

## Does Turkey's Stance on Iran's Nuclear Program Reflect an Axis-Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy?

---

**Mai Lan Thanh Nguyen**  
*Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey*  
[lan.thanh@fatih.edu.tr](mailto:lan.thanh@fatih.edu.tr)

### **Abstract**

Iran's nuclear development program has been one of the hot topics in the agenda of a vast number of states' foreign policies. The Islamic Republic has declared her intention toward this nuclear plant as for peaceful purposes in compliance with the international treaty. However, the state's sovereignty seems to be degraded when the West has disregarded Iran's discourses. Turkey with her history of being an ally with the West, especially the U.S, and constant attempt to be a member of Western organizations, NATO during the Cold War, and the EU since its establishment, has demonstrated the country's friends and foes. However, her reluctance to comply with Western sanctions on Iran recently poses a question among the international community whether Turkish Foreign Policy towards nuclear-aspiring Iran changes its Western orientation. This paper endeavors to explain Turkish interests in shaping Turkey's position regarding Iranian nuclear program. It is believed that Turkey has attempted to play neutrally her role in mediating the dispute between the West and Iran, with Turkish Foreign Policy served both sides as long as it would not hamper Turkish national interests and priority concerns. In contrast to much in the literature which perceived Turkey as a moderator, this paper argues that Turkey is more like a facilitator, besides proposing mediation grounds like the previous Baghdad and Moscow sponsored mediations between the US, EU and Iran. Overall, Turkey's decision of no sanctions on Iran does not indicate that Turkish foreign policy is anti-Western. Rather, it illustrates Turkey's growing independence as a regional power and flexibility in decision-making process with regard to her own interests, such as gaining image in the Middle East with the new foreign policy doctrine, less independence on Russian energy imports by Iran's alternative, and prioritizing domestic solutions, while not upsetting the West's mutual interests. The paper also focuses on the discourses offered by the Iranian and Turkish representatives to the international community concerning the ambiguities of the Iranian nuclear development program. In addition, this study will also contribute to the literature addendum on the part of the explanation of Iranian diplomacy with regard to the religious understanding of "taqiyya" (deception) and "qitman" (concealing).

**Keywords:** Nuclear program, Iran, Middle East, NPT, Turkish foreign policy, axis-shift, Iranian diplomacy, sanctions, taqiyya, qitman.

### **Introduction**

The world is being nourished with tremendous development in technology, which causes the greatest destruction of civilization from the intrinsic civilization itself. It is believed that nuclear weapon states hold a handful of nuclear arsenals, strong enough to eradicate completely life on earth. With the experience of the devastating atomic bombs marking the end of the Second World War, it is not difficult to say that the whole world is shaking when there is any state attempting to develop nuclear armaments.

In the case of Iran recently, different approaches and resolutions have been discussed. Consequently, several of them have been implemented, in order to prevent the Islamic Republic from pursuing nuclear arsenal, despite Tehran's discourses on her intention to have her own nuclear program for peaceful and civilian purposes. Turkey, as an active regional player, reflects her position on the issue via the state's foreign policy. That Turkey has been hesitating at complying with the West's sanctions on Iran poses not only questions but also confusion among the international community. "Does Turkey's stance on Iran's nuclear development program reflect an axis-shift in Turkish Foreign Policy?"

This paper seeks to answer that question, by analyzing the context that endorses the Iranian nuclear program in pursuance of nuclear technology, and by focusing on the discourses offered by the Iranian and Turkish representatives to the international community concerning the ambiguities of the Iranian nuclear development program. In contrast to much in the literature, which perceived Turkey as a moderator, this paper argues that Turkey is more like a facilitator.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Part two analyzes Iran's problem and Iranian diplomacy. Part three introduces Turkey's position. Then, part four evaluates if the policy is diverting from Western-oriented tradition in Turkey. Consequently, part five explains such stance. Finally, part six concludes the paper.

### **Iran's problem and Understanding Iranian diplomacy**

Iran's recent history especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is one of foreign domination. Today, apparently, it is the U.S that the Islamic Republic finds itself constantly confronted with. Militarily speaking, Iran's capability is considered an inferior to other regional opponents, namely, Israel and perhaps, Turkey. What the world is observing now, as a result, is an Iran that longs for exercising leadership of the Muslim world (Villemant, 2012), a membership to the exclusive "nuclear club", and balancing Israel's nuclear weapons. (Waltz, 2012)

In fact, nuclear development program is not something new in Iran. Since the 1957 there have been several attempts. Prominently in the 1979 Revolution with the U.S support, the state has already obtained the skills via "Atoms for Peace" program under the instruction and provision by the U.S. What attracted attention of the international community, Turkey included, is that the IAEA since 2005, kept reporting its inability to access to Iranian nuclear plants in full scale.<sup>1</sup> The West has, interestingly, immediately responded with deterrence and sanctions, etc. despite Iranian discourses on her so-claimed genuine intention.

Since Iran is an Islamic Republic, a religious perspective might certainly help understand Iranian diplomacy. After the revolution, the regime's leader, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, announced a fatwa forbidding nuclear weapon development program in his country. Some scholars employed this fatwa as a means to judge Iran's nuclear plant today that it is not peaceful as the government declared. Iranian diplomacy, nowadays, along with this fatwa, exposed to the world the two concepts of religious understanding of "taqiyya" and "qitman".<sup>2</sup>

Taqiyya, meaning deception or disinformation, is a term generally used by Shiite Muslims, who believe that they may lie and pretend to hide their religious identity under perceiving

---

<sup>1</sup> For the latest news on key findings by the ISIS analysis of IAEA report regarding Iranian nuclear potentials, please see the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> The terms were first mentioned in *Today's Zaman* newspaper by Dr. Bulent Kenes, a scholarly figure regarding Iranian politics and issues.

threats. As an integral part of Muslim military strategy, taqiyya is also employed to trick or deceive enemies.<sup>3</sup> Another synonymous term is “qitman” meaning concealing. It refers to a cautious reservation and dissimulation of genuine intentions. As such, the two terms have been used as means of defense and concealment by Shiites against unbelievers. Iranian diplomacy, thus, can be understood with the skillful use of the two terms.<sup>4</sup>

Needless to say, however, without foreign assistance, nuclearization of Iran seems vague due to her poor industrial and technological base. Believing so, the Obama administration insists on imposing economic sanctions on the country. One of the explanations for such a reaction is that the U.S is not ready for Iranian nuclear weapon existence. (Parasiliti, 2009)

Iran is perceived as playing the Israel game. Although Iran is aspiring to have a nuclear ambiguous status like Israel, she will stay in the NPT for legitimate cover. History has proved that no one can stop nor attack once one goes nuclear, considering the cases of Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and India. Iran is different from Iraq. Israel conducted surgical strikes in the mid-1980s and took out the Iraqi nuclear facility. Iran has over 20 and all are on different locations. A surgical operation is more or less impossible. Iran is aspiring to acquire nuclear technology and continues to play the game excellently. She has her own mediation as well as delaying strategy. Moreover, Iran did receive civilian nuclear technology and materials in the Atoms for Peace program by the U.S so they knew what to do. Since there is not a lot of difference between civilian and military technology- only weaponization procedures- Iran knew the roadmap, which in turn makes it harder for other actors to response.

On August 30, 2012, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon contended Iran’s right to nuclear development program. He proclaimed and showed expectations toward fruitful talks between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1. In addition, the 120 Non-Aligned Movement states also openly supported Iran’s right to development nuclear power for civilian purposes after their meeting together in Tehran. In response, the Foreign Minister of Iran, Ali Akbar Salehi asserted a strong statement about the intention of the Islamic Republic.

*“I would like to re-emphasize that we do not see any glory, pride or power in the nuclear weapons, quite the opposite based on the religious decree issued by our supreme leader, the production, possession, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, are illegitimate, futile, harmful, dangerous and prohibited as a great sin.” (PressTV, 2012)*

Moreover, Ebrahim Nekou, an Iranian lawmaker said that the Islamic Republic favors resolving its nuclear standoff through negotiations, “The Islamic Republic of Iran still insists on resolving the [nuclear energy] issue through diplomatic ways and is ready for negotiations.” However, instead of recognizing Iran's right, the United States and other Western countries are imposing pressure and sanctions, such policies have controversially debated to lead to ineffective diplomatic progress between Iran and the P5+1. Iran's

---

<sup>3</sup>The definition of the concept can be found in Esposito, J. (2003). The Oxford Dictionary of Islam. Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> It is believed that Mahmoud Abbas in his interview with the EU on Palestine issue, Arafat and Oslo dispute, and some other Middle Eastern leaders have at least once employed such means. Since this paper only introduces the terms to the literature, there is no deliberate analysis, because its main focus is Turkish foreign policy. One can find the art and legitimacy of the use of taqiyya and qitman during the prophethood as well as in one of the hadiths: “he who keeps secrets shall soon attain his objectives.”

nuclear pursuit, as a result, has become the state's securitized issue with regard to the challenges and threats to the national identity.

### **Turkey's position**

Turkey is believed to have played a neutral role in this Iran's nuclear energy issue. Although Turkey complies with U.N. decisions, Taner Yildiz, Energy and Natural Resources Minister of Turkey, said, Turkey did not abide by unilateral sanctions imposed by other countries. (*Farznews*, 2012) Until 28<sup>th</sup> April 2013, according to CNS news, Turkey is still preserving her trade relations with Iran. The volume of gasoline as well as other petroleum products sold to Iran keeps sustaining and increasing despite U.S sanctions. (*CNS News*, 2013)

Turkey, on the other hand, being preoccupied with domestic concerns, has not really regarded Iranian nuclear program as an immediate threat in comparison with other priority concerns. Besides, Turkey is already covered by the US and the NATO allies; therefore, nontraditional security for Turkey is not a posed challenge. (Kibaroglu, 2011) Turkey has other priorities, such as the issue of internal security and does not want a nuclear arms race. (Ustun 2010, 19) There are a lot of separatist movements by the Kurds; and the issue of Kurdistan in Northern Iraq is also aggravating this. Therefore, Turkey will neither initiate any steps nor will she support further sanctions on Iran. Since Turkey is a legitimate and internationally well-balanced actor, she would firmly express her position and Turkish Foreign Policy on Iran neutrally in the region while she is preoccupied with domestic security policy. Since, it would be illogical to think that Turkey would step into an unsecured and dangerous zone while she has already been trying to avoid one at home.

*"No one has the right to use force against a country whose nuclear capabilities are used for peaceful purposes," said Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan after his talk with Iranian Vice President Mohammad-Reza Rahimi. "Anyone who has common sense opposes the use of nuclear power as a weapon, but at the same time, nuclear activity for peaceful purposes should not be opposed." (The Times of Israel, 2012)*

This statement of the Prime Minister has clearly defined Turkey's position in the international community regarding nuclear energy program in Iran. That is, Turkey officially recognizes the right of Iran to pursue nuclear energy program. However, those nuclear plants should be accessible for the IAEA. In this way, the international community, and so to say, Turkey and the West would be able to increase their confidence in this peaceful development plan.

The U.S and the EU have come up with several solutions regarding Iranian nuclear development program. Even though threats of use of force were also employed, things do not show positive results. Consequently, several sanctions have been imposed on Iran's economy, especially on the country's oil and financial sectors, believing that the outcome would affect the Central Bank of Iran to carry on any business. From financial sectors angle, as a result of sanctions, the U.S and the EU together expected a drop in foreign investors and customers of Iranian crude oil. However, it seems that all those efforts created a counter-effect. That is, Tehran is feeling threatened and weak confronting the superpowers; therefore, together with her own citizens suffering now from the economic sanctions, Iran developed even a stronger will to have her own means of protection. A nuclear weapon Iran is a very likely outcome if the West has no better alternative solutions, as several critics discussed.

Turkey, as a consequence, reserved her foreign policy's view at this point. Turkey as a regional moderator is only to propose mediation grounds like the previous Baghdad and Moscow sponsored mediations between the US/EU and Iran, which makes Turkey "feel" more into the game. From this perspective, Turkey's stance seems clear in supporting the idea that instead of imposing sanctions, the US and the West must think of other effectiveness ways to resolve the nuclear development issue in Iran. In other words, Ankara believes that diplomatic talks and negotiations shall be continued and attributed to Iranian nuclear debacle. It is increasingly observed that soft power has been the main logic and nature of Turkish foreign policy under the current AKP government since 2002. Turkey has conducted diplomatic talks especially in the melting pot of the conflicting Middle Eastern zone. The first apparent attempt of Turkey as being a mediator in the region has been seen through the tri-partite Joint Declaration by Iran, Brazil and Turkey in 2010.<sup>5</sup> Giving such a decision, Turkey believed that economic cooperation and diplomatic talks would bring positive outcome to the solution of Iran's nuclear issue.

Turkey does not want a nuclear-armed Iran, neither but does she would like to close the access to nuclear energy technology in her country. (Kibaroglu, 2009) Lesser (2004) argued that Turkey could act more radically to prepare for a nuclear Iran as well as consider her potential to go nuclear. He further explained in his paper if Turkey can live with a nuclear Iran.

*"Could the emergence of a nuclear Iran be accommodated comfortably in the Turkish security scene? Or would it spell a fundamental and negative transformation of the strategic environment? The answer to this question should inform the Turkish calculus as the international community grapples with the challenge of a near-nuclear Iran." (Lesser, 2009)*

If Iran fails to pursue her nuclear energy development due to the opposition of the West, then other states would certainly be concerned on their future likelihood of self-enrichment and reprocessing nuclear technology and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Ankara, consequently, is precautious that the rights given to non-nuclear NPT states will no longer be guaranteed.<sup>6</sup> Hence, a proper strategy and foreign policy should be devised carefully. A deliberate strategy to deal with Iran's nuclear ambition will have to address both the supply and demand sides of the nuclear equation, (Bahgat, 2006) Pressuring foreign governments and companies to stop cooperation with Tehran is not enough. Iran's security concerns need to be addressed since it would definitely affect the balance of power in the region. Improving the security environment in the Persian Gulf and the broad Middle East would substantially reduce Tehran's incentives to pursue nuclear capability. As Kemp (2003) asserted, there is a need for "multilateral and multi-tiered efforts that would involve carrots as well as threatened sticks."

### **Turkish decision of no sanctions: An act of anti-Western orientation?**

Turkey since the birth of the republic has been perceived, especially by the Middle Eastern states, as a puppet of the West, that she only listens and acts according to the West's will. Moreover, Turkish secularism has been one of the factors that disintegrate Turkey from the region, in which majority of population are Muslims. After the refusal to the U.S to employ

---

<sup>5</sup> See Tehran Declaration, [www.fas.org/nuke/guide/iran/joint-decl.pdf](http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/iran/joint-decl.pdf)

Further discussion about the agreement see Fitzpatrick, M. (2011). Containing the Iranian nuclear crisis: The useful precedent of a fuel swap. *Perceptions*, 6 (2), 27-42.

<sup>6</sup> Official from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (name withheld due to conference format and Chatham house rules), Ankara Workshop on Nuclear Proliferation, Ankara, Turkey, June 2011.

her territory during Iraq invasion in 2003, however, now, Turkey again denies implementing her traditional Western allies on imposing sanctions on Iran; this confused both the East and West. Whether this act of Turkey an anti-Western orientation or not is an intriguing question to investigate.

Shortly, there is not enough evidence to confirm that Turkish Foreign Policy towards nuclear-aspiring Iran has changed its Western orientation. On the contrary, Turkey and the internal priorities as well as a neutral status serve both the West and Iran. This is internationally observed through her compliance to the NPT obligations by Iran and no use of force by the West. In his paper, Sinan Ulgen defends Turkish foreign policy regarding Iran with the notion of the new activist approach requiring more thorough analysis to understand, not simply a change or shift in axis as recently Turkey has been “accused of.” (Ulgen, 2010) Similarly, Gurzel argues that since 2002, under the AKP government, Turkish foreign policy has rotating her role toward Iran’s nuclear development program. Turkey is believed to have been an observer only, then recently a facilitator and a mediator. That is to say, Turkey’s own national interests concerning future possibility of nuclear development plant have shaped its stance. (Gurzel, 2012)

Similarly, Kanat (2010) argued that changes in Turkish foreign policy are not aimed to de-Westernize Turkey; instead they are attempts to create an autonomous, self-regulating, and self-confident foreign policy agenda while normalizing the previous crisis-driven policymaking in Turkey’s foreign relations. As a result, Turkey will not take blindly the sanctions of the West, more specifically, the U.S. Surprisingly, the U.S would not be upset about this. Apparently, Washington has two allies in the region, Israel and Turkey. However, Israel is neither a mediator nor a trustworthy partner or friend with any state in the Middle East. Without Turkey, the U.S could not dominate its rule in the Middle East. Especially after the Arab spring and the global economic crisis, the power of the U.S did not only decline inside but outside the country as well, apart from the Middle East, where Turkey is doing the mediation role. Moreover, the tension between Turkey and Israel has left an important imprint on the relationship between Turkey and Iran. (Bacik, 2012) Certainly, Turkey is playing this role not for the favor of the U.S but indirectly for the regional and international politics. Hence, Turkish foreign policy has not diverted its direction from the West while still exposing good relation with the Islamic Republic.

Ankara continuous economic relations with Tehran have proved to be effective regarding Turkey’s interests. For Ankara, changing Turkey’s pro-Western orientations is not of main focus. Instead, ability and capability to act on its own are main concerns of the state. According to the Prime Minister, “Turkey cannot designate its foreign policy in line with someone else’s directives but on its own”.<sup>7</sup>

### **How to explain Turkey’s stance?**

It is important to understand Turkey’s stance towards Iranian nuclear program because indeed, Turkey’s relations with Iran are important not only for domestic but also for regional and international politics of Turkey. (Aras, 2001) As a matter of fact, it is believed

---

<sup>7</sup>*World Bulletin*. (2009, December 23). Turkey’s PM in Syria defends “independent” foreign policy. <http://www.worldbulletin.net/index.php?aType=haberArchive&ArticleID=51712>.

that Turkish foreign policy towards Iran with increasing attentions from the international audiences today is a result of Turkey's soft power which has been exposed intensively especially under the AKP government.

Turkey is, by nature, geopolitically important. Turkish Foreign Policy reflects the nation's interests in both the East and the West. Regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, Turkey serves both the West and Iran. Ankara does not risk any foreign policy decisions to dampen her relations with both the Western countries and Iran. (Kibaroglu and Caglar, 2008) Apart from Turkey's long history of being alliance with the U.S, Turkey, as a candidate of the EU, is expected to pursue a policy in line with that of the EU's Iran policy, apart from sanctions. (Alcaro, 2012)

First of all, from economic perspective, the EU is Turkey's largest trading partner and Turkey is at top seven among importers of EU products and top five in exporting states.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Turkey's main exporting markets are the EU, Iraq, Russia, USA, United Arab Emirates and Iran.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Turkey imports also largely from the EU, Russia, China, USA, Iran and South Korea.<sup>10</sup> Turkish Foreign Policies, hence, on Iran is not only determined by Iran's aspiration to possess nuclear energy but also on that Iranian and Turkish diplomatic relations have improved significantly as a result of rising economic relationship and security cooperation (Ulgen, 2012).

Secondly, Turkey is known as being a large energy importer. One of the motives for Turkey to continue importing energy from Iran despite the sanctions placed by the Western countries is believed to be Turkish effort in reducing dependence on Russian energy import. The figure below shows that Turkish crude oil import from Iran has increased dramatically and exceeded that from Russia. In 2009, Turkey had to rely her oil consumption demand on Russia for 40% and on Iran for 26%. The figures reversely changed in 2011 with Russian oil imported as 12% and that of Iran as 51%. This means that Iran is increasingly an alternative main oil supplier for Turkish growing market.

Table 1. Crude Oil Imports – 2009/2011

	2009 (M tons)	Percentage	2011* (tons)	Percentage
Russia	5.7	40	2,116,500	12
Iran	3.2	26	9,287,092	51
Iraq	1.7	12	3,071,477	17
S. Arabia	2	14	1,965,299	11
Italy			116,405	1
Kazakhstan			1,185,556	7
Azerbaijan			80,719	0
Syria			254,655	1
other		0.8		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,000,000</b>		<b>18,077,703</b>	<b>100</b>

\*In 2011, 18.077.654 tons crude oil imported. 2.433.408 tons was domestic production. Total refined amount was 20.744.705 tons.

Source: Babali, T. (2012). The role of energy in Turkey's Relations with Russia and Iran. *The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey*, March 29.

### ***Turkey wants to be a regional power?***

Another argument to explain Turkey's position regarding Iran is Turkish's "zero problems with neighbors" foreign policy and "strategic depth" doctrine by Foreign Minister Ahmet

<sup>8</sup> European Commission Statistics

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.



Davutoglu. Turkey, to some extent, fits the definition of regional power. With the objective of “strategic depth”, Turkey considers herself and is considered as an important player in several regions due to her geopolitics, namely, the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean.

To begin, Turkey has strong partners in the Middle East, and close friends in the West, among others, the United States. In this regard, Israel and Iran might be considered as regional powers; nevertheless, neither of the two possesses such status as Turkey. More broadly speaking, none of the Arab countries has the same position and plays the same rules that Turkey is playing. Turkey is seen as a bridge between the East and the West and she is well aware of this fact.

Turkish policy till 2002 was perceived as passive one towards the Arab world in regard that the regime in Turkey was heavily Western oriented, and distant itself from the Arab or Islamic world as part of the legacy of Ataturk. Turkey was completely directed by her government towards the West and Israel was the only friend in the Arab world back then. The fact that AKP came into power in 2002 made a remarkable turning point for Turkey with especially its prominent foreign policy “zero problem with neighbor countries.” Practically, the new government enhanced Turkish position in the Middle East. As a consequence, economic cooperation and trade relations have been established and the ties among Turkey with the Arab countries have never been that strong before. Some critics may undermine that the policy might not help achieve zero problems, however, it helps Turkey improve her economic cooperation and political rule, neither did Turkey lose her legitimacy of being the combination of East and West, as well as the mediator of them as a bridge between cultures.

In this respect, energy, among others, is one of Turkey’s strategic cards to play a role of a regional power. The securitization of energy has been reflected mostly in Turkish foreign policy. That is, it attempts to reduce Turkey’s heavy dependence on imported energy resources. To illustrate, Iran is among those suppliers that Turkey conceived in her diversification strategy for alternative energy resources. As a result, Turkey’s energy strategy is aimed at both domestic demand and contributing to energy security issue in Europe. Turkey, in this sense, is ambitious to become a pivotal energy bridge between not only East and West, but also between North and South.

### ***Is Iran a competitor?***

Regarding developments in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are aspired to assume the power vacuum as being a regional leader. (Guzansky et al., 2012) As a result of the Arab uprising, each state seems to be more cautious in formulating and implementing foreign policies to maintain the peace at home as well as not to lose credit in the region among other strong players. A vast amount of literature has been discussing the quest of Iran for nuclear technology and infrastructure. If Hashemi Rafsanjani and Muhammad Khatami once wished to use nuclear weapons as a means of deterrence, the present president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guards consider them as a critical tool to proclaim Iran's regional power.

Regional ambitions of Iran are not something new. Historically, Iran was an empire until the 19th century. If one refers to the legacy of Ottoman Empire to address Turkey in her ambition for the leading chair, it is the Persian Empire nostalgia that can be said for



today's Iran to reemerge. The direct and indirect interference of the Great Powers in Iranian affairs in the 19th and 20th centuries were also main escalators for Iran to become a regional power. (Ayman, 2012)

From Turkish side, it is believed that Turkey has been constantly mirroring Western values to the region on the ground that she is a secular state. This fact somehow upset the Muslims in the Middle East. Yet, at the same time, it may also be understood that the attempt of Turkey to democratize the country simultaneously reflect Islamic civilization could not be found elsewhere. The United States, especially, has denoted Turkey as the role model for the Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu kept emphasizing a "just" and "inclusive" global order. In his view, "Turkish state as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire that has responsibilities toward neighboring regions should be among the countries that will lay the foundations of this order."<sup>11</sup>

However, neither Turkey nor Iran could be successful in assuming the regional leader's position yet.

*"So far neither Turkey nor Iran seems to be able to acquire a preponderance of power in the Middle East that succeeded in building institutions to regulate regional affairs. It does not seem that anything like that could also happen in the near future because of major powers opposed interests, the mutual balancing acts of Turkey and Iran and the complicated but not harmonious interests of regional states that motivate them to align with external powers as well as with Turkey and Iran. But their stakes are in great danger and both states' actions have the power to change the course of developments whereas the risks of becoming enemies would risk their existential interests." (Ayman, 2012)*

Nuclear or military capability used to be regarded as a means to measure power. Recently, nevertheless, the world seems to be more content with a peaceful use of soft power. In this regard, Turkey has been one of the states that have arisen as such. (Ulgen, 2011) This may lead to a Europeanization of Turkish Foreign policy, as the EU has long been notorious for soft power employment in solving disputes and conflicts.

More specifically, when one looks at the foreign policy domain, one observes that the AKP government has given Davutoglu the steering wheel to handle Turkish foreign policy. (Sozen, 2010) Except for a few incidents, such as Hamas leader Khalad Mashal's visit to Turkey (Zaman, 2006) the prime minister's denunciation of Israel's policies towards Palestinians (Today's zaman, 2010), and the invitation of the Sudanese prime minister to Turkey (Turkish Daily news, 2010), Davutoglu's policies have not significantly irritated the Turkish foreign policy establishment. Although the foreign minister has been criticized by some for driving Turkey away from George W. Bush's actions, the EU's not-so-friendly policies towards Turkey in a way justified his attempt to bring Turkey closer to countries in the region.

## Conclusion

---

<sup>11</sup>Today's Zaman. (2009, May 4). New FM Davutoglu to Build Order-Instituting Role for Turkey.

It is believed that hard power means waging war or attacking Iran coercively is very costly affair while the world is now under an economic fragile zone. By contrast, soft power as economic sanctions and diplomacy has been employed so far to counteract to Iranian nuclear program. It is realized that economic sanctions applied by the U.S and the European Union have indirectly led to Iran's recent crisis. However, this method only suffered the civilians inside the country, but did not discourage Iran's ambition to go nuclear. Diplomatic negotiations, hence, are more desired. Turkey is, therefore, in favor of this way of resolving the problem.

In short, Turkey's decision of no sanctions on Iran does not indicate that Turkish foreign policy is anti-Western. Rather, it illustrates Turkey's growing independence as a regional power and flexibility in decision-making process with regard to her own interests, such as gaining image in the Middle East with the new foreign policy doctrine, less independence on Russian energy imports in place of Iranian one, and prioritizing domestic solutions, while not upsetting the West's mutual interests.

Turkey's stance on Iran reflects her neutral stance and mediating effort. Although it is a fact that Turkey does not apply unilaterally sanctions by the U.S on Iran, it does not mean that Turkey has deviated from the West. Instead, Turkey is actively playing her mediating role in resolving the conflict as a bridge between East and West, while preserving her own internal security and multilateral interests.

## References

- Alcaro, R. (2012). A tale of wasted opportunities: the EU, Turkey and Iran's nuclear issue. *IAI Global Turkey in Europe Commentaries*.
- Aras, B. (2001). Turkish foreign policy towards Iran: Ideology and foreign policy in flux. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 18(1), 105-124.
- Ayman, S. G. (2012). Regional aspirations and limits of power-Turkish-Iranian relations in the New Middle East. *Etudes Helleniques*, 1.
- Bacik, G. (2012). Will Turkey change its position on Iran? *Today's zaman*. September 30, <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist-293834-will-turkey-change-its-position-on-iran.html>.
- Bahgat, G. (2006). Nuclear proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran. *Iranian Studies*, 39(3), 307-327.
- CNS News*. (28 April 2013). Turkey, Ignoring U.S. Sanctions on Iran, Will Continue Sending Iran Gasoline. Retrieved April 28, 2013 from <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/turkey-ignoring-us-sanctions-on-iran-will-continue-sending-iran-gasoline/#sthash.mEwO5Slv.dpuf>
- Cunningham, F. (2012, September 1). Ban in disgraceful show of US puppetry. *presstv.ir*. Retrieved on April 28, 2013 from <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/30/259034/ban-kimoon-in-disgraceful-show-of-us-puppetry/>

- Esposito, J. (2003). *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford University Press.
- Farsnews*. (2012). Turkey Underlines Opposition to Unilateral Sanctions against Iran. Retrieved April 26, 2013 from <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107123048>
- Fitzpatrick, M. (2011). Containing the Iranian nuclear crisis: The useful precedent of a fuel swap. *Perceptions*, 6 (2), 27-42.
- Gurzel, A. (2012). Turkey's Role in Defusing the Iranian Nuclear Issue. *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer.
- Guzansky, Y., Asculai, E. & Lindenstrauss, G. (2012). Civilian Nuclear Programs in the Middle East: Nuclear Spring or Nuclear Autumn? *Strategic Assessment*, 15 (1), 95-111.
- Kanat, K. B. (2010). AK Party's Foreign Policy: Is Turkey Turning Away from the West? *Insight Turkey*, 12(1), 205-225.
- Kemp, G. (2003). How to Stop the Iranian Bomb. *National Interest*, 72, 48-58.
- Kenes, B. (2012). Is Iran's nuclear program peaceful? *Today's zaman*. July 5, <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist-285661-is-irans-nuclear-program-peaceful.html>.
- Kibaroglu, M., & Caglar, B. (2008). "Implications of a nuclear Iran for Turkey." *Middle East Policy*, 15(4), 59-80.
- Kibaroglu, M. (2011). Turkey, NATO & Nuclear Sharing: Prospects after NATO's Lisbon Summit. *Nuclear Policy Paper*, No. 5, 1-11.
- Kibaroglu, M. (2009). Turkish perspectives on Iran's nuclearization. *Eurasiacritic*, April, 48-54.
- Lesser, I. O. (2004). Turkey, Iran and nuclear risks." *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Summer.
- Lesser, I. O. (2009). Can Turkey Live with a Nuclear Iran? *GMF's On Turkey*, March 2, 1-4.
- Parasiliti, A. (2009). Iran: Diplomacy and Deterrence. *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*. 51(5), 5-13, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396330903309824>.
- Sozen, A. (2010). A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges. *Turkish Studies*, 11(1), 103-123.
- Today's Zaman*. (2009, May 4). New FM Davutoglu to Build Order-Instituting Role for Turkey.

- Today's Zaman*. (2010) Erdogan Angered by Israel's Gaza Campaign, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tzweb/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=162602>.
- Turkish Daily News*. (2008, January 28). An understandable Logic behind the Visit. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/h.php?news=un-understandable-logic-behind-the-visit-2008-01-28>.
- Ulgen, S. (2010). A Place in the Sun or Fifteen Minutes of Fame? Understanding Turkey's New Foreign Policy. *The Carnegie Papers*, 1.
- Ulgen, S. (2011). The Security Dimension of Turkey's Nuclear Program: Nuclear Diplomacy and Nonproliferation Policies, in "The Turkish Model for that Transition to Nuclear Power." *Ekonomi ve Dis Politika Arastirma Merkezi(EDAM)*, December 9.
- Ulgen, S. (2012). "Turkey and the Bomb." *The Carnegie Papers*, 6.
- Ustun, K. (2010). Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions. *Insight Turkey*, 12(3), 19-26.
- Villelabeitia, I. (2012). Iran makes a threat to Arab nations. *COGwriter*, January 19.
- Waltz, K. (2012). Why Iran should get the bomb. *Foreign Affairs*, 91(4), Jul/Aug, 2-5.
- World Bulletin*. (2009, December 23). Turkey's PM in Syria defends "independent" foreign policy. Retrieved April 26, 2013 from <http://www.worldbulletin.net/index.php?aType=haberArchive&ArticleID=51712>.
- Zaman*. (2006, February 21). Hamas Visit: Good Diplomacy by Ankara, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/yazarDetay.do?haberno=30119>.
- Zion, I.B. (2012, March 28). Erdogan, in Tehran, says 'No one has the right to attack Iran.' *The Times of Israel*. Retrieved April 28, 2013 from <http://www.timesofisrael.com/erdogan-denounces-attacks-on-iran/>

## Appendix

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released on February 21, 2013 its latest report on the implementation of NPT safeguards in Iran and the status of Iran's compliance with Security Council resolutions.

### Key Findings:

- 1) Number of installed centrifuges at Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) increases substantially;
- 2) IR-1 centrifuge installation is occurring at a faster than expected rate at Natanz FEP;
- 3) New IR-2m advanced centrifuges are being installed at Natanz, although when they will start enriching or how well they will operate remains unknown;
- 4) Number of cascades producing near 20 percent low enriched uranium (LEU) is constant;
- 5) Iran has less than enough 20 percent low enriched uranium hexafluoride for one nuclear weapon, if further enriched to weapon-grade;
- 6) Almost all of the cascades at Fordow are now vacuum tested and likely ready for enrichment;
- 7) Iran resumes converting near 20 percent LEU hexafluoride to oxide form;

- 8) Iran will use the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR) to test IR-40 Arak reactor fuel; continued construction of the IR-40 reactor is in violation of UNSC resolutions; and,
- 9) No progress on "structured approach" to resolve outstanding questions about military dimensions and no access to Parchin, which Iran continues to sanitize.