



WISE MEN CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

Iran at the Center of Chaos Scenarios

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FOREWORD

The Middle East region has undergone a rapid transformation period in recent years. Iran's nuclear program may bring the US-Iranian relations to the verge of close combat. Any Israeli attack against Iran's nuclear facilities may trigger a series of conflicts. Due to the sanctions imposed upon Iran because of its nuclear program, the country is getting more and more isolated and feels under threat. What could be the possible reactions of an Iran that sees itself as threatened?

The US withdrew from Iraq and as a result of the popular movements, the Middle East administrations are changing hands one by one. The region has started to teem with uncertainties and risks. On one hand, there is a wish for freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, free market, and fair income distribution. On the other hand, an abundance of conflicts and blood is being seen. What will these developments bring about? Could Iran, as an important player in the area, transform this uncertainty into an opportunity for itself?

This report named "Iran at the Center of Chaos Scenarios" focuses on paradigms which direct Iran's geopolitical features and foreign policy, paying particular attention to elements of continuity, drastic differences and ruptures in Iran. There are certain scenarios on how Iran, which feels under threat, will evaluate and make use of sensitivities and opportunities appearing with the US withdrawal from Iraq and the Arab Spring. The report also pays special emphasis to the fact that Iran stands at the center of all these scenarios, potentially leading to chaos in the region. I hope the report will contribute to the work of the related researchers and experts.

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI
BILGESAM President

IRAN AT THE CENTER OF CHAOS SCENARIOS

Iran has abundant geo-economic sources including 10 %¹ of the world-proven oil reserves and 16%² of the world-proven natural gas reserves. It also stands at a strategically critical point where it is situated right in the middle of the Central Asia, Caspian Sea Basin, and the Middle East, a triple mechanism accepted as the hub of world energy sources. Additionally, playing an active role through its religious identity in the Shiite geopolitics, Iran tries to be a key player in the rebuilt Middle East. Not only because of its geographical position but also because of its Shi'ite religious identity, Iran is identified as a pivotal state³ in the Middle East and regarded as a negative prototype by the US in today's political equation. All these combined variables are increasing Iran's global and regional importance in the international system, thereby carrying Iran to the center of the scenarios which aim at re-planning the Middle East.

Before referring to these scenarios, it is necessary to touch on historical parameters which shape Iran's social memory, political psychology and current foreign policy. Under the reasons why Iran takes place at the center of these scenarios, especially under its nuclear program lies certain psychological factors such as the motivation of "expansionism" and the "syndrome of being occupied" and its long experiences of the past. However, despite all the international moves, Iran is determined to maintain its nuclear program. Under its determination lie these psychological factors and historical experiences.

1. "Syndrome of being Occupied" and "Expansionism"⁴

1.1. Syndrome of Being Occupied

Having been conceptualized as "a key country" due to its geopolitical position, Iran became one of the important stages of "the Great Game" between England and Russia in the 9th century and it had been shared under an agreement signed between these two powers in 1907. According to this agreement, Iran had been divided into three regions where its northern part came under Russian domain, the region neighboring India came under England's domain, while the region between the north and south of the county had been accepted as a buffer zone which was neither under the domination of England nor that of

¹Iran is the third richest country in having the world-proven oil reserves; OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin 2010/2011 p. 22., http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/publications/202.htm

²Iran is the second largest country having the world-proven natural gas reserves; OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin 2010/2011, p. 23 http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/publications/202.htm

³ See Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill, Paul Kennedy, "Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol:75, No:1, January-February 1996, p. 33-51.

⁴ The first and second sections of the report were taken from the presentation "Iran's Foreign Policy Vision and Geopolitical Objectives" given by the writers of the report at the International Middle East Congress organized by Kocaeli University.

Russia.⁵ Even though Iran had declared itself impartial during the first and second World Wars, it had been occupied by both the Russians and the English. Tehran, as an impartial region, came under the occupation of the English and the Russians in the Second World War; northern Iran coming under the domination of the Russians while the other regions controlled by the English.⁶ However, with the Treaty of Alliance signed in January 1942, Iran was rid of these occupations. However, during the Cold War period, Iran had been at the center of the ideological and military conflict between the USA and the USSR, the dominant actors of the bipolar “new game.”

Iran had been the geopolitical conflict area of the big powers throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and had witnessed many wars. These, in turn, have played a key role in shaping the psychological parameters of the country’s foreign policy decision-makers. Especially the fact of being under the occupation of England and Russia has formed Iran’s strategic mentality framed by an “occupation syndrome.” Thus, Iran’s foreign policy understanding had been built on the basis of threat, defense, and security. The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 revived Iran’s “occupation” syndrome. Besides, the attitude of the international public and the West in this war resulted in Iran’s “strategic isolation.” The fact that the US entered Afghanistan and Iraq after the September 11th attacks, containing Iran as a result, has further increased Iran’s security concerns.

Iran’s strategic isolation has reached a peak through the policies of “isolating Iran from the international system” by the West (mostly by the US) as of the 1979 Revolution. Additionally, carrot-stick strategies applied by the West in order to “draw Iran into its system” have not only failed but also reinforced Iran’s security dilemmas.⁷ As a consequence of these experiences of the past, Iran prioritizes the national security and prestige in its foreign policy.⁸

Within this framework, from the period of political reign of Ayatollah Khomeini to current Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, following certain political-psychological elements, have showed continuity in Iran’s foreign policy as a consequence of the syndrome of being occupied. Iran has constantly regarded itself as under threat, seeing itself surrounded by enemies, thus always feeling insecure, isolated, and unstable. It has paid a special emphasis to Iran’s territorial integrity and independence and followed a rather cautious foreign policy. From this perspective, strict political discourse of the Ahmadinejad administration and its

⁵ Fahir Armaoğlu, 20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi, (20th Century Political History) Türkiye İş Bankası Publications, Ankara, 1983, p. 35-36.

⁶ Fahir Armaoğlu, *ibid.*, p. 378-379.

⁷ Nadeer Entessar, “Iran Nuclear Decision Making Calculus”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol: 26, No: 2, 2009, p. 34-35.

⁸ Richard K. Betts, “Incentives for Nuclear Weapons: India, Pakistan, Iran”, *Asian Survey*, Vol: 19, No: 11, 1979, p. 1063.

determination in carrying out nuclear research despite the pressure of the West could be understood as the psychological implication of “the fear of being occupied.”

1.2. Expansionism

With the 1979 Revolution, Iran’s foreign policy understanding has undergone a rupture. Foreign policy principles and parameters of Khomeini resulting in this rupture could be summarized as follows:

- i-) Absolute neutrality
- ii-) Avoiding the international power blocs and alliances
- iii-) Establishing close political and economic relations with third world countries
- iv-) Rearranging the region through the country’s religion-based foreign policy and strategy of export of revolution⁹ and being the powerful and leading state of the Islamic world

Khomeini, who was overwhelmingly disturbed by the close relations established between the Shah Administration and the US (and Shah’s Western-oriented foreign policy alike) included the US as “the Great Satan,” the USSR as “Little Satan,” and Israel as “Zionist Satan” in his new threat list. One of the parameters of Iran’s foreign policy during the presidency of Khomeini had been “anti-Westernism,” while the other one had been “Islamic Identity.”¹⁰ Religious identity of the new regime established by Khomeini manifested itself as “the export of revolution.”

It could be stated that the concept of export of revolution (which constitutes the new foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran) contains three main objectives in the short run, medium term, and long run. In the short term, this foreign policy of the country aims at the protection of the Islamic Republic of Iran, or the new regime. In the medium term, it aspires to attain the territorial integrity of the state. As for the long run, it aims at establishing a world order in which Islamic values play a dominant role.

As it can be seen, Khomeini’s objective in the long run, which is of universal characteristics, was to build “an Islamic world order” under the leadership of Iran.¹¹ According to Khomeini, Islam, which does not only belong to an individual country but instead serves for the good of the whole humanity, has the capacity of ensuring that all people live in absolute justice.

⁹Gökhan Çetinsaya, “Rafsanjani’den Hatemi’ye İran Dış Politikasına Bakışlar”, içinde: *Türkiye’nin Komşuları* (From the Period of Rafsanjani to Khatami: Views over Iran) in: *Turkey’s Neighbors*: Prepared by Mustafa Türkeş, İlhan Uzgel, Imge Publishing House, Ankara, 2002, p. 296-297.

¹⁰ Mehmet Durmuş, “Şahtan Hatemi’ye İran Dış Politikası” (Iran’s Foreign Policy Form Shah to Khatami), <http://www.turksam.org/tr/a653.html>

¹¹ Tayyar Arı, *Basra Körfezi’nde Güç Dengesi* (Balance of Power in the Persian Gulf)(1978-1991), Uludağ University Publishing House, Bursa, 1992, p. 174-179.

Within this scope, Khomeini put a huge emphasis on the universality of the Islamic world order and the dimension of justice of Islam with these words: “Islam belongs neither to a certain country or countries, nor to a certain group or only to Muslims. Islam serves for the whole humanity. Islam aspires to embrace all people under the umbrella of justice.”¹²

Moreover, Khomeini stated that the world was divided into two, one of which being “the oppressors” (the tyrants) and the other one being “the oppressed” (aggrieved). He further stated that the Gulf states, with their policies, had served for the benefit of the oppressors, which was led by the US and the USSR. At this point, Khomeini stated that their objective constitutes the preparation phase of “Islamic world order” which will be realized by the Mahdi (the twelfth imam) at “doomsday.” Additionally, Khomeini said that the Iranian Revolution was a transition period for “the Islamic world order” which was the ultimate purpose. He also claimed that all Islamic states should be governed by fukahas,¹³ experts in ‘fiqh,’ or Islamic jurisprudence until the twelfth imam arrived. In this way, Khomeini pointed out the universality and export of the revolution.

In brief, thought of export of revolution dating back to Khomeini forms the basis of Iran’s expansionist policies through the Shia geo-politics. The Shia geo-politics plays a dominant role in Iran’s foreign policy and the country tries to spread its sphere of influence within the framework of the Shia crescent. Likewise, when the Shia population, which is 60-65% of Iraq, 70% in Bahrain, 35% in Lebanon, 24-30% in Kuwait, 16-20% in Qatar, 16-18% in the United Arab Emirates, 10-16% in Syria (Nusayris) and 5-8% in Saudi Arabia, is taken into account,¹⁴ it is seen that Iran has the potential of expanding its sphere of influence through the Shia geo-politics in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East basins. Hence, in recent periods, Iran, by supporting the Shiite groups in the countries of the region, increases its sphere of influence. Within this scope, Iran has developed its relations with African and Latin American countries, basing on the discourse of “the oppressors and oppressed people” proposed by Khomeini and spread its sphere of influence outside of the region as well.

¹² R.K. Ramazani, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran’s Foreign Policy”, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No.4, Autumn 2004, p. 555.

¹³ Arı, *ibid*, 174-178.

¹⁴ Mehmet Şahin , “Şii Jeopolitiği: İran için Fırsatlar ve Engeller”, (The Shia-Geopolitics: Opportunities and Impediments for Iran” *Akademik Ortadoğu*, (Academic Middle East), Volume: 1, No: 1, 2006, p. 40; Serkan Taflıoğlu, “İran Silahlı İslami Hareketler ve Barış Süreci” (Iran, Armed Islamic Movements and Peace Process)*Avrasya Dosyası(Eurasian File)*, Special Issue for Israel, Volume:5, No: 1, Spring 1999, p. 49 and CIA Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

2. Quests in Iran's Foreign Policy: Continuities, Drastic Differences and Ruptures

It could be stated that since 1979, Iran's foreign policy has been on a "quest" of its course partly because of the system-level effects. Under Khomeini, Iran has distanced itself from the United States and severed its ties with the West. In order to be a regional leader through its strategy of exporting revolution, Tehran turned to the Persian Gulf and Middle East. Rafsanjani and Khatami have tried to revise the relations with the US and Western world for the purpose of integrating Iran into the international system. However, during the Ahmadinejad administration, relations with the US and European Union have again plunged into crisis. Under the Ahmadinejad administration, with the purpose of conducting nuclear cooperation with the US and the EU, Iran has headed towards the Eastern axis as its primary foreign policy objective as an alternative to the Western axis.

Depending on the changes-transformations in the international system after the Cold War, there have been tides and quests for strategic directions between the Western and Eastern axes of the Iran's foreign policy. Likewise, the dynamic and multilateral structure of the new international system, which has emerged with the end of the Cold War and disappearance of the static structure of the bipolar world, has along with the other states, urged Iran to look for new strategies and tactics in its foreign policy. Hence, different foreign policy concepts formed during the times of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Rafsanjani, Mohammed Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have been shaped in parallel with the systemic variables. That's to say, systemic variables have resulted in a change of direction in Iran's foreign politics as well.

In addition to systemic parameters, individual variables in Iran's oligarchical religious regime play an important role in Iran's foreign policy making. As it has been during the times of the Supreme Leader Khomeini and presidents Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad, Iran's foreign policy has experienced certain continuities and drastic differences depending on the individuals administrating the country. Although Iran did not have a big rupture after the 1979 Revolution in its foreign policy, it has undergone drastic differences depending on the individual variable as of its revolution.

In a nutshell, after 1979, there have not been any changes that could be regarded as a "rupture" in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, as of that date, there have been many drastic differentiations. As an example, the drastic differentiation in Iran's foreign policy during the periods of (moderate-liberal conservative) Rafsanjani and Khatami compared to the period of (the traditionally conservative) Khomeini could be shown. Likewise, the Iranian foreign policy approach during the period of (radical-revolutionist conservative) Ahmadinejad differs from the periods of Rafsanjani and Khatami,

and despite some differences, it has got closer to the Khomeini's line. Thus, changes-transformations and quests within Iranian foreign policy as of 1979 have evolved depending on the differences between the individuals.

Additionally, drastic differentiations in Iran's foreign policy manifest themselves in foreign policy strategies and tactics while continuities are seen in medium and long-term state policies that are based on foreign policy goals. From this point, in contrary to his approach, which prioritizes compromise and peace process with the West, Khatami spent more money on military expenditures than that of the previous periods.¹⁵ This sets a good example for Iran's pragmatism in its foreign policy. Likewise, among the main elements that show continuity in Iran's foreign policy mentality, are the nuclear energy program that has been maintained since the Shah period, including anti-Israel and anti-US policies that were seen during the period of Khomeini.

Another constituent that shows continuity in the Iranian state policies, and perhaps the most important one, is its aim of being "a leader in the region." Decision-mechanisms ranging from Khomeini to Rafsanjani, and from Khatami to Ahmadinejad, have primarily aimed at rendering Iran the leading state within the Middle East. However, both due to its socio-economic problems and since its religious identity prioritizes the Shia geography in its foreign policy, Iran has not yet been able to attain this objective. In fact, the Shia geopolitics has a paradoxical influence upon Iran's foreign policy. To put it differently, on one hand, the Shia geopolitics provides Iran with strategic depth. On the other hand, it restricts Iran's geo-political and geo-cultural dimension. Thus, as a comparatively strong player in its region, Iran plays a role of a middle-size geo-political actor.¹⁶

It could be said that in case Iran produces long-range ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, then it could adopt a more dynamic and offensive foreign policy for the implementation of its geopolitical objectives and increase its influence over the countries in the region. As a matter of fact, Iran regards its nuclear program as a rational means to be the leading power of the region and a global player. What's more, Iran carries out its nuclear studies in a rather determined manner. Additionally, the Arab Spring, which has led to a remarkable transformation in the Middle East, despite embodying risk elements in itself, may provide Iran with different foreign policy instruments and opportunities.

¹⁵Bilgehan Alagöz, "Değişen Orta Doğu Kavramı ve İran", içinde: Büyük Ortadoğu Projesi: Yeni Oluşumlar ve Değişen Dengeler, (Changing Concept of Middle East and Iran", in *the Greater Middle East Project: New Formations and Changing Balances*), edited by Atilla Sandıklı, Kenan Dağcı, Tasam Publications, Istanbul, 2006, p. 270.

¹⁶Yalçın Sarıkaya, "2009 İran Seçim Krizi: İç ve Bölgesel Analiz", (2009 Iranian Election Crisis: Domestic and Regional Analysis), <http://karasam.giresun.edu.tr/fileadmin/userupload/raporlar/002.pdf>

3. Nuclear Crisis and Diplomatic Quests

3.1. Perceptions of Threat

With the 1979 revolution, Iran has increasingly kept away from the US, coming to a point of breaking its relations with the Western world. Khomeini's foreign policy, which symbolizes the separation from the Shah administration, had been built upon the notion of "anti-Westernism." Likewise, "the Iran hostage crisis" between Iran and the United States (where 52 Americans were held hostage for 444 days from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981, after a group of the Iranian students took over the American Embassy in Tehran in the first days of the regime) clearly showed that Iran's changing foreign vision had been built upon anti-Westernism. Following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait came the US intervention and the 9/11 attacks, the US then invaded Afghanistan and later Iraq. These all have induced "the state of being contained" and "syndrome of being occupied" in Iran. As a result, the idea of anti-Americanism has strengthened in Iran's foreign policy with Iran and the US becoming two opposing actors in the axis of security dilemma.¹⁷

From the US point of view, Iran stands as "destructive input" preventing the US from reaching its goals both at a global level in general, and specifically at a regional level (particularly the Middle East). Given its influence over Hamas and Hezbollah, it could be stated that Tehran poses a huge threat for the interests of the US and Israel in the region. Thus, Iran ranks first in the US's threat list. According to the US's 2006 National Security Strategy, objectives of the US in the Middle East could be summarized as follows:

- Maintenance of oil and natural gas security in the region
- Elimination of threats coming from terrorist organizations towards the energy security and the security of Israel
- Prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons
- Maintenance of Israel and its military superiority in the region
- As an ultimate goal, maintenance of economic liberation and consolidation of democracy in the area¹⁸

Within the framework of the afore-said goals, Iran is seen as a threat that may both disrupt the current status quo and influence the developments in the region to the detriment of US interests. For instance, regarding energy security, Iran has the power of negatively affecting flow of energy due to its clout in the Strait of Hormuz. Additionally, the US cannot ignore an

¹⁷Gawdat Bahdat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran", *Iranian Studies*, Vol: 39, No: 3, 2006. P. 313.

¹⁸Nihat Ali Özcan, Özgür Özdamar, "Iran's Nuclear Program and the Future of US-Iranian Relations", *Middle East Policy*, Vol: 26, No: 1, 2009, p. 125.

Iran, which through Hamas and Hezbollah, which increases its influence over the US and Israel and makes use of its influence over the Shiite groups in Iraq.

Tension between Iran and the US has further increased upon the existence of Iran's secret nuclear facilities at Arak and Natanz being discovered by the international agenda. In time, Iranian nuclear crisis has turned into an equation with multiple variables thereby being a global problem. Within this context, the former US president George W. Bush included Iran as an "evil axis" and stated that due to Iran's nuclear program, Iran poses a great threat for global peace. He also underlined the need for the prevention of Iran's nuclear energy program so that "a third world war" could be prevented.¹⁹ Iranian decision makers reacted in a similar way to the harsh discourses from Bush, that with time, led to the radicalization of the both sides and a reciprocal showdown.

On one hand, the US claims that the Iranian nuclear program has military purposes and aims at production of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, Iran alleges that its nuclear program are civilian-oriented and peaceful, with its nuclear facilities comply with the international law and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).²⁰ Despite a many number of (mainly being economic) sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council, Iran continues conducting its nuclear program. This, in turn, leads the US to revive its option of conducting military operation against Iran.

3.2. Attempts for the Prevention of the Nuclear Energy Program

After taking office in 2009, the US President Barack Obama prioritized talks held for the prevention of the development of Iran's nuclear program. In this direction, on October 1st of 2009, the Iranian committee (under the leadership of the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and the 5+1 group²¹ led by the European Commissioner for External Relations) convened at Geneva. Within these talks, the parties agreed on "meeting the need of fuel necessary for the Tehran Nuclear Research Center" and "taking the enriched uranium outside of Iran, turning it into a highly enriched fuel rod and finally delivering it to Iran" in principle.²²

¹⁹Jennifer Knepper, "Nuclear Weapons and Iranian Strategic Culture", *Comparative Strategy*, No: 27, 2008, p. 453.

²⁰The NPT was signed by the US, USSR, and England on June 1st 1968 and entered into force in 1970. Its objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general along with complete disarmament. Iran signed the NPT in 1970. For the text of the treaty, see: Treaty On The Non-Proliferation Of Nuclear Weapons, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf>

²¹The 5+1 group consists of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, namely the US, Russia, the People's Republic of China, France, England, and Germany.

²²Paul K. Kerr, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Status", *CRS Report for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, 29 December 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34544.pdf>

3.2.1. The Vienna Convention

In parallel to the talks at Geneva, the Vienna group, comprised by the US, France, Russia, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA),²³ and representatives from Iran convened on October 19-21st of 2009 in Vienna. They reached compromise on the proposal offered by the IAEA. According to this proposal, Iran was going to send 70% (1200 kg) of its uranium (which was enriched at about the rate of 3.5%). Subsequently, Russia was going to enrich this low-enriched uranium (which was received from Iran) at about the rate of 20% and send it to France.²⁴ The purpose here was to prevent any further enrichment of the 20% enriched uranium and to ensure that the uranium is processed in France and turned into a nuclear fuel rod and then submitted to Iran.²⁵

Even though the Tehran administration had initially approved the Vienna proposal, this proposal resulted in serious reactions in the Iranian public. The Iranian people reacting to this proposal agreed on that France and Russia could not be trusted and the real purpose of the West was to receive the Iranian-enriched uranium supply. Additionally, the proposal emphasized that Iran was not guaranteed to receive the enriched uranium. As a result, Iran demanded a revision about the place and time of the Vienna proposal in addition to the amount of the uranium. Therefore, even though an agreement was reached in Vienna, Iran submitted a new proposal. This resulted in harsh reactions within the 5+1 group countries, and Iran's new proposal was not accepted as a result.²⁶

In order to maintain the search for solutions, El Baradei, the Director General of the IAEA, suggested that "until Tehran is supplied with enriched nuclear fuel, Iran's enriched uranium could be transferred to Turkey, a country trusted both by Iran and the West."²⁷ This proposal was supported by the international actors, mainly being the US and Russia. Likewise, the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu welcomed the proposal, stating that Iran's low-enriched uranium could be stored in Turkey. He was also in contact with the 5+1 group countries, representatives of Iran, and the IAEA. However, upon Iran's explanation that it

²³The IAEA is an autonomous institution established on July 29th 1957 and operates within the EU. The main objective of the IAEA is to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons. Within this scope, the IAEA supports its member countries so that nuclear science and technology is used for peaceful purposes. It controls whether they comply with their commitments set forth within the framework of nuclear security standards. Iran became the member of the IAEA in 1958.

²⁴Bayram Sinkaya, "İran Nükleer Programı Karşısında Türkiye'nin Tutumu ve Uranyum Takası Mutabakatı", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, (Turkey's Attitude in the Face of the Iranian Nuclear Program and Uranium Exchange Agreement, *Middle East Analysis*) Volume:2, No:18, 2010, p. 69.

²⁵Enriched uranium is acquired when the U-isotopes in a matter is increased to the level of 20% and it is used for the production of a nuclear bomb. However, to acquire a nuclear bomb of high capacity, uranium enriched at a higher rate of 90% is needed.

²⁶Sinkaya, *ibid*, p. 69-70.

²⁷"IAEA Chief: Iran should store enriched uranium in Turkey", *Today's Zaman*, 9 November 2009.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-192403-iaea-chief-iran-should-store-enriched-uranium-in-turkey.html>

would not let the country's enriched uranium stock get out of the country in any way, hopes for the solution of this crisis through negotiations once again disappeared.

1.1.1. The Tehran Declaration

Since talks in Vienna did not yield results, this time Turkey and Brazil initiated a mediation process in an effort to overcome the crisis between Iran and the West, with Iran welcoming this initiation. Upon Iran's acceptance, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, and Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim signed the joint Tehran Declaration (the text agreement on uranium exchange) on May 17th 2010, with the participation of the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Brazilian President Lula da Silva, and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.²⁸

The Tehran Declaration, not carrying the characteristics of an agreement, is a text on which each of the three countries (Turkey, Brazil, and Iran) agreed to ensure the execution of a nuclear compensation agreement between Iran and the Vienna group. Within the text, commitment of the parties to the NPT is reiterated and it is stated that all of the signatory countries of the NPT, without any discrimination, have the right to carry out research, produce and use nuclear fuel cycle (including nuclear enrichment activities) for peaceful purposes. Laying stress on the right to use nuclear energy, the text states that Iran should steer clear from any measures, acts, and rhetorical explanations which would endanger Iran's rights and duties within the NPT and avoid any kind of hostile behaviors, instead should work to ensure cooperation within the nuclear field.²⁹

Pursuant to the Tehran Declaration, Iran agreed on keeping 1,200 kg low-enriched uranium in Turkey. It was also emphasized that as long as this uranium is preserved by Turkey, it belongs to Iran, and Iran and the IAEA, at their will, would be able to control under what conditions this uranium is kept. The following provisions were decided in the declaration: Iran would declare to the IAEA within seven days that it accepts the afore-said aspects, in parallel with the approval of the Vienna Groups (consisting of the US, Russia, France, and the IAEA body) it should be committed that 120 kg fuel necessary for Tehran's research reactor of is given by these countries and details about the compensation should be given in the final agreement. After the parties reached an agreement, Iran accepted to send 1,200kg of low-enriched uranium to Turkey. In this direction, the text emphasized the necessity that the

²⁸ "İran: Uranyum Takası Türkiye'de Yapılacak", (Uranium Exchange will be Made in Turkey), Radikal, 17 May 2010, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=997227&Date=17.05.2010&CategoryID=81>

²⁹Türkiye, İran ve Brezilya Dışişleri Bakanları Ortak Deklarasyonu, (Joint Declaration dated 17 May of 2010 by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Brazil and Iran) <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17-mayis-2010-tarihli-turkiye-iran-brezilya-disisleri-bakanlari-ortak-deklarasyonu.tr.mfa>

Vienna group should submit 120 kg nuclear fuel to Iran in a year from that declaration. It was also set forth that, in case the provisions of the declaration are violated, Iran has the right to reclaim the uranium which it gave beforehand and Turkey will return 1,200 kg of uranium it would store for Iran upon such a demand.³⁰

The 5+1 countries (excluding the US) and the IAEA approached the declaration with caution. Iran's acceptance to transfer the low-enriched uranium to Turkey was seen as a positive step. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned countries claimed that the Tehran Declaration did not settle the real problems deriving from Iran's nuclear program. Therefore, they found the steps taken for this end as insufficient. Above all, what they agreed upon was that all these steps did not mean that Iran had taken concrete steps for the solution of the problem. After a while, Iran explained that it would carry on with the acts of enriching its uranium at the rate of 20%. This was interpreted by the 5+1 countries and the IAEA in this way: Iran's real purpose, instead of reaching a compromise, was to thwart the international sanctions. It had been the US which gave the most negative reaction to the Tehran declaration, accusing Iran of "trying to get rid of the pressures derived from being imposed with new sanctions." It also drew attention to the particular timing in which Iran signed the agreement, which was right before the UN Security Council meeting. Additionally, the US stated that it was only when being imposed with sanctions came to agenda that Iran sought the support of the Security Council members.³¹

3.2.3 The UN Sanction Resolution 1929

Despite the efforts of Brazil and Turkey, the Tehran Declaration did not bring about the expected ground for compromise. It was interpreted as Iran's diplomatic maneuvering the face of a possibility that the UN Security Council might pass a new sanctions decision. Upon Iran's determination in performing uranium enrichment efforts, the US demanded a new sanction upon Iran. In spite of Turkey's and Brazil's opposition to the sanction decision and their wish for the maintenance of diplomatic negotiations, they failed in impeding the sanction decision. Thus, on June 9th 2010, the UN Security Council took a new sanction decision (Resolution 1929) against Iran.³²

³⁰Türkiye, İran ve Brezilya Dışişleri Bakanları Ortak Deklarasyonu, (Joint Declaration dated 17 May of 2010 by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Brazil and Iran) <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17-mayis-2010-tarihli-turkiye-iran-brezilya-disisleri-bakanlari-ortak-deklarasyonu.tr.mfa>

³¹Sinkaya, *ibid*, p. 74-75.

³²Resolution 1929 was accepted with 12 votes, despite Brazil and Turkey's "no" votes and Lebanon's "absent vote." Unlike previous voting behavior, China and Russia also said "yes" for this decision; Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions on Iran, June 9th 2010, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2010/sc9948.doc.htm>

Within the scope of the Resolution 1929 which confirmed the sanctions imposed upon Iran, it was demanded that Iran halt its uranium enrichment procedures, fuel recycling and building of heavy-water reactor and to take new steps in these fields. Moreover, it was demanded that Iran perform an encompassing cooperation with the IAEA so that it can guarantee that its nuclear activities are civilian in nature and intended peaceful purposes. In order to force Iran to implement the demands of the Security Council, the scope of the previous sanctions were broadened. What's more, transfer of any kind of material, equipment, and technology required for Iran's nuclear activities and missile improvement program which can carry nuclear warhead was thus banned. Foreign funds of people and institutions that are included in these activities were frozen. Besides, restrictions were imposed upon the nuclear program affiliated personnel's right to travel. The decision also required the control of any kind of shipping to Iran and warned states about their financial relations with Tehran. It was also required from the states doing business with Iran that cautions taken for the implementation of sanctions should be declared to the Sanctions Committee.³³ Within this scope, on July 1st 2011, the US President Barack Obama approved a law which requires the implementation of the harshest sanctions against Tehran. In the same vein, the EU reinforced the sanctions imposed upon Iran.

1.1.2. Istanbul Talks

Following the Security Council's sanction decision, Iran, by emphasizing that uranium enrichment works is the natural outcome of the NPT, carried on with its nuclear program. Iran claimed that it produces powder uranium and in a short time it would be producing nuclear fuel rods. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi also explained that Iran produces almost 40 kg of uranium enriched at the rate of 20%.³⁴ In parallel with these developments, the search to find ways to restart the suspended talks went on. The EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton suggested the maintenance of the talks. This suggestion was welcomed by the Iranian Chief Negotiator Saeed Jalili, and talks between the 5+1 group and Iran restarted in Geneva between December 6-7th 2010. Although no progress was made during the talks, the second round of the talks was decided to be held in Istanbul.

Talks between the 5+1 group members and Iran were performed between January 21-22nd 2011 in Istanbul. During the talks, the Vienna group countries (the USA, Russia, and

³³Sinkaya, *ibid*, p. 77 and Resolution 1929 (2010), United Nations Security Council Resolutions, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/unscre1929-2010.pdf>

³⁴Ivanka Barzashka, "Using Enrichment Capacity to Estimate Iran's Breakout Potential", *Federation Of The American Scientists Issue Brief*, 21.01.2011, p.14, http://www.fas.org/pubs/docs/IssueBrief_Jan2011_Iran.pdf "Iran Announces Plan to Produce Medical Reactor Fuel", <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/iran-announces-plan-to-produce-medical-recator-fuel/>

France) organized a separate meeting with Iran for the first time.³⁵ Being the committee president of the 5+1 group, Catherine Ashton stated that negotiations did not bring about any results. Ashton added that Iran needs to prove that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes and Iran is not open to collaborate.³⁶ Thus, Istanbul talks did not bring about concrete results for the solution of the nuclear crisis through diplomatic manners, either.

1.1.3. IAEA's Report About Iran's Nuclear Energy Program

Yukiya Amano, the Director of the IAEA, organized a report over Iran's nuclear energy program and it was published in November 9th 2011. The report, which was said to be based on reliable sources, laid stress on the military dimension of Iran's nuclear program. It was also stated that Iran conducts a many number of experiments in its nuclear plants to produce nuclear weapons, and some of these experiments proved successful. Moreover, the report revealed that Iran conducts activities for the planning and production of nuclear weapons and trials. Other important points emphasized in the report were as follows: Iran carries out computer simulations and modeling with the purpose of obtaining a nuclear warhead, nuclear engineers work on the ways how to integrate nuclear warheads with missiles and within this context, it is intended to transform the medium-range ballistic Shahab-3 missile into a nuclear missile.³⁷

The report was presented to the member countries of the 5+1 group at the Ordinary Meeting of the Board of Directors between November 17-18th 2011. The 5+1 group members put forth a new draft resolution for the Iranian nuclear program. The draft resolution was accepted by majority of votes³⁸ and it mainly focused on the military dimension of Iran's nuclear program. It was also stated in the draft resolution that the Iranian decision-makers should be in a collaboration based on transparency with the IAEA so that the international community's concerns over the Iranian nuclear program could be averted. Additionally, it was underlined in the draft resolution that Iran should immediately approve the Additional

³⁵ No: 28, 22 January 2011, For the Meeting held in Istanbul between the P5+1 and Iran during the dates 21-22 January of 2011, see http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-28_-22-january-2011_-p51-ile-iran-arasinda-21-22-ocak-2011-tarihkerinde-istanbulda-gerceklestirilen-toplantı-hk.tr.mfa

³⁶ Programm nucléaire de l'Iran – Déclaration de la Haute Représentante de l'Union européenne, Catherine Ashton, aumodes E3+3, à l'issuées pour parler à Istanbul les 21 et 22 janvier 2011 (Bruxelles, 22 Janier 201)
<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo/iran/l-union-europeenne-et-liran/article/programme-nucleaire-de-l-iran>

³⁷ For the whole report, see 'Implementation of the NPT Safe guards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2011/65,
<http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2011/gov2011-65.pdf>

³⁸ The draft resolution was accepted with 32 votes in favor, two negative vote sand one abstention vote; during the voting Cuba said "no" while Indonesia abstained from a vote; December 2011: Iran,
http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.7886213/k.9533/December_2011brIran.htm

Protocol,³⁹ which allows for the NPT to carry out sudden and impromptu inspections. In the meeting, Iran said that the report was not of professional characteristics, claiming that it was the proof of the fact that a technical organization became politicized.⁴⁰

2. Chaos Scenarios

Iran's nuclear crisis was not settled through diplomatic methods and hopes for this end started to decrease. This has resulted in such comments that hint that the crisis could very likely turn into a conflict. What's more, tension between Iran and the US has increased and it has been one of the agenda items of the world public that a hot conflict between the two countries may arise. These all have, in turn, placed Iran at the heart of chaos scenarios. One of these scenarios is built on the possibility that the Iranian nuclear facilities and missile systems could be attacked by a military operation to be organized by the US and Israel. The second scenario appears to be the closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian armed forces, which may result in a rapid increase in oil prices and oil problem on a global scale. The third possible scenario is that Iran may make use of the vulnerability of the region which has manifested itself upon the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq and the Arab Spring, thereby triggering a Sunni-Shia conflict.

2.1. First Scenario: A Military Operation Against Iran

Following the explanation of the IAEA report, Iran went on with its uranium enrichment works and declared that it produces nuclear fuel rods. This explanation concerned the world public. Additionally, the following news has spread in the US and Israeli public: Tehran produces nuclear trigger mechanisms. It has gained the capacity of directly attacking Israel with the Shahab-3 missiles (at the range of 2,000km), and Iran, with Fecr-3 (at the range of 45km) and Fecr-5 (at the range of 75 km) rockets, poses a constant threat for Israel through its support for Hamas. As a result, all eyes have focused on Iran.⁴¹ The possibility of performing a military strike against Iran so as to hinder Tehran's nuclear program is one of the seriously debated topics in this sense.⁴² Certain projections also exist about the

³⁹The Additional Protocol was formed in 1997 to increase the efficiency of the control of Nuclear facilities and activities within the countries signing the NPT. The Additional Protocol authorizes the IAEA (along with routine supervisors) with the power of performing sudden inspections without the need of permission. Iran signed the NPT Additional Protocol on December 18th 2003 but has not yet approved.

⁴⁰December 2011: Iran,

http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/B.7886213/k.9533/December_2011brIran.htm

⁴¹Yossi Melman and Hagar Mizrahi, "News of Palestinian Rockets",

<http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/2191/haaretz-wikileaks-exclusive-iran-providing-hamas>, "Hamas Rockets", <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hamas-qassam.htm>

⁴²See Stephen M. Walt, "Why Attacking Iran is a Still Bad Idea?", 27.12.2011,

http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/27/why_attacking_iran_is_still_a_bad_idea "Military strike won't stop Iran's nuclear program", <http://www.haaretz.com/news/military-strike-won-t-stop-iran-s-nuclear-program-1.266113>

possibilities within this scope. Among these projections are: the increasing possibility that the US, with an air operation and a missile attack, may strike Iran's nuclear facilities and it will be solely Israel that will carry out an attack in case the US does not initiate any military operation. What's more, it is also thought that necessary preparations have been complete for any plausible operation.

The following facts increase Tehran's concerns: Viruses had been transmitted to Tehran's nuclear computer codes, many of Iran's nuclear experts have been killed, and 17 people (including the Brigadier-General Hasan Tehrani-Moghaddam –one of the leading names in ballistic missile program) lost their lives in an explosion at the Bidganeh arsenal explosion about 50 kilometers west of Tehran.⁴³ Lastly, the assassination of one of the Iranian pioneering nuclear scientists Mostafa Amadi Roshan on January 11th 2012 has given rise to the possibility that the covert war among the intelligence services in Iran may evolve into an interstate close combat.⁴⁴

Within this scope, Iran has started to worry about annihilation of its significant nuclear facilities with an operation plan prepared with the joint contributions of the intelligence services and security organizations of the US and Israel. It has also been proposed that the Tehran administration is intensifying its preparations for any plausible attack. In this sense, the comprehensive operation carried out by Iran at the Strait of Hormuz sets a good example for Iran's concerns. Besides, Major General Mohammed Ali Jafari is said to have prepared the military forces to be ready for any strike or covert operations. The Western intelligence sources state that the Tehran regime has long-range missiles, high explosive bombs, cannons, and guards units deployed at focal points of defense.⁴⁵

2.2. Second Scenario: Possibility of the Closure of the Strait of Hormuz By Iran and Oil Crisis

Despite all the warnings, Iran has carried on with its nuclear program and certain estimates remain that Iran will have the capacity of producing nuclear weapons in a year. These all, in turn, further increase the concerns of both regional and global players. It is the world public, mainly being the US and Israel, that are rather concerned about this situation. In this sense, the US decided to impose sanctions upon the financial institutions which deal with the Iranian Central Bank. Moreover, the EU Foreign Ministers, who convened for the solution of

⁴³ "Iran Savaş İçin Hazırlanıyor." (Iran is preparing for a War", <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/19401449.asp> December 6th 2011

⁴⁴ "Bomb kills Iran nuclear scientist as crisis mounts", January 12th 2012, http://www.sundaytimes.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14649:bomb-kills-iran-nuclear-scientist-as-crisis-mounts&catid=81:news&Itemid=625

⁴⁵ "Iran Savaş İçin Hazırlanıyor", (Iran is preparing for a War", <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/19401449.asp> December 6th 2011

the recent problems in Syria on December 1st 2011, froze the assets of 143 Iranian companies and banned 37 Iranian citizens from travelling. Additionally, during the talks in January 2012, it was agreed to decide that an oil embargo would be laid on Iran.

Information acquired from the European Commission says that the EU countries had met 5.8% of their crude oil needs from Iran in 2010.⁴⁶ The EU countries which take the highest amounts of crude oil from Iran are Italy, Spain, Belgium, and Greece. These countries are also trying to take necessary measures as well. Iran exports 17% of its crude oil to EU countries. Upon such an embargo on its oil, Iran, which receives half of revenue from the crude oil exports, is assumed to instead turn towards the Asian markets. However, many countries, mainly China, have taken measures with the purpose of decreasing the oil they import from Iran.⁴⁷ Within this context, China decreased the rate of imported oil from Iran at a rate of 50%. Thus, its oil import has shifted to Russia, African countries, and the other Middle Eastern countries.⁴⁸ The US also demands the other countries to stop their oil imports from Iran and the EU has accelerated its efforts to make decisions in this direction. Within the framework of these developments, it could be stated that the influence of the sanctions upon Iran will further increase.

Nevertheless, Iran threatens to close Strait of Hormuz over EU oil sanctions. Within this scope, in the early January of 2010, the Iranian Naval Forces conducted a naval exercise in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. It tested short-range, medium-range, and long-range missile firings. It was stated that missiles launched from land to sea and from sea-to-sea can exactly hit the marks of 200 km away. Immediately after its naval exercise, Iran said that it would conduct another military exercise with the land forces and go on with naval exercises in February. Iran warned the US not to deploy its naval forces at the Persian Gulf and not to allow the passing of aircraft carriers and aircraft fleet through the Strait of Hormuz. In spite of these warnings, the US states that it will do anything necessary to ensure that the Strait of Hormuz is open in any case. The US Defense Minister Leon Panetta described closure of the Hormuz Strait as “alarming,” stressing that the necessary reaction would certainly be given in case the strait is closed. Given that almost 40% of the oil shipment via sea lane and almost 20% of the global oil trade in the world passes through the

⁴⁶ “Suriye için Toplandılar, İran’a Yaptırım Kararı Aldılar”, (They came together for Syria only to take a decision of imposing sanctions upon Iran) <http://www.haberturk.com/dunya/haber/693310-suriye-icin-tplandilar-irana-yaptirim-karari-aldilar> 01.12.2011

⁴⁷ “İran’a AB’den de Petrol Yaptırımı Yolda”, (The EU is also about to impose oil sanctions against Iran), <http://www.cnnturk.com/2012/dunya/01/05/irana.adbden.de.yaptirimi.yolda/643400.0/index.html> 05.10.2012

⁴⁸ Esin Gedik, “Hürmüz kapanırsa petrol 200 dolara çıkar”, (If Hormuz is closed, petrol will escalate to \$200) January 9th 2012, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/hurmuz-bogazi-kapanirsa-petrol-200-dolara-cikar,-cari-acik-36-milyar-dolar-artar-91327h.html>

Strait of Hormuz, it is predicted that oil prices will almost double just in a few days after the closure of the strait.⁴⁹

It could be envisaged that the financial crisis under such circumstances may turn into a global oil crisis which, in turn, affects the whole world. The international public is concerned about the occurrence of such a development. It is for this reason that countries which had once supported Iran, have started to question their support. The fact that England sent additional ships to the region increases the possibility of a serious operation against Iran.

2.3. Third Scenario: A Shiite-Sunni Conflict

Iran, which aims at increasing its sphere of influence over the Shia geo-politics and has the potential of doing so, closely follows the developments in the area that have been seen within the framework of the Arab Spring. In the same vein, Iran forms its strategies and policies within the framework of these developments. Upon the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq and the overthrow of the pro-US administrations, a geo-political gap appeared. Iran tries to make use of this gap so as to increase its regional power. Within this scope, Iran supports the popular movements in the Gulf countries embodying Shia populations. In this way, Iran tries to counteract the US influence in the region. However, the US has its 5th fleet ready in Bahrain (a country which encompasses a considerable number of the Shia population) and the other Gulf countries also include a significant number of the US troops. Besides, the Gulf Cooperation Organization, which acts so as to counterbalance the Iranians' increasing influence in recent years, has improved its strategic relations with regional players and players outside of the region, and countries within the region have been supplied with large amounts of weapons.⁵⁰ These factors all concern Iran as a result. Similarly, Iran strongly criticized Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates since they sent troops to oppress the Shi'ite rebellions in Bahrain. It also negatively reacted to the Saudi Arabian administration's attitude towards the protests of Shi'ite-rooted people in Saudi Arabia.

Iran has adopted a different stance in the face of the recent developments in Syria, though. Standing by the other popular movements in the Middle East, Iran has kept its silence in the face of the popular movements in Syria and describes the international community's

⁴⁹ "ABD'den Son Uyarı: Hürmüz Kırmızı Çizgimizdir", (The Last Warning from the US: Hormuz: the Alarming Point), <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/19633574.asp> 08.01.2012

⁵⁰The US is concluding arms agreements with its allies in the region, mainly the Saudi Arabia. The White House explained that the US and Saudi Arabia made an agreement including the sale of F-15 war planes worth of almost \$30 billion. It is stated that these sales of war planes are included with in the arms agreement of \$60 billion which was signed with Saudi Arabia and which includes helicopters, missiles, bombs, radar warning systems and night vision systems; "ABD'den kilit müttefike F-15" (F-15 From the US to its Key Ally) December 29th 2011, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/abd-den-kilit-muttfeike-f15/dunya/dunyadetay/29.12.2011/1482122/default.htm>. These arms agreements are seen as the US's strategic move to wards Iran.

comments towards the Assad regime as ‘an intervention’ into the domestic affairs of Syria. The underlying reason of such a different stance is the fact that it is the Nusayris (a branch of the Shiism) who hold the power (at a rate of 12%) and their close relations with Iran. Despite all the happenings, Iran maintains its support towards the Assad administration, which in turn increases the already escalating Sunni-Shiite tension in the area.

The Iranian administration, via the discourse of the Shia Crescent, wants to increase its freedom of movement in the Shia geo-politics and develop strategies towards this end. This is, in fact, the reflection of the foreign policy understanding which was inherited from the Khomeini period. Iran’s main goal appears to maintain the Shiite axis in the region and to maintain its efficiency through the Shiite Crescent. Along with Syria and Lebanon, Iraq (where the Shiites came to power upon the US intervention and increasingly became effective) has been included in this axis. Following the Shiites coming to power in Iraq, Iran has further increased its clout over this country. Immediately after the withdrawal of the US forces, a warrant was issued for the Iraqi Vice President (and Sunni Arab) Tarik al-Hashemion the grounds of terrorism-related charges. This shows that Iran, in a short period of time, could include this country in its own playing field.

When this is considered in combination with the developments arising with the Arab Spring, it could be claimed that Iran will increase its influence over the Gulf countries and extend its room for maneuver towards the Gulf countries. Iran, by means of anti-Israel and anti-US discourses, is exerting huge efforts to gain the interests of the Islamic geo-politics. What’s more, it tries to take advantages through Shiism. Additionally, the Tehran administration, through its Shiite-oriented regional policies and strategies, paves the way for the Western thesis of “separating Muslims through a Shiite-Sunni conflict and creating a sectarian fault line over the Muslim geo-politics.” Within this framework, the developments in Syria especially stand as an important means for this purpose. It could be said that the developments in Syria are likely to turn into sectarian conflict and have the potential of spreading into the region. It is for this reason that, in the upcoming period, Iran’s policies towards Syria should be closely followed.

3. CONCLUSION

The first signals of a close combat have already appeared in the Middle East and Iran stands at the center of all the scenarios. These scenarios are as follows: “Iran’s nuclear facilities and missile systems could be attacked by a military strike by the US and Israel,” the Strait of Hormuz could be closed by Iran’s armed forces, thus oil prices may rapidly increase and this may lead to huge oil crisis at a global level, ”and “Iran’s attempts to cause a Shiite-Sunni sectarian conflict by making use of the sensitivity that came into being with the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq and the Arab Spring.” These scenarios impel the foreign policy

decision makers into being cautious in the face of the existing options, mainly being the possibility of a close combat.

Serious doubts have appeared lately whether Iran carries out nuclear activities for military purposes. This, combined with the other latest developments in the area, has cause the Iranian nuclear crisis to evolve into chaos. As it has been during the Arab Spring and especially during the developments in Syria, Iran gains time in maintaining its nuclear activities thanks to the problems arising from the other tension fields in the region. It tries to make use of the tension fields so as to leave the nuclear crisis off the agenda, even on temporary case. The global security is under threat due to the possibility of the closure of the Hormuz Strait and a Sunni-Shiite conflict. Besides, Iran's policies conducted within the scope of the Shia Crescent carry the risk and potential of a Sunni-Shiite conflict. It is highly plausible that such a potential will turn into reality by the West, mainly by the US. Therefore, it is speculated what policies Iran (which is at the center of the chaos scenarios) will produce within the scope of developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, including the real concerns that exist.

Under the current threat assessments, Iran thinks that the most appropriate strategic development to eradicate the 'syndrome of being occupied' and to realize its wish of being a regional leader is to hold nuclear weapons and missile systems. It is because of the belief that an Iran, which holds nuclear weapons and the means of will into launching these weapons, will acquire immunity and as a regional power, spread its efficiency through using the Shiite geo-politics. Hence, despite all sanctions and threats, Iran carries on with its nuclear program. It claims that the program is for peaceful purposes and when it feels that it is in trouble, Iran tries to establish the appropriate ground for the initiation of the negotiations. Thus, it tries to create the chance of making the world's public accept the progress it made in its program. Thanks to this policy, Iran gains time and it is thought that Iran will have the capacity of producing nuclear weapons in a year's time.

The only policy upon which both the ruling party and the opposition party in Iran unquestionably agree is the "nuclear program." This program seems to be indispensable for the achievement of the objectives that have showed continuity in Iran's foreign policy. A nuclear Iran poses a threat both for the countries in the region and Turkey. Hence, Turkey needs to review its policies (which provide Iran with enough time to produce nuclear weapons) towards Iran. Any confrontation with the West in this sense may contribute to Iran's strategy of gaining time.

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Workshop and Exhibition on High Technologies (İTÇ 2010) Results Report

BILGESAM

Journals

Wise Strategy Journal Vol 1, No 1, Fall 2009

Wise Strategy Journal Vol 2, No 2, Spring 2010

Wise Strategy Journal Vol 2, No 3, Fall 2010

Wise Strategy Journal Vol 3, No 4, Spring 2011

Wise Strategy Journal Vol 3, No 5, Fall 2011

Wise Talks

Wise Talk-1: Turkish–Azerbaijani Relations

Interview with Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

Elif KUTSAL

Wise Talk -2: Nabucco Project

Interview with Arzu Yorkan

Elif KUTSAL-Eren OKUR

Wise Talk -3: Nuclear Iran

Interview with Ret. Minister-Ambassador İler TÜRKMEN

Elif KUTSAL

Wise Talk -4: European Union

Interview with Dr. Can BAYDAROL

Eren OKUR

Wise Talk -5: Constitutional Change

Interview with Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

Merve Nur SÜRMEİ

Wise Talk -6: Turkey- Israel Relations in Recent Period

Interview with Ret. Ambassador Özdem SANBERK

Merve Nur SÜRMEİ

Wise Talk -7: UN Sanctions and Iran

Interview with Assoc. Prof. Abbas KARAAĞAÇLI

Sina KISACIK

Wise Talk -8: Missile Defense Systems and Turkey

Interview with Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

Eren OKUR

Wise Talk-9: Today's and Tomorrow's Developing and Changing Turkish Navy

Interview with Ret. Admiral Salim DERVIŞOĞLU

Emine AKÇADAĞ

