effort for 'critical dialogue' with Iran in hope to solve the crisis through direct negotiations seemed to work well especially when Iran agreed to abandon its nuclear programme in the early 2004. Yet, particularly after the election of the President Ahmadinejad, Iran's nuclear programme became more problematic which led to a shift on the EU's policy towards Iran. With a new approach, the EU acted with the USA taking the Iranian nuclear issue to the UN Security Council in order to have an approval for the imposition of 'stick' policy through economic sanctions against Iran. Yet, though their vantage point appears to become closer with the USA, it is not identical. Since the 1990's the USA has favored 'an active containment' policy toward Iran, hoping to isolate the Iranian regime, thereby causing a 'regime change' in Iran. As a part of its 'active containment' strategy, the USA has not only supported a number of sanctions ranging from political to economic, but also has repeated references to military action. Yet, the USA has little independent diplomatic or economic leverage over Iran and needs other nations to give meaning to any threat of economic lost. The EU has resisted the US calls to intensify the extent of sanctions against Iran, which would go beyond the resolution of the UN Security Council. The EU has acted more or less in a united fashion, but since it had lasted long, some internal divisions occur, as is already happening today with the declarations of the French President Sarkozy.

Russia and China, on the other hand, do not see Iran as an existential threat. The Russian and the Chinese approaches might be a sign of resisting US hegemony and control over the Middle East and Central Asia. This might be the reason for their strengthened economic, political and diplomatic ties with Iran. Russia supports the IAEA's continued efforts to find more information and wants to take into account the

progress achieved through the work of the IAEA and Iran's readiness to cooperate with the IAEA. China also favors diplomatic efforts. So far the adoption of the third UN resolution is delayed by the efforts of Russia and China.

For their part Tehran has been emphasizing the honesty and sincerity of its cooperation with the IAEA. President Ahmadinejad has repeatedly told that Iran would never abandon purely peaceful programmes. Yet, the nuclear issue has become highly politicized in Iran. Though there exists a widely shared national consensus and the public believes that Iran has right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes, if not for nuclear weapons, there is a divergence of opinion between the hard-liners allied with the Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who support Iran's search to become a nuclear power, and the pragmatists who search for political benefits from the West and might accept limits on Iran's nuclear programme.<sup>98</sup> The hardliners are closely associated with the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamanei. They have enormous influence on national security planning through the command of key institutions such as the Revolutionary Guards, the judiciary and the Guardian Council.<sup>99</sup> The hardliners are not necessarily afraid of sanctions and coercion. In contrast to the hardliners, the pragmatists accept certain restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme. The pragmatists do not call for the halt of the Iran's nuclear programme, but work within the guidelines of the NPT. In other words, the pragmatists want to sustain Iran's nuclear programme while maintaining its international ties.<sup>100</sup> In the last decade, opposition to Ahmadinejad has risen above the traditional split in the Iranian politics between pragmatic conservatives and reformists. The opposition has evolved around Karroubi, a moderate cleric, and Rafsancani, the former President.<sup>101</sup> The Western diplomats say that the UN sanctions might challenge the hardliners and thus the pragmatists might gain more support.<sup>102</sup> Yet, in October 2007, the President Ahmadinejad had replaced Iran's pragmatic conservative top nuclear negotiator

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<sup>98</sup> Scott MacLeod, "Iran's War Within," 15.03.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1599710,00.html> (05.02.2008).

<sup>99</sup> Takeyh, "Iran Build the Bomb," p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> Takeyh, "Iran Build the Bomb," pp. 56-57.

<sup>101</sup> Scott MacLeod, "Iran's War Within," 15.03.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1599710,00.html> (05.02.2008).

<sup>102</sup> Scott MacLeod, "Iran's War Within," 15.03.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1599710,00.html> (05.02.2008).

Larijani by his ally<sup>103</sup> though Larijani have been criticizing Ahmadinejad's more provocative positions, but not the nuclear programme itself.<sup>104</sup> Anyhow, Larijani was in favor of reviving talks with the EU.<sup>105</sup> Yet, as the possibility and the need for compromise with the EU has become a part of the Iranian discourse, the voices of pragmatists might be more assertive.

To conclude, what emerges from this analysis is that attitudes of the international community with respect to Iran's nuclear puzzle have not been monolithic. Yet, after years of having different approaches toward Iran's nuclear programme after the 1979 Revolution, there have been a change to a common position among the approaches of the USA and the EU/EU-3 in 2005 – that can be called as the 'Western approach', vis-a-vis the approaches of Russia and China. Russia and China has supported the diplomatic bargaining of the EU-3 rather than imposing sanctions advocated by the USA. Considering the overlapping issues of concern, this article put forward an optimistic scenario that might lead to successful solution on Iran's nuclear puzzle based on the EU's method of diplomacy. Nevertheless, no real solution is expected in the short term, but there can be an opportunity under a new American administration along with a new government in Iran after 2009, since the new US President will be elected in November 2008, and the new Iranian President will be elected in mid-2009. It is rather difficult to keep international consensus –above all in the Security Council- over how to address the Iran's nuclear puzzle, particularly on escalating sanctions, while China and Russia have hesitations. So far the USA has failed to coerce Iran to bargain, and a brief window of rapprochement with Iran had closed. Today, it seems that there is no possibility of direct talks with Iran under the Bush administration. Recent US search for economic pressure on Iran is strongly supported by Britain and France, while Russia, China and Germany are opposing moves outside the UN Security Council. As discussion of relations with the USA has become more specific in Iran in terms of open calls for direct relations with the USA and as already some contact has begun with the discussion on issues related to Iraq, there is more reason to be optimistic.

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<sup>103</sup> Scott MacLeod, "Iran War Drumbeat grows louder," 26.10.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1676826,00.html> (05.02.2008).

<sup>104</sup> Guldemann, p. 171.

<sup>105</sup> Scott MacLeod, "Iran's War Within," 15.03.2007, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1599710,00.html> (05.02.2008).

After the US elections, there might be reconsideration on the question of how to deal with Iran's nuclear puzzle. The optimistic scenario may be the next US administration's opt for staying on the diplomatic track and the reestablishment of the EU's locomotive role in designing a deal with Iran's nuclear puzzle.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: DOMESTIC DEBATES

#### 2.1 GENERAL ANALYSIS OF IRANIAN NUCLEAR MOTIVES

Iran is a country with large oil and natural gas reserves and is increasingly perceived as the main component of stability in the Gulf region. Is Iran in need of alternative energy resources such as nuclear energy? Why does Iran insist upon continuing with its nuclear programme? There are mainly five motives behind Iran's nuclear programme. The first motive is about Iran's pursuit of energy security and self-sufficiency through energy diversification. It is predicted by the analysts that the oil and gas reserves of Iran will be depleted in 20-50 years time since these resources are finite.<sup>106</sup> Besides, Iran has a rapid population growth that leads to an increase in domestic oil consumption. Given rapid population growth along with growing energy consumption, Iran argues that it has to diversify its energy resources and acquiring nuclear technology is claimed to provide Iran with an alternative energy supply. In this regard, it is also pointed out that "the nuclear issue is not just a question of energy but of science and technology and self sufficiency and as such an issue of great practical and symbolic significance" for Iran.<sup>107</sup> Thus, avoiding dependency on outside suppliers for its energy need is has been a motivating factor behind Iran's nuclear research programme. As Chubin puts forward, "the nuclear programme implies self sufficiency in all aspects of using the peaceful use of nuclear energy from extraction through enrichment".<sup>108</sup> It is as well argued that nuclear technology would provide Iran with more freedom of action securing future generations with substantial energy supply.<sup>109</sup>

The second motive behind Iran's nuclear programme is about economic considerations. Iranian economy has been facing severe problems due to a number of factors. Firstly, as it has already been mentioned despite the fact that Iran is the

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<sup>106</sup> Kamal Kharrazi, "The View From Tehran," **Middle East Policy**, Vol.12, No.1, 2005, p. 29. Kharrazi served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Khatami's administration.

<sup>107</sup> Shahrām Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., 2006, p. 25.

<sup>108</sup> Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, pp. 24-25.

<sup>109</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, **Iran and the Rise of Its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution**, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., New York, 2007, p. 128.

second largest oil producer in the OPEC, Iran imports nearly 40% of its gasoline from other countries mainly from the Gulf States to meet its domestic demand.<sup>110</sup> Gasoline imports constitutes a significant handicap for Iranian economy as it “imports more than a third of its annual consumption of over 64.5 million liters from a variety of foreign sources at an estimated cost of more than \$3 billion annually.”<sup>111</sup> Secondly, Iranian regime has failed to reinvest in its industry over the last 20 years.<sup>112</sup> Lastly, Iranian economy has long been in short of foreign direct investment.<sup>113</sup> Proceeding with nuclear technology is believed to offer a cure to economic problems predominating Iranian society.

The third motive behind Iran’s nuclear programme concerns the advantages and opportunities presented by NPT to its signatory members regarding their rights and responsibilities. Being a signatory member of NPT provided Iran with an opportunity to acquire nuclear technology and know-how for peaceful purposes in line with the subarticles of article IV of the NPT.<sup>114</sup> The subarticles of article IV of the NPT states:

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.*
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 co-operate 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.*<sup>115</sup>

Iran’s nuclear programme is fourthly motivated by the matters of prestige and status that are believed to be gained by means of becoming a nuclear power. Possession of nuclear technology is expected to increase Iran’s influence both regionally and

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<sup>110</sup> Arthur Herman, “Getting Serious About Iran: A Military Option,” **Commentary**, Vol.122, No.4, 2006, p. 30.

<sup>111</sup> Ian Berman, “The Economics of Confronting Iran,” in I. Berman (ed.) **Taking on Tehran: Strategies for Confronting the Islamic Republic**, Lexington Books, Lenham, 2007, p. 46.

<sup>112</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, “Iran: Three Alternative Futures,” **Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol.10, No.2, 2006, pp. 73-74.

<sup>113</sup> Berman 2007, p. 47.

<sup>114</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 125.

<sup>115</sup> The text of Nuclear Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) can be viewed at <http://www.un.org/events/npt2005/npttreaty.html>, (10.02.2008).



internationally. As Chubin highlight technology and power are equated, and thus “nuclear power is said to give Iran entry into an exclusive club”.<sup>116</sup> Likewise, the possession of nuclear technology is seen as an indicator of modernization which in return would heighten Iranian national prestige and would reinforce its weight in the region. Amuzegar states: “Possession of an atomic bomb would give the theocratic oligarchy entry into the prestigious nuclear club, which, like all exclusive clubs bestows on members a coveted status far beyond its club’s privileges and amenities”.<sup>117</sup>

The fifth motive behind Iran’s nuclear programme is about domestic politics and this motive has two components. One of them is that oil revenues along with natural gas revenues form the largest income of Iranian economy and this rent is the core means of legitimizing the regime. Oil rent has given the Iranian ruling regime the opportunity to provide its citizens with a wide range of services including free education, health care and housing. This has contributed not only to the ability of the ruling regime to purchase the consent of its citizens about political decisions but also to the weakening of any potential opposition groups. With the reduction in oil revenues, the Iranian ruling regime would become more accountable to its citizens, since it would be lacking enough economic means either to silence the opposition or to pacify any public criticism. That’s why Iranian regime has sought for nuclear technology that would remove the burden of domestic energy consumption through allowing the Iranian regime with much oil income. Secondly, the nuclear issue has become a common point around which all Iranians converged. As Chubin demonstrates, “polls consistently show some 80 percent of the population supporting Iran’s access to nuclear technology as a right that reflects and contributes to Iran’s advanced scientific status”.<sup>118</sup> In this respect, Iranian regime frequently uses this compromise both to silence its opponents and to quote national unity in their international negotiations.

The final motive behind Iran’s nuclear program is about security considerations. Iran is located in an unstable, insecure region surrounded by nuclear

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<sup>116</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 26.

<sup>117</sup> Jahangir Amuzegar, “Nuclear Iran: Perils and Prospects,” **Middle East Policy**, Vol.13, No.2, 2006, p. 97.

<sup>118</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 28.

powers such as Israel and Pakistan. In addition, Iranian sense of threat has accelerated “following the American military presence in Afghanistan, on Iran’s eastern border, and the US invasion of Iraq, on its western border”.<sup>119</sup> Exposed to threat perception from the USA and the Israel, Iran assumed that a nuclear capability would be a significant deterrent against external threats and a counterbalance to Israeli military power in the region. Accordingly, Iranian regime has argued that nuclear capability would help Iran to be taken seriously as a dominant regional actor.<sup>120</sup> Moreover Iranian regime has discovered that possession of nuclear technology would increase Iranian bargaining power vis-à-vis international community as the examples of North Korea, Pakistan and India have demonstrated. As Amuzegar indicates with the possession nuclear technology Iranian leadership believed that Iran can more easily ignore international pressure and would enjoy greater respect by the USA as it worked in the case of North Korea.<sup>121</sup> As it is pointed out;

*In relation to the examples of North Korea, Pakistan and India, it is said that these Countries have become immune from US aggression thanks to their nuclear-weapons capabilities, which have acted as a deterrent and established a counterbalancing mechanism to potential future American threats. Indeed, it is apparent to the proponents of this view that India and Pakistan have even been rewarded for their nuclear misdeeds by the USA.*<sup>122</sup>

## **2.2 COMPETING APPROACHES VIA POLITICAL FACTIONS**

Iran’s political system has a complex administrative structure which is different from other Middle Eastern states. In Iran, the political administrative structure consists of both elected and unelected set of individuals and institutions. Elected political administrative institutions include the president, the cabinet, the parliament (Iranian Majlis) and the assembly of experts whereas unelected political administrative institutions include the supreme leader (Velayet-e Faqih / Rule of the Jurisprudent), armed forces, the head of judiciary, the expediency council and the

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<sup>119</sup> Efraim Inbar, “The Need to Block a Nuclear Iran,” **Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol.10, No.1, 2006, p. 86.

<sup>120</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 126.

<sup>121</sup> Amuzegar, pp. 96-97.

<sup>122</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 127.

guardian council. On the one hand, Islamic Republic empowers the Iranian population to elect their president, representatives of the parliament and representatives of the municipal councils whereas on the other unelected institutions are empowered with the ultimate authority over national affairs without any electoral process.<sup>123</sup> As Bahgat points out, “True, the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei had the final word on all important issues, but it is also true that the system was designed to ensure a level of checks and balances between different institutions.”<sup>124</sup>

It would be appropriate to speak of four divergent factions within the Iranian political system, which are radical conservatives (hardliners), mainstream conservatives (moderates), pragmatists and reformists. Each of these factions has its own agenda, priorities and positions with respect to a number of domestic and foreign policy issues. According to Mehran Kamrava, a Middle East specialist, among many policy issues national security policies deserve special attention and of the various national security policies, nuclear program attracts attention.<sup>125</sup> Although these positions converge on the significance of a nuclear programme, they are divided over both about the scope of this programme and how to handle the response of the international community. To put it differently all “sides agree that Iran must have access to nuclear technology, what they disagree over is the means to achieving this end or, more accurately, the price they are willing to pay in order to accomplish the same goal”.<sup>126</sup>

As it is put forward by Chubin, the nuclear issue influences politics to a large extent as political factions have sought to use this issue politically.<sup>127</sup> While holding office, each of these political factions expressed their approval for possessing nuclear technology and linked it directly to Iran’s national interest particularly emphasizing the importance of generating nuclear energy. What differentiated these factions is that whereas the reformists and the pragmatists are more careful in proceeding with this technology and are willing to negotiate with the international community, the conservatives particularly the hardliners are impatient to achieve this technology

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<sup>123</sup> Ray Takeyh, “Iran at a Crossroads,” **Middle East Journal**, Vol.57, No.1, 2003, p. 43.

<sup>124</sup> Bahgat, “Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran,” pp. 321-322.

<sup>125</sup> For more details about national security debates in Iran, see Mehran Kamrava, “Iranian National Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities,” **Middle East Policy**, Vol.14, No.2, 2007, p. 84.

<sup>126</sup> Kamrava, p. 95.

<sup>127</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 28.

disregarding the attitude of the international community almost leaving no room for dialogue.<sup>128</sup>

Likewise, the conservatives are more willing to “violate Iran’s treaty commitments and imperil important regional relationships for the sake of acquiring nuclear arms,” when compared with either pragmatists or reformists.<sup>129</sup> The radical conservatives (hardliners) are more suspicious about the West in general and the USA in particular, in comparison with other three factions. As a result, unlike reformists or pragmatists, hardliners support a revolutionary foreign policy. More than other three factions, the pragmatist faction focuses on the critical interrelationship among the nuclear confrontation with the West and the needs of Iran’s economy, and concentrates on the impact of nuclear programme on Iranian economy.<sup>130</sup>

The eventual outcome of Iran’s nuclear programme depends on which faction dominates the political system in Iran. Since the election of Ahmedinejad as the president in the 2005 presidential elections, hardliners have been more influential in determining the developments with respect to nuclear programme and Iranian foreign policy. Some hardliners have even argued in favor of leaving the NPT to eliminate any barriers to seeking nuclear weapons.<sup>131</sup> The buffer before the implementation of hardliners’ radical policies lies in the moderating role undertaken by mainstream conservatives such as the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Currently, both the elected and unelected political administrative institutions are under the control of conservatives. However, it would be appropriate to differentiate among the radical conservatives and the mainstream conservatives as it seems likely that the political struggle mainly among these factions would determine the fate of the Iranian nuclear puzzle. In the proceeding part, four competing approaches toward Iranian nuclear program will be analyzed in detail within the factional context.

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<sup>128</sup> Kamrava, p. 96.

<sup>129</sup> Takeyh, “Iran’s Nuclear Calculations,” p. 25.

<sup>130</sup> Pollack, p. 75.

<sup>131</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 29.

### 2.2.1 Conservatives

Iran's conservative faction is divided into two groups as radical conservatives broadly known as hardliners and mainstream conservatives broadly known as moderates. Whereas conservatives differ from either pragmatists or reformists both in domestic and foreign policy issue, what differentiates hardliners from moderates is their radical attitude in foreign policy issues. Hardliners have strongly supported anti-Western foreign policy vision. In this respect, while both groups of conservatives seemed determined to accomplish nuclear program, they "differ on means or the price to be paid to achieve this".<sup>132</sup> Here, while moderates care about the normalization of external relations, hardliners are not bothered about it at all.

Ehteshami and Zweiri point out that Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's<sup>133</sup> presidential victory reveals the transformation of the political struggle in Iran from one between the conservatives and other factions to one within the conservative faction itself.<sup>134</sup> Recent parliamentary elections<sup>135</sup> which took place on 14 March 2008 clearly demonstrated the intense competition for political power between these two factions. In line with expectations, conservative candidates rather than pragmatists, reformists or a combination of both dominated the Iranian Majlis. Among the conservatives, mainstream conservatives gained more seats than the radical conservatives. This was largely due to criticisms raised by mainstream conservatives against radical conservatives arising from the three rounds of sanctions imposed on Iran by the UN over its nuclear programme.<sup>136</sup> Moderate conservative winners of the parliamentary elections include the former nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani, who has been an outstanding opponent of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.<sup>137</sup> The result of the

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<sup>132</sup> Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 32.

<sup>133</sup> Mahmoud Ahmedinejad is the sixth and the current president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Prior to his presidency he served as the mayor of Tehran. He is known with his radical policies particularly in the field of foreign affairs.

<sup>134</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 74.

<sup>135</sup> It was the eighth parliamentary election since 1979 revolution with 43 million eligible voters, for more details see "Conservatives Win Iran Election," **BBC News**, 16.03.2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/7297923.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7297923.stm) (18.03.2008).

<sup>136</sup> "Iranians Vote In General Election," **BBC News**, 14.03.2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/7295732.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7295732.stm) (16.03.2008).

<sup>137</sup> "Conservatives Win Iran Election," **BBC News**, 16.03.2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/7297923.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7297923.stm) (18.03.2008).

recent parliamentary elections would be a signal of the intensifying competition among the moderates and hardliners for the forthcoming 2009 presidential elections.

### **2.2.1.1 Radical Conservatives (Hardliners)**

With the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in August 2005, political power of the hardliners in the Iranian political system has consolidated. In reality, victory of President Ahmedinejad owed largely to his deployment of a populist rhetoric (Ahmedinejad mainly emphasized social justice, independence, and export of the revolution in his election campaign) promising to serve particularly to those Iranians, who had not been taken care of by previous administrations and who constituted the majority of the Iranian population. Other than the defeat of the reformists, Ahmedinejad's presidency implied "the rise of a new political elite of 'neoconservatives' with a new political discourse and a new agenda."<sup>138</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Ahmadinejad's taking office, deterioration of relations with the EU/EU3 took place with respect to nuclear issue. Just one year before, Iran and the EU/EU3 signed the Paris agreement (November 2004) which encouraged the suspension of Iranian nuclear programme in exchange for intensified economic relations between the EU and Iran. Soon after, Ahmedinejad came to power, he appointed new officials from hardliner faction for Iran's negotiating team which was established to deal with external concerns about Iranian nuclear programme. This change has surely influenced Iran's relations with the West in a negative way especially when the nuclear issue has been in focus. President Ahmadinejad has refused to enter into any new talks with the EU/EU3 about Iran's nuclear programme.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, the new administration restarted its uranium enrichment programme which has been suspended for only nine months, breaking negotiations with the EU/EU3.<sup>140</sup> On this issue, Kamrava states:

*In June 2005, soon after Ahmedinejad's election, Iran served notice of its intention to resume the enrichment activities it had suspended during the negotiations, rejected an incentives package proposed by the EU, resumed enrichment the following August, and*

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<sup>138</sup> Ehteshami, and Zweiri, p. 73.

<sup>139</sup> "Iran Rejects New EU Nuclear Talks," **BBC News**, 05.03.2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/7279852.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7279852.stm) (10.03.2008).

<sup>140</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 120.

*adopted a more belligerent posture toward the EU, the IAEA and the US, which by now had become directly involved in the matter. Since then, it has shrugged off threats of progressively stronger UN sanctions or even US military strikes or both.*<sup>141</sup>

It would be appropriate to mention about three characteristics of hardliners' policies with respect to Iranian nuclear programme. First of all, hardliners follow policies that are anti-Western in their nature and nuclear issue has not been an exception. They have justified their anti-Western stance, both pointing out the corruptness of the Western culture along with its colonial legacy, and underlying the significance of self-sufficiency. Hardliners have made frequent references to importance of self-sufficiency particularly in the scientific and technological fields to consolidate Iranian position in the international system. According to hardliners, the major obstacle to Iranian scientific and technological advances is the West that "is determined to keep Iran technologically subordinate," and they further claimed that EU and the IAEA are both 'bullies' to impede Iran's progress.<sup>142</sup>

In this regard, the hardliners view the 1979 Islamic Revolution more as anti-Western, anti-imperialist and anti-US uprising rather than an anti-monarchical one. Since hardliners are the most passionate advocates and guardians of the Islamic revolution, they have established a positive correlation among protecting Islamic Republic's national interests with confronting the West. As the chief of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmood Hashemi Shahroudi, stated in 2001, "Our national interests lie with antagonizing the Great Satan. We condemn any cowardly stance toward America and any word on compromise with the Great Satan."<sup>143</sup> In line with Shahroudi's statement, Ahemedinejad has continuously accused Western countries of attempting to prevent Iran from developing peaceful nuclear technology. He declared that Iran would never give up developing this technology denying Western claims that his regime had never pursued any nuclear weapons.<sup>144</sup> Ahmadinejad even threatened to use the oil card blocking regular supply of oil therefore causing a radical increase at oil prices. He said in one of his speeches dated back to December

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<sup>141</sup> Kamrava, p. 96.

<sup>142</sup> Kamrava, pp. 96-97.

<sup>143</sup> Pollack, p. 22.

<sup>144</sup> Alireza Jafarzadeh, **The Iran Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p.125.

2005: “If Iran’s nuclear case is referred to the Security Council of the UN, then the response of this country will be to use different ways to stop selling oil.”<sup>145</sup>

In a recent address, he charged UN Security Council as being a tool in Western hands to realize Western interests. He said that 2008 sanctions resolution against Iran’s civilian nuclear activities would further “downgrade the UN’s standing”.<sup>146</sup> According to Ahmadinejad the Security Council made its anti-Iran decisions based on false information and thus its credibility had a major blow.<sup>147</sup> Similar to the address of Ahmedinejad, another hardliner, Majlis Speaker Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, criticized the UN Security Council’s move to intensify sanctions against Iran as “illogical, illegal, and absolutely political.”<sup>148</sup>

Another characteristic of hardliners’ policies with respect to Iran’s nuclear programme is that they use ‘conflict’ as a means to achieve their goals. Chubin points out that hardliners view the world as a “Hobbesian one of unremitting struggle, where predatory powers lurk to dictate and dominate and where the only currency is military power.”<sup>149</sup> Hardliners’ have not seemed to be bothered by any conflict or confrontation with the foreign powers. Even, they have not avoided pouring gasoline to burning fire. This attitude has two key explanations. Firstly, hardliners believe that negotiations and compromises would only contribute to preserving the status quo in foreign relations. Thus, they advocate conflict and contention to extend the influence of the regime beyond its borders. As it is mentioned, “negotiations, in this mind-set, reflect and ratify the balance of power but add nothing to it.”<sup>150</sup> Secondly, hardliners are well aware that existence of a foreign threat has a unifying and mobilizing impact on the people. Thus, keeping the idea of external challenge alive through conspiracies, hardliners have been able “to divert attention from their inadequate domestic record”.<sup>151</sup> To put it differently, hardliners have made use of conflict and confrontation to cover the shortcomings of their

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<sup>145</sup> Jafarzadeh, p.193.

<sup>146</sup> “Iran: Sanctions Resolution Deals Another Blow to Security Council’s Credibility,” **Tehran Times**, 05.03.2008, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/NCms/2007.asp?code=164434> (10.03.2008).

<sup>147</sup> “Iran: Sanctions Resolution Deals Another Blow to Security Council’s Credibility,” **Tehran Times**, 05.03.2008, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/NCms/2007.asp?code=164434> (10.03.2008).

<sup>148</sup> “Iran: Sanctions Resolution Deals Another Blow to Security Council’s Credibility,” **Tehran Times**, 05.03.2008, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/NCms/2007.asp?code=164434> (10.03.2008).

<sup>149</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 33.

<sup>150</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 33.

<sup>151</sup> Shahram Chubin, **Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, p. 110.



policies both in the political and socio-economic fields. As Takeyh has also pointed out, the primary beneficiary of US hostility and sanctions policy have been the radical conservatives since “as they have long required external demons and isolation from the international community as a means justifying their monopoly of political power”.<sup>152</sup>

Lastly, unlike other political factions hardliners have believed that not only access to peaceful nuclear technology but also access to military nuclear technology are required for Iran’s further development. They have emphasized the significance of hard power to preserve the security and prestige of the Islamic Republic believing that possessing nuclear capability would make Iran immune from any external interference into its domestic affairs such as human rights. Hardliners have also been less enthusiastic about rejecting the claims that Iran was secretly pursuing nuclear weapon technology. On this issue, Chubin and Litwak suggest that the rationale for the nuclear weapons program rests in the worldview of the hard-liners, who see the programme as the ultimate guarantor of Iran’s influence and security and, not incidentally, their own political power.”<sup>153</sup> In fact, since Ahmedinejad’s presidency, militarization of Iranian politics has increased.<sup>154</sup> According to Ehteshami and Zweiri, for the first time in over a generation, political establishment in Iran has had more militaristic face than ever.<sup>155</sup> This has as well contributed to the intensification of alarm bells in the West.

Overall, the current political setting in Iran is almost dominated by hardliners who support hawkish national security policies in the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).<sup>156</sup> Thus, the acquisition of nuclear technology would also likely to result in the acquisition of nuclear weapons under the rule of hardliners meeting concerns of the international community. Access to nuclear weapons would enhance

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<sup>152</sup> Takeyh, “Iran at a Crossroads,” p. 55.

<sup>153</sup> Shahrām Chubin and Robert S. Litwak, “Debating Iran’s Nuclear Aspirations,” **The Washington Quarterly**, Vol.26, No.4, 2003, p. 106.

<sup>154</sup> Ahmedinejad is known to have close ties with the Revolutionary Guards. Iranian military and security constituency “notably the militia Basij and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, known as the IRGC or Pasdaran” are claimed to support this administration. For more details see Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 32.

<sup>155</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 151.

<sup>156</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 31.

the militarization of the Iran's regime enhancing the very same populist forces in the military-security apparatus.<sup>157</sup>

### 2.2.1.2 Mainstream Conservatives (Moderates)

Despite the fact that the radical and the mainstream conservatives share many things in common in general and with respect to Iranian nuclear programme in particular, there are several visional differences among these two factions. First of all, when the nuclear issue is in focus, whereas mainstream conservatives care about potential costs such as isolation and sanctions, radical conservatives usually remain to be indifferent to potential costs. Secondly, notwithstanding the fact that conservatives in general are less enthusiastic about developing relations with the West when compared with either pragmatists or reformists, mainstreams conservatives at least favor the normalization of relations with the West, whereas "their hardliner counterparts welcome the opportunity to purify the regime and society by limiting contamination from the outside and asserting the revolution's values of self-reliance and authenticity."<sup>158</sup> Statements by President Ahmedinejad have demonstrated the indifference and disrespect of radical conservatives for international community.

Lastly, even though both the radical and the traditional conservatives converge on the desire to enhance Iran's power and influence by means of nuclear technology they differ on their perceptions of Iran and the external world. Whereas mainstream conservatives have a realistic perception of Iran and the external world, radical conservatives have on the one hand overestimated Iran's power and centrality in the international system, while on the other hand misjudging the external world, they have an exaggerated perception of the antagonism and hostility the West felt against Iran.<sup>159</sup>

With the election of Ahmedinejad as the president, the mainstream conservatives are expected to lose some of their control in the political system.

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<sup>157</sup> Elliot Hen-Tov, "Understanding Iran's New Authoritarianism," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.1, 2006-07, p.169.

<sup>158</sup> Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, p. 34.

<sup>159</sup> Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, p. 34.

However, this assumption has not realized at all since Supreme Leadership position is occupied by a mainstream conservative, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been influential in curbing the extremism in hardliner' policies to restore some political equilibrium in the Iranian political system.<sup>160</sup>

In fact, mainstream conservatives are not happy with the way the nuclear issue is handled by president Ahmedinejad and other radical conservatives. Thus, mainstream conservatives have been in a position to check the policies implemented by radical conservatives.<sup>161</sup> Other than the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Ali Larijani<sup>162</sup> is also an outstanding figure belonging to mainstream conservative faction. Ali Larijani and Supreme Leader Khamenei representing the mainstream conservative faction occupy a middle position lie in between radical conservatives and the pragmatists. This position is mostly apparent in Khamenei's acts and attitudes. As Pollack and Takeyh indicate that on the one hand Khamenei shares the "hardliners' revolutionary convictions and their confrontational impulses," whereas on the other as the head of state, he is aware of his duty to "safeguard Iran's national interests and temper ideology with statecraft".<sup>163</sup> For this reason, Khamenei has followed a delicate policy trying to balance the hardliners and the pragmatists, preventing either of them to gain excessive power. Pollack mentions:

*Khamenei understands the importance both of not allowing Iran's economy to collapse (because of the potential for this to cause widespread popular unrest) and not alienating the radical hardliners who ultimately are key to his hold on power. As a result, from 1990 till 2002, Khamenei pursued a middle path, never curbing Iranian nuclear and terrorist activity enough to satisfy the Americans, but keeping things in check enough to allow the European and Japanese governments (who were more willing to turn a blind eye to Iranian misdeeds at that time) to continue to trade and invest in Iran.*<sup>164</sup>

Negotiations for nuclear dispute were mostly under the control of mainstream conservatives during the 2003-2005 period and they preferred to act within the limits

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<sup>160</sup> Bahgat, **Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran**, p. 322.

<sup>161</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 77.

<sup>162</sup> Ali Larijani is the former National Security Council chairman and the current speaker of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis).

<sup>163</sup> Kenneth Pollack and Ray Takeyh, "Taking on Tehran," **Foreign Affairs**, Vo.84, No.2, 2005, pp. 22-23.

<sup>164</sup> Pollack, pp. 73-83.

of NPT. They cared about the relations with the international community and suspension of enrichment programme as a result of Paris agreement signed between Iran and the EU/EU3 was a clear indication that moderates choose cooperation in their relations with the external world. In addition, their awareness of the potential costs of a disruption of relations with the international community forced the moderates to accept the Additional Protocol of the NPT. As Pollack and Takeyh point out despite pressures by the radical conservatives for discarding the NPT, Supreme leader Khamenei agreed that Tehran would sign the NPT's Additional Protocol<sup>165</sup> that was followed by Iranian consent for suspending its uranium enrichment activities.<sup>166</sup> It was also Khamenei, who charged Ali Larijani for supervising the negotiations on the nuclear dispute worrying about any mishandling about the nuclear issue by Ahmedinejad administration. Khamenei also charged Kamal Kharrazi (he was the former foreign affairs minister during Khatami Administration), a reformist to supervise foreign affairs.

Overall, whereas mainstream conservatives resembled the radical conservatives in believing that nuclear technology would enhance Iranian power and prestige in the international system, mainstream conservatives have a moderate stance in its relations with the international community when compared with aggressive hardliners. Moderated have more things in common with the pragmatists when the national interest and economic issues are in focus. To preserve national interests or economic interests moderates are inclined to engagement, accommodation and compromise. Criticisms against Ahmadinejad administration have not been made only by pragmatists and reformists but also by traditional conservatives. Particularly, provocative speeches by Ahmedinejad about the nuclear dispute and the approval of third set of sanctions by the UN Security Council in December 2007 led to sharp criticism against Ahmedinejad for inflaming the nuclear by traditional conservatives.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Iran signed the Additional Protocol in October 2003 allowing an intrusive inspection regime on Iran's nuclear programme.

<sup>166</sup> Pollack and Takeyh, p. 22.

<sup>167</sup> Mark Gasiorowski, "The New Aggressiveness in Iran's Foreign Policy," **Middle East Policy**, Vol.14, No.2, 2007, pp. 129-130.

### 2.2.2 Pragmatists

Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani<sup>168</sup> representing the pragmatist faction, is an influential figure in Iranian political system. During his presidency (1989 to 1997) Rafsanjani followed a pragmatic policy concentrating externally on the development of trade relations with other countries and internally seeking to shift Iran's economy from a state-controlled one to a more market-based one. He also encouraged a rapprochement with the West. Rafsanjani and the pragmatists gathered around him have long prioritized rebuilding Iran's economy recognizing that this required "vastly improved relations with the West in order to encourage greater trade and investment in Iran".<sup>169</sup> Pragmatists have made alliances with the traditional conservatives and reformists whenever their interests with that of either of these groups converged.<sup>170</sup>

On the nuclear issue, pragmatists have stood for the nuclear programme as long as it did not have a negative impact on Iran's trade relations and its economy. Pragmatists have frequently implied that in order to improve relations with the West which are critical to Iran's economic interests, they would even abandon the nuclear programme.<sup>171</sup> With respect to the nuclear issue, Rafsanjani stated, "Iran is not looking for acts of adventurism."<sup>172</sup> Rafsanjani has also repeatedly emphasized that Iran was ready to negotiate with the international community about its nuclear programme.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Rafsanjani was the fourth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He served as the President of Iran from 1989 to 1997. He ran again for presidency in 2005 presidential elections losing it against Tehran Major, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. Being appointed in September 2007, he is currently the chairman of the Assembly of Experts that is charged with electing the Supreme Leader of Iran. Rafsanjani is also currently the Chairman of the Expediency Council, (appointed in 2002) that resolves legislative issues between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians and advises the supreme leader on matters of national policy. For more details see; "Profile: Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani," **BBC News**, 17.06.2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3034480.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3034480.stm) (18.03.2008) and "Historic Personalities: Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani," Iran Chamber Society Web Page, [http://www.iranchamber.com/history/arafsanjani/akbar\\_rafsanjani.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/arafsanjani/akbar_rafsanjani.php) (27.06.2008).

<sup>169</sup> Pollack, pp. 75-76.

<sup>170</sup> Hussein S. Seifzadeh, "The Landscape of Factional Politics and Its Future in Iran," **Middle East Journal**, Vol.57, No.1, 2003, p. 61.

<sup>171</sup> Pollack, pp. 75-76.

<sup>172</sup> Kamrava, p. 94.

<sup>173</sup> "Profile: Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani," **BBC News**, 17.06.2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3034480.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3034480.stm) (18.03.2008).

According to pragmatists given the fact that the US has been highly critical and suspicious of Iran's nuclear programme, any provoking act of Iran would lead other states to adopt US' penalizing stance, thus leading to Iran's further isolation. In this regard, prior to referral of Iran to the UN Security Council owing to Ahmedinejad administration's aggressive tactics and rhetoric on the issue, Rafsanjani criticized Ahmedinejad administration's provocative strategies and argued in favor of intense diplomacy.<sup>174</sup> He said, "Our main task is to prove that we are not the sort of people to utilize nuclear weapons" and to prove to Iran's opponents that "Iran will not use the technology for military purposes."<sup>175</sup> Likewise, in an interview in 2002, Ali Shamkhani, former Iranian Minister of Defense from the pragmatic faction stated, "existence of nuclear weapons will turn us [Iran] into a threat to others that could be exploited in a dangerous way to harm our relations with the countries of the region."<sup>176</sup>

Overall, pragmatists have prioritized economic efficiency and on the nuclear issue they are aware that the imposition of multilateral sanctions would put Iranian economy under constraint. For pragmatists, harmonious relations with foreign states are significant for developing mutual trade relations and encouraging the flow of foreign investment to Iran contributing the welfare of Iranian economy. Rafsanjani warned that "If there are domestic and foreign conflicts, foreign capital will not flow into the count...such conflicts will lead to the flight of capital from this country."<sup>177</sup> In relation to the nuclear issue, pragmatists have not approved hardliners' aggressive attitude which have invited further sanctions by the international community. To sum up, pragmatists have opposed each and every act which have raised difficulties for Iran's greater integration into the global economy.

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<sup>174</sup> "Rafsanjani Warns US against Military Attack on Iran," Voice of the IRI Network (Tehran), 30.09.2005 in BBC Monitoring, 01.10.2005 quoted in Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, pp. 34-35.

<sup>175</sup> "Rafsanjani Warns US against Military Attack on Iran," Voice of the IRI Network (Tehran), 30.09.2005 in BBC Monitoring, 01.10.2005 quoted in Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, pp. 34-35.

<sup>176</sup> Pollack and Takeyh, p.24.

<sup>177</sup> Pollack and Takeyh, p.23.

### 2.2.3 Reformists

With the election of Ahmedinejad as the President in 2005 presidential elections, reformists have lost control in almost all important political institutions. The reformists have gathered around Muhammad Reza Khatami,<sup>178</sup> who helped to moderate Iran's foreign policy in the late 1990s until the collapse of this approach with the strengthening of hardliner faction starting from early 2000s which is led by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.<sup>179</sup> In relation to domestic politics, reformists have strongly advocated liberal principles of freedom of expression, tolerance and civil society.<sup>180</sup> Like pragmatists they have also favored the functioning of a free market and Iran's greater integration into the global economy. In relation to foreign affairs reformists have encouraged constructive diplomatic relations with other countries. Particularly during mid-1990s, Khatami intensely "endorsed a foreign policy of engagement and integration in the global society".<sup>181</sup> In this regard, Khatami opposed to Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations"<sup>182</sup> thesis, instead arguing for a "Dialogue Among Civilizations."<sup>183</sup>

Despite higher intentions of the reformists, it would not be unfair to tell that during the two terms they occupied key governmental positions, they did not succeed in political liberalizing. This was probably due to the fact that unelected administrative positions were occupied by mainstream conservatives who were against change. This led to a disappointment among many Iranians who believed that reformists would realize political and socio-economic reforms in line with their promises.

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<sup>178</sup> Muhammad Reza Khatami served as the fifth president of Iran for two terms from 1997 to 2005. For more details see Seifzadeh, p. 62.

<sup>179</sup> Gasiorowski, p. 127.

<sup>180</sup> Khatami has strongly argued for the compatibility of Islam and democracy. He claimed that there was not only one specific formula in order to achieve a democratic order since he believed that a democratic order would include religious norms and thus would fill in the "vacuum of spirituality" from which "today world democracies are suffering". Quoted in John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy," **Humanities**, Vol.22, 2001, p. 23.

<sup>181</sup> Takeyh, pp. 25-26.

<sup>182</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" **Foreign Affairs**, Vol.72, 1993, pp. 22-49.

<sup>183</sup> Through his "Dialogue Among Civilizations" thesis, Khatami rejected the notion of the clash of civilizations; embracing the principle of dialogue among religions, cultures and nations; believing in the interdependence of societies, cultures and economies; and advocates a "proactive and firm foreign policy". R. K Ramazani, "The Shifting Premise of Iran's Foreign Policy: Toward a Democratic Peace?" **Middle East Journal**, Vol.52, No.2, 1998, p. 181.

For reformists nuclear programme was not an issue of high priority. Instead they paid much more attention to issues of political and socio-economic reforms. They also emphasized establishing good relations with the liberal West. Indeed as Pollack points out “during the Khatami Administration, many leading Iranian reformists privately assured the USA that Mr. Khatami would be willing to give up the nuclear program altogether as part of a general rapprochement.”<sup>184</sup> In fact, during Khatami’s administration was successful in reducing Iran’s global economic isolation and attracting a growing number of foreign investors.<sup>185</sup>

According to Chubin, the reformists generally view the nuclear programme as one among other several technologies and in relation to the nuclear issue they are not willing it to lead to “Iran’s estrangement from the international community and hurt relations with neighbors”.<sup>186</sup> When the reformists were in power, they underlined the significance of dialogue and cooperation in solving the nuclear dispute with the international community. As Kamrava indicates,

*Keen to lower tensions and to show the country’s willingness to cooperate with the EU and IAEA, when the reformists were in power, they were willing to suspend enrichment for the life of the negotiations and were eager to come up with a win-win compromise whereby Iran would continue its nuclear activities under a presumably toughened IAEA inspection regime.*<sup>187</sup>

Reformists have insisted on that Iran’s national interests would be preserved through its adhering to the broad confines of the international nonproliferation regimes. Ali Reza Aghazadeh, an outstanding Khatami advisor, said, “Peace and stability cannot be achieved by means of nuclear weapons.”<sup>188</sup> Another reformist, Mustafa Moin<sup>189</sup> clearly emphasized that “if seeking enrichment poisoned relations with the international community, Iran should forgo it”.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Pollack, p. 75.

<sup>185</sup> Kamrava, p. 95.

<sup>186</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 31.

<sup>187</sup> Kamrava, p. 96.

<sup>188</sup> Afsane Bassir Pour, “Interview with Ali Reza Aghazadeh,” **Le Monde**, 13.03.2003 quoted in Takeyh, “Iran at a Crossroads,” p. 24.

<sup>189</sup> Mustafa Moin served as the Minister of Science in Khatami’s administration.

<sup>190</sup> Chubin, **Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**, p. 29.



### 2.3 PUBLIC OPINION: VOICE OF THE IRANIAN STREET

In relation to nuclear issue, public opinion in Iran is not monolithic in contrast to what the Iranian government constantly tries to demonstrate. It is true that some conscious Iranians support the nuclear programme due to a number of motivations such as the need for alternative energy resources as oil resources will be depleted, security concerns and Western approval for nuclear programmes of several countries including Israel, India and Pakistan. Some others view the right to develop nuclear power as a matter of national pride since they “perceive their nation as a great civilization that has been deprived of its rightful status as a regional superpower by foreign intervention, including the Russian, British, and American...Developing an indigenous nuclear capability would go a long a way in restoring a sense of pride and respect.”<sup>191</sup> The remaining Iranians do not have any idea about either what exactly the nuclear programme is about or what would its implications be on their daily lives. As Atrianfar, Rafsanjani’s advisor, said, “People have been hearing these things about having the right to have or to possess this [nuclear] capability. And, naturally, if you ask an Iranian whether [they] want this right or not, they would say they do want it. But if you ask, though, ‘What is nuclear energy?’ they might not be able to tell you what it is.”<sup>192</sup> There is also uncertainty in the Iranian street particularly about how to handle the nuclear dispute given the strong suspicion prevailing within the international community.

In fact, the nuclear programme is not a crucial issue for an average Iranian. Iranian street cares more about the price of bread or other major goods and the growing unemployment rather than the fate of uranium enrichment activities. To put it differently, economic welfare is the priority of an average Iranian and the nuclear issue is a subject of discussion only in the socio-economically satisfied segments of the Iranian society. As Sadjadpour points out “per capita income in today’s Iran is

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<sup>191</sup> Bahgat, p. 322.

<sup>192</sup> Muhammad Atrianfar, interview by Margaret Warner, PBS NewsHour, 06.09.2006, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/july-dec06/iran\\_09-06.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/july-dec06/iran_09-06.html) quoted in Karim Sadjadpour, “How Relevant Is the Iranian Street?” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.1, 2006-07, pp. 155-156.

roughly one-half what it was shortly before the shah's downfall".<sup>193</sup> In the immediate aftermath of Ahmedinejad's coming to power, Iranian economy faced a significant challenge. Foreign investors fled to neighboring states and the stock market experienced a sharp decline due to foreign investors' lack of confidence in Ahmedinejad administration's economic policies and the appointment of ministers with little known management experience.<sup>194</sup> In fact, economic expectations of the people from Ahmedinejad's administration had already risen owing to effective populist electoral campaign of Ahmedinejad promising to deliver greater amount of oil revenues to them prior to president. Yet, Ahmedinejad was soon to discover the difficulty of delivering on his economic promises of bringing the benefits of oil revenues to the Iranian people.<sup>195</sup>

Iranian economy has long been experiencing a set of macroeconomic problem such as high inflation, unemployment, and income inequality.<sup>196</sup> It is pointed out that inflation rate has reached double digits accompanying the living of one out of every four Iranians below the poverty line.<sup>197</sup> Other than economic problems, many Iranians particularly the younger generation, have become tired of divergent restrictions on individual liberties imposed by the Ahmedinejad administration. According to Jafarzadeh, this socio-economic burden over the shoulders' of the Iranians has turned the domestic situation into a "time bomb that could explode any day".<sup>198</sup> It is true that popular discontent has increased to a large extent during the Ahmedinejad era. It was registered that roughly 4,000 antigovernment demonstrations took place in Iran between March 2005 and March 2006, an average of more than 330 protests every month.<sup>199</sup>

Aware of the domestic crisis, Ahmadinejad administration has tried to divert the attention of the Iranians from the realities by overemphasizing Iran's nuclear rights and Western powers' attempts to deprive Iran of those rights, thereby appealing to Iranians' sense of nationalism. Through public speeches Ahmedinejad

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<sup>193</sup> Karim Sadjadpour, "How Relevant Is the Iranian Street?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.1, 2006-07, p. 158.

<sup>194</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 76.

<sup>195</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 85.

<sup>196</sup> World Bank, "World Economic Development Indicators 2005," <http://devdata.worldbank.org/wdi2005/index2.htm> quoted in Hen-Tov, p. 170.

<sup>197</sup> Jafarzadeh , p.235.

<sup>198</sup> Jafarzadeh , p.235.

<sup>199</sup> Jafarzadeh , p.225.

has frequently accused Western powers of trying to prevent Iran from enriching uranium in order “to keep it backward and dependent on the West”.<sup>200</sup> During international negotiations Iranian leaders have often made references to popular polls revealing that the clear majority of the Iranian population has supported the nuclear programme. It is ironic that although the current Iranian regime has constantly disregarded and has even repressed public opinion, when the nuclear programme has been in focus, they have use Iranian street as a bargaining tool in their foreign relations.<sup>201</sup> The polls referred by the Ahmedinejad administration have pointed out that 80 percent of the population is supporting Iran’s access to nuclear technology.<sup>202</sup> Like each and every citizen, Iranians have been in favor of an increase in their country’s status, respect and a broader regional role and they have viewed access to advanced technology as desirable. However, it would be appropriate to maintain nationalistic feelings of the Iranian people have been provoked by the regime in relation to the nuclear issue. It is true that the polls conducted have found strong public support for the country’s nuclear programme.<sup>203</sup> However, issues of whether these polls are either scientific or objective are debatable. Christopher de Bellaigue, the correspondent for the Economist in Tehran puts forward that these polls were conducted mostly by organs close to Iran’s conservative establishment and in addition to the obvious bias prevailing in these polls, they are inherently flawed as the questions in these polls imply that the nuclear programme is a risk-free enterprise offering those surveyed no alternative.<sup>204</sup> It is also mentioned that since the Iranian government has intimately controlled research on this topic by Iranian media, analysts and journalists have had “to cite government-sponsored surveys that indicate that the majority of the Iranian public supports the country’s nuclear program” in the absence any reliable empirical data.<sup>205</sup> In his article in Financial Times, Former Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ senior official Abbas Maleki writes;

*Reports suggest that Tehran’s official joy over the nuclear breakthrough is shared by a*

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<sup>200</sup> Sadjadpour, p. 156.

<sup>201</sup> Sadjadpour, p. 156.

<sup>202</sup> Chubin, *Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, p. 28.

<sup>203</sup> John C. Wobensmith, “Getting Smart on Iran,” in I. Berman (ed.) **Taking on Tehran: Strategies for Confronting the Islamic Republic**, Lexington Books, Lenham, 2007, p. 10.

<sup>204</sup> Christopher de Bellaigue, “Think Again: Iran,” **Foreign Policy**, May/June 2005, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=2828](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=2828) (16.04.2008).

<sup>205</sup> Sadjadpour, p. 157.

*large segment of Iranian society. Such reports should not be taken as evidence that the Iranian people share their government's views, and should not be used as a pretext for using force against Iran's population...The general public does not consider the nuclear issue to be of vital importance. Nuclear technology will do little for the average Iranian – it cannot create more jobs for a country that needs one million jobs annually, it cannot change the chronic low efficiency, productivity and effectiveness of the economy and management, and it will do nothing to improve Iran's commercial ties with the rest of the world.*<sup>206</sup>

Likewise, Christopher de Bellaigue indicates,

*Iranians who vocally support their country's nuclear ambitions tend to be strong supporters of the Islamic Republic, and they are a minority. In today's sullenly depoliticized Iran, it is the mundane issues that animate people: the price of staple products, for instance, or changes in terms of required military service. In the four and a half years that I have lived in Iran...I have never witnessed a spontaneous discussion of the nuclear program among average Iranians...It's unlikely that many Iranians would be willing to put up with the economic and diplomatic isolation that would likely result if Iran insisted on enriching uranium. And the Islamic Republic would hesitate to ask them to do so, for it is the regime, not the international community, that would feel the backlash.*<sup>207</sup>

Eventually, having experienced one of the bloodiest wars of the second half of the twentieth century, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Iranians do not want any adventure, conflict or confrontation to be developed out of the nuclear programme.<sup>208</sup> Neither do they have any desire for any international isolation. To be sure, they want to live in a country where their economic needs are met and where they can carry out their businesses in a stable environment. Given the economic difficulties, Iranians do not want to be subject to further economic sanctions for the sake of the nuclear programme. To sum up, the nuclear issue is a matter of national pride for the average Iranian only as long as her/his primary needs are covered and they believe that it is not worth of entering this or that sort of any war.

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<sup>206</sup> Abbas Maleki, "Iran Is Eager to Defuse the Nuclear Squabble," **Financial Times**, 09.05.2006, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/c6310ec4-df83-11da-afe4-0000779e2340.html> (04.04.2008).

<sup>207</sup> Christopher de Bellaigue, "Think Again: Iran," **Foreign Policy**, May/June 2005, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=2828](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=2828) (16.04.2008).

<sup>208</sup> Sadjadpour, p. 157.

## 2.4 OVERVIEW

It would be appropriate to suggest that at present in Iran, there is not any compromise both among divergent political factions and within the Iranian public on how to handle the nuclear issue. With respect to internal politics; the radical conservatives, the mainstream conservatives, the pragmatists, and the reformists have considerably different ideas about how to deal with the nuclear dispute that leads to tension among Iran and the international community. The converging point of view among these political factions is that they have all underlined their desire to see Iran as an independent, developed and technologically advanced state. Yet, they have disagreed on how to achieve an Iran with these above mentioned qualities. Nuclear capability has been one of these critical qualities that has long been discussed in the political circles.

Actually, the main difference among Iranian factional approaches to nuclear issue arises from their divergent foreign policy views. Here, the main distinction is between those who favor accommodation with the West such as reformists and pragmatists and those who strongly oppose any accommodation with the West such as radical hardliners. There are also those who approve conditional accommodation with the West such as mainstream conservatives meaning that their approval depends on changing circumstances. To put it differently, there is a division between those political factions who emphasize the significance of compromise in solving the nuclear dispute including the reformists and the pragmatists and others for whom any compromise with the West is unimaginable including the hardliners. Mainstream conservatives occupy a middle ground among these two political tendencies, playing a balancing role.

The election of Ahmedinejad represents a major turning point in Iranian politics. As Ehteshami and Zweiri argue, with Ahmedinejad's presidential victory, Iran has entered "new and uncharted waters in both its domestic politics and foreign relations".<sup>209</sup> Current Iranian parliament is dominated by radical conservatives and mainstream conservatives and Iran's current nuclear policy is a combination of these two factions' visions. Recent parliamentary elections which took place on 14 March

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<sup>209</sup> Ehteshami and Zweiri, p. 105.

2008 resulted in mainstream conservatives' gaining apparently more seats than any other political group. Yet, the cabinet is still dominated by the hardliners and this would also change with the forthcoming 2009 presidential elections. Overall, Iranian policy would be subject to change if the composition of the parliament changes. However, it should not be forgotten that unelected institutions such as the position of the supreme leader are very influential in Iranian politics.

Public debate is another theme that was analyzed in this chapter. It appears that for an average Iranian the nuclear issue is not as prioritized as economic welfare. What also matters for the Iranian street is the combination of costs or consequences as result of insisting on a technology without having the consent of major powers. International isolation and further economic sanctions mean genuinely high prices for the Iranian public that they can not afford. Public polls, manipulated by the Iranian regime, have been used by the Iranian regime as well to enhance its bargaining power vis-à-vis the international community in relation to negotiations on the nuclear issue. The ruling regime has aimed to buttress its legitimacy too through exploiting Iranians' sense of nationality that has been provoked making references to Western double standards. Lastly, the possibility of Ahmedinejad administration possessing nuclear weapons would strengthen the hands of the hardliners, leading to a serious increase in the repressive and authoritarian nature of their policies.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: IMPLICATIONS FOR TURKEY

Iranian nuclear issue is part of domestic struggle in Iran. It is also a regional and international issue. As indicated in the previous chapter Iran's policy on particularly nuclear issue has caused serious concern among the international community. The EU-3 engaged in a dialogue aimed at resolving the crisis, but this aim has failed in 2005. Eventually, the IAEA has referred this issue to the UN Security Council in 2006. Since Iran has refused to halt enrichment of uranium, the UN imposed three sets of sanctions in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Besides, the USA has established economic sanctions against Iran.

Recently, it seems that a new period of power struggle and bargaining over the Iranian nuclear issue started. The EU tries to start talks with Iran while the rhetoric between Washington and Tehran grows more aggressive. Presently, in addition to its nuclear programme, NATO has been discussing Iran's ballistic missile program and concerned about missile launches from Iran. Moreover, Iran has been accused of supporting terrorist organizations. All of these challenges are also hold a high priority for Turkish foreign policy. Turkey has to follow the developments closely since Iran is a neighbor to Turkey. Also due to security and energy interests, regional developments are a matter of concern for Turkey. In regard to the aim of this thesis, here, emphasis will be given to the implications of nuclear issue for Turkey, which will be analyzed after an overview of relations between Iran and Turkey.

#### 3.1. OVERVIEW OF RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND TURKEY

Turkey and Iran share a 310-mile border and as indicated by the Turkish foreign ministry the two countries have been at peace for centuries.<sup>210</sup> It is noteworthy that though both countries are Muslim, Iran is mainly Shiite, while

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<sup>210</sup> "Turkey's Political Relations with Iran", available at [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-political-relations-with-iran.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relations-with-iran.en.mfa); for details of relations between Iran and Turkey at the beginning of the establishment of Turkish Republic see: Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Ataturk Donemi Turkiye-Iran Iliskileri 1926-1938 [Turko-Iranian Relations in the Time of Ataturk 1826-1938]", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol.5, No.3, 1999, pp. 148- 176.

Turkey is Sunni. Furthermore, in Iran there is a religious and authoritarian regime where as in Turkey there is a secular and democratic regime. As there are political and ideological differences, it is important to regard their mutual relationship in this regard.

Relations between the two countries can be examined in three periods. The first period covers the years from the establishment of the Turkish Republic until the Iranian Revolution. In the 1920s, Turkey and Iran pursued similar foreign policy goals of resisting to territorial demands by outside forces. In 1926 and 1932, the two countries signed Treaties of Friendship and Security and formed the Saadabad Pact in 1937. After the World War II, both countries followed a policy of alliance with the West. By 1955 the Cold War had stabilized and President Eisenhower was following the policy of containment. Under this international context, in order to prevent Soviet intervention, Turkey and Iraq signed the Baghdad Pact in 1955. Together with England, Pakistan and Iran have joined this Pact in the same year. The name of the Pact was changed to the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959 after Iraq pulled out, but it survived until 1979. In fact, until the Islamic Revolution, Iran and Turkey continued their cooperation and as Bishku argues bilateral relations were reasonably good with similar foreign policy principles.<sup>211</sup>

The second period of bilateral relations covers the years between 1979 and 1997. After the Revolution in Iran, some conflicts were observed in their relations. Nevertheless, during the Iran-Iraq War for eight years, starting from 1980 Turkey followed a policy of neutrality. Iran on the other hand, actively assisted Kurds in order to open another front against Iraq.<sup>212</sup> In 1983, the PKK terrorism intensified in Turkey and heightened gradually. As stated by Laqueur, during the 1980 and 1990s "Iran became the main sponsor of terrorism."<sup>213</sup> Thus, Turkey felt threatened especially due to attempts of Iran to export the Iranian revolution and support given to the PKK until the late 1990s.<sup>214</sup> In 1992, major threat for Turkish security was

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<sup>211</sup> Micheal B. Bishku, "Turkey and Iran During the Cold War", **Journal of Third World Studies**, Vol.16, No.1, 1999, pp. 1-28.

<sup>212</sup> Unal Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey: 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences", **Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)**, Vol.7, No.1, 2003.

<sup>213</sup> Walter Laqueur, **The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction**, Oxford University Press, London, 2002, p. 172.

<sup>214</sup> Micheal Emerson and Nathalie Tocci, "Turkey as a Bridgehead and Spearhead: Integrating EU and Turkish Foreign Policy", **EU Turkey Working Papers**, No.1, Centre for European Policy Studies,



defined as Kurdish separatism. In 1997, radical Islamism (irtica) and Kurdish separatism were identified as major threats to Turkish security.<sup>215</sup> In addition, in the first half of the 1990s, problems in bilateral relations were observed due to claims on Iranian involvement in the political assassination of Turkish intellectuals. It is stated that the main suspects in the assassination of the intellectuals were having Iranian connections.<sup>216</sup> In the second half of the 1990s, especially Iran's support of the PKK raised serious problems. In this respect, Ankara claimed that Iran trained the Turkish Islamist radicals and supported terrorist activities. Moreover, as Ozcan stated "the tension turned out to be a crisis in February 1997 when the Iranian ambassador Muhammad Baghai attended to address an Islamist gathering called 'the Night for Jerusalem' expressing critical views in public on Turkey's rapprochement with Israel and close relations with the USA."<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, in May 1990, the former Turkish Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, has accused Iran of trying to export its own Islamist ideology to Turkey and helping the separatist PKK terrorists.<sup>218</sup>

On the other hand, from Iran's vantage point, Iran hesitated to develop relations with Turkey due to Ankara's pro-Western orientation and close relations with the West. Also, Iran has been cautious about Turkey's growing political and military relationship with Israel. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, two countries engaged in competition to influence over the Central Asia and Caucasia and to increase economic and political relations with the new Republics. A Turkish world from the Adriatic to the Chinese wall became a slogan in Turkish foreign policy. However, towards the mid of the 1990s it became obvious that Russia would

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Brussels, August 2004, pp. 24-25; Daniel Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Jerold Green, **Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era**, RAND, Santa Monica CA, 2001, pp. 65-6; Nihat Ali Ozcan, "Iran'ın Turkiye Politikasında Ucuz Ama Etkili bir Manivela: PKK [A Cheap but Influential Level in Turkey Policy of Iran: the PKK]", **Avrasya Dosyası**, Vol.5, No.(3), 1999, pp. 325-43; Ely Karmon (1997), "Radical Islamic Political Groups in Turkey", **Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)**, Vol.1, No.4, 1997.

<sup>215</sup> Pinar Bilgin, "Rethinking Turkey's Security Discourse: The Challenge of Globalization," paper presented at the annual meeting of the **American Political Science Association (APSA)**, Boston, MA. August 29-September 1, 2002.

<sup>216</sup> Gencer Ozcan, "Turkey's Changing Neighbourhood Policy", **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Vol.35, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>217</sup> Ozcan, "Turkey's Changing Neighbourhood Policy," p. 9.

<sup>218</sup> "World: Turkey Accuses Iran," **BBC News**, 09.05.1999, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/339308.stm> (12.06.2008).

not tolerate their regional influence.<sup>219</sup> That is not to say that the potential between Turkey and Iran has disappeared. But it shifted towards competition to become energy transportation route after 2000. Besides, Turkey's security environment has not improved with the end of the Cold War. Just on the contrary, insecurities have increased as observed in the Balkans and the Northern Iraq.<sup>220</sup>

The third period of bilateral relations covers the years from 1997 to present. During President Khatami's government starting from 1997, Iran's quest to export the revolution beyond its borders, its support for the radical Islamic groups in Turkey and for the PKK has gradually declined. President Khatami was a moderate who striving to promote regional stability and to improve relations with Turkey as well as the West. As Iran's "terrorist operations directed against Western countries" were in decline,<sup>221</sup> Turkey's perceived threats from Iran have diminished.<sup>222</sup> Thus, Turkey preferred to approach Iran more tolerably. Nevertheless during the years 2000-2001, before American attack on Iraq, issues relating to the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict and the PKK terrorism dominated bilateral relations. According to Olson in these issues Turkey had taken a stronger position vis-à-vis Iran. Particularly, competition between two countries to become main energy route to transport the Central Asian energy sources (oil and natural gas) to the world market has intensified.<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless, despite competition and conflicting interests, they avoided serious confrontation, thus bilateral relations have improved with Khatami's moderate policies.<sup>224</sup>

Iran has remained isolated after the Revolution in 1979 though during President Hatemi's period Iran has tried to decrease tension and develop relations. It still has no diplomatic relations with Washington, and relations with Europe are still distant. After the US occupation of Iraq in March 2003, the US had more reason for lessening Iran's power since it did not want a regional hostile power on the borders

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<sup>219</sup> Ertan Efeğil and Leonard A. Stone, "Iran and Turkey in Central Asia: Opportunities for Rapprochement in the post-Cold War Era", *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol.20, No.1, 2003, p. 58.

<sup>220</sup> Ozcan, "Turkey's Changing Neighbourhood Policy," pp. 1-15.

<sup>221</sup> Laqueur, p. 175.

<sup>222</sup> Emerson and Tocci, p. 25.

<sup>223</sup> Robert Olson, "Turkey-Iran Relations, 2000-2001: The Caspian, Azerbaijan and the Kurds", *Middle East Policy*, Vol.9, No.2, 2002, pp. 111-129.

<sup>224</sup> Efeğil and Stone, pp. 55-77.

of Iraq. Thus, Iran is faced with a unilateralist superpower and much stronger Israel in the Middle East. US actions and attitudes also affect Iran's relations with Turkey in the region.<sup>225</sup>

After September 11 Turkey has supported US campaign against terrorism. Turkey has even taken the command of UN forces in Afghanistan in 2002. Turkey has also strong relationship with Israel. Yet, Turkey is unhappy with the changes in the region after the US occupation of Iraq in 2003. The policies pursued by the US in Iraq and against Iran had the potential to negatively affect Turkish interests. Thus, Turkey preferred to cooperate with Iran and Syria rather than completely following the American policies. However, it is clear that Turkey would like to also continue its relationship with the US and the EU.<sup>226</sup>

Having said that Turkey's relations with Iran have transformed in the last years as Tehran acted against the PKK and given support to Turkey in the fight against the PKK. Iran's change of behavior is related to its converging interest with Turkey in regard to Iraq, fight with PKK terrorism and energy deal. The Iranian behavioral change is coupled with friendly neighborhood policy adopted by the JDP.

Particularly, the JDP government has given high priority to the EU membership in its foreign policy. Within the Europeanization process, since 2003 it adopted a 'policy of zero problems' with neighboring countries to develop political and economic relations with its neighbors.<sup>227</sup> According to Ozcan, "The dynamics of Turkish politics have transformed since Turkey received a status of candidacy in December 1999<sup>228</sup>. Increasing prospects of EU accession has been exerting tremendous impaction on Turkish foreign policy." In this regard, Iranian-Turkish relations started to show the signs of gradual improvement after 1999. Additionally, Turkey is in pursuit of increasing its influence on the global stage, namely in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. Today, both Iran and Turkey are competing to be important regional actors. Yet, Turkey prefers its relations with other global actors to

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<sup>225</sup> Robert Olson, **Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics**, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa CA, 2004, pp. 238-241.

<sup>226</sup> Olson, **Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics**, pp. 242-243.

<sup>227</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007", **Insight Turkey**, Vol.10, No.1, 2008, pp. 77-97.

<sup>228</sup> Ozcan, "Turkey's Changing Neighbourhood Policy," p. 13.

be complementary and not in competition<sup>229</sup>, thus, following a balanced and multi-dimensional foreign policy. Within this policy Turkey's approach to the Middle East has changed. Aim is to find a solution to existing problems with neighbors. In 2002, it is indicated that the bilateral relations with Iran, Iraq and Syria would be improved though Iran's aspirations of development of nuclear power and WMD and its continued support for the PKK were considered as sources of threat.<sup>230</sup>

Furthermore, in recent years, it is observed that the JDP's approach in foreign policy is to be more active in the Middle East and even be a facilitator in some regional conflicts in which Turkey previously had avoided to be involved. According to Cengiz Candar, a well-known Turkish journalist and commentator on foreign policy, "Turkey today is playing its role the way it is supposed to be, owing this to the collapse of the Saddam regime and increasing Iran's influence in the region."<sup>231</sup> Overall, despite the fact that there are still conflicts between the two countries, there is hope for improvement of cooperation in the last decade<sup>232</sup>, as cooperation has been observed on security and economic relations. The opening of pipeline construction, high-level visits between two countries, Tehran's support for the Turkish fight with the PKK, economic and educational cooperation are signs of improving relations. Recent relations between two countries will further elaborated below. Yet, the main focus is Iranian nuclear issue. Nevertheless, accepting the difficulty to address one issue in isolation from other major bilateral issues and interests, implications of the nuclear issue will be analyzed by adopting a comprehensive approach.

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<sup>229</sup> Davutoglu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007" pp. 77-97 and Bulent Aras, "Turkiye'nin Gucu Suriye ve Israil'in Arasini Bulmaya Yetecek mi? [Will Turkey's Power be able to Mediate between Syria and Israel]", **Star**, June 6, 2008.

<sup>230</sup> Ozcan, "Turkey's Changing Neighbourhood Policy," pp. 1-15.

<sup>231</sup> Cengiz Candar, "The New Middle East Equation and Turkey", **Turkish Daily News**, May 28, 2008.

<sup>232</sup> "Iran- Turkey Relations Growing", **Iran Daily**, October 18, 2004.

## 3.2. IMPLICATIONS OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR ISSUE FOR TURKEY

### 3.2.1. Recent Security Concerns

For Turkey Iran's nuclear programme does not constitute a high priority. Specifically, Iran and Turkey are preoccupied with another major issue- the PKK terrorism in Turkey and the PJAK terrorism in Iran. However, though Turkey does not approach Iran's nuclear programme as exposing an existential threat for itself, Turkey does not want proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region. Besides, Turkey had also some hesitations on nuclear programme of Iran. Yet, Turkey rejected sanctions against Iran and supported constructive engagement policy to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Thus, Turkey is interested in the EU's attempts to engage in dialogue with Iran.<sup>233</sup>

In regard to nuclear issue, firstly, Turkey's relations with the EU, specifically its search to secure full EU membership, mainly determine its policy. Secondly, Turkey seems to balance security concerns of the US, Israeli and European allies.<sup>234</sup> Thirdly, the JDP's foreign policy goal of 'zero problems with neighbors' affects its policy. Fourthly, for security and economic reasons, it is likely that Turkey might pursue a neutral course. Fifthly, Turkey cannot disregard its regional alliance with Syria and Iran especially on the critical issue of the PKK.<sup>235</sup>

Turkey would not favor a military strike by the US against Iran or increase of tension between the two sides. Specifically, Turkey prefers Iran not to continue its nuclear programme before convincing the international community about its peaceful

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<sup>233</sup> Emerson and Tocci; and Yigal Schleifer, "Caught in the Fray: Turkey Enters the Debate on Iran's Nuclear Programme", **The Christian Science Monitor**, February 2, 2006.

<sup>234</sup> Jonathan Feiser, "Iran's Shadow over Turkey, Saudi Arabia", **Asia Times**, January 29, 2005.

<sup>235</sup> Akin H. Unver, "Post-PKK Operations: Will Turkey Change its Attitude toward Iran and Syria?", **Turkish Daily News**, February 4, 2008.

intentions, and at the same time wishes that international community would not engage in a military action against Iran. Overall, Turkey wants a dialogue with Iran, and Iran without nuclear weapons.

Considering Turkey's revival for quest of nuclear energy, is Turkey in search for nuclear weapons due to Iran's nuclear programme? This would be a dramatic departure from long-standing Turkish policy and not expected.<sup>236</sup> Kibaroglu said, "Strengthening the nonproliferation regime, however, has been the key issue in Turkey's official stance toward the spread of weapons of mass destruction."<sup>237</sup> As highlighted by Turkish Foreign Ministry, Turkey has signed the NPT and supported international efforts towards nonproliferation of WMD. As being party to the NPT agreement Turkey is in search of nuclear energy for peaceful means.<sup>238</sup> As indicated by Energy Minister Hilmi Guler, due to Turkey's dependence on natural gas imported from Russia and Iran, Turkey is in need for nuclear energy, and not in quest for becoming a nuclear power.

### 3.2.2. Increasing Security Cooperation

Similar to the EU, Turkey has also been engaged in a dialogue with Iran on addressing regional concerns. Particularly after the Iraq war (2003), Turkey cooperated with Iran, because Iran (and Syria) as well as Turkey has been against the increased autonomy of Kurds in the region, given the potentially destabilizing effect they may have on their own states.<sup>239</sup> For its part, though earlier in the 1980s and 1990s Iran had supported the PKK terrorism, has started to be concerned about Kurdish terrorism in the region. Thus, both countries felt a necessity to establish firmer control over their borders. In this respect, Turkey considers Iran as an ally in

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<sup>236</sup> Karl Vick, "Energy, Iran spur Turkey's Revival of Nuclear Plans", **Washington Post**, March 7, 2006 and Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Programme may Trigger the Young Turks to Think Nuclear", **Carnegie Endowment For Peace**, 20.11.2004, available at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/npp/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=16284> (11.06.2008).

<sup>237</sup> Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Programme may Trigger the Young Turks to Think Nuclear".

<sup>238</sup> "Iran'ın Nükleer Programı Bağlamında Ülkemizin Nükleer Silah Üretimine Yönelip Yönelmeyeceği Hakkında Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü Namık Tan'ın Bir Soruya Cevabı [The Answer of Namık Tan, Foreign Policy Ministry speaker, to a question: if Turkey will Produce Nuclear Weapons as a Result of Iranian Nuclear Programme]", 11.02.2006, available at [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_2---11-subat-2006-iran-in-nukleer-programi-baglaminda...](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_2---11-subat-2006-iran-in-nukleer-programi-baglaminda...) (20.04.2008).

<sup>239</sup> Pinar Tank, "The Effects of the Iraq War on the Kurdish Issue in Turkey," **Conflict, Security and Development**, Vol.5, No.1, 2005, p. 82 and Gulden Ayman, "Iran Nükleer Krizi ve Türkiye [Iran Nuclear Crisis and Turkey]", **Avrasya Dosyası**, Vol.12, No. 2, 2006, p. 45.

its fight against the PKK (the Kurdistan Worker's Party)<sup>240</sup> – KADEK terrorists, who operate in Iran under the name of PJAK<sup>241</sup> (the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan)<sup>242</sup>. "The Kurdish conflict in Turkey intensified in 1991-92 after the Gulf War."<sup>243</sup> The mass movement of Kurds from the border of Iraq and Iran contributed to increase in conflict. The threat of an autonomous state in Iraq was (and still is) considered as a major threat.<sup>244</sup> Thus, Turkey did not (and still does not) want an independent Kurdish state to appear in northern Iraq and did not want "the Kurds to control the oil and gas fields of northern Iraq."<sup>245</sup> Turkey's official policy was to support the territorial integrity of Iraq.

Today Turkey considers the PKK terrorism as a major threat to its security while Iran considers the PJAK terrorism and the US as major threats. For Iran, resisting the autonomy of Kurds in the region is considered as a part of their fight with the US hegemony in the region as well as concerned with its effects on its own security.<sup>246</sup>

In the last decade the two countries have held the 'Turkey-Iran High Security Commission Meetings' and exchanged official visits. Though the Commission was established in 1988, bilateral security cooperation has especially improved with the Justice and Development Party government since 2002.<sup>247</sup> During the Commission Meetings, they have discussed about bilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorism and border security. In the 12<sup>th</sup> round of meetings in April 2008, the two countries had signed a memorandum of understanding to promote their security cooperation and discussed measures to deal with threats posed by the outlawed PKK

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<sup>240</sup> The PKK is considered as a terrorist organization by a majority of the international community, including the European Union and the United States.

<sup>241</sup> The PJAK has recently threatened to start bomb attacks inside Iran if Tehran fails to stop anti-Kurdish policies. See for details, "Iran and Turkey to discuss PKK, PJAK", **Turkish Daily News**, 14.04.2008.

<sup>242</sup> Ayman, p. 43 and Hakki Uygur, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions and Turkey", **Seta Policy Brief**, No.7, February 2008, p. 5.

<sup>243</sup> Tank, p. 73.

<sup>244</sup> Tank, pp. 69-86.

<sup>245</sup> Olson, **Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics**, p. 165.

<sup>246</sup> Ayman, p. 45.

<sup>247</sup> Gareth Jenkins, "Turkey and Iran Expected to Boost Security Cooperation", **Eurasia Daily Monitor**, 14.04.2008.

and the PJAK terrorism.<sup>248</sup> The commander of Turkey's land forces Gen. Ilker Basbug informed that Turkey and Iran, even though not conducting joint operations against the terrorists, are sharing information and coordinating their operations.

The Turkish military was authorized on October 2007 to launch operations against the outlawed PKK terrorism and thus, launched cross-border operations into northern Iraq in December 2007.<sup>249</sup> In February, another military operation is launched against the PKK, which lasted for 8 days. After the operations Iraq president Talabani visited Turkey in March 2008. The visit was first since he became president in 2005.<sup>250</sup> Talabani has earlier told, "Iraq does not approve the presence of the PKK combatants and their armed acts. It cannot tolerate them when they go into Turkey and kill people then return to our territory." But he also objected extensive Turkey's military action. Yet Talabani realized that Turkey has not targeted Iraqi regime or Kurdish civilians in these operations, but the PKK combatants. He has highlighted that with the JDP government a democratic climate in Turkey has developed which is favorable to Kurds.<sup>251</sup>

Despite the conflicts between Iran and the US, today Iran has also relations with Iraq. President Talabani has visited Iran for several times. Furthermore, Iranian President Ahmedinejad had visited Iraq in March 2008.<sup>252</sup> This was the first visit by an Iranian president after the revolution in 1979. After the Iranian revolution there was a war between the two countries that lasted until 1988. Relations since then were hostile. Despite the hostility, which lasted many years, and despite US invasion of Iraq five years ago, Baghdad has welcomed a president, which openly condemns American presence in Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki said his talks with Ahmedinejad had been "friendly, positive and full of trust."<sup>253</sup> Especially Kurds and Shiites in Iran were pleased with Ahmedinejad's visit. It seems that Iran has

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<sup>248</sup> "Iran, Turkey sign security MOU", **Press TV**, 04.04.2008; "Turkey-Iran Security Meeting Begins", 15.04.2008, available at [http://www.haber.turk.net/haber\\_detay.asp?ID=2002869&cat=ENG](http://www.haber.turk.net/haber_detay.asp?ID=2002869&cat=ENG) (21.05.2008)

<sup>249</sup> "Turkey, Iran work together against PKK, Gen. Basbug says", **Turkish Daily News**, 06.06.2008.

<sup>250</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, "Iraqi Leader Tries to Mend Relationship with Turkey", **The New York Times**, 08.03.2008.

<sup>251</sup> Michael Abu Najm, "Iraqi President Talabani on the PKK-Turkey Crisis", **Asharq Alawsat**, 21.10.2007.

<sup>252</sup> Abdulhamit Bilici, "Iran Turkiye'yi geçti! [Iran is above Turkey!]", **Zaman**, 12.03.2008.

<sup>253</sup> "Iran Leader in Landmark Iraq Trip", **BBC News**, 02.03.2008.



benefited from US invasion of Iraq by the overthrow of Iran's opponent –Saddam regime.

In short, presently, Turkey and Iran have similar concerns over Iraq and Kurdish separatist terrorism, thus felt the necessity to increase their security cooperation.

### **3.2.3. Energy Concerns and Deal for Gas**

Turkey's energy policy is driven by several concerns. Firstly, Turkey tries to establish a vital role for itself for energy (oil and gas) transportation mainly with the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Blue Stream, Nabucco and Samsun-Ceyhan pipelines. The BTC pipeline, which has opened in May 2006, runs from the Sangachai terminal in Azerbaijan via Georgia to Ceyhan in southern Turkey. The pipeline will have an annual capacity of 50 million metric tons of oil. The US has supported the BTC pipeline. The Blue Stream gas pipeline, which has opened in 2003, runs from Russia along the bottom of the Black Sea to Samsun in northern Turkey. The pipeline will have an annual capacity of 16 billion cubic meters. The Nabucco project is still in its initial planning phases and has been slowed by high costs and uncertainty over sources of supply. The construction of pipeline will start in 2009 and in the best scenario will be opened by 2012. The project aims to deliver 30 billion cubic meters of gas annually from Central Asia and the Caspian region to Europe through a 3,300-kilometer pipeline from eastern Turkey via Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary to Austria. The EU and the US are strong supporters of the Nabucco pipeline.<sup>254</sup> "Turkey has said that the Iranian and Turkmen gas can be used for the planned 4.6 billion euro (\$6.3 billion) Nabucco project, which will carry gas across Turkey and the Balkans to central Europe and is backed by the European Union."<sup>255</sup> Construction of Samsun- Ceyhan oil pipeline has started in the mid 2006, which will transport 1 million barrels of oil.

As recently there are concerns about Iran's nuclear programme and Russian energy politics, Turkey has potential to emerge as an important player in energy

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<sup>254</sup> "Guler: Marriage between Nabucco and South Stream Possible," **Today's Zaman**, 21.03.2008.

<sup>255</sup> "Energy Deal with Iran Dominates PM's agenda," **Turkish Daily News**, 28.09.2007.

transport from energy-rich Central Asia and Caucasia to energy-demanding European states. But Turkey needs to build the infrastructure for storing gas and re-exporting to Europe. Yet, BOTAS, the state owned gas company in Turkey, cannot make these investments alone since these pipelines are very expensive to build. Though, the government is aware of the need for energy market reform, because of political disagreements there has been little progress.<sup>256</sup>

Turkey's second concern is becoming a regional actor. It is considered that becoming a major Eurasian energy corridor and energy hub would also increase Turkey's geopolitical standing. Being a regional actor will be further elaborated in the next section.

Thirdly, Turkey tries to lower energy prices and increase alternative energy resources. Power demand in Turkey is rapidly growing. "Despite the 25 percent growth in Turkey, electricity production rates have remained almost unchanged because of lack of investment in the sector."<sup>257</sup> Lack of power could do serious damage to Turkey's fast growing economy. Turkey has very limited oil and gas reserves and thus cannot meet the rapidly rising demand. Currently, natural gas amounts for almost 50 percent of energy consumption, and expected to increase to 60 percent next year.<sup>258</sup> A Russian company Gazprom provides over half of Turkey's natural gas demand, which arbitrarily increases the prices. Though Turkey tries to keep good relations with Russia, it also wants to diversify its energy sources and to decrease its dependency on Russia, since it cause great danger for Turkey.<sup>259</sup> In this respect, Iranian gas would reduce Turkey's dependence on Russian supplies. Iran supplies close to a fifth of Turkey's natural gas supply. Turkey's dependency on Iranian gas is 20 percent compared to 65 percent from Russia.<sup>260</sup> Meanwhile, Russia is developing alternative projects. Yet, Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler denied the existence of rivalry between two countries. Furthermore, in February 2008

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<sup>256</sup> Katinka Barysch, **Turkey's Role in European Energy Security**, Centre for European Reform Essays, London, 2007.

<sup>257</sup> "Power cuts could me much more frequent this summer," **Today's Zaman**, 12.06.2008.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Barysch.

<sup>260</sup> "Between Political Crises: Turkish Energy Policy," **Turkey Analyst**, 23.04.2008.

Foreign Minister Babacan said Turkey was open to including Russian gas in the Nabucco project.<sup>261</sup>

With these concerns, Turkey has signed an energy agreement with Iran in 2007. Turkey has agreed to establish a joint company to carry up to 35 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Iran (and from Turkmenistan) via Turkey to Europe and to construct three thermal power plants by Turkish companies in Iran.<sup>262</sup> In fact, an energy agreement was signed between the two countries as early as 1996. Despite US objections, Turkey signed another agreement with Iran in 2000 to begin importing natural gas.<sup>263</sup> According to these agreements Iran was going to re-export gas that it had provided from Turkmenistan.

In short, Turkey seems decided to continue in energy cooperation with Iran. Lately, in September 2007 at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan held a meeting with Ahmedinejad on planned natural gas deals, Iran's nuclear program, and a joint combat operation plans against terrorism. Yet, the details of the meeting are not announced to public. At the same time, Turkish Prime Minister Babacan held a meeting with US counterpart Rice on Turkey's energy cooperation with Iran, PKK terror, Cyprus, the Middle East Peace Process and awaiting so called Armenian genocide resolution at the House of Representatives. These meetings were held just a day after the US adopted a bill to tighten economic sanctions against Iran. The US considers that energy agreements with Iran are unacceptable.<sup>264</sup> Besides, Washington wants to eliminate Iran in transporting the Caspian oil and gas, whereas Iran sees itself as a natural transit route to world markets.

In contrast to American attitudes, Iranian gas exports to Europe are of much interest to latter, since EU wants to develop alternative energy sources to Russia.<sup>265</sup> At present, the EU gets around a quarter of its gas from Russia. The European recent energy policy emphasizes the diversification of sources of supply. Thus, pipeline connection from Iran is both in interest of Turkey and the EU.

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<sup>261</sup> "Guler: Marriage between Nabucco and South Stream Possible," **Today's Zaman**, 21.03.2008.

<sup>262</sup> "Turkey and Iran: Too Energetic a Friendship," **The Economist**, 23.08.2007.

<sup>263</sup> 'Turkey To Buy Iranian Gas,' **Associated Press**, 02.08.2000.

<sup>264</sup> "Energy Deal with Iran Dominates PM's agenda," **Turkish Daily News**, 28.09.2007.

<sup>265</sup> Emerson and Tocci and Barysch.

As stated by the EU Energy Commissioner Piebalgs, the EU values Turkey's role in energy transportation.<sup>266</sup> Yet, EU law requires all member-states to open their pipelines for companies from other countries. The Energy Community Treaty was signed in 2005 and in force since June 2006 to create the legal framework for an integrated energy market.<sup>267</sup> Nine partners of South East Europe - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria and UNMIK on behalf of Kosovo have signed the ECT. Turkey has an observer status and negotiations with Turkey are ongoing for joining the treaty at a later stage. Recently, the EU invited Turkey to join the ECT and demands Turkey's commitment for energy market reform and regulations, in order to develop European energy cooperation with Turkey.<sup>268</sup>

Ironically, it might be possible for Iran to force Turkey to stay out of any Western efforts in containing Iran's disputed nuclear programme by using its dependence on Iranian gas supply.<sup>269</sup> Besides Iran arbitrarily cuts gas supply to Turkey without any acceptable excuse, leading to gas shortage in Turkish economy. Thus, Iran's cooperation to provide gas has not been easy and efficient for Turkey.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Andris Piebalgs, "EU-Turkey: Together for a European Energy Policy", Speech given at the Conference 'Turkey and the EU,' Istanbul, 05.06.2007.

<sup>267</sup> Available at <http://www.seerecon.org/infrastructure/sectors/energy/> (23.06.2008)

The major commitments are:

- to create a regionally integrated energy market for electricity and natural gas networks and to integrate that market into the wider EU market;
- to establish common rules for generation, transmission and distribution of electricity;
- to similarly establish common rules for the transmission, distribution, supply and storage of natural gas;
- to establish state level national energy authorities, regulators and transmission system operators;
- to establish compatible state and regional electricity and natural gas market action plans;
- embryonic regional level dispute resolution mechanisms;
- to open the markets in line with EU commitments but with a suitable transition period (all non-domestic markets are projected to be open by 2005);
- unbundling of integrated utilities;
- authorization procedures for new infrastructure that are transparent;
- an anti-corruption programme;
- to implement grid codes and other technical and commercial codes that are necessary for the functioning of the market; and,
- regulated third party access, tariff systems that encourage trade, and technical codes necessary for the operation of a trade based regional system.

<sup>268</sup> See "Turkey Progress Report 2007" issued by the European Commission on 06.11.2007 for the details of recent developments in Energy.

<sup>269</sup> "Caught in the Fray: Turkey Enters Debate on Iran's Nuclear Programme", **The Christian Science Monitor**, 02.02.2006.

<sup>270</sup> Sedat Laciner, "Mistrust Problem in Turkey-Iran Relations," **Turkish Weekly**, 21.02.2008.

For example, after an explosion on a gas pipeline Iran reduced supplies in May 2008. This explosion is observed with the sabotage of the PKK. Russian company Gazprom said that they would increase natural supplies from 22 to 30 million cubic meters per day to Turkey.<sup>271</sup>

In short, Turkey has planned energy deals with Iran. Yet, also, Turkey searches for alternatives. Thus, Turkey revitalized support for a series of pipeline prospects presently on the agenda. In addition, new energy projects, including those relying on nuclear power were brought to fore in the recent years.<sup>272</sup> Nevertheless, Turkey tries to follow a careful and balanced policy toward the US and Iran urging both sides to adopt constructive policies.<sup>273</sup> This is not easy for Turkey. Even though, Turkey tries to follow an independent policy from the US to solve Iran-related security problems in the region, its cooperation with Iran might put in trouble its strategic relations with the US.<sup>274</sup> Accordingly, Turkey does not want to act alone toward Iran's nuclear programme and prefers to support unified efforts of the international community. In this regard, Turkey closely follows the EU's attitude on this issue.

#### **3.2.4. Turkey's Search for Regional Role**

Though Turkey has not felt threatened by directly Iran's nuclear programme, what is vital will be potential increase in the regional status and influence of nuclear Iran that might threaten the regional power balance.<sup>275</sup> Additionally, Iranian influence can intensify not only in the Middle East but also in Central Asia and Caucasia. Furthermore, nuclear Iran might have more potential to export Islamic ideology abroad.<sup>276</sup> In this regard, while Turkey is benefiting from US support, Iran is under pressure from the US-led embargo. Yet, according to the Turkish foreign minister Ali Babacan, US effort to impose sanctions and isolate Iran ironically

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<sup>271</sup> "Russia Boosts Gas Exports to Turkey After Blast," **Turkish Daily News**, 28.05.2008.

<sup>272</sup> "Between Political Crises: Turkish Energy Policy" **Turkey Analyst**, 23.04.2008.

<sup>273</sup> Ayman, p. 46 and Uygur p. 6.

<sup>274</sup> Uygur, p. 5.

<sup>275</sup> Ayman, pp. 25-60.

<sup>276</sup> Shahram Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., 2006, p. 129.

increases power and regional influence of Iran. So Turkey prefers dialogue and diplomacy.<sup>277</sup>

During his visit to Lebanon in June 2008 for to attend the Arab Economic Forum held in Beirut<sup>278</sup>, Erdogan further said that, “Turkey set the world’s agenda; to ignore this is not right.”<sup>279</sup> Besides becoming an energy hub to increase its geopolitical standing, according to foreign policy advisor of Turkish prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey would like to be a facilitator in regional conflicts.<sup>280</sup> From the Turkish governments point of view these efforts might increase role of the Turkey in the region as well as in the eyes of other global actors.

Recently, we have observed two issues where Turkey would like to play a facilitator role: between Israel and Syria, between international community and Iran. In June 2006, Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul during his visit to Tehran told that Turkey could be a facilitator to solve the Iranian nuclear crisis. Iran’s reaction was quite positive towards the Turkish efforts. Ahmedinejad said, “Turkey can play a determining role in regional and international issues together with Iran.”<sup>281</sup>

Furthermore, recently Ankara has been encouraging to restart negotiations between Israel and Syria. These peace talks are the first talks since the collapse of the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations in may 2000. The JDP government considers that Turkey’s cooperation with Israel and role as a facilitator to Israeli-Syrian relations might further increase Turkey’s regional role. Syrian and Israeli officials have met in Turkey under the Turkish mediation on May 21, 2008. As a facilitator, Turkish diplomats have met separately with two countries officials and informed two sides about the meetings. In addition, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni visited Turkey in May 2008 as the first visit to a foreign country after his appointment to this position, which indicates that Israel really pays attention to relations with Turkey.<sup>282</sup> Though it is not clear if Turkey has power to find a solution to Israeli-Syrian conflict, it is evident that Turkey wants to play a role in bringing stability and security to the

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<sup>277</sup> “Turkey says US Nuclear Policy Strengthens Iran,” **Reuters**, 26.06.2008.

<sup>278</sup> “The Lebanese Experience and Erdogan’s Visit to Lebanon”, **Journal of Turkish Weekly**, 16.06.2005.

<sup>279</sup> Candar.

<sup>280</sup> Davutoglu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007,” pp. 77-97.

<sup>281</sup> Yuksel Soylemez, “Minister Gul’s Mission as Facilitator in the Iran Nuclear Issue,” **Turkish Daily News**, 16.07.2008.

<sup>282</sup> “İki ziyaret ve çözüme yönelik adımlar... [Two visits and steps toward solution...],” **Salom Newspaper**, 11.06.2008.

Middle East and to enhance its regional status. Israel and Syria announced that they had begun an open dialogue with the aim of a comprehensive peace. However, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told that Syria have to “distance itself completely” from “problematic ties” with Iran and stop “supporting terror-Hezbollah, Hamas.” Syria has rejected the precondition.<sup>283</sup> The complications related to the peace talks are beyond the scope of this analysis.

In paradox, Iran is highly concerned with developing relations between Syria and Israel under Turkish mediation. In the Middle East, Iran-Syria and Israel-the US were considered as two opposite camps, thus any agreement between Syria and Israel is against the interests of Iran. Yet, Syria has so far does not seem to change its cooperation with Iran. Recently on May 26, 2008 Syrian Defense Minister has visited Iran and signed memorandum of understanding regarding defense issues. In addition, Iran’s Defense Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar confirmed his country’s “strategic ties” with Syria based on mutual interests. Meanwhile, the US said it did not oppose to meeting between Syria and Israel but repeated its disapproval of Syria’s “support for terrorism.”<sup>284</sup>

In short, there is a complexity for both Turkey and Iran to maintain their influence in the region.

### 3.3. OVERVIEW

Turkish policy toward the Iranian nuclear issue is closer to the European than the American approach given the potential of bilateral cooperation in policy toward the PKK and energy deal. Thus, the Turkish attitude toward the Iranian nuclear programme shows similarities to the European attitude. It appears that Turkey does not oppose Iran’s search for peaceful nuclear energy. Yet, Turkey does not want spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and Iran to acquire nuclear capability, which might lead to an increase in regional security dilemma and regional role of Iran. Furthermore, Turkey does not want the escalation of crisis between the US and

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<sup>283</sup> “Iranian Defense Minister Hails ‘strategic ties’ with Syria”, **Reuters**, 25.05.2008.

<sup>284</sup> “Iranian Defense Minister Hails ‘strategic ties’ with Syria,” **Reuters**, 25.05.2008.

Iran, and to have any new war in the region. Thus, Ankara prefers diplomacy and Iran's cooperation with the IAEA in finding a solution to Iran's nuclear puzzle. As announced by the Turkish foreign ministry, Turkey supports international community's efforts to provide a negotiated solution through diplomacy. Accordingly, Turkey believes that the EU-3 can play a constructive role.

Moreover, in the recent years there is a growing activism of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East. It can be argued that the Turkish Prime Minister advisor Ahmet Davutoglu is forming the theoretical infrastructure of Turkey's relations with neighbors. Davutoglu favors Turkey to be in good relations with neighbors and become a regional power.<sup>285</sup> Thus, the JDP government tries to increase influence of Turkey in the neighboring regions and develop good relations with neighbors. In this regard, Turkey's image in the eyes of Muslim countries is changing. Yet, Turkey also wants to improve relations with Israel. Consequently, it can be also argued that Turkey can be a facilitator in diplomatic initiatives as a trustworthy negotiator from both the perspective of Iran and the international community.<sup>286</sup> Yet, so far the international community has preferred the diplomatic efforts of the EU-3 vis-à-vis Turkey.

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<sup>285</sup> For details of Davutoglu's views about the Turkish foreign policy strategy, see: Ahmet Davutoglu, **Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu** [Strategical Deepness: Turkey's International Standing], Kure Yayinlari, Istanbul, 2007.

<sup>286</sup> "Turkey Seeks to Help Solution of Iran's Nuclear Issue," **Fars News Agency**, 24.06.2008.



## CONCLUSION

Having analyzed international, regional and domestic dimensions of Iran's nuclear programme, three sets of conclusions can be made. The first set of conclusions is related with the international dimension of Iran's nuclear programme. The first chapter including a detailed analysis on the attitudes of the USA, the EU/EU-3, Russia and China has shown that there is no common comprehensive agreement on the solution toward Iran's nuclear programme. The EU have been in favor of 'critical dialogue' with Iran in hope to solve the crisis through direct negotiations. However, with the election of the President Ahmadinejad, Iran's nuclear programme became more problematic which led to a shift on the EU's policy towards Iran. With a new approach, the EU acted with the USA taking the Iranian nuclear issue to the UN Security Council. The USA has favored 'an active containment' policy toward Iran, hoping to isolate the Iranian regime, thereby causing a 'regime change' in Iran. As a part of its 'active containment' strategy, the USA has not only supported a number of sanctions ranging from political to economic, but also has repeated references to military action. Russia and China, on the other hand, have not regarded Iranian nuclear programme as an existential threat. The Russian and the Chinese approaches toward Iran's nuclear programme have signaled a resistance to US hegemony and control over the Middle East and Central Asia.

Overall, what emerges from the analysis of the international dimension of Iran's nuclear programme is that attitudes of the international community with respect to Iran's nuclear puzzle have not been monolithic. Yet, after years of having different approaches toward Iran's nuclear programme after the 1979 Revolution, there have been a change to a common position among the approaches of the USA and the EU/EU-3 in 2005 – that can be called as the 'Western approach', vis-a-vis the approaches of Russia and China. Russia and China has supported the diplomatic bargaining of the EU-3 rather than imposing sanctions advocated by the USA. Considering the overlapping issues of concern, this article put forward an optimistic scenario that might lead to successful solution on Iran's nuclear puzzle based on the EU's method of diplomacy.

Second set of conclusions is related with the analysis of Iranian domestic debates with the respect to nuclear issue. This analysis through the second chapter has revealed that at present in Iran, there is not any compromise both among divergent political factions and within the Iranian public on how to handle the nuclear issue. Iranian political factions including the radical conservatives, the mainstream conservatives, the pragmatists, and the reformists have considerably different ideas about how to deal with the nuclear dispute that leads to tension among Iran and the international community. Yet, these political factions converged on the common desire to see Iran as an independent, developed and technologically advanced state.

The major difference among Iranian factional approaches to nuclear issue arises from their divergent foreign policy views. Here, the main distinction is between those, who favor accommodation with the West such as reformists and pragmatists and those who strongly oppose any accommodation with the West such as radical hardliners. There are also those who approve conditional accommodation with the West such as mainstream conservatives meaning that their approval depends on changing circumstances. To put it differently, there is a division between those political factions who emphasize the significance of compromise in solving the nuclear dispute including the reformists and the pragmatists and others for whom any compromise with the West is unimaginable including the hardliners. Mainstream conservatives occupy a middle ground among these two political tendencies, playing a balancing role.

Public debate is another theme that was analyzed in the second chapter. It appears that for an average Iranian the nuclear issue is not as prioritized as economic welfare. What matters for the Iranian street is the combination of costs or consequences as result of insisting on a technology without having the consent of major powers. International isolation and further economic sanctions mean genuinely high prices for the Iranian public that they can not afford. Public polls, manipulated by the Iranian regime, have been used by the Iranian regime as well to enhance its bargaining power vis-à-vis the international community in relation to negotiations on the nuclear issue.

Eventually, the third set of conclusions is arisen from the analysis of regional dimension of Iran's nuclear programme with a special emphasis on Turkey's approach. This analysis through the third chapter has demonstrated that the Turkish attitude toward the Iranian nuclear programme shows similarities to the European attitude. Turkey has not opposed Iran's search for peaceful nuclear energy. Yet, Turkey has been against the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and fears that Iran's quest for nuclear capability might lead to an increase in regional security dilemma. Also, Turkey does not want the intensification of crisis between the USA and Iran, and to have any new war in the region. Thus, Ankara prefers diplomacy and Iran's cooperation with the IAEA in finding a solution to Iran's nuclear puzzle. As announced by the Turkish foreign ministry, Turkey supports international community's efforts to provide a negotiated solution through diplomacy. Accordingly, Turkey believes that the EU-3 can play a constructive role.

The third chapter of the thesis as well points out that in the recent years there is a growing activism of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East since the JDP government has tried to increase influence of Turkey in the neighboring regions and to develop good relations with neighbors. Thus, it can be argued that Turkey can be a facilitator in diplomatic initiatives on the Iranian nuclear issue nuclear as a trustworthy negotiator from both the perspective of Iran and the international community.

The results of recent Iranian parliamentary elections that took place on 14 March 2008 were neither surprising nor expected. In line with the previous parliament, conservatives won the majority of the seats in the Iranian Majlis.<sup>287</sup> The disqualification of a large proportion of the reformist candidates by the ruling has certainly contributed to this outcome, maximizing the chance for a conservative victory. Yet, the astonishing aspect of these results was that it signaled a growing divide between radical conservatives (hardliners) allied with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and mainstream conservatives (moderates) who are critical of Ahmadinejad's policies. Many of the conservative winners are from the ranks of

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<sup>287</sup> Conservatives gained 70 percent of the votes in 2008 Iranian parliamentary elections. For more details, see Kelly Campbell, "Analyzing Iran's Domestic Political Landscape," United States Institute of Peace Briefing, 2008, [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2008/0513\\_iran.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/0513_iran.html) (02.06.2008).

moderates, who have disapproved President Ahmadinejad's economic policies and his confrontational rhetoric with the West, particularly on the nuclear issue. In the immediate aftermath of the parliamentary elections a new power struggle within the conservative camp has emerged in the Majlis. On the one hand, there are those hardliners who support Ahmedinejad's aggressive economic and foreign policies whereas on the other there are those moderates who have been gathered around former nuclear negotiator and current Majlis speaker Ali Larijani.<sup>288</sup>

Overall, current Iranian parliament is dominated by radical conservatives and mainstream conservatives and Iran's current nuclear policy is a combination of these two factions' visions. Recent parliamentary elections which took place on 14 March 2008 resulted in mainstream conservatives' gaining apparently more seats than any other political group. Yet, the cabinet is still dominated by the hardliners and this would also change with the forthcoming 2009 presidential elections. Iranian foreign policy with respect to nuclear issue would be subject to change if the composition of the parliament changes. However, it should not be forgotten that unelected institutions such as the position of the supreme leader will continue be very influential in Iranian politics.

To conclude, no real solution with respect to Iranian nuclear dispute is expected in the short term, but there can be an opportunity for an agreement under a new American administration along with a new government in Iran after 2009, since the new US President will be elected in November 2008, and the new Iranian President will be elected in mid-2009. It is rather difficult to keep international consensus –above all in the Security Council- over how to address the Iran's nuclear puzzle, particularly on escalating sanctions, while China and Russia have hesitations. In the aftermath of the forthcoming US presidential elections, there might be reconsideration on the question of how to deal with Iran's nuclear puzzle. The

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<sup>288</sup> Ali Larijani won an impressive victory in the holy city of Qom in the recent parliamentary elections. He won 232 votes out of a total of 263 cast in parliament becoming the Majlis speaker and certainly the position of parliamentary speaker gives much power to Larijani. For more details see, John Leyne, "Iran faces power play after vote," **BBC News**, 16.03.2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/7299733.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7299733.stm) (11.05.2008) and Orla Ryan, "Ahmadinejad rival elected as Iranian speaker," **The Guardian**, 28.05.2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/28/iran.middleeast> (15.06.2008) and John Leyne, "Analysis: The rise of Ali Larijani," **BBC News**, 28.05.2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/7424322.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7424322.stm) (30.05.2008).

optimistic scenario may be the next US administration's opt for staying on the diplomatic track, the next Iranian administration's willingness to cooperate with the international community, the reestablishment of the EU's locomotive role in designing a deal with Iran's nuclear puzzle and granting Turkey a mediatory role in negotiations with Iran

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Foreign Policy

Global Strateji

Haaretz

Humanities

Insight Turkey

International Herald Tribune

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Journal of Third World Studies

Mediterranean Quarterly

Middle East Journal

Middle East Policy  
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