

*Strategic asymmetries in the East-Mediterranean region.  
Turkey, Syria, Iran*

por el

Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Giancarlo Elia Valori

The current situation of the Iranian axis towards Syria and Turkey stems from an analysis – somehow symmetrical – that the three Middle East Islamic governments made after the end of the U.S. and Western presence in Iraq<sup>1</sup>.

For Turkey, the Iraqi issue is closely interwoven with the dynamic of Kurdish movements.



In [http://gdb.rferl.org/4B03E0EF-796B-4139-A0FF-6550F9DD1A8D\\_mw800\\_mh600.gif](http://gdb.rferl.org/4B03E0EF-796B-4139-A0FF-6550F9DD1A8D_mw800_mh600.gif)

1. See The Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, Charleston, BiblioLife, 2008

The PKK isolation in the area will become virtually complete and Turkey will be in a position to rebuild a corridor of allies ranging from Anatolia to Central Asia if the following events occur: the Turkish government succeeds in separating Masud Barzani's Kurds from the PKK ones – as has happened so far; the issue of the “protection” of the Turkish minority in Kirkuk is solved in a peaceful way; Turkey, which has opened its consulate in Erbil (in the wake of the same action taken by Iran) keeps the promise of constitutionalising the non-PKK Kurdish minority in the Turkish Parliament; finally the economic link between the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq and Turkey gets even closer<sup>2</sup>. This is exactly what can be defined as the Turkish government's *Grand Strategy*. Turkey needs to “act as China”, namely combine a geopolitics of multipolarism and a self-propelled economic growth enabling it to build a stable regional hegemony.

From the strictly strategic viewpoint, Turkey wishes to extend its “strategic depth” in Asia, as Pakistan – which is located at the other edge of the Central-South Asian system – wants to consider Afghanistan as a territorial reserve and an area to manage a possible conflict with India. The proposals made in 2006 by the Pakistani *Prime Minister* Musharraf to his Indian opposite number, Manmohan Singh, in the framework of the *Composite Dialogue Process* of SAARC, the *South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation*<sup>3</sup>, are somehow symmetrical to the ones that Turkey is making in the framework of its penetration into Central Asia. For Pakistan and India, the issue lies in dividing the Jammu-and-Kashmir into seven regions<sup>4</sup>, whereas – as we have already noted for the Iraqi Kurdish State - for Turkey the major issue lies in creating a sort of strategic continuity and depth from Anatolia towards Azerbaijan – an area of Turkish civilisation and ethnic group - Iran, Syria and the non-jihadist Sunni minorities of Central Asia, through the Afghan borders up to Pakistan, the Sunni Islamic State which has a nuclear arsenal<sup>5</sup>.

2. See *Turkey and Iraq's Kurds: Loving Thy Neighbour* in <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/news/turkey-and-iraqs-kurds-loving-thy-neighbor>

3. See the data on the website of the Association, <http://www.saarc-sec.org>

4. See G. Parthasarathy, *India-Pakistan Bilateral and Nuclear Equations in a Volatile Regional Environment*, in <http://www.cprindia.org/papersupload/1217317742-India%20Pakistan%20Relations%20in%20a%20Volatile%20Regional%20Environment%20.pdf>

5. Joshua W. Walker, *Learning Strategic Depth, Implications of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Doctrine*, in “Inside Turkey”, July 2007

The *pipelines* network is not the goal of this project, but one of its prerequisites. Turkey wants economic development to become a great regional power, which can repeat the glories of the Ottoman Empire, and not the other way round. The U.S. and NATO-ISAF presence in Afghanistan is, on the one hand, a factor blocking this project, whereas, on the other, it enables Iran, Turkey and Syria to have a wide leeway and an area for autonomously managing local crises, considering that – also with a view to reducing costs - the United States must avoid their Armed Forces' *overstretching* and the opening of war fronts, or anyway military contrasts, for their troops in Afghanistan<sup>6</sup>.

The U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan had been started to defeat the *Taliban*, allied with *Al Qaeda*, and to break the strategic continuity between Pakistan, in particular its autonomous tribal areas, and the Afghani insurgency. The result is that, precisely thanks to the United States, Iran witnesses the elimination of its major enemy, namely the Salafite and Jihadist Sunni rebellion in Afghanistan. Therefore it can freely move towards the Persian Gulf and the Old Middle East, thus expanding its links with Turkey and Syria “behind the U.S. lines”, as well as manage the Shia majority of Iraqi voters. Finally it can be present with a small group of *Revolutionary Guards* in the Afghani guerrilla warfare, re-establish links with the old Pakistani enemy<sup>7</sup> and isolate the Gulf petromonarchies, and Saudi Arabia in particular, through an agreement with Turkey. For many Iranian leaders, the U.S. war in Iraq was designed to isolate the U.S. Saudi ally from Iranian pressures and to reach maritime control over the Iranian lines of communication in the Persian Gulf<sup>8</sup>.

---

6. See F. Harris, *US Army is "too stretched to defeat rebels"* in <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/northamerica/usa/1508853/US-army-is-too-stretched-to-defeat-Iraq-rebels.html>; with reference to the same issues in Afghanistan, see <http://www.gawkk.com/afghanistan-overstretching-u-s-military/discuss>.

7. See Shah Salam, *Iran-Pakistan Relations: Political and Strategic Dimensions*, IDSA, Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses, New Delhi, 2004.

8. Suzanne Maloney, *How the Iraq War has Empowered Iran*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 2008.



The Jammu-and-Kashmir, in <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/jammuandkashmir/jammuandkashmir-road-map.jpg>



See <http://media.economist.com/images/20090718/CEU9083.gif>

In other words, while in the Balkan wars from 1991 to 1995 and until the 1995 Dayton agreements the United States had imposed – in that case with the German support for Slovenia's and Croatia's independence - a *dissociation* of ethnic minorities in small states so as to avoid blocking the strategic continuity between Western Europe and the Russian Federation and avoid Russia exerting a credible *leverage* with its Slav allies in the Balkans, currently this state and jihadist *dissociation* policy is carried out by the Islamic middle powers in the crisis area stretching from the *Federally Administered Territories* between Pakistan and Afghanistan up to Central Anatolia and the Lebanon.

While fostering this process, Russia has recovered vertically (from Georgia to Egypt) the strategic potential it had lost horizontally after the Balkan crisis and Kosovo's independence – which was the time when Russia “opened its eyes” on the U.S. *Grand Strategy* in the region<sup>9</sup> - and, with the political management of the price and supply of hydrocarbons, imitates China which, on the contrary, has managed its own economic and geopolitical growth through its “oil” and the manpower controlled by the Party-State.

Nevertheless, with reference to the Turkish geopolitics after the 9/11 attack - that the analyst Soner Cagaptay deems to be unreasonably polarised between “the West vs. the Rest”, thus obliging Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP to reach a pan-Muslim solidarity which, if not preserved, would alienate most voters' support for that Party<sup>10</sup> - the major issue is the relationship between Turkey and Iran. Turkey has two criteria for restructuring its relations with the Shia revolution's Iran: the economic criterion, which mainly regards Iran's wide domestic market that is little penetrated by Western companies for political reasons<sup>11</sup>, and the more strictly strategic and military criterion, resulting from Iran's civilian and military nuclearisation<sup>12</sup>.

---

9. See *Moscow threatens Force over Kosovo*, 11 February 2008 in <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=44203&sectionid=351020602> and *Putin Calls Kosovo Independence a “Terrible Precedent”*, in [www.eubusiness.com](http://www.eubusiness.com) area search.

10. Soner Cagaptay, *Turkey's Transformation under the AKP, III, Solidarity with Anti-Western and Islamist Regimes*, “Hurriyet”, 18 April 2010, see <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey8217s-transformation-under-akp-iii-solidarity-with-anti-western-and-islamist-regimes-2010-04-18>

11. See Lionel Beehner, *What Economic Sanctions Mean for Iran's Economy*, Washington D.C., Council on Foreign Relations, 2006, in [http://www.cfr.org/publication/10590/what\\_sanctions\\_mean\\_for\\_irans\\_economy.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/10590/what_sanctions_mean_for_irans_economy.html)

12. See Stephen Blank, *Iran's Nuclear Program Modifies Turkish Strategy and Policy*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2006, in [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org) area search.

The closure of the Turkish air space to Israeli aircraft meets two Turkish aims: creating a favourable climate for its more or less “moderate” Islamist public and dissuade Iran from including Turkey in the list of regional targets for a limited nuclear attack, which seems to be the specific doctrine of the Iranian nuclear system.

For the Russian Federation, this is a *win-win* operation, just to use the Game Theory criteria.

Russia sells technologically advanced weapons to Turkey<sup>13</sup>, particularly the S-300 systems and probably the S-400 ones, after blocking the transfer of these missile structures to Iran.



A surface-to-air US-300 missile, in [http://www.javno.com/slike/slike\\_3/r1/g2008/m12/y190666889561974.jpg](http://www.javno.com/slike/slike_3/r1/g2008/m12/y190666889561974.jpg)



A Chinese S-300 missile, in <http://archive.newsmax.com/images/stories/sa10-2.jpg>

13. See [http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Iran\\_out\\_but\\_Russia\\_eyes\\_Turkey\\_for\\_S-300\\_999.html](http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Iran_out_but_Russia_eyes_Turkey_for_S-300_999.html)



A S-400 missile, in <http://img.youtube.com/vi/gLWsvqS64zA/0.jpg>

This means that Russia creeps into the NATO *Eastern Flank*, in Turkey, with a view to determining the Western strategic balance in the Mediterranean as a factor of exchange and pressure on the Atlantic Alliance in Central Europe and the Baltic region, and also creates credible pressure mechanisms with Iran, which enable Russia to manage its nuclear cooperation with Iran with the greatest *leverage* vis-à-vis the Shia Republic.



NATO missile network, in <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2010/100315B.html>

As early as 2005 the NATO BMD strategy has envisaged a missile defence network of the Alliance's military installations; an AM structure to defend peoples and infrastructure, as well as a series of bilateral agreements between the United States and the individual NATO Member States, especially in Eastern Europe, to *deploy* smart research-protection systems both for forces and resources<sup>14</sup>.

In 2010 the Russian Federation succeeded in stopping the positioning of the ELINT and BMD networks in Tchechnia and Poland, but the Turkish issue remains open.

In fact, should Erdogan's government accept the NATO BMD network – though revised in its applications and doctrines to adapt to the Turkish strategies of “strategic depth” towards Central Asia, which after all are not fully consistent with the NATO doctrines for the same area of the “Silk Road”<sup>15</sup> - the Iranian reaction, and subsequently the Russian reaction, will be bound to be harsh and go as far as creating an Iranian specific doctrine on the use of tactical nuclear weapons against the Turkish territory.

Conversely, should Turkey accept the Russian weapon system, Russia will be in a position to manage its role as seller of technologies and fissile material to Iran, with a view to avoiding a future nuclear *clash* along its Southern borders which, *inter alia*, would flare up Georgia, the starting point of the Russian Federation's new terrestrial and economic geopolitics.

Nevertheless, if Turkey could manage a limited plan of NATO BMD bases on its territory, the risk of an Iranian NBC attack would increase, but it could use the Alliance's defence potential to penetrate more safely into the terrestrial axis of its new “strategic depth” towards Central Asia.

Furthermore, if Turkey succeeded in fostering the Russian Federation's exit towards the Central-East Mediterranean region, this could mean the real *death of the NATO Southern Flank*, but could also establish a role as new *power broker* for Russia in the area, which could benefit all the Islamic and non-Islamic countries of the region, both in *win-win* and *zero sum game* logics.

---

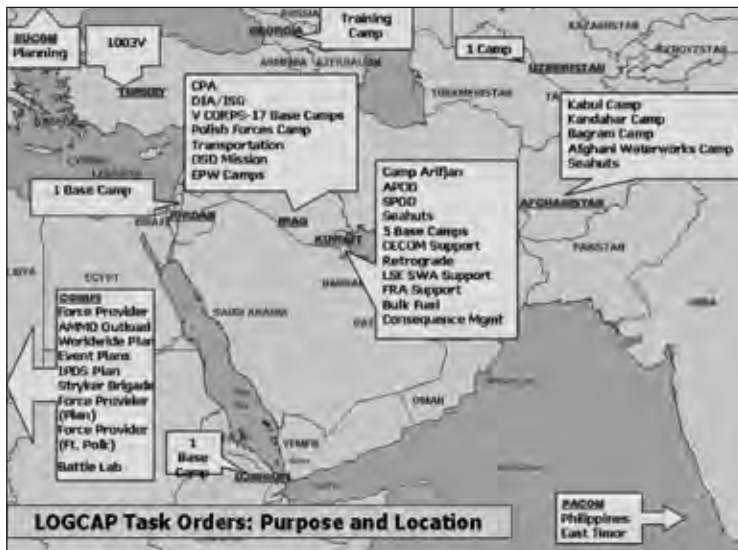
14. See [http://www.wmdinsights.com/114/114\\_EU1\\_SRI\\_EasternEurope.htm](http://www.wmdinsights.com/114/114_EU1_SRI_EasternEurope.htm)

15. See <http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/05/09/global-military-bloc-finalizes-21st-century-strategic-doctrine/>





The impossibility for the U.S.-European combined networks to intercept the Russian ICBMs, in <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/missile/bmd-europe.pdf>



See the strategic coordination of the U.S.-NATO bases in the area, in [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org) area search.



NATO-U.S. nuclear bases in Europe, in [http://www.globalresearch.ca/articlePictures/nato\\_baseamap.jpeg](http://www.globalresearch.ca/articlePictures/nato_baseamap.jpeg)

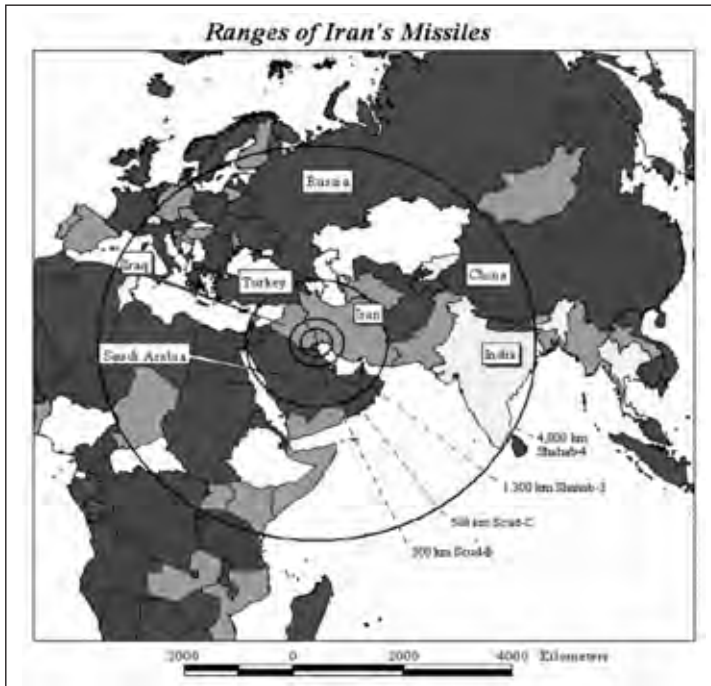
As can be easily noted, if the strategic continuity with NATO “fails” in Turkey, both the Russian Federation and Iran will be in a position to directly threaten the whole Eurasian peninsula, as well as some parts of Russia and its most faithful Eastern allies, and therefore decide the level of strategic *threat, irrespective of the size and development of the NBC arsenal reached by Iran.*

This would enable Iran to decide the timing and place of its nuclear *deployment* and the best strategic mix to increase the impact of its threat both on the European Union and NATO and, finally, on Israel.

The Iranian propaganda for nuclear weapons against the “Zionist entity” is the mechanism to reach the greatest support, loyalty and coverage for its nuclear programme<sup>16</sup>. Thanks to the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic rhetoric, Iran points to a target that most “Arab crowds” accept – thus allowing to *de facto* exclude the United States and most European Union from the Israeli-Iranian bilateral tensions since they would

16. M. Kibaroglu, B. Caglar, *Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey*, “Middle East Policy”, vol. XV, issue no. 4, 2008.

not certainly die for Jerusalem, the “Jewish” Gdansk - and finally silence the neighbouring Islamic governments which could be directly threatened by the Iranian N+BC project.



In [http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/congress/2006\\_rpt/iran-report\\_060822v2-06.jpg](http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/congress/2006_rpt/iran-report_060822v2-06.jpg)

According to Turkey, the somehow optimal solution could be the “Middle East denuclearisation”<sup>17</sup>.

This, however, would obviously disrupt not only the NBC but also the conventional defensive doctrine of Israel, according to which nuclear weapons are the strategic factor to rebalance the negative asymmetries of the Jewish State’s military system: scarce population compared to its enemy countries; scarce or even non-existent stra-

17. See the statements made by Gen. Ozkok in 2005, in [www.tsk.mil.tr](http://www.tsk.mil.tr)

tegic depth; impossibility to separate the counterforce and counter-resource enemy attacks, except for few rare cases<sup>18</sup>.

The Shia leaders' search for the Iranian military-civilian nuclear potential is fully rational if – as is highly likely – Iran has a subtle and somehow innovative doctrine of the use of nuclear weapons<sup>19</sup>, which are employed as deterrence vis-à-vis the West and for the isolation and subsequent possible destruction (or cutting down to size) of the “Zionist entity”, which would allow the Iranian strategic continuity towards Egypt and the Horn of Africa and the playing down of the OPEC top oil producer, namely Saudi Arabia. This would also allow to finally exclude the Russian Federation from the Middle East region and regulate the hydrocarbon management cycles towards the European Union and the West, as well as directly threaten – on the basis of a strategic mix – the Persian Gulf passageways and the presence of India or other powers in the Asian seas up to the South-Pacific<sup>20</sup>.

Finally, precisely the psychopolitical (and operational) management of the Iranian nuclear research to identify and hit the Jewish “small Satan”, in particular, by pushing away the U.S. “great Satan”<sup>21</sup>, enables the Iranian leaders to choose the best timing and the most effective mechanism to conceal the strategic aims and results of nuclear research, considering that Israel has not signed the NPT and this enables the Shia revolution leaders to have a *bargaining* power vis-à-vis the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) far greater than the power they could have by devising a dual NBC system for long-range strategic targets which, however, do not rule out the attack against the Jewish State, but indeed incorporate it in a wider and more complex strategy.

With reference to the link between Turkey and Iran at economic level, the issue lies in hydrocarbons.

---

18. The doctrine, though not existing formally, can be inferred and debated thanks to the work by Warner Farr, *The Third Temple's Holy of Holies: Israel's Nuclear Weapons*, The Counterproliferation Paper Series, Air War College, Maxwell Air Base, 1999.

19. See Ray Takeyh, *Iran's Nuclear Calculations*, World Policy Journal, MIT Press, 2003.

20. A. Cordesman, A. Seitz, *Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction, Doctrine, Policy and Command*, Washington D.C., CSIS, 2009 in [http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090112\\_iran\\_wmd\\_policy.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090112_iran_wmd_policy.pdf)

21. In Shia esotericism the two forms of “evil” regard the “night devil” (the big one) and the “day devil” (the small one). It is not the same division that can be found in the Koran, in the separation between *Shaytan* and *'Iblis*.

If Turkey wants to continue its quick economic development, in a context of international financial crisis, its interest is bound to focus on Iran, as oil exporter all over the world<sup>22</sup>.

The exports of hydrocarbons enable Iran to fund its nuclear civilian-military project and allow the *zero sum* exchange between the acceptance of its missile and nuclear system for neighbouring countries and the opening of its domestic market to Turkish exports. Finally, they enable Iran to carry out its *psyops* actions both against Israel and in providing a sort of ideological coverage to its “peaceful” nuclear programme.

The first integrated agreement for natural gas – the first energy source for Turkey – was signed in 1996 by the *leader* of the “Welfare Party” (*Refah Partisi*), Erbakan, exactly two years before its dissolution by the Constitutional Court for not having complied with the obligation of “secularism” enshrined in the Kemalist Constitution.

The volume of imports was often called into question by the two parties and there were ongoing contrasts about prices and the quality of gas imports<sup>23</sup>.

All bilateral negotiations were revised in the *Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU) of November 2008, while the fundamental strategic choice of the new negotiations between Turkey and Iran materialised: the exclusion of the U.S. dollar as currency for bilateral settlements<sup>24</sup>.

Therefore, if Iran can use the Turkish network to bring its natural gas towards the European Union, it will have a further favourable factor for a strategic *leverage* in its NBC security policy and fight against the Jewish State and certainly both the European governments and most of their peoples will be willing to support the anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist Iranian policy in exchange for the Iranian gas.

---

22. *Iran Energy Data*, DOE, in <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Iran/Oil.html>

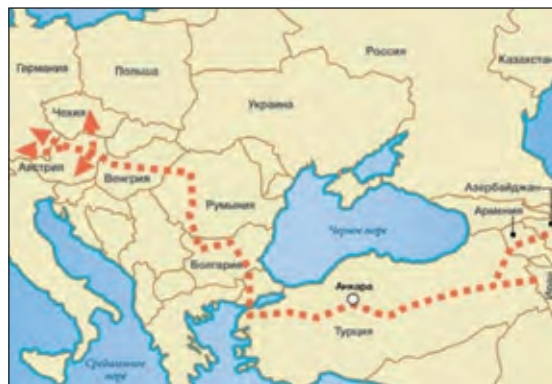
23. E. Kinnander, *The Turkish-Iranian Gas Relationship, Politically Successful, Commercially Problematic*, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, January 2010.

24. See <http://www.irantracker.org/analysis/iran-turkey-economic-relations-what-their-rapid-growth-means-iran%E2%80%99s-nuclear-program>



The pipeline from Iran to Turkey, which will be subsequently connected with the Iranian-Pakistani network, in <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Iran/images/IPI%20w-source%20included.gif>

Iran can choose the NABUCCO, the *Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP)* or the Persian one. Also Azerbaijan has chosen NABUCCO.



The NABUCCO network, in [http://en.ng.ru/energy/2008-03-11/6\\_nabucco.html](http://en.ng.ru/energy/2008-03-11/6_nabucco.html)



The TAP, which can be extended both to NABUCCO and the other ones, such as BTP, strongly wanted by the United States in [http://www.trans-adriatic-pipeline.com/news/newsletter\\_.html](http://www.trans-adriatic-pipeline.com/news/newsletter_.html)



The *Persian Pipeline*, in <http://gscpgroup.com/images/persianpipeline8.jpg>

The financial operations will be carried out by Indian and Chinese banks.

A further significant factor at geopolitical level has been the statement whereby the Turkish side of *South Pars*, the Iranian gas field, will be wholly funded by internal resources of the Turkish capital market.

The only variables to be put in the strategic equation of the Iranian natural gas towards Turkey regard the needs of the Iranian internal market, which are very great and subsidised by the government, and the average price set in the MoU, that Turkey deems still too high compared to the average quality of the gas sold.

Moreover, global recession has reduced the hydrocarbon demand in Turkey, while the real Turkish strategic interest is to use the MoU for natural gas as a mediation factor to re-establish a contact between Iran, E.U. and the United States which, after, all cannot take place without the ongoing strategic break between Turkey and Israel.

The time factor is the core of the issue. Should Turkey and its AKP government, which has devised the “zero problem” policy line with neighbouring countries, record lower support for Erdogan’s Party in the 2011 elections<sup>25</sup>, the good neighbourhood policy between Turkey and Iran would be the first *reverse strategy* of a future government excluding the AKP.

For Iran, the strategic equation remains the one already set. On the one hand, Iran support and will ever more support Karzai’s government in Afghanistan<sup>26</sup>. Iran is the fourth largest investor in Karzai’s country<sup>27</sup>, supports the *Taliban* and is clearly interested in opposing and then replacing the United States, after the end of the U.S. war effort.

The Iranian strategic mechanism is designed to gain (tacitly or not) the support of the whole Sunni and Shia Arab world, pending an attack against its nuclear sites by Israel, the United States, or both of them.

As in the past, on the one hand, Iran supports the Islamic insurgency - such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houti rebellion in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, the *Taliban* themselves – and, on the other, it develops a wide alliance between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and the Central Asian Islamic countries, with a view to expelling the United States from the *broader Middle East*, by using the nuclear threat and, in particular, the possibility of hitting what President Ahmadinejad considers the weak point of the U.S.-E.U. system in the region, namely the State of Israel.

---

25. See. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=akp-votes-in-decline-survey-says-2009-11-02>

26. See B. Bhadrakumar, *Karzai’s China-Iran Alliance riles Obama*, in [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/LC30Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LC30Df01.html)

27. <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8610260669>



The variable to be defined is the use or not of a tactical nuclear *strike* against the Jewish State, with a view to forcing the United States and the West to move away from the Persian Gulf-broader Middle East strategic system or simply threatening it<sup>28</sup>.

The other variable of the Iranian strategic formula is to make essential for the United States to accept Iran's role as regional power to solve the most important *issues* that the U.S. *Global War on Terror* has left unresolved: Afghanistan, where the Iranian role is inevitably remarkable; Iraq, where the Shia majority can change the Iranian policy line; Syria which, thanks to the Iranian support, can manage a friction policy vis-à-vis Israel and mediate the Lebanese stabilisation; Turkey itself which, on the basis of its *special relationship* with Iran, could oppose the NATO action in the Mediterranean and make the hydrocarbon supply very hard and uncertain for Europe.

For Iran, nuclear weapons are a political weapon and Israel is the weakest point of the Western relations system both at geopolitical and *psyops* levels.

This means that Iran's chances of using nuclear weapons may be very great in some phases of the asymmetrical and forced negotiations that Iran can hold with the United States and the European Union. These chances, however, may reduce drastically in the phases when Iran decides to use intermediate countries (Turkey and Syria itself) or resort to the economic and oil blackmail, on the basis of the model devised by OPEC (which Iran promoted together with Venezuela) during the *Yom Kippur* war, with the secret agreement between Sadat and the Saudi King reached immediately before the beginning of hostilities.

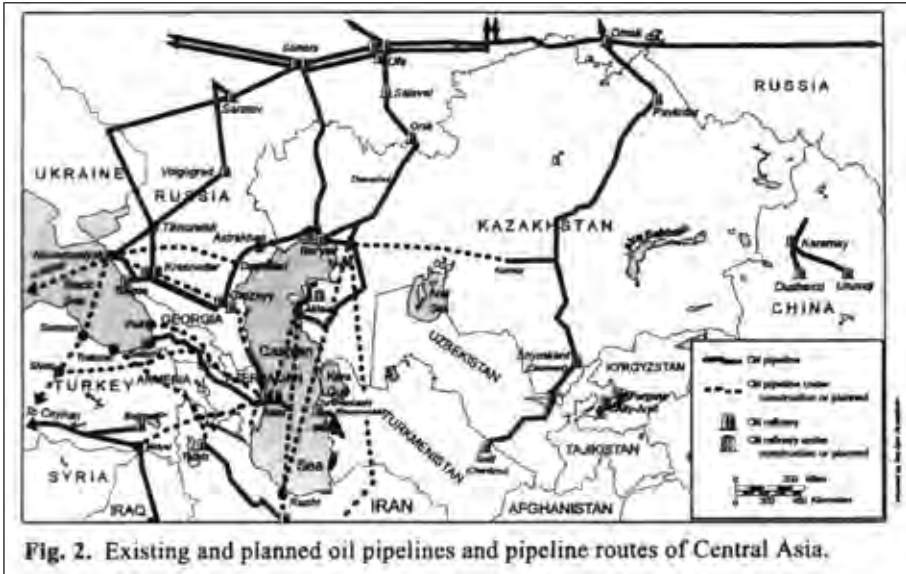


Sadat and the Saudi King, in [www.weeklyaram.org.en](http://www.weeklyaram.org.en)

---

28. *Iran to Surge to a Hegemonic Position in the Middle East without a Major War*, in [www.oilprice.com](http://www.oilprice.com) area search, 2 January 2010.

For the Russian Federation, Iran and Turkey the core of geoeconomic operations on hydrocarbons is Turkmenistan.



In <http://www1.american.edu/ted/turkmen.htm>

In 1992 GAZPROM established its ownership over the old Soviet *pipelines* and therefore limited the Caucasian Republic’s access to the European market<sup>29</sup>.

On the contrary, the alternative to this situation – that Vladimir Putin has reversed by fostering relations with Turkmenistan - sees Iran play the card of the Central-Asian republic’s extractive and commercial independence and try to combine the Turkmen and its resources, with a view to reaching such as a “critical mass” of natural gas for exports as to define a “seller market” vis-à-vis the European Union.

This is the reason why, in late 1990s, an agreement with Turkey was needed which – as indeed happened - could be both a final buyer and the inevitable axis for transporting gas to European markets.

29. Martha Brill Olcott, *International Gas Trade in Central Asia, Turkmenistan, Iran Russia and Afghanistan*, CESP, Stanford, Working Paper, issue no. 28, May 2004.

Iran funded 90% of the Korpedzhe-Kurt-Kai *pipeline*, which has been operational since December 1997.

In general strategic terms, Iran plays its role in Central Asia as geo-economic *pivot* of the hydrocarbon networks, by trying to eliminate the Russian Federation, where possible, and associate Turkey in this economic and strategic perspective.

Iran has an interest in the “divide and rule” strategy in Central Asia, by leaving Russia in the Georgian area and supporting a role, on an equal footing with Turkey, in the gas distribution market.

This operation enables Iran to acquire a role in the East to play it in the West: the highest strategic *leverage* on the E.U. energy market allows Iran to put pressures on the E.U. pro-Israeli countries, and hence increase the strategic gap between them and the Jewish State, until their likely leaving of Israel to its fate when Iran decides to “cut Israel down to size”, by means of a credible tactical nuclear threat combined with Hezb’allah and Hamas guerrilla warfare or conventional war, north and south of the Jewish State’s borders.

The massing of about 20,000 Hezbollah militants at the border between the Lebanon and Israel in mid-July 2010 is a clear sign of this “rear” – albeit “mass” - strategy of the Iranian Lebanese and Shia *proxy*<sup>30</sup>.

Hence an “Ankara-centered” scenario of Turkish foreign policy, as assumed by some U.S. analysts<sup>31</sup>, is not fully credible. Turkey is moving towards Mediterranean Europe and the E.U. and will continue to do so, as a function of a joint strategy with Iran. Hence the *win-win* exchange between Turkey’s accession to the European Union and its moving away from Iran is a strategic fallacy.

The more Turkey is entitled to a strategic *leverage vis-à-vis* the European Union, the more Turkey will be interested in preserving strong bilateral links with Iran.

---

30. See <http://www.debka.com/article/8905>

31. Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic, Turkey as a pivotal State in the Muslim World*, Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008.

Nevertheless – and here the U.S. analysts’ viewpoint can be shared – the more Turkey will be in a position to hold strong and firm negotiations with Iran, the more it will need support from the European Union and NATO, in particular<sup>32</sup>.

From this viewpoint, a management of the inevitable relations between Turkey and the European Union by Israel, acting as a “third party” and a broker, could create such a *linkage* between the Turkish issue and the Jewish State’s strategic needs as to stultify, in the long run, the effects of the *Mavi Marmara* jihadist operation<sup>33</sup>.

Clearly, a further, and certainly not minor, factor of the East-Mediterranean strategic system is Syria.

As is well-known, Syria has strong bilateral relations with Iran and the reasons are clear. Iran needs Syria to manage a strategic depth vis-à-vis both the Russian Federation and Turkey, which is well aware it will never have an interest in walking out of NATO, and hosts Atlantic Alliance weapon systems clearly targeted against Iran. Furthermore, Iran needs Syria not to control the Shia majority Iraqi area but the *whole* country and, after all, this is in line with Turkish needs to regionalise the Iraqi Kurdish region and separate Barzani’s regime and the PKK area. Finally, Iran is bound to have an outlet on the Mediterranean, which is provided by the Syrian ports and strategically rebalances the possible U.S., Saudi, NATO, or even Indian, pressure on the Persian Gulf.

Moreover, we must not forget that any Iranian policy against Israel gets credible only if the alliance with Syria allows to maximise the pressure, threat or joint terrorist or conventional actions by Syria and Iran against the Jewish State, starting from the Golan Heights that we hope no E.U. Member State will be willing to “assign” to Syria, since this would be tantamount to a real permission to invade Israel from the North-Eastern area. It would also allow to hold the whole Israeli central axis in check with the minimum deployment of forces on the field. Without Syria, the Iranian combined threat to NATO and Israel would be less credible.

---

32. Dietrich Jung, *Does Turkey Turn East?*, Odense, Center for Mellemøststudier, December 2009.

33. See Dr. Alon Ben Meir’s *Visit to Turkey*, 30.01.2010, in [www.sde.org.tr](http://www.sde.org.tr) area search.

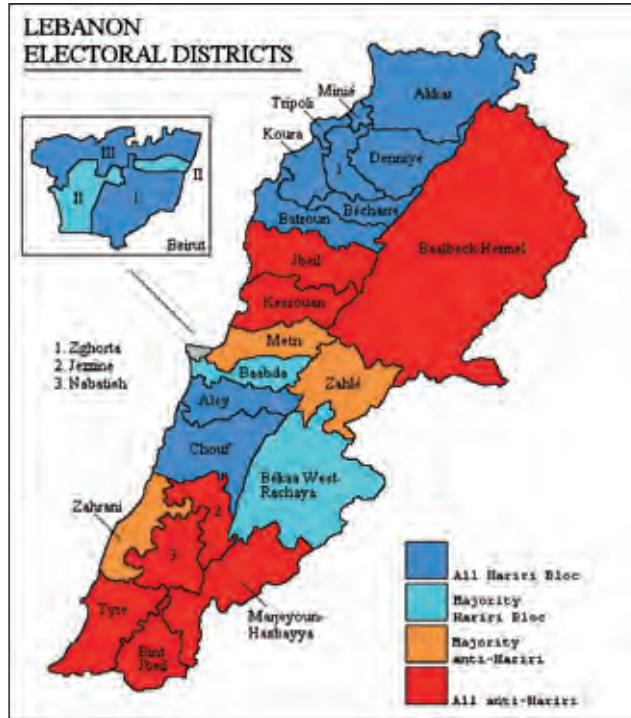


Syrian missile areas hit by the Israeli air forces in [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com) area search.

Iran and Syria have obliged the two Shia Lebanese groups, Amal and Hezbollah, to unite and this has created a Shia “critical mass” far greater than the military and political potential of the other ethnic and religious minorities in the Lebanon<sup>34</sup>.

Through Syria, Iran can rearm Hezbollah very quickly, and this would be unlikely if Syria and Iran were not so closely interwoven, as happened soon after the 2006 war with Israel. Furthermore, without the Iranian support, the Syrian economy could neither afford its military expenditure, which is decisive to keep the Assad family’s Baath Party in power, nor an acceptable standard of living for its people.

34. Michael Rubin, *The Enduring Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis*, December 2009, in [www.meforum.org](http://www.meforum.org) area search.



Shia voters in the Lebanon, in <http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/wp-content/gallery/lebanon2005/2005-lebanon-legislative-gif.gif>

The break between Iran and Syria is a strategic puzzle if the United States – as is happening with the Obama administration – think to replace the Iranian aid with the Western one and imagine that Bashar-el-Assad’s tokens of good will are signs heralding a reversal of front in Syria<sup>35</sup>.

Syria is like the Swiss soldiers of fortune of the Renaissance period, who survived by fighting the wars that others did not want to wage or could not manage directly.

Should the United States believe in Syria’s peace and neo-isolationism offers and reach the point that Bashar-el-Assad wants to reach<sup>36</sup>, namely the return of the Golan

35. Seymour Hersh, *Syria, Israel, and the Obama Administration*, “The New Yorker”, April 6, 2009.  
 36. Yassin Al-Haj Saleh, *Drivers of U.S. Syrian Relations Under the Obama Administration*, Washington D.C. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2009.

Heights to Syria, the break between the United States and Israel would be complete. Probably the ensuing consequences would be a virtually immediate Syrian action from the Golan Heights, an Hezbollah action from the rear areas in South Lebanon, before the territories on the Litani River controlled by the UNIFIL II peacekeeping force, and finally a tactical use or a credible threat to use nuclear weapons by Iran. As King Francis I said about King Charles V by referring to the Duchy of Milan, “I also want what my brother wants”.

The Gaza Strip area, inevitably less controlled by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), would rebel on its own or with “aid” from the sea and both the *Mavi Marmara* and the Libyan *Amalthea* ship affairs of mid-July 2010 seem to foreshadow this scenario.

Conversely, should the United States create the conditions for a limited clash with Iran, Syria would be crushed by military tension and could certainly not change front, but remain the “strategic depth” necessary for Iran to isolate the U.S. counter-force attacks on its territory and reach the Mediterranean, by directly threaten Israel and the NATO *Southern Flank* and finally force Turkey – thanks to the military pressure on Incirlik and the Turkish coasts - not to take part in the clash or even cooperate with the Iran-Syria axis.

On the contrary, a joint action carried out by the United States, Israel and Turkey - with the benign non-interference of Egypt, and characterised by a sequence of targeted actions scattered throughout the territory and a timing that Syria and Iran cannot understand – could change the Middle East strategic equation. This would correspond to a *strategic mimesis* in which NATO, the Jewish State and Turkey itself mime the geopolitical behaviour of the Syria-Iran system: actions of groups that cannot be directly referred to these States; control over timing instead of space; link between conventional military actions and deep guerrilla warfare; remote management of the regional *Grand Strategy* through the Israeli, NATO and U.S. nuclear threat. A *low-intensity war*; albeit with acute and unforeseeable clash peaks, and particularly a *non-orthodox war*; just to use the terminology used by the Atlantic Alliance during the *cold war*.

From another viewpoint, we need to study the economic effects that the support to the economy and the regime of the Assad family would have on Iran.

According to the data of December 2009, the Iranian (gross) foreign debt amounted to 18.73 billion U.S. dollars<sup>37</sup>, with a slight improvement as against the previous year. With a 15% inflation rate at January 2010 and a 2.6% economic growth rate expected for 2010, the Iranian country-system is bound to experience a structural economic crisis *with* or *without* the extra costs of the military-civilian nuclear system, which has already been partly completed.

The Shia Republic of Iran is a wholly *oil-dependent* economy. Natural gas and oil exports account for about 80% of total exports and are obviously the major source of currency reserves.

40% of government revenue come from oil and this implies the political and strategic need to bank on natural gas, with a view to acquire the currency reserves needed to manage the interplay between public expenditure, the religious *welfare* of the *bonyad*, namely the “foundations” supported by the various groups in power, and the extra costs of the civilian-military nuclear system<sup>38</sup>.

With a view to backing the expansion plan for the Iranian oil extraction - which will be focused on the fields of Azadegan, Jofeir (phase 1), Yadavaran (phase 1), Resalat, Azadegan Phase 1 North (all operated by Iranian national companies except for Yadavaran Phase 1 (NIOC and Sinopec) Jofeir (Belarusneft), Resalat (CNPC) and Azadegan, again with Chinese support, which will manage 5.1 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2015), strong financial support from abroad will be also needed<sup>39</sup>.

Hence, should Iran be able to “govern” the distribution of *pipelines* and run a policy as middle power in the region, also through its civilian-military nuclear system, the share of funds coming from abroad could be sufficient to define a policy marked by an optimal mix between the preservation of the religious *welfare*, the continuation of oil investment and the management of an Iranian preferential role in the OPEC framework.

---

37. See the IMF data, in [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org) area search.

38. Farrokh Zandi, *Iran's Economy in Crisis*, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto 2010.

39. EIA-DOE, *Country Analysis Briefs, Iran, January 2010* [www.eia-doe.gov](http://www.eia-doe.gov) area search.





The Iranian oil fields, in <http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/images/CCO20.gif>

Nevertheless, the crisis of Iran's oil production is far from being solved: currently the oil extraction has fallen to 3.7 million barrels, which is 5% below the OPEC assigned quota<sup>40</sup>.

It is worth recalling that, in 1974, Iran pumped 6.1 million barrels per day.

What is mainly lacking is investment in natural gas injection technologies for mature, depressurised, seemingly exhausted wells or wells close to exhaustion, which account for about 35% of the entire Iranian oil system.

40. The Financial Express, *The Looming Oil Crisis in Iran*, April 2007, and *Iran strikes Saudi Arabia as Oil Crisis deepens*, Adbusters, 14 May 2010, <https://www.adbusters.org/magazine/89/iran-strikes-saudi-arabia-oil-crisis-deepens.html>

Therefore, if the current level of investment persists – hence, as is likely, if China does not decide to play only the Iranian oil card, but diversifies its sources and, in the short term, prefers to invest in areas with “younger and less exploited” wells - oil production is expected to decrease at a 13% yearly rate and within 2020 Iran will turn into an oil net importer<sup>41</sup>.

With a view to preserving oil production at the 2008-2009 levels, nine billion U.S. dollars per year are needed, but we must consider that currently Iran’s investment for technological *upgrade* amount to roughly 3 billion U.S. dollars per year.

Therefore the Iranian civilian-military nuclear system is *double face*: on the one hand, it allows to produce sufficient energy to replace the extraction quotas which are lacking and it frees oil to be exported to the European Union and, on the other, it is a tool for: a) Iran’s hegemony over the Arab masses – and hence their governments; b) a geo-economic pressure towards Iraq, which could be encompassed in the Iranian extraction system, and towards Saudi Arabia and Kuwait; c) a threat to the United States and Israel for their activities in Central Asia and their relations with China; d) a *de facto* closure of the Persian Gulf space and the Syrian Mediterranean axis to the Russian Federation; e) a strategic threat – also only at geo-economic level – to the West (as a function of exchange and not market reasons) regarding the possible hitting of the Jewish State with nuclear attacks, which would seal the whole area between the old Middle East and the Persian Gulf for all the interests not subordinated to Iran; f) a geostrategic threat to manage the Afghan crisis which, if Iran had the nuclear bomb, would *de facto* be isolated from the U.S. and NATO system and fully out of control for ISAF and the United States.

A nuclear *win-win* game for all the issues still outstanding in Iran and its natural area of influence.

Iran’s internal consumption which, after all, is subsidised by the Iranian government, is rising as a result of the obvious increase of its population and for the basic preservation of the standard of living and income level of the past years: a 10-12% yearly growth rate of oil domestic consumption, with growing subsidies, thus excluding oil from exports, with a further extra cost<sup>42</sup>.

---

41. See Farrukh Zandi, *the same*.

42. See EIA-DOE, *Country Analysis Briefs, Iran*, the same.

Therefore Iran needs to quickly press ahead with the bomb: insofar as it succeeds in exploiting all the political, strategic, geoeconomic and military potential of its civilian-military nuclear system, it will be ever more able to avoid the economic decline which has long been besetting it.

Furthermore, if the Iranian nuclear threat against Israel works well and is soon put into practice, thanks to its *indirect strategies*, Iran will be in a position to manage the pressure on OPEC major oil producers, especially with Saudi Arabia, with a view to running a favourable oil price cycle and a quota management not penalising it.

Iran accounts for 15% of natural gas world reserves and it is the second top country owning the largest global *proven reserves* after Russia.

Nevertheless, here the *win-win* game turns into a “*zero sum game*” because if Iran invests in gas extraction, it will have no sufficient capital to update its oil system and viceversa.

The reform of subsidies<sup>43</sup> makes much liquidity available; it could foster inflation and place at the disposal of the “Turbans”, namely the religious managers of the Shia power, the resources with which to further the nuclear system. It could also selectively distribute resources to its voters and political *supporters*<sup>44</sup>.

The issue of Iranian government securities decided by President Ahmadinedjad in 2006 was really unsuccessful (there were virtually no bids in the auction sale), whereas the Egyptian, Qatari and Saudi securities have saturated the sovereign debt retail market throughout the Middle East<sup>45</sup>.

Therefore, Iran intends to reach the goal that cannot be achieved with the financial *soft power*, with what we can define as a “strategic distortion” of the oil market and the correlation of forces in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, or with the en-

---

43. See <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE64Q08S20100527>

44. See Alberto Negri, *Il Turbante e la Corona* (The Turban and the Crown), Naples, Marco Tropea, 2009. With reference to the link between the distribution of selective resources and elections, see. Marco Giaconi, *Il Costo della Politica* (The Cost of Politics), Milan, Franco Angeli, 2008.

45. See [http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary\\_0286-22522381\\_ITM](http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-22522381_ITM). Per la vendita del 2006, v. <http://regimechangeiran.blogspot.com/2006/09/no-government-bonds-sold.html>

hancement of its agenda through the nuclear threat to Israel and the “great Satan”, a threat which unites all the Arab “crowds” as, in the 9/11 terrorist attack, *Al Qaeda* had rallied the Islamic masses, by imposing its new agenda of the global and non-state *sword jihad*.

Iran’s sovereign risk is stable (B), worse than the Egyptian one (BB) and Bahrein (BBB), better than Iraq (CC), far worse than Kuwait (A) and worse than the Saudi one (BBB)<sup>46</sup>.

Furthermore, the Iranian government cost to stabilise its currency<sup>47</sup> ranges between 190 and 220 million U.S. dollars per day, more than the daily oil revenue (160 million U.S. dollars).

Therefore, if the *rial* tends to depreciate (by about 6% since December 2009)<sup>48</sup> and much “paper” is issued, the strategic reaction time for the direct and indirect use of the Iranian civilian-military nuclear system will be bound to step up.

Conversely, the price control policy implemented by President Ahmadinejad has further reduced Iran’s financial resources and the country has to add the costs for supporting the increased prices of many convenience goods.

At this juncture, an action against Israel and/or the United States could electrify Shia masses and made them forget the economic crisis or export the Iranian crisis to the region, with a sort of nuclear version of the classic *beggar-thy-neighbour* trade policy.

Moreover, a 40% real inflation rate is a way to force Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as the other Sunni Gulf countries, to significantly increase military expenditure. This reduces the *peace dividend* which had emerged in the Sunni region after the end of hostilities in Iraq and the U.S. presence in the Arabian peninsula and Afghanistan.

The Iranian Central Bank’s *Oil Stabilization Fund* system, which became public in 2005 after being created before the 9/11 attack, operates only on the Yemenite mo-

---

46. See <http://www.intelligencequarterly.com/2010/04/sovereign-ratings>

47. See the data in [www.cbi.ir](http://www.cbi.ir) area search.

48. See <http://blog.panorama.it/mondo/2010/06/24/iran-nuove-banconote-contro-linflazione>

bile phones and the Gulf Injazat Fund<sup>49</sup>, but now pumps liquidity for the internal system and has no longer sufficient capital for the operations designed to support the oil price cycle<sup>50</sup>.

There are no signs that – apart from the revenue resulting from the illegal trafficking network between Afghanistan and Iran along Iranian borders – the funds of the Iranian “Oil Stabilization Fund” are enough to manage the economic crisis and crude oil price fluctuations.

The Iranian government seems to bet on an oil barrel price below 70 U.S. dollars, which would allow a management of the Iranian OPEC reserves and a steady growth of currency imports<sup>51</sup>. The new Fund, which was of fundamental importance for the liquidity management operations between 2001 and 2008, is the “National Energy Fund” and it will invest in internal structure and the update of the oil network. As President Ahmadinejad stated, it is worth 23 billion U.S. dollars<sup>52</sup>. It will be the new financial tool of the Iranian system and the mainstay of its foreign and defence policy<sup>53</sup>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ahmadinejad', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned centrally on the page.

---

49. See <http://www.swfinstitute.org/fund/iran.php>

50. See <http://payvand.com/news/05/nov/1221.html>

51. See <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-03-11/iran-oil-fund-to-expand-if-crude-stays-above-65-update1-.html>

52. It shall acquire one fifth of oil “revenues”, in. <http://www.upstreamonline.com/live/article204440.ece>

53. [http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index\\_view.asp?code=203292](http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=203292)