

# Turkey-Iran Relations in the Light of Nuclear Power Debates and Arab Spring, Turkey's Role and The Future of Relations

*Nükleer Güç Tartışmaları ve Arap Baharı Işığında Türkiye- İran İlişkileri, Türkiye'nin Rolü ve İlişkilerin Geleceği*

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## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** Iran,  
Arab Spring,  
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The purpose of the study is try to find out how Iran and Turkey current relations which were effected by Iran nuclear program after changing dynamics in Middle East with Arab Spring. In this context, both countries relation has been examined comparatively in terms of chronological perspective. Iran's nuclear progress caused its image more dangerous and more striking in the international arena. This situation of dilemma makes Iran a threat in Middle East and on the international arena; it produces paradox on Iran for its description as friend or foe. As being a balance fact for Eurasia politics, Turkey is expected as a state to assume role on the Iran's nuclear practices between the West and Iran. The nuclear deal with Iran on April 2015 will probably prove inexpugnable effect on national power of Iran which will increase Iran' impact upon on Middle East. After the Arab Spring the political struggle between both countries has been affected by regional changes. The countries relations will apparently be included into understanding of mutual interest politics

## ÖZ

**Anahtar  
Kelimeler:** İran,  
Arap Baharı,  
İran-Türkiye  
İlişkileri, Nükleer  
Güç

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Arap Baharı ile birlikte Ortadoğu'da değişen dinamiklerin, İran'ın nükleer programından etkilenen Türkiye – İran ilişkilerine etkisini incelemektir. İran'ın nükleer gelişimi İran'ın uluslararası arenadaki imajının daha belirgin ve daha tehlikeli bir almasına neden olmuştur. Bu ikilem durumu İran'ı Ortadoğu'da ve uluslararası arenada bu ülkenin dost mu yoksa düşman mı olduğu konusunda paradoksal bir durum içine sokmaktadır. Avrasya politikasının bir denge gerçeği olarak Türkiye'den beklenen rol İran'in nükleer uygulamalarında İran ile batı arasında köprü vazifesi görmesidir. İran'la yapılan Nisan 2015 nükleer anlaşması İran'ın Ortadoğu'daki önlenemez etkisinin artmasına neden olabilir. Arap baharı sonrası bölgesel değişimden etkilenen iki ülke ilişkilerindeki siyaset anlayışı içinde karşılıklı çıkar politikasını barındıracaktır.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Iran's rising on the Middle Eastern and international politics had begun with the encouraging effect of Iran Islam Revolution. Although the religious regime was not completely related Iran's roots, the new formation of politics in the country would create a new era for revolutionary spirit of Iran's current generation. At the end of revolution period, Iran had decided to draw its own future by the words and the doctrines of Mullah Regime. Shia population of Iran was supportive on that new order and they were ready to fight the subjects of Iran Islam Revolution (Fischer, 2003:47). Surely, that religion-based order would seem like an oppressive factor for Iran's politics; however, the country has developed and educated its people in time. At the same time, the new religious order of Iran has increased the capacity of the country in political and in military mean. Today, Iran has a key role for regional global politics (Guner, 2007:239). Besides, the country has a decisive role for the destiny of Middle East and maybe this role is the most powerful trump of Iran against its rivals and enemies.

This view is a brief summary of Iran's changing role in the historical flow, but a specific factor makes Iran's position more valuable compared to the past. Iran's nuclear progress makes the country more dangerous and more striking. On the other hand, Iran claims that the nuclear effort of country is only related the peaceful purposes. This situation of dilemma makes Iran a threat and a partner for the regional issues on the Middle East and on the international politics (Gold, 2009:24). There is a paradox on Iran for its description as friend of foe.

In the last years, Iran's nuclear capacity has become the most discussed issue for the future of Middle East. Iran is one of most active actors of this region, but Iran's nuclear power is not just related the Middle Eastern politics; it has also effect on the EU's regional policies, the US's international plans and Israel expectations from its neighbors. Beyond that, Iran is seen a valuable and a dangerous actor of international politics because of its nuclear practices like China, India and North Korea (Jafarzadeh, 2008:91). In the near past, the attention of EU's authorities has showed the value of Iran in the international politics clearly.

Iran's increasing importance due to its nuclear practices has caused an abnormal balance change in the international politics. The US and Israel has become the opposite sides of Iran's development in the nuclear issues and Iran's socio-political influence on Shia population in the Middle East after Iraq's regime change has become a visible political threat on the projects of US and Israel in the Middle East region. Despite of Iran's increasing importance, another country has a different value for that issue. As being a balance fact for Eurasia politics, Turkey is expected as a state to assume role on the Iran's nuclear practices between the West and Iran (Keskin, 2009:48).

It was not for the first time for Turkey to be a mediator about the problematic relations between the West and the East; Turkey has a long-term experience for those diplomatic issues. However, Iran's nuclear program is a completely different issue ever. Iran's "insurgent" stance and persistent attitude against the pressure on country about nuclear matters are tough issues for Turkey to find a permanent solution to the Iran's political situation.

Actually, Turkey's situation is problematic as much as Iran's position in the international politics. When Turkish government decided to start a nuclear program in 2009 by building a nuclear facility, Turkey had put itself into the center of nuclear debate all around the world; because of Turkey has relationship with both of Iran and Russia about the nuclear program development issues has made Turkey a potential nuclear actor in the international politics (Ürküt and Sarı, 2009:203). At the same time, Turkey's historical relations with the West make Turkey a potential mediator state to build a bridge between the West, Iran and Russia. In particular, Turkey's close relationship with Iran during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidential; Turkey was the only hope of the US and the EU to convince Iran to change its nuclear policy to cause a conflict on the Middle Eastern lands (Khan, 2009:121). Turkey has still importance in this issue and Turkey's moves, approaches and expectations in this process have decisive role for the future of relations. Although Turkey was out of the meetings between P5+1 States (the US, Russia, China, France and England + Germany) and Iran, Turkey's role has still fateful for the future of Middle East in any mean (Uzun, 2013:65).

In nuclear issue, Ankara is optimistic against Tehran's future plans. That is why Turkey had accepted to join Uranium-Swamp Deal in 2010. There was a certain failure for that agreement, but Ankara does not see that failure a permanent problem for Iran's nuclear policy's peaceful purposes and Tehran's long-term partnership in the political area. Personally Recep Tayyip Erdogan has always declared his trust to Iran authorities on their nuclear plans and Erdogan's governments has always supported cooperation with Iran governments (Ürküt and Sarı, 2009:205).

Despite optimistic idea of Turkey regarding to the nuclear power of Iran, future scenario will be different. The nuclear deal with Iran April 2015 will prove inexpugnable effect on national power of Iran. Ultimately, Tehran will become the dominant economic and military power in the Middle East. Operational ability of Iran will increase with disembargo. New economic condition will allow intervene the regional countries such as Yemen, Syria etc. The new stance of Iran will be more power and more hegemonic both in the region and systemic level.

## **2. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL FRAME OF TURKEY-IRAN RELATIONS**

Turkey and Iran has a deep history with their roots. In particular, the terms of Ottoman Empire and Safavid Dynasty were the most active years of relations; however, the tension of relations was always high and the content of relations was always related clashes and wars between the sides. Until the end of the First World War, the relationship of Turkey and Iran was on the battlefields and the agreements. The end of First World War was the end of both states' revolution process (Saray, 1999:138); Ottomans had left their place to Turkey Republic and Iran had left its control to the imperialist states like Britain.

After the Turkish National Campaign, Turkey had drawn a new roadmap for its future in freedom; industrial attempts, investments for development and education moves were the prior actions of new Turkish states. Partially, Turkey was successfully in this process. Moreover, Turkey had overcome the Second World War without being a direct part of the war compared to its allies. Nothing had affected Turkey negatively but financial crisis. At the end of the war, Turkey had chosen its side and had joint the Western alliance. It was a new beginning for Turkey for the future of oncoming Cold War (Görçün, 2008:179).

On the other side, until and after the Cold War period, Iran was under the control of British and American policies' pressure. Absence of authority had made Iran an easy target for Soviet opposites of Western world and especially Britain had chosen Iran as a base for military operations and as a threat against Soviet Union. The factor of Iran petroleum had showed the country more attractive for the US and its future projects for the Middle East. Iran government had started to get losing its control on the national politics (Atabaki, 2007:214). The burden was heavy for Iran and modernization efforts of governments had met rebellions on the streets. While Turkey's partnership with the West was creating a regional power in the Eastern Europe and Middle East, the same partnership of Iran had created a weak and an ineffective regional actor in

the Middle East; it was Iran's despair and failure to build a new state in the modern international relations era (Hunter, 2010:151).

The years between 1930 and 1970, Turkey and Iran had continued their relations by the support of their Western allies and there were no direct relations between two states; however, the 1970s and aftermath, the destinies of both states had brought them together. Turkey's domestic clash between the ideological groups and Iran society's rebellion against the Shah regime to build an Islam-based country had created revolutionary periods for Turkey and Iran.

Firstly, in 1979, Iran declared the "Iran Islam Revolution" and the country started a new period for its political identity in domestic and international policies. "Mullah Regime" had replaced the democratic Shah regime; Iran was now an "Islam-ruled" country. Turkey had faced coup again after 1960 and the coup attempts in the beginning of 1970s; it was a bloody period between the years of 1973 and 1980. Turkey had decided to build a new and a liberal regime in the country after that coup (Byrd, 2011:22).

That period was first serious attempt for the sides to create a new diplomatic relationship after many years; the basic reason of that was about Iran's loneliness after the regime change. Any of states around Iran had not accepted to communicate with Iran diplomatically but Turkey. Turkey had supported Iran's decision in community base and accepted to aid in some economy and health issues. Although there was a negative response Turkey's attitude in the Western alliance, Turkish government did not give up keeping the relations with Iran alive. However, the spiritual leader of Iran in those years, Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989) had not seen Turkey as a natural and a reliable ally for Iran because of Turkey's alliance with the US. According to Khomeini, Turkey had to decide its side for the regional policies and if Iran would be an ally for them, Turkey would prove it honestly. Turkey had answered that statement with the full of support to the NATO alliance (Atabaki, 2007:222). Khomeini's that reaction and Turkey's answer were the first signs for the problem between two states.

Iraq-Iran war between the years of 1980-1989, Turkey's liberalization and the end of Cold War were the milestones of Turkey-Iran relations towards the end of 1980's. In this process, Turkey and Iran had started to understand their political approaches and the level of their diplomatic relations had increased. In those years, Turkey was trying to discover the change in the Middle East and to make Turkish policies accepted on the Middle Eastern states. It was not a completely successful project, but Turkey had seen the region cleaner and sharper than ever (Elik, 2011: 188).

Despite of Turkey's European integration process in the 1990s, the relations with Iran were in better condition compared to the near past. On the Iran side, the country had recorded important development values and the nuclear projects, which had been designed in the 1970s, had started to give their first successful signs in this period; Iran was an invisible nuclear actor of the world and Turkey was one of the states that they were aware of Iran's nuclear development. Towards the end of 1990s, Turkey had met cursory Iran authorities about nuclear issues, but it was not a serious attempt to understand the dimensions of Iran's position (Tezcur, 2010:198). There were also meetings between Turkish and Iranian authorities about terrorism issues because of the regional threat of Kurdish rebellion groups on the Turkey-Iran border. At truth, the terrorism issue was the basic agenda of Turkey-Iran relations in the 1990s; in the first period of issue Iran was not interested the danger of matter. Moreover, there were some claims about that Iran was supporting some terrorist groups against Turkish and Iraqi troops (Görçün, 2008:204). However, when the same threat was valid on Iranian lands against the Iran government, the partnership on this issue had become indispensable for the security of both states.

The 2000s were the most active period of Turkey-Iran relations. Political change in Turkey by the hegemonic triumph for Justice and Development Party (JDP) and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was an indication of Turkey's foreign policy's change. In Iran, presidential period of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was for the footsteps of Iran's foreign policy, too. In particular, in the base of Iran's nuclear program, the state has become one of most important actors of global politics (Elik, 2011:248). In this changing period of Turkey and Iran, these states have affiliated to each other and started to understand their moves, plans, attitudes and expectations.

The 2000s have triggering effect on Turkey and Iran's role on the international politics. Iran's nuclear development and Turkey's relative enlarging influence area on the Middle East decide the direction of their relations. At the same time, Iran's nuclear program is a handle for Turkey and Iran to increase the level of their relations.

### **3. A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF NUCLEAR ISSUES IN IRAN-TURKEY RELATIONS**

The beginning of nuclear relations between Turkey and Iran depends on the first attempts about this issue in 2009. Turkey's cooperation call for any states, which would help Turkey during the nuclear system building process, had reached a result and Iran had accepted to work together with Turkey. Iran had seen Turkey's call a legitimation move for its own nuclear program against the US and the EU (Porter 2014:119). It would be a great beginning to use Turkey, as a part of nuclear development practices of Iran and Turkey would become nuclear power in the international area. However, Turkey's expectations were not about legitimating Iran's practices; it was about providing a nuclear energy support for Turkey's energy needs. Turkey had also imagined assisting for the peace process of nuclear disagreement between the West and Iran; Turkey's expectations were close to a complete agreement between the regional and international actors of that matter (Sezgin, 2013:78).

In this manner, Iran and Turkey came closer to each other towards the end of 2009. Sides decided to draw a window for their cooperation in the nuclear issues. However, Iran and Turkey's approaches to create cooperation for nuclear practices in peaceful mean had seemed like a logical and a useful political convergence for Brazil. Actually, Brazil was a surprise for

Iran-Turkey convergence; because Brazil is on the South America continent and there was no reason to join the cooperation like this. Nevertheless, former Brazil President Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva had improved Brazil’s capacity in domestic area and had developed country’s influence in the international politics. At the same time, Brazil had become a potential nuclear program developer. So, Brazil had chosen Iran-Turkey cooperation as a possible attempt to enlarge Brazil’s influence area in the international politics and in the nuclear issues (Topak, 2013:710).

Thus, Brazil, Iran and Turkey carried their political agreement to the legal sphere and the sides signed “Uranium-Swamp Deal” (Tehran Declaration) on May 17, 2010. The agreement text were including Iran’s acceptance of restriction on uranium enrichment program, cooperation with third party states and assistance to the other sides of agreement text (Porter, 2014:132). Uranium-Swamp Deal, which, was seen a serious attempt for building of agreement process on Iran’s nuclear matters for some, did not create the expected positive effect on the Western states’ policies (Ürküt and Sarı, 2009:210-211); even Russia preferred to stay as neutral for that deal. In the end, the cooperation between Brazil, Iran and Turkey could not go further that Erdogan, Ahmadinejad and Lula imagined.

After a short time period that deal was signed by Brazil, Iran and Turkey, in UN Security Council, permanent members of Council US, France, China, Russia and England decided for embargo on Iran despite of Turkey’s counter vote. Turkey had supported its deal partner by voting negative against embargo; however, the decision was made by majority vote (Akbaş and Baş, 2013:34).

There were two basic reasons of Uranium-Swamp Deal’ failure for the US and the others’ embargo decision on Iran after Uranium-Swamp Deal. First, the US, as being dominant power of nuclear issue in the international politics, had seen Iran as a direct interlocutor; Turkey could assume just a mediator role and more of it would cause a crisis for American policies on the Middle East and specifically Iran. On the other hand, Brazil’s increasing popularity between developing countries of the world by using nuclear program trump was an indirect threat for US’s regional and international interests (Gelinoğlu, 2013:138). That is why US had encouraged its allies in the West wing and in UN Security Council to apply embargo on Iran. That embargo attempt was a message for both Brazil and Turkey at the same time.

The other reason of reaction from Western side was about the concerns on Turkey’s relations with its Western allies. There was a belief on the issue that Turkey had changed its foreign policy’s direction and had started to recede from its natural alliance in the West. At truth, it was not just a belief; it was a concern for the West to see both Brazil and Turkey, which are rising-ones of developing countries, as being a part of Uranium-Swamp Deal (Gelinoğlu, 2013:140). In particular, Turkey’s role on deal had caused a disturbance; because Turkey was always a good and a loyal ally for the West. That position and role of Turkey was not compatible with its long-termed Western policies.

In the end, embargo decisions, political pressure on Turkey and American policies directives for Turkish policies caused a cancelation for Uranium-Swamp Deal after a short time period that deal was signed. Turkey Prime Minister Erdogan declared that Uranium-Swamp Deal would not become successful without the support P5, which is also called “Wien Group States”. Turkey’s attitude was a sign of Western pressure on Turkey’s decision-making process for Uranium-Swamp Deal and relations with Iran on nuclear issues (Sezgin, 2013:82).

In 2012, although Iran shelved some energy talks with Turkey, the address of nuclear deal meeting between P5+1 states and Iran was Istanbul. Iran chose Istanbul as an important and a strategic point for the positive progress of negotiations. Turkey’s mediator role was a reason for trust on achievement of deals in the Iran side and Istanbul was chosen as the center of nuclear talks. At the same time, the EU and the American side supported the host role of Turkey. As a first step for the nuclear talks between P5+1 states and Iran was very successful and promising for future (Akbaş and Baş, 2013:34-35). In the end of the meetings, after the failure of Uranium-Swamp Deal period, Iran-Turkey relations precluded for a new era of region’s future.

After this failure in nuclear issues, Iran and Turkey’s relations met a deadlock in 2012 and 2013. In particular, Iran preferred to shelve the relations with Turkey specifically in energy issues. Some energy agreements were cancelled and the future plans for the energy transfer from Iran to Turkey delay to discuss in a next time period (Adibelli, 2013:221). Iran’s reaction was tough against Turkey; because Turkey’s role in the Uranium-Swamp Deal had changed after the pressure by the Western allies of country and Turkey could not decide due to its own foreign policy priorities and interests. According to the Iran authorities, Turkey had chosen the chaos for international and regional politics.

For the current time, Iran is ready to discuss the energy deals with Turkey after the temporary success of P5+1 meeting. Iran has faith for Turkey’s support more than ever and Iran does not want to lose a business chain in energy issues against Russia; because, the traffic between Turkey and Russia about energy issues has accelerated in the last years and Iran is close to lose Turkey as a potential and a loyal customer. To keep Turkey’s current customer position, Iran may compromise in the energy deals for Turkey and Iran may convince Turkey about Syria matter for a peaceful solution including the expectations of both Bashar al-Assad and Syrian dissidents. It all depends on Iran’s attitude on nuclear deal with P5+1 states and Iran’s viewpoint on Turkey’s approaches on regional and international politics. Current Prime Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoglu has a moderate approach on the relations with Iran and his approaches will be able to keep Turkey and Iran closes each other.

The April 2015 nuclear deal with Iran will not bring peace on region, because with the lifting embargo, integration of Iran with World will escalate. This new economic stance could causes allocate resource to regional problem. Iran will be

manipulated to region more strongly. This scenario will not bring peace on both World and Middle East. Execution of the Contract April 2015 nuclear deal with Iran still being debated in terms of both republicans in senate (majority) and radicals group in Iran. The strong groups in both USA and Iran could change the direction of flow in a different way. Also Israel and regional countries such as Saudi Arabia watch the developments like a hawk.

#### 4. IRAN-TURKEY RELATIONS AFTER ARAB SPRING

Arab Spring was a sudden explosion for the Middle Eastern politics. States of the region had not expected a chain effect about this issue and it had taken time to understand the dimensions of incidents and who were the specific sides of that process. However, the situation like Arab Spring was not coincidence or staggering for the regional states in the Middle East (Uzun, 2013:149) like Iran and Turkey. Historical experiences both countries made the situation easier to understand. It was clear to see that Iran and Turkey were the states, which reacted fast and consciously to the matter.

At the beginning of Arab Spring, some states like Turkey took advantage of the complicated situation in the region and some leaders like Erdogan increased their popularity. Erdogan has become a role model for the new era's Arab leaders after Arab Spring. Turkey's approaches on the Arab Spring period were important role model for the Arab states in chaos (Sarıkaya, 2012:42). The developments in the Arabian lands between the years of 2009 and 2013 have served the benefit of Turkey to improve its political identity on the minds of Arabian authorities and people. Turkey was so temperate and friendly to the Arab Spring martyrs; Turkey's mercy and helpful attitudes worked the interest of Turkey's positive image in the Middle East. Turkey has still advantage of those days' good relations with the regional states, which met the pressure of Arab Spring.

Two countries' viewpoints regarding to Arab Spring are different from each other. Turkish motivations in field of democracy and strong economy would be a role model for regional countries especially period of 2002 to Arab Spring. Turkey gave positive image to Arab countries regarding to international security, and impressive economic growth. Due instable domestic and foreign policy situation damaged role model perception of Turkey in terms of especially Arab countries. Hence Turkey's engagement is more limited than Iran's, engagements and Turkey rhetoric is louder than its actions. Actually when consider of national power of countries (Iran Turkey), Turkey certainly the superior power compared to other two countries.

Iran was also supportive for Arab Spring process; in the Iran side, Arab Spring was evaluated a revolutionary movement and rebellion wave against American and Zionist policies of the West on the Middle East (Uzun, 2013:150). This approach of Iran made the country a side of Arab Spring process. Some part of Iran society supported the Arab Spring rebellion attempts and the Arab Spring's rebellious side was seen Iran against Ahmadinejad's authority. However, those attempts were too weak to change the system, ideology and leader in the country. On the other hand, although Iran was a supportive side of Arab Spring, in the practice, Iran stayed away to communicate the dissident sides against the current authority in the Arabian countries during the Arab Spring period and that attitude of Iran had showed the country as "insincere" to react against the illegal and dictatorship administrations in the Arab geography (Aras, 2013:3). Ayatollah Khamenei has called Arab Spring an "Islamic awakening" against Israel and the United States (Aljazeera 2011). Iran uses the recent Arab revolutions as an opportunity to establish alliances with countries whose former dictators had written off any sort of relationship with the Islamic Republic. This is one of main reason to struggle between Iran and Arabia. Saudis see Shiite populations within or near its borders as an intimidation to its stability. Therefore Turkey's role in the Middle East has changed dramatically after Arab uprising for Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Iran influences to region increasingly continue conducted with military activities in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. Furthermore the elimination or struggle of the Sunni extremist groups in Syria and Iraq by Iran (Qaidaari 2015) gave opportunity to dominate region against to United States, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

While Iran maintains its influence on the basin from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean with its deep-rooted history and state traditions - the Shiite Hezbollah structuring in Iraq (the Shiite structuring in the body of the state and the support of the Shiite militia), Syria (the Assad government and the fighters in Syria), and Lebanon on one hand and its support to Hamas dominating in Gaza on the other- , its influence on the Shiite current in Bahrain and Yemen in the Gulf area makes itself felt throughout the Middle East. The fact that Houthis fighting to overthrow the Sunnite government supported by Saudi Arabia in Yemen are supported by Iran on the Shiite side is openly accepted by the Iranian government. In order to reduce the costs and the risks, Iran continues the power struggle in the regions through the indirect support it provides to militia forces instead of establishing a direct war strategy.

In this chaos environment, although they have similar approaches about the Arab Spring, just one issue has divided Iran and Turkey. Syria's continuing civil war and Assad regime is the basic dissident issue between the sides. The Shia belief of Iran and Assad family made their relations always active and powerful; it was the same for Erdogan and Bashar al-Assad's relations (Barkey, 2012:153). However, Arab Spring and Syria civil war has changed the dimension of relations between Turkey and Syria. While Iran is so supportive to keep Assad's position on the top of Syria, Turkey expects a new era in Syria without Bashar al-Assad (Uzun, 2013:152-153). In a critical issue like this Turkey is with American thesis to rebuild Syria, but Iran does not think about a new era in Syria without Bashar al-Assad's presence and authority. This matter has a separating role in Iran-Turkey relations for the current political process between the sides.

For the near future, there are two basic points in the probable scenario of Iran Turkey relations. First of these points is related the transition period of Iran's nuclear program. The meetings with P5+1 state were in good form between the years

Of 2013-2014. If this good form is kept, Iran may find a permanent role for itself in the international politics. Indirectly, the relations of Iran and Turkey may be evaluated as harmless. When the Uranium-Swamp Deal was signed, the convergence of Iran and Turkey had been seen as a regional threat for NATO and Turkey's role in the West wing. However, now, Turkey has a critical role for the West wing and Iran. This positive view will be able to strengthen the bond of Iran-Turkey relations. Turkey needs that strengthening for its energy needs at first and the benefit of its multidimensional international policy strategy in the second phase. Perhaps, Iran is the only left state to work together in peace for Turkey. Iran also needs Turkey to make a strong political connection for crisis and chaos periods of the Middle East, which never ends.

The other basic point of probable scenario in Iran Turkey relations is the future of Middle East related Arab Spring. Basically, Iran and Turkey are separated in Syria matter. Discussions on regime change make the situation harder to find a permanent solution. On the other hand, Iran is firstly in search for the leadership of Shia population of the region and Turkey is in search for a general leadership and director role on the region. Turkey seems like closer to its targets than Iran, but there are still dissident states and armed forces against Turkey's leadership in the Middle East. Despite of these differences and conflicts, Turkey and Iran has a serious common point; Israel's aggressive and threatening attitude poses problems for both states. In particular, Iran is in a serious contention with Israel and Israeli authorities do not avoid of threatening Iran in the specific terms when international politics' tension is high. Israel has still serious problems with Turkey since Mavi Marmara ship attack in 2010; Turkey has not still forgotten the tragedy and Israel's irreconcilable attitude in Palestine matter. That is why; even a simple common point is enough to bring Iran and Turkey together. After Iraq's division, Syria's civil war and Arab Spring's destructive effects have provided Iran and Turkey a possible and a compulsory cooperation in the regional politics.

## 5. COMPARATIVE VIEWS OF ANKARA AND TEHRAN TO EACH OTHER

For a good understanding on Iran-Turkey relations, it is a need to understand the current approaches of Ankara and Tehran to each other. Despite of current matters and disagreements, there are still issues to discuss between the sides and their relations' dimensions are effective for the future of Middle East; both states have determinative roles for the first time in their history for the political structure of region.

In Ankara, after the change of Prime Minister Chair, former Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become the President of Turkey Republic; his successor has become former Minister of Foreign Affairs. This is just a replacement between two important figures of JD: The mentality and the approaches of JDP and its ideology are in the same direction. It means that there will be no change for the foreign policy of JDP government and directly Turkey. The same situation is valid for Turkey's foreign policy approach on Iran.

Ankara has always seen Tehran as a possible ally in the Middle East politics. Turkey's perception on Iran was about that Iran has been the natural ally of Turkey in the Middle East since the 1990s. In particular, after Turkey's problematic relations with Israel and Israel's illegal operations on Palestine have encouraged Turkey to build a permanent and a strong alliance. Uranium-Swamp Deal was the first step of that, but it did not work that both sides expected. Although there was a serious disagreement for a long time period between two states, they are aware of that their alliance about nuclear and the other political issue will be the determinative facts of regional and indirectly the international politics (Larrabee and Nader, 2013:28).

The US and the EU do not accept even Iran to be a part of international politics; Turkey's cooperation and mediator role make the agreement with Iran an indispensable for the US and the EU. On the other hand, Ankara has now direct and active relations with its neighbors; this active policy keeps the relations with Tehran alive. If there is a problem and a disagreement between the side, Ankara and Tehran's relation has potential to reach the solution faster than ever. Today, Turkey's energy need is only the thing to find solution in their relations and there was not any progress for the solution in the last days (Tamçelik, 2014:167).

After Iran Islam Revolution Iran had not preferred to choose Turkey as a potential ally in the region; however, the negative effect of Iran-Iraq War had made Turkey as the best option to cooperate during the war. Since the day Turkey assisted Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, Iran did not want to lose the support of Turkey. Perhaps, there were difference between the religious approaches and the regional political ideas of Iran and Turkey, but Iran did not change the positive policy on Turkey until the current time. Turkey is a historical partner for Iran and their relations depend on the mutual interests on the regional politics; beside, their destiny on the international politics is the same (Sandıklı and Emeklier 2012:76). Basic reason of that is about Iran and Turkey's potential regional leadership sharing in the Middle East and in the world for the future.

Despite of positive situation between Tehran and Ankara, Turkey's solid relations with the West, especially the US, is a disturbing fact for Iran's positive approaches. While Turkey's membership to NATO and NATO's protection project against Russia and Iran make Turkey a possible area to locate the missiles, Iran opposes this project and threatens Turkey indirectly by threatening NATO's decisions. At the same time, Turkey has unstable attitude between the cooperation with NATO or Iran. This unstable attitude of Turkey disturbs Iran; Tehran wants Turkey as a stable and a constant partner in the international politics (Sinkaya, 2012:152).

Iran has always needed a reliable partner, especially in the Middle East politics and Iran is always ready for a strong cooperation. At the same time, Iran has been always in seek for a regional partner like Russia and Syria; however, these

states' different expectations and plans on the Middle East have showed them as wrong options. Iran has still partnership with Russia and Syria, but those partnerships are not related the future plans of Tehran (Patrikarakos, 2013:283). In compared to Russia and Syria, Turkey seems like more effective and more reliable partner except the failure of Uranium-Swamp Deal.

For future plans in nuclear issues, Tehran needs support of Turkey again more than the other states in the Middle East; Turkey may break the pressure chain of the West on Iran. On the other side, Iran does not have any intention to give up the nuclear program. Moreover, Iran wants to be a part of Turkey's nuclear development process. Although Ankara does not have any certain decision about futures nuclear program, Iran tries to make Turkey's decision and program clearer in nuclear issues. There some differences between the expectations of Turkey and Iran from the nuclear programs; while Iran plans to be a nuclear world power, Turkey expects to answer the energy expectations of the country. However, despite of these differences, Tehran believes in finding a common point about nuclear issues with Iran.

No doubt, Iran's current nuclear potential is an ongoing debate for the Middle East politics and international political actors. Iran does not have any intention to leave its nuclear progress and the agreement with the P5+1 state did not mean a limitation, it was just like an agreed text. So, Iran is still active to develop its uranium enrichment practices. This persistent attitude of Iran makes the states alone in the world politics, but Russia's proximity to Iran on economy and military areas means a serious support in the international area. On the other hand, Iran has support different states in the different parts of world like China and Venezuela. Iran is not weak as much as in the past compared to the first period of nuclear debates.

The current support to Iran is so encouraging for the country; however, Iran needs more than this support and Turkey is the only states to provide that support. Turkey's geopolitical situation and mediator role for this issue until the meeting between P5+1 countries and Iran was effective to remove the foe image of Iran; Turkey was successful as the "bridge" state in this process at least. Surely, Iran had mistrust on Turkey after corruption of Uranium-Swamp Deal; it is a bad legacy for Turkey in the relationship with Iran since the last period of Ahmadinejad administration. Turkey was very willing to build nuclear partnership with Iran and Brazil by signing the agreement, but Turkey's alliance with the US and ongoing membership negotiations with the EU were effective reasons and obligations for corruption of Uranium-Swamp Deal. This unstable attitude of Turkey had reminded Khomeini's admonition to Turkey about the relationship with Iran in the 1980s.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Today, there is a visible improvement in Turkey-Iran relations after Iran's new President Hassan Rouhani's leadership: As being a realist and reformist leader Rouhani is open to develop the dimensions of Turkey-Iran relations; because Rouhani is aware of that the relations of Turkey and Iran are candidate to decide the future of Middle East politics in the near future. That is why Rouhani does not think about to lose Turkey's alliance in a sharp process during the nuclear talks with P5+1 states.

Even though both countries foreign policies regarding to Middle East are not close each other, Turkey's importance for Iran is not limited with the nuclear issues; Turkey means more than that. Turkey's problematic relations with Israel is a great chance for Iran; if there is a serious pressure from Israel on Iran, Turkey may be a potential ally to reduce the level of Israel's threats. Some security treatments were signed between Turkey and Iran in the last few years and Iran's basic purpose to keep Turkey as a neutral state during a probable wartime by those agreements. On the other hand, after the terrorist threat of ISIS on Syrian and Iraqi lands, the complicated political and military area has disturbed Iran near the borderline; that is why the country needs a reliable ally to trust in this period.

Turkey seems like the best option for the US to design the Middle East after Arab Spring period. Turkey's Muslim and conservative population, secular mentality and historical bond with the Middle Eastern countries bring Turkey a valuable and an indispensable regional role. Iran authorities are aware of Turkey's current and future role for the Western policies; this awareness makes the relations necessary even there is a disagreement about nuclear issues and reconstruction of Syria. While Turkey is against Bashar al-Assad's presence in Syria, Iran is not completely against Assad's role because of Assad's representative role on Shia population. The Syria matter locates in the current political relations of Turkey and Iran. However, the Syria issue does not have priority for Iran; Turkey's cooperation means a lot for Iran's existing policies and future plans to survive in the Middle East politics against the US and Israel.

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