

Significance of Turkey-Brazil Nuclear Deal with Iran

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With the participation of the foreign ministers of Turkey and Brazil along with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Iran has signed a joint declaration on May 17, 2010 with Brazil and Turkey "in which Iran agreed to send low-enriched uranium to Turkey in return for enriched fuel for a research reactor."¹ This joint declaration was considered a very serious one by specialists closely following the nuclear negotiations. However, instead of responding positively to the agreement, the US and the overall reaction of the West had fixated on making sanctions against Iran a reality, although the content of the deal was what the US sought from Iran.² This has materialized itself with the new UN Security Council decision which brings new sanctions on Iran. On June 9, 2010, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1929, imposing a complete arms embargo on Iran, travel bans on certain Iranian figures, banned Iran from any activities related to ballistic missiles, the freezing of all assets to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, and Iran Shipping Lines, and to inspect all Iranian cargo or financial institutions, such as banks, on their territory.³

Turkey-Brazil deal has implications much more beyond merely being related to the Iranian nuclear crisis. It has implications for global politics, for now and in future, and requires a deep and categorical analysis. Only within this context, one may condemn or appreciate the joint efforts of Turkey and Brazil. Both Turkey and Brazil are emerging powers in their regions from economic and political point of view and started to exert their influences in global arenas. Brazil is part of the unique tri-lateral cooperation initiated in 2003 with India and South Africa, called India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), whereas Turkey has been cited as the rising star of the 21st century in the Muslim world by deepening its democratic credentials and opening up new horizons especially in the Middle East. The aim here is not to discuss the political and economic developments in Brazil and Turkey in detail, however, to present a perspective on the possible implications of their joint declaration with Iran on the future of the middle-sized state activism in international politics at local, regional and global levels.

From a local perspective, Turkey-Brazil deal has confirmed one thing that Iranians will not concede any power that has an inclination to speak to Iranians from above. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu frequently argued that the %60 of the negotiations in any conflict is the psychology and environment of negotiations and atmosphere, while 20% is methodological

¹ For the full-text of the declaration, see http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8686728.stm (20 July 2010).

² See Obama's Letter to Lula Regarding Brazil-Iran-Turkey Nuclear Negotiations dated 20 April 2010, available at <http://www.politicaexterna.com/archives/11023#axzz0pB5f3OCQ> (20 July 2010).

³ See the UN resolution, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm> (20 July 2010).

and the remaining 20% is the content.⁴ Turkey and Brazil have not talked to Iran as if Iran is to comply something, but the atmosphere was more friendly and the aim was to convince Iranians to the importance of such a deal for global security and regional politics. Moreover, Turkey and Brazil have not spoken to Iran through the power hierarchy of existing global international system, rather they have spoken to their counterpart as 'equals'.⁵ It was this atmosphere that defined and facilitated to get a deal with Iran, not the content. Because it is, by and large, the same content that the IAEA offered Iran in 2006. Here, some may argue the changing climate of international politics as something that may have played a facilitator role for the timing. While this may be true, it is difficult to measure how effective was the climate change considering that in 2006 there were more talks on the military option about the possible solution than today. Contrary, one may claim that the global atmosphere has changed in a way the Iranians wish because in 2010 there are less hard power talks against Iran than before. Even it is possible to argue that current situation in Afghanistan and Iraq is forcing the west and the US to be less effective on Iran.

Especially since the end of the Cold War, regional re-configurations are on the way anywhere in the world. It is a process of re-definition of the regional parameters, leaders, equals and the influences. Brazil has tried to contribute this regional re-configuration in Latin America by creating a new discourse based on centre-left politics without clashing with the neoliberal values. Although rivals like Venezuela has questioned Brazil's new re-configuration at political and discursive level, there is a general consensus that Brazil is the key player in Latin America and has been the face of newly emerging Latin America in global politics.

Similar observations can be made about Turkey in its immediate region. From a pariah in the Middle East for a long time, Turkey now has transformed itself, to one of the most important player in the region at economic, political and discursive level. Strengthening relations with Syria, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other players along with a strong relations with Israel (until recently), transformed Turkey a place where even rivals can visit and talk very frankly. Turkey's reconciliation efforts in the domestic politics of Iraq and Lebanon, championing for a just solution in the Palestinian issue and mediation role between Syria and Israel in 2008 have been the few examples of Turkey's re-integration with the region. At discursive level, Islamic transformation Turkey's ruling elite from a conservative outlook to an accommodative one has also been closely followed by the Islamic movements in many countries not only in the region but also in overall Islamic world.

How viable will be the path that Turkey and Brazil have taken in their regions is remain to be seen, but with the nuclear deal with Iran, they have increased their level of interaction to create a new discourse. They went on to craft a new discourse which may be called as 'second option' in solving the global issues. The Iranian nuclear deal is a candidate to be the first effort

⁴ See Jonny Dymond, 'Turkey FM Davutoglu embraces mediation role', *BBC News*, December 3, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8393516.stm> (21 July 2010).

⁵ See Graham Fuller, 'Brazil and Turkey Shift Global Politics', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol 27, No 3, summer 2010, p.24.

to create a *political* discourse on a global issue, which is different, solution-oriented, diplomacy-based and fair in its engagement comparing with many examples of the western involvements. It is also an effort to solve a non-western issue by non-western powers. In that sense, it is unique and has possibility to pave the way in the creation of a new discourse and self-confidence in the non-western world for their engagements in global conflicts.

The most important implication for Turkey-Brazil deal is expected to be seen at global level. It is not because of the nuclear issue itself, rather the doors that has opened. During the Cold War, middle-sized powers had two options: align with one bloc or keep quite in its own region with a low profile. When the leverage of Cold War parameters has changed in early 1990s, middle-sized states have engaged a redefinition of their roles in global politics. They were freed from the Cold War restrictions but they also had to assume the responsibility in their regions and beyond.

Until early 2000s, mostly due to domestic political instabilities, the middle-sized states could not able to craft a new position in global economic and political reconfiguration. However, especially through the World Trade Organization's Cancun meeting and subsequent Doha Talks, they found the ways to exert their voice being heard in global economic arena. They asked for a fair trade, expressed their displeasure for restriction against non-western states and subsidies in the west. Out of this environment, the existence of a new organization called India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) was not surprising simply due to fact that there was an urgent need to express the new rising powers' economic demands for a better share from global economy. The IBSA is a pioneering organizational example connecting three continents by establishing a tri-lateral organization. It has also contributed to economic interaction between member countries. However, it was, in essence, not more than a new *economical* grouping. It has some political aspirations, but it has been very careful not to upset global powers at political level. In many aspects, Turkey-Brazil deal should be seen as an extension of inroads taken by middle-sized state in global affairs. Nevertheless, this has been the first inroad directly related to the *political* and *discursive* arenas, which were usually left to the western power. Considering the fact that the western power has tried to ignore the deal with various reasons is quite interesting despite their intensive efforts to settle down the Iranians nuclear crisis. It is also important here to note that while Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan both had tried their best to actually succeed in their negotiations with Iran, especially Washington was publicly expecting their certain failure, and even hoped for.⁶

⁶ Fuller, p.23.

Turkey-Brazil deal also opened a door to debate the inefficiencies of international institutions and the general global legitimacy crisis in the post-Cold War context more generally in a political context. They contributed directly to debates and the role of emerging powers in a multi-polar and multilateral world.⁷ The deal has also stressed that if a new international system is to be established and the economic and political problems in the current system are to be solved, diplomacy could constitute a milestone not only in Iranian nuclear issue but to all. In short, it is possible to argue that Turkey-Brazil deal has upgraded the level of involvement and the engagement of the middle-sized states in global politics. It has changed the discourse from benefiting economic changes in the system to a political one.

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⁷ See Taha Ozhan, 'Multilateralism in foreign policy and nuclear swap deal', *Foreign Policy*, June 3, 2010, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/03/multilateralism_in_foreign_policy_and_nuclear_swap_deal

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