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Energy, Economic and Diplomatic tights between BRICS and Iran

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1. INTRODUCTION

Iran holds a unique place in the study of the modern Middle East: it is a non-Arab country, deeply involved in the heart of the Arab world¹ (Bar S., 2004). As Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, Dr. Shmuel Bar, mentions: «*(Iran) is the sole Shiite regime and the active "exporter" of Islamic radicalism and terrorism, not only to Shiite, but also to Sunnite Islamic movements; and it is actively involved in attempts to disrupt the Israeli-Arab peace process*» (Bar S., 2004). According to Dr. Kenneth Katzman, Iran also has financially supported regional politicians and leaders. Tehran, also, poses significant challenges to U.S. policy, for instance, it provides direct material support to armed groups, some of which use terrorism to intimidate or retaliate against Israel or other regional opponents of Iran. Iran's armed support to Shiite-dominated allied governments, such as those of Syria and Iraq, has aggravated challenges from Sunni insurgent groups by fueling Sunni popular resentment (Katzman K., 2016). As Rachel Brandenburg mentions during the revolution's first decade, Iran's primary focus in the Arab-Israeli conflict was aiding and arming its Shiite brethren in Lebanon's new Hezbollah. But Tehran's involvement with the Sunni Palestinians deepened progressively with three major turning points: The Palestinian Liberation Organization's call for peace talks with Israel in 1988, the second intifada – or uprising – in 2000, and the election of Hamas in 2006 (Brandenburg R., 2016).

Iran is a country of particular interest as a regional power capable of creating high levels of tension in the sensitive area of the Persian Gulf. Iran, among other things, holds an advanced secret nuclear weapons program (Bar S., 2004). Iran refuses to be a state sponsoring terrorism, although it admits supporting Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran, however, claims that Hezbollah and Hamas are not terrorist organizations. Instead, Iran views them as "anti-imperialist movements". Lebanon, Syria and Russia characterize Hezbollah in the same way. Based on this distinction, Iran continues to provide Hezbollah with an estimated \$100 million annually training for funding and arms (Copeland E. T., Cook H. A., McCarthan M. L., 36:2010).

However, the Rouhani government is characterized by a more mediocre attitude. The election of Hassan Rouhani in June 2013 as Iran's new president has given the hope

among the world community that Iran will pursue a liberal (or moderate) foreign policy and that it could also resolve the nuclear issue. Hassan Rouhani's phone call to former US President, Barack Obama in September 2013, and the Geneva nuclear agreement show Iran's new political stance (M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, 2014). The contribution of the BRICS countries to Iran's nuclear program is of great importance. As will be seen below, the impact of the BRICS countries on the world does not only, focus on the economic sector. As noted by, Deputy Secretary-General and Director of the Foundation for Research, Peace and Development, Ji Ping: *«The impact of BRICS countries goes far beyond the economic arena. We have more say on international affairs, which has changed. Since the first day we gathered together, BRICS countries have upheld the purpose of safeguarding the interests of this organization and the interests of developing countries. It is our shared hope to change the unfair global economic and political system by tapping into the influence of BRICS. We all hope to create a favorable external environment and find a short cut to the solution of problems by capitalizing on our strength in unity»* (Ping J., 2013).

1. According to the American Senator from Arizona and the Republican candidate in the 2008 presidential election, John McCain: *«The Iranian regime is the real focus of radical Islamic extremism in the world, it continues to finance terrorism and incites chaos in his campaign for sovereignty over the void of the American retreat (from the Middle East region)»*. Source: *The Washington Times*. Wednesday, 17th June 17, 2015

2. PURPOSE

Security decisions include a great deal of uncertainty, because policies are often cleared up with moderate and hard-line discussions, as is the case with the current Iranian leadership (Mintz A., DeRouen K. Jr., 2010). Iran, a country with such rich culture is once again in the news. In February 2016, the parliamentary elections in Iran, which were the first since the signing of the historic agreement between the great powers and Iran, on the Tehran nuclear program, was fulfilled. In this tremendous agreement, between Iran and the great powers, what was the role of emerging economies, also known as BRICS?

The purpose of this paper is to present and study the contribution of the BRICS countries in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and to analyze Iran's relations with each BRICS state (concerning the nuclear program and their economic ties). Furthermore, this paper will point out the doubts that the western countries and the BRICS³ have, whether Iran would use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes or develop nuclear weapons. Although, on the one hand, the West has a negative attitude towards Tehran's nuclear program, on the other, the BRICS countries maintain a more positive attitude. For a better understanding of Iran's actions and the BRICS that were taken during the UN conferences, we will first analyze, the close trade relations between the BRICS and Iran, and investigate what all these countries above mentioned, expect from their relations, both in the economic and diplomatic fields.

2. *BRICS is an informal group of states comprising the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170315130617/http://www.infobrics.org:80/page/history-of-brics/>)

3. THE HISTORY OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM (1957-2007). BRICS' CONTRIBUTION TO IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Iran's nuclear program began shortly before the 1960s when the US had encouraged the Shah to develop its own nuclear program. In 1957, the US and Iran signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement as part of the "Atomic Energy for Peace". In the same year, the Institute of Nuclear Physics, under the auspices of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007) (brilliantmaps.com/cento) and Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, takes a personal interest in nuclear power. The US provides Iran with a research reactor and also sells many shielded nuclear radiation containment chambers. It is worth noting that the idea of Iran's nuclear weapons was initially the US Army General Staff when on February 11, 1960, they proposed to place nuclear weapons on Iran *"as part of its close ties with the US"*. The USA, in the coming years, supplies Iran with enriched uranium and research reactors (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007).

The US was not the only western country that supported - in terms of hardware and know-how - Tehran's nuclear program. In November 1974, Iran signed agreements to buy two 1200 MWe pressurized water reactor (PWRs) from the German company Kraftwerk Union (a Siemens subsidiary) to install in Bourse and two other 900 MWe reactors from the French company Framatome, to install in the Bandar Abbas (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007). According to those contracts, France and Germany would provide enriched uranium for initial loading and recharging for ten years. The French reactors are to be manufactured by permission from Westinghouse USA (Andrews W. G, and Hoffmann S., 1981). Before the Islamic Revolution in Iran broke out, US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger and Iranian Finance Minister Houshang Ansari signed a broad trade agreement to buy 8 reactors valued at \$15 billion (Fuhrmann M., 2008). The US Atomic Energy Commission agrees to supply Iran with fuel for two 1,200 MWe light water reactors and signs an interim agreement to supply fuel for the additional six reactors with a total power of 8,000 MWe (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007).

The Islamic Revolution brings a (temporary) end to Tehran's nuclear program. However, the issue of Iran's nuclear program reappears both at the end of the eight-year

Iran-Iraq conflict and at the end of the Cold War. Iran, in order to recover its nuclear program, is turning to Russian know-how. In July 1989, Iranian President Akbar Hasemi Rafsanjani signed a pact on the 10-point Iran-Russia cooperation for peaceful use of "*nuclear materials and related equipment*", and soon followed several defense agreements with Russia, mainly to buy Russian weapons systems (MiG-29 and Su-24 warships, Kilo class submarines) (Roger H., 2004). Three years later, the Russians agreed to rebuild the remains of the Bushehr reactor³ for "*... peaceful uses of atomic energy*". At that time, Iran had also China's support for its newly emerging nuclear program. On September 19, 1993, China agrees to sell two 300MW Qinshan reactors as part of a project called Esteqlal for their installation at Darkhovin, located south of Ahvaz. It also provides a Tokamak HT-6B fusion reactor installed at the Azad University's Physical Plasma Research Center (Koch A., and Wolf J., 1998).

The US authorities observed the developments, notably Russia and China's help in rebuilding Tehran's nuclear program. In 1994 the Clinton government persuaded Beijing to stop nuclear aid to Iran. But Washington did not manage to persuade Moscow to do the same. Russian Ambassador to Iran Sergei Tretiakov confirmed that Russia would help Iran to complete the nuclear reactor at Bushehr, indicating that a preliminary agreement had been reached. In addition, on 21 March 1994, Russian experts began manufacturing the first 1000 MW plant in Bushehr. The Bushehr Nuclear Plant was scheduled to be completed in 4 years. In January 1995, Russian Atomic Energy Minister Viktor Mihailov signed a new \$800 million contract for the reconstruction of two other 1000 MW light water generators at Bushehr (Roger H., 2004).

According to British journalist, Roger Howard, Russian support has proved to be of great importance for the development of Iran's nuclear program. In particular, during Putin's presidency, Russia was strongly supported by the government to provide nuclear power reactors to Iran, partly because of the apparent economic ties⁴ and geo-strategic benefits (ie, sale of Russian weapons systems).

3. Bushehr reactor was bombarded by Saddam Hussein's Iraqi jets during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in six separate attacks (Reiter D., 2006:p.6)

4. Russia has earned \$1 billion, by developing the Bushehr project (Eldar D., 2002: p. 44)

The conflict with the West on Iran's nuclear program was worsening. Initially, the US has accused Iran of *"seeking the possession of weapons of mass destruction in spite of the decisions of the (International) Atomic Energy Commission"*. Shortly thereafter, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in its report in June 2003, argued that Iran failed to comply with the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) (Roger H., 2004).

In addition, in January 2006, the three European Nuclear Forces (EU3) (France, Germany, UK) cancelled the nuclear talks with Iran and argued that Tehran should be referred to the United Nations Security Council. In February 2005, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told America's European allies that: *«At this point, the military attack on Iran's nuclear program is not on the US agenda»*, but *«all the options on the table»* (Ritter S., 2005). Before the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, in 2006, the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council - plus Germany (P5 + 1) at a meeting in Paris, agreed to refer Iran's file to the UNSC (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007).

The Security Council, through Resolution 1696, Article 40 of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations:

1. Calls upon Iran without further delay to take the steps required by the IAEA Board of Governors in its resolution GOV/2006/14, which are essential to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful purpose of its nuclear programme and to resolve outstanding questions;

2. Demands, in this context, that Iran shall suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the IAEA ([iaea.org /res1696-2006](http://iaea.org/res1696-2006)).

The IAEA postponed the Iranian request for assistance in building heavy water research reactor in Arak (Kerr P., 2003). The technical meeting of the Board of Governors of the IAEA was split between the US and most of its allies in the EU, who feared that Iran could use the reactor to make fuel for a nuclear weapon (Gerami N. and Goldschmidt P., 9:2012). The members of the developing nations have argued that the Tehran exclusion request will be a precedent for denial of technical assistance to them for peaceful atomic energy programs. As the Western and developing countries failed to reach an agreement on Iran's request, they decided to postpone the decision for one year. IAEA chief Mohammed El Baradei said Iran had agreed to give access to archive and equipment inspectors at two of its nuclear facilities that it had agreed to let IAEA inspectors take

environmental samples from the equipment to a former military site in Lavizan. He also mentioned that Tehran has agreed to give inspectors access to records from a uranium enrichment plant in Natanz. ElBaradei welcomed the moves, but said that Iran needed to show more transparency on its nuclear program (Gerami N. and Goldschmidt P., 10:2012). After two months of tough negotiations, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 1737 on sanctions against Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment in order to force Tehran to return to negotiations and to clarify its nuclear ambitions. The resolution urges all countries to stop supplying Iran with materials and technology that could contribute to its nuclear and missile programs. It also freezes Iranian assets from 10 key companies and 12 people associated with these programs (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007).

Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Javad Zarif, denounced the council for imposing sanctions on Iran, whose facilities are under UN safeguards, while doing nothing about Israel, whose prime minister recently confirmed that it is a nuclear power. «*A nation is being punished for exercising its inalienable rights*» to develop nuclear energy, primarily at the behest of the US and Israel, «*which is apparently being rewarded today for having clandestinely developed and unlawfully possessed nuclear weapons*» Zarif said. Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismissed the resolution as illegal and invalid and stressed that Iran would continue her uranium enrichment programme under the supervision of the IAEA (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007). The UNSC unanimously approved Resolution 1747, imposing further sanctions on Iran, banning export of Iranian weapons and freezing the assets of 15 additional individuals and 13 organisations allegedly involved in Iran's nuclear and missile programmes and connected with the Revolutionary Guards (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007).

The Resolution also asks the IAEA to report within 60 days on whether Iran has suspended its efforts at enriching uranium or not. The resolution also stressed the importance of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, in an indirect reference to Israel's nuclear weapons. In a speech after the vote, the Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki made a defiant rebuttal to the Security Council, dismissing the sanctions as “unlawful, unnecessary and unjustifiable” and said they would have no effect. He also mentioned that: «*Iran does not seek confrontation nor does it want anything beyond its*

inalienable rights» and «I can assure you that pressure and intimidation will not change Iranian policy» (un.org./24/03/2007), (Ronen Y., 142:2010).

After extensive talks in Tehran between Iran and the UN's nuclear agency, both sides said that they have made progress on Iran's nuclear programme. In July the two sides announced a two-month arrangement aimed at clearing up outstanding questions and giving the agency better access to nuclear sites. After the talks in Tehran both said that they have agreed on a timeline for implementation. Olli Heinonen - deputy director of the International Atomic Energy Agency - was leading the talks on behalf of the IAEA. He described the two days of talks as "good, constructive". Since July's agreement, Iran has allowed the IAEA's inspectors to visit its heavy water research reactor at Arak, and has been holding talks with a UN technical team on guidelines for inspecting its uranium enrichment plant at Natanz (Dr. Farhang Jahanpour, 2007).

Chief U.S. delegate to the IAEA Gregory Schulte, however, described Tehran's new openness as *«clearly trying to take the attention from its continued development of bomb-making capabilities»*. In Washington, State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said that the US believed the Council *«must move forward as soon as possible with additional sanctions»*. But the US stance drew criticism, with some diplomats suggesting that Washington was trying to derail important progress in getting to the bottom of Iran's nuclear programme. In August 2007, IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, In an interview, told that : *«This is the first time Iran is ready to discuss all the outstanding issues which triggered the crisis in confidence»* and that *«It's a significant step»*. (Cohn M., 2011), (Sciolino E., and Broad J. W., 2007)

Representatives of the five permanent members of the UNSC - plus Germany (P5 + 1) met in London to discuss strengthening sanctions against Iran since the 3rd UN resolution, which failed to reach an agreement. The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs within the United States Department of State, Nicholas Burns, told that he *«was disappointed in China and in Russia»* which did not agree to tighter sanctions against Iran. Shortly before the meeting, in an interview with CNN, IAEA chief El Baradei said he had seen no indication of any diversion to Iran's peaceful nuclear program (iaea.org). Although the report's circulation was restricted, the full text of the report was published by a number of news agencies. The report pointed out that as far as the agency can determine, Iran has told the truth about its nuclear activities and its black market

purchases of centrifuge technology used to enrich uranium. However, ElBaradei added that he could not draw a definite conclusion on whether some activities had possible military aspects. He called on Iran to implement the Additional Protocol and to suspend uranium enrichment in keeping with the previous UNSC resolutions. In December of 2007, the permanent members of the Security Council met in Paris to discuss more punitive resolution against Iran, but failed to reach agreement, a French diplomat said (Dr. F. Jahanpour, 2007), (Roger H., 2004).

The decisions taken by the USA, China and Russia alliance were based on the theory of the balance of power theory (Realism school of thought), which assumes that avoiding hegemony is the prime objective of states or at least the major forces) and that maintaining a balance of power in the system is a basic means for that purpose. Based on this theory, powerful states create alliances against states that pose a threat to their interests, and especially to states seeking a hegemonic position in the global system. Thus, hegemonic states (such as the US) use their power to create a series of political and economic structures and norms of behavior that enhance the stability of the system while promoting their own security (Levy S. J., 354-355:2002). The fact that a Middle East country, which is rich in oil and gas (such as Iran), maintains good diplomatic and commercial relations with emerging economies (such as China, Russia and India), coupled with the possession of nuclear warheads, would put risking a balance in the region and would help shift the global economic influence from the G7 to the BRICS.

4. THE ROLE OF BRICS IN GLOBAL SECURITY

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was trying to establish a unipolar system where it would determine the actions of all the countries in accordance with the American national interests. But as the Head of Department for Work with Participants from the BRICS World Summit, Slonskaya Maria, refers to her article: «The Role of BRICS in Global Security» this initiative (by the USA): *«will fail because of a new phenomenon – a rise of several developing economies whose role in economic, financial and political spheres will be increasing by large rates. The world order will be transforming into a multipolar one. Soon, in the 2000s, a BRICS group will emerge that will encompass five quickly developing economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa»* (Slonskaya M., 2015).

International security is one of the main topics of the discussions within the leading organizations of the world including the BRICS. However, the main institutions that are responsible for maintaining peace and security do not correspond to the realities of the modern world. Most countries cannot or do not want to change this order because the current situation brings dividends and gives a lot of benefits and opportunities to impose their own rules of the game on others. The main feature of BRICS is that these countries, together, are willing to change the world (Slonskaya M., 2015).

Firstly, the global dimension.

The BRICS nations support the central role of the United Nations in maintaining and promoting peace and security all around the world. They declare that all peacekeeping and peacemaking activities (such as preventive deployments and postconflict peace-building) should be taken on the basis and in accordance with the UN Charter and universally recognized norms of International law. The BRICS countries advocate the adherence to such universal principles as respect for sovereignty, unity, independence, territorial integrity, non-aggression, equality (VII BRICS Summit: 2015 Ufa Declaration). The group also emphasizes the necessity of the comprehensive reform of the United Nations Organization (including the UNSC). With Russia and China holding the seats of the permanent members of the UNSC, India, Brazil and South Africa aspire to

play a more significant role. An evident conclusion is that the Security Council should be reformed, and Russia and China (as well as other permanent members) support these aspirations (Swart L., and Pace C., 2015). However, consensus on any reform of the Security Council was not found because of the unwillingness of P5 to lose their primacy⁵ and the uncertainty of the results of such a reform (India, Brazil and South Africa are approaching foreign policy differently than, what the Western countries do).

There are also some concerns that with more countries having a permanent seat in the UNSC, the decision-making process will be hampered (un.org/07/09/2013). According to the BRICS, in addition to UNSC, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank also need to reform. With the developing economies producing more than 50% of world GDP (BRICS members generate about 27% of world GDP at purchasing power parity, while China has surpassed the US in terms of this indicator), the BRICS combination hold only 15% of the voting rights in these two organizations. The reform of the IMF's quotas in 2009 includes the growth of emerging economies (BRIC) shares, minimizing the privileges of developed countries in the Governing Council, and introducing them to the mechanism of elected directors. In the meantime, this reform has not been implemented because the US Congress has not yet ratified it (Vestergaard J. and Wade R.H., 10:2014). According to American journalist, writer and academic of international politics at the American University of Washington, David Bosco: *«U.S. leaders aren't convinced that council reform is in the national interest. The United States has an awfully good deal on the Security Council. On many issues, it can use the council to help share burdens, amplify its voice, and endow policies it favors with the force of international law. When Washington doesn't find the council convenient, the veto power means it can work around the body without risking an official reprimand»* (Bosco D., 2015).

5. In public, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5 - China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the US) - claim they are open in expanding the members of the UNSC. However, they disagree on which countries should join new members of the (UNSC). Behind the scenes - China, Russia and the US (ie P3) - have effectively prevented the progress of joining new members in the UNSC. Source: Lydia Swart and Cile Pace - Center for UN Reform Education, 1st March 2015 (<http://www.centerforunreform.org/?q=node/629>)

One of the ways to alleviate the independence on the “Western-based and governed” institutions is the creation of alternative ones. The most brilliant example of such an approach is the New Development Bank and the Stock Exchange Consortium launched at the BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil in 2014. As Deputy Professor of Foreign Policy and International Cooperation at the Institute of Public Administration, Roman Andreeshev said at Pravda.Ru. «*BRICS, aims to become a direct competitor of both the World Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*» (Snytkova M., 2015). BRICS confirm the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They are in the process of adopting the UN Convention on International Terrorism, which will help to promote cooperation and support for the mitigation of terrorist activities. These states are also deeply concerned about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and an interest in strengthening the nuclear arms control mechanisms (and other Weapons of Mass Destruction). Among the issues that raise serious concerns are the problems of the Korean Peninsula, and the Iranian nuclear program (Uyanaev S., 2012). There are great prospects for cooperation in the *Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (Slonskaya M., 5:2015) through the development of joint programs and through the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which could become an important weapon control mechanism if it enters into force (it has been ratified so far by two BRICS countries (Russia and China). In addition, BRICS members are discussing the creation of the most effective system of international information security and cybercrime (Dr. Vyacheslav N., 2012).

In conclusion, with regard to the global security dimension, the role of the BRICS will be more and more active. Their cooperation on Nuclear Non-Dissemination and cyber-security issues is a stark proof that the BRICS is not just an international political organization of five states that will only cooperate in the economic and commercial spheres but are studying the possibility of how could they be more involved in global affairs in the future.

Second, the regional dimension

If we analyze the regional dimension we will get very controversial results. The BRICS is a diverse group which consists of three rich civilizations and two former colonies. Each of these countries has its own cultural traditions, endless territorial and

border disputes, religious and ethnic conflicts, rivalry in economic and political spheres – these countries seem to be absolutely incompatible. A lot of Russian and foreign experts and researchers argue that such a variety does not leave any chance for BRICS to become a really strong economic and political power which would be able to use its heft to influence global processes and reshape the world. However, this “incompatibility” may affect favourably and result in a reverse outcome (Slonskaya M., 6:2015). For example, China and India do not only cooperate in the commercial and economic spheres, but they are also likely to carry out joint initiatives in other areas, such as military cooperation and security issues, which are very sensitive to both. An example of their military co-operation was the joint counter-terrorist exercises of Indian and Chinese armed forces that ran from 16 to 27 November 2014 in the Indian city of Pune (Ramachandran S., 2014).

The reason these two countries work together to "fight terrorism" can be attributed to the Chinese government's concern about separatist aspirations among ethnic minorities in the country's border areas, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang. Resolved by the Chinese government to overcome turbulence and secessionist ambitions in these areas, the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) is willing to learn from the other countries' operational techniques to fight terrorism. In this context, the PLA is interested in learning from the experienced Indian army in dealing with terrorism, since it faced similar incidents of insurgency in the region of Jammu and Kashmir (Ramachandran S., 2014).

5. IRAN AND ENERGY POLICY

The global economy is going through an exemplary shift, from a western-dominated economic model to a more complex and multipolar. Consumption, production and innovation centers are no longer concentrated exclusively in Western economies, but there is a shift towards new economies on different continents, namely China, Russia, Brazil, India, and South Africa, called BRICS. One of the central issues for the future of this new coalition is energy security (Lodgaard S., 6:2012).

This concept is a top priority of policymakers not only in the West hemisphere, but also in countries of the economically emerging world in current and also coming decades. Global demand for primary energy will increase over the next few years, and based on international projections, hydrocarbons will still be the predominant source of energy. As a result, for both the West and the emerging economies, extensive energy relations with oil and gas-rich countries (excluding BRICS), such as OPEC countries in general, and Iran in particular, appear to be is very important. Iran as the second largest country in terms of combined fossil reserves, benefits an outstanding geo-economic position. Obviously, Iran would be able to play a prominent role in this respect. (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 1:2013). Security of energy supply is a top priority of policy makers around the world, particularly in economically developing countries. Due to the rising consumption of China and India, by 2040, global energy demand will have doubled. One of the central issues for the future of BRICS (as a new alliance of economically emerging countries) is energy security (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 136:2013).

Any failure of this alliance to work towards energy security will have a huge impact on the energy security of neighboring nations and surrounding countries that are energy dependent on them. For instance, when energy prices rose during 2006/2007, Russia took a tougher stance in international relations, presenting itself as an "energy superpower" by shifting its weight to neighboring countries such as Ukraine and Belarus, with a negative impact on EU countries. In addition, the 2008 economic crisis changed Russia's image as an "energy superpower", resulting in Russia's dependence on hydrocarbon revenues. The diminished economic growth of the European market is

another source of concern for the Russian elite after the economic crisis, which is worried, among other things, by the EU's commitment to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 80-95% by 2050 (Rich M. K., and Rowe E. W., 10:2012).

It seems that any real and potential interactions in the energy field, notably oil and gas, have some opportunities, in addition to challenges for Iran (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 138:2013). Iran is the only path between the Persian Gulf in the south and the Caspian Sea in the north and the route connecting the Indian subcontinent to the Mediterranean Sea, as well. Iran's coastline is 1259 kilometers long in the Persian Gulf, as well. The Strait of Hormuz, on the southeastern coast of this country, is an important route for oil exports from Iran and other Persian Gulf countries. At its narrowest point, the Strait of Hormuz is 21 miles wide and roughly two-fifths of all seaborne traded oil, flows through the Strait daily. This country's northern borders and geographical, geopolitical and geostrategic location on the Persian Gulf have given it geopolitical value as a bridge between Central Asia and the Middle East (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 140:2013).

6. ENERGY AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BRICS STATES AND IRAN⁶

At the end of the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, 55% of the 20 largest companies in the energy industry were American, and 45% European. However, in 2007, 35% of the 20 largest energy companies were from the so-called “*economic tigers*” nicknamed the BRICS, 35% were European and 30% American. Brazil’s modest energy reserves, like a massive field off the coast of Rio de Janeiro discovered by Brazilian public company Petroleo Brasileiro SA (Petrobras) and the government’s strong emphasis on alternative energy, mainly in the form of sugar-cane ethanol, are so important in Brazilian energy policy, particularly since the 1973 Arab oil embargo. The Tupi field is also believed to contain from five to eight billion barrels, making it the largest find in the Western Hemisphere in the past 30 years (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 146:2013).

This opportunity in the energy sector is what Iran wants to take advantage. On the other hand, Russia with the world's largest proven gas reserves, being 2nd in gas production, 2nd in coal reserves, and 8th in oil reserves, is ready to support its energy independence. With regard to India, there are many challenges in finding hydrocarbons and energy sources. India is the 4th largest economy and 6th largest consumer of energy globally. Furthermore, due to its population growth, expansion of its economy, and the rising domestic demand for improved quality of life, India's dependence on foreign oil and natural gas, is increasingly ascending. Consequently India will seek to secure its energy supply. That should be expected, India and China will compete over energy supplies in the future (Mihlmeste and Anderson, 6:2010).

6. The BRICS states - in particular China and Russia - are engaged in trade with Iran, in other sectors besides energy, such as the military-technical sector. Iran is an important importer of Russian and Chinese weapons systems. However, Iran is working in this area exclusively with China and Russia from the the BRICS alliance. However, this working paper will focus on the energy sector in terms of BRICS-Iran economic relations.

Cairn Energy's⁷ discovery of the Mangala field in 2004, which contains a wealth of over 1 billion recoverable barrels, is the largest discovery in India since 1985. The Barmer Basin field is expected to increase India's domestic oil production by 20%. India's LNG imports also increased to 9.0 mtpa in 2010, then 14.0 mtpa by 2015, and 22.0 mtpa by 2020 (Fesharaki F., 31-33:2007). India is the world's 11th largest energy producer, with 2.4% of energy production, and the world's 6th largest consumer, with 3.5% of global energy consumption. Domestic coal reserves account for 70% of India's energy needs. The remaining 30% is met by oil (CSIS, 2006), (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 148:2013). Demand for energy is expected to double by 2025; by then, 90% of India's petroleum will be imported. India currently imports 60- 70% of its oil needs, mainly from countries in the Middle East like Iran. Experts estimate that by 2025, India will be the third-largest importer of energy (CSIS, 2006), (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 148:2013).

Of all the BRICS countries, China's domestic energy demand is growing. Thus the need to secure oil and gas supplies is a high priority for Beijing. China is particularly concerned about its own over-reliance on shipping lanes through the Straits of Malacca for energy imports from the Middle East. This is why Beijing fears being cut off from its energy lifeline by a U.S. naval blockade of the Straits in the event of a conflict between the US and Iran. Hence, the Chinese government has been working to diversify and expand energy imports, and one of its priorities is to develop pipelines from Iran, passing through Central Asia and Russia that could alleviate this dependence on the chokepoint. Xinjiang, site of the Tarim Basin, continues to be a critical component of China's domestic energy supply. The province provides 14% of China's oil output and over 40% of its coal reserves. Today, China is already the 3rd largest importer of oil, after the United States and Japan. Conservative projections foresee a rise in Chinese oil consumption from the now 8% of annual global output, to near 15% in the next decade, since China's oil reserves will remain static at 3 million barrels per day (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 148:2013).

7. A hydrocarbon production and exploration company (<https://www.cairnenergy.com/>)

China's three state-owned enterprises, namely SINOPEC, PetroChina, CNOOC (China National Offshore Oil Corporation), and a provincially owned enterprise, Shaanxi Yanchang Group, held 98.3% of China's crude oil proven reserves and 86.8% of China's refinery capacity as of the end of 2008. However, China's key challenge is implementation of energy efficiency activities (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 148:2013). In fact, India and China have measurable reserves, but their reserves-to-production ratios stand at 21 years and 11 years, respectively, at current usage rates. South Africa's energy sector is critical to the economy, too. The newest BRICS member has only small deposits of oil and natural gas, so it uses its large coal deposits for most of its energy needs. The BRICS countries together control almost 10% of global oil reserves, and more than 25% and 40% of natural gas and coal reserves, respectively. With regard to these fuel, Russia is the only net exporter among the BRICS. However, Eurasian and European markets largely depend on Russian natural gas and oil output. It's hard sometimes to imagine any of them adopting a serious alternative energy platform in the near future (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 149:2013).

The economic growth of populous China and India, Brazil, and the resurgence of Russia, have intensified competition for global energy resources. Iran's importance in international relations has been enshrined for many years to come with the huge oil and gas reserves. Expanding ties with BRICS countries is Iran's first economic priority. Without any reliance on the Middle East for energy supplies, Moscow can adopt a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards allies like Iran, as Russia and Iran control the most enormous global hydrocarbon reserves worldwide (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 151:2013). China is now one of the biggest buyers of Iranian crude oil and the Chinese Customs Organization has announced: *«This country's level of oil imports from Iran during the first half of 2011 reached 134.7 million tons, a growth of 49% in comparison to the same time period last year»*. Chinese imports of Iranian LPG (Liquefied petroleum gas) during the first six months of 2011 increased 72.2% in comparison to the same period of 2010. In addition, as of May 2009, China and Iran concluded an agreement to construct 20 nuclear reactors (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 152:2013).

Iran, being sanctioned by the West, wanted to create new alliances for its own benefit. So, Tehran took advantage of the increased needs of China's energy-intensive hydrocarbon industry, as well as China's know-how on nuclear energy. In anticipation of

China's economic development, Iran has called for agreements with China since the beginning of the 21st century. In March 2004, China's state-owned oil trading company, Zhuhai Zhenrong Corporation, signed a 25-year deal to import 110 million tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Iran (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 152:2013). In October of the same year, Sinopec signed a 25 year deal, valued at 100 billion US dollars, that provides China with 150,000 barrels per day of crude oil and 250 million tons of LNG from Iran's Yadavaran oilfield. In 2006, the Iranian government and CNOOC signed a 16-billion US dollars natural gas deal, regarding potential LNG exports of 1.3 billion cubic a day and the development of Iran's Yadavaran oilfield. Sinopec signed a 2.6 billion deal in 2007 to develop the onshore Yadavaran oil field. In 2008, China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) has signed a deal to acquire a 70% stake in developing the onshore North Azadegan oil field in Khuzestan, in South-western Iran. In 2009, CNPC signed a 4.7 billion US dollars deal to develop phase 11 of the giant South Pars gas field. As of 2009, CNOOC is active in exploration at the North Pars field (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 152:2013).

Tehran's interests, related to Russia and energy, are: to expand its oil and gas production capacity and develop its offshore gas fields, including monetizing the huge South Pars field in the Persian Gulf. In 2009, Iran had invited Gazprom to invest in a pipeline to connect Oman and the Caspian region. Gazprom Neft has signed an agreement to start the development of the Iranian Azar and Changuleh oil fields (Groot K., 87-88:2010). Gazprom also participated in the development of the second and third phase of the South Pars oil well together with a pair of foreign companies to produce and process 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year (Groot K., 70: 2010). Furthermore, Russian Lukoil and Norwegian Norsk Hydro, have participated in the 2bn barrels Anaran block in western Iran next to the Iraq border. Rosneft and Zarubezhneft have also played a role in the massive Azadegan oil field near the Iraqi border (Groot, 2010: 48).

The Indian government has signed a \$40 billion dollar gas deal with Iran, which guarantees India 7.5 million tons of LNG over a 25 year period (CSIS, 2006). Indian IOC and OVL companies own 40% each of Farsi offshore block. So, India is in a delicate position in its involvement with Iran. On the one hand, energy and social ties are crucial and on the other hand, there is increasing pressure from the US to lessen its involvement with Iran (Fesharaki F., 40:2007). Energy cooperation between Iran and India is beneficial

for both countries. On the one hand, Iran ranks second in global gas reserves but, due to western sanctions, remains a non-compliant hydrocarbon exporter. Energy infrastructure - long neglected as a result of Western sanctions - requires major upgrades to be able to export energy. This will require massive foreign investment. Iran is taking advantage of India's major energy needs in cooperation with the companies above mentioned. On the other hand, India has felt limited by the lack of access to the energy rich region of Central Asia, trapped by both China and Pakistan. The IPI (Iran-Pakistan-India) and TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipelines still have not progressed due to the failure of the countries to appoint the heads of the consortia to build the pipelines. India is very willing to launch a submarine pipeline project that would bring Iranian gas to India via the Arabian Sea, bypassing Pakistan. The Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry also said: *«Lifting of western sanctions on Iran throws up a great opportunity for India to transport natural gas from Iran to Porbandar port in Gujarat, bypassing Pakistan -- the main sticking point for other multilateral projects of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI)»* (Vinay Kaura, 2015).

Iran's geographical position provides an excellent opportunity for oil and gas pipelines to run from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. In fact, only the Iran route offers India both an alternative to unresolved conflict and tension with Pakistan as well as the opportunity to overcome India's geographic isolation from energy-rich Central Asian region. That is why Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during a recent visit to Turkmenistan as part of his Central Asian tour, suggested an alternative land-sea route via Iran for transporting Turkmen gas to India (Vinay Kaura, 2015). This route could be a turning point for India's energy security. New Delhi's efforts to secure the Iran-Oman-India pipeline can be interpreted as a smart diplomatic gesture aimed at China's latest agreement with Pakistan to construct most of Pakistan's segment of the Iran-Pakistan pipeline as well India's desire to reverse the economic and strategic setbacks that New Delhi suffered from its withdrawal from the Iran-Indian-Pakistan pipeline (Vinay Kaura, 2015).

Brazil is another member of BRICS that had good relationships with Iran, especially in energy sector. Brazilian interest in supporting Tehran's nuclear program dates from the early 1990s when it considered selling equipment from its own failed program to Iran. Despite the vast reserves of oil and natural gas that both countries

possess, they began discussing such cooperation in energy sector back in the 1990s. In 2003, the National Iranian Oil Company granted Brazil's Petrobras rights to explore Iran's vast offshore oil reserves in the Persian Gulf. Petrobras signed a second, larger exploration deal with Iran in 2004 to drill in the Caspian Sea (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 153:2013). Moreover, Iran and Brazil signed an memorandum of understanding in May 2010, on the sidelines of the G15 summit in Tehran. The two sides emphasized on cooperation in the exploration and production of hydrocarbon resources, using non fossil fuels and training forces, as well as Brazilian firms participation in modernization of Iran's oil sector. In April 2010, the president of Petrobras announced that this Brazilian oil giant has invested some \$30 million in Iranian oil development despite of some commercial failure in testing wells (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 154:2013).

In recent years, Brazil has continued to engage in normal state relations with Iran and energy has been central, despite sanctions against the Iranian nuclear program; because Brasilia's position is that the International Atomic Energy Agency, not the UNSC or independent powers, should resolve the dispute over the Tehran's program (Tehran Times/10/11/2008). The desire for further economic co-operation between Iran and Brazil was demonstrated by Armando Monteiro's visit (Brazil's Minister of Development, Industry and Trade) to Iran's Foreign Minister Mohamed Javad Zarif in Tehran in October 2015. Zarif stressed the importance of improving relations with Brazil due to Brazil's particular position in Latin America and the BRICS group. *«This country (Brazil) has always been among the priorities of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran»* Zarif said in his meeting with Armando Monteiro. He added that Iran has great potential to open new markets and can help Brazil's access to the Central Asian region. Zarif mentioned that that Tehran and Brasilia are looking to further develop common interests, including businesses, banking and financial institutions. He noted that Iran and Brazil are strengthening their cooperation in various fields such as technology, biotechnology, energy and natural gas (presstv.com/26/10/2015/).

It seems that economic co-operation between Iran and Brazil will continually improve and will not focus solely on the energy sector. The fact that Brazil is Iran's most important economic partner in Latin America (bilateral trade between Iran and Brazil is estimated at about \$ 1.6 billion a [year](#)) is positive for both countries. Brazil will gain

access to Central Asian markets, and Iran will have an ally in Latin America, which, by the way possesses advanced know-how concerning oil mining, and the banking sector and also is an emerging economy.

South Africa economy, as a newest member to BRICS, has grown rapidly since the end of the apartheid era in 1994 and is now one of the most developed economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. This country has had broad relationships with Iran in energy field, so bilateral oil deals grew after 1995. Furthermore, this main African country has been one of the main proponents of Iran's nuclear energy program. In 2007, Iran's oil exports to South Africa neared \$21 billion. As of 2006, South Africa received 40 percent of its crude oil from Iran, and despite interfering with its friendly relationship with the United States, South Africa agreed to store 15 million barrels of Iranian oil (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 154:2013). In June 2009, the National Iranian Petrochemical Company announced that the South African Company, Sasoul, is one of the world's largest coal liquefaction plant, would be involved in Iranian petrochemical projects. South Africa has an estimated 354,000 tonnes of recoverable uranium ores, accounting for 11% of the world's reserves. Though, this country is a net importer of oil and gas (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 154:2013). South Africa is a significant coal consumer and exporter, but imports large amounts of oil and some natural gas. It has the second largest oil refinery system in Africa and imports the majority of needed oil from Saudi Arabia and Iran followed by Nigeria and Angola (Eyetwa M. Maleka, Mashimbye L. and Dr. Goyns P., 35:2010).

Before the recent lifting of the sanctions, the trade relations between South Africa and Iran were particularly good. Iran's re-emergence in the international economy and politics will not leave indifferent to the much more developed country of the African continent. South Africa in its relations with Iran is not just focusing on the energy sector. The South African telecommunications giant MTN owns 49% of the Iranian IranCell (Themmbisa Fakude, 2016). Improving relations between South Africa and Iran is reflected in the 12th meeting of the South African-Iran Joint Committee held in Tehran on 10-11 May 2015. At the meeting, Secretary of State for International Relations and Cooperation in South Africa condemned the imposition of sanctions against Iran, saying that the sanctions are *"unreasonable and illegal"*. The Minister showed interest in improving trade

relations in areas such as education, health, investment, mining, transport, agriculture, electricity and technology, and energy once sanctions are lifted (allafrica 2016).

The growing relationships between China, India, and Russia mark an evolving trend in the subject of Iran's hydrocarbon and geopolitics. The energy demands of the two rising Asian economies and the re-emergence of Russia in international relations, powered by its immense energy resources, have provided Tehran with alternative military and economic partners. Iran should attract the most modern, sophisticated oil and gas field technology available and in many cases that comes from international energy firms. Iran should attract the most modern, sophisticated oil and gas field technology available and in many cases that comes from international energy firms. Tehran's international foreign policy is now oriented towards the east in particular, China, Russia and India, where energy hungry great powers (especially China and India) arise (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 154-155:2013). This shift over the Iranian foreign energy policy strategy has been toward securing of gasoline supplies and energy investment, the development of oil and gas markets and the development of strong energy ties with its neighbors; all these issues involve strategies in which China, India or Russia participate (Groot K., 70:2010). Russia and China enter into this regional scenario on account of their massive energy investments in Iran and their status as influential UNSC members. All five BRICS states — three of whom possess nuclear arsenals — will have considerable clout as members of the UNSC (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 155:2013).

BRICS countries believe that if Iran were to cross the line in order to manufacture and acquisition of nuclear weapons, their commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) would incline them to support firm counter-measures. Russia, for instance, has made clear on several occasions that any Iranian potential bomb would be incompatible with Russia's security primarily. However, China - like Russia -, has encouraged Iran to lower tensions and reduce pressure for sanctions by engaging in regional confidence-building. The imposition of sanctions on Iran has not stopped the economic as well as the energy relations between Russia and Iran (Groot K., 88:2010). Nevertheless, the fact that the BRICS countries would jeopardize their international reputation for Iran's sanctions is not surprising because they all have a share in the protection of Iranian energy. China and India need an unencumbered Iranian energy sector for their own imports, while Russia

and Brazil are being driven by other political considerations. Taking into account the needs of energy security and the rise in crude prices, the BRICS have decided not to break their ties with Iran. By studying India's foreign policy, the energy sector is the one most directly related to its development plans (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 156:2013), and its ambitions for good bilateral relations with Iran bring it into conflict with its most important foreign trading partner, the US. That is why, on many issues where the two countries' relations are not in harmony, it is mainly about the energy sector (CSIS, 2006). As regards Russia's foreign energy policy towards Iran, it also takes into account closer cooperation between the gas producing nations in the Caspian Sea region and among members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (Groot K., 55-56:2010). During the SCO summit in 2006, the proposed initiative to shape energy cooperation with members of the SCO was presented to Iran. Therefore, if Iran is accepted as a member of this regional body, it will strengthen China's ability to access Iran's energy sources, although India has been a member of this organization (Sheena C. J., 13 -15:2010).

This positive attitude of Russian foreign policy towards Iran is not related only the energy sector. There are 20 million Muslims living in Russia, many of whom are Shia. Russia needs Iran's support in limiting Sunni extremism in the South Caucasus and Central Asia as its as its backyard. With regard to the Caspian Sea, Iran needs Russia for a satisfactory juridical resolution of its territorial status, so unsatisfactory resolution could be detrimental to Iran's pipeline interests. The Russians, therefore, view their close economic and military ties with Iran as strategically critical. The relationship with Iran allows Russia to exert influence in Central Asia more easily without a major US ally (apart from Turkey) (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 157:2013). With the current state of Russian-Iranian military and energy ties, Russia finds the opportunity to challenge the US in the heart of the Middle East, and together with China in SCO, they are presenting a new global energy bloc (Reza A., 2009).

Iran, from a geostrategic point of view, is a regional superpower, as it sits on a sea of hydrocarbon energy. With the help of Chinese and Russian technology, would also pump Caspian oil and gas south into Iran's existing transport network to be shipped to international markets via the Persian Gulf. This can further Iran's cause of leadership in both the Middle East and Central Asia. Iran is a member of OPEC and Russia is a non-

member observer, so the latter seeks to maintain good relations with this international energy policymaker as the ultimate guarantor of oil price stability. This trend will strengthen more the position of Tehran in regional and even energy equation. However, at present, Iran is producing only a small share of its gas reserves, about 2.7 trillion cubic feet per year. This means that Iran is capable of supplying much larger amounts of natural gas in the future (Valizadeh A., Houshialsadat Seyyed M., 157:2013), (Groot K., 97: 2010).

While Russia is developing strong ties with Iran and China, is also afraid the influence of these states. Russia may consider the expansion of Iran's capacity to export energy in contrast with the Russia's strong presence in the global energy markets. This, of course is inconsistent with the realities of international economy and interdependency between economies in the era of globalization. Moreover, while the Russia's traditional energy customers are mainly among European countries, Iran's oil purchasers are mostly from the South, South East and East Asian countries. Another obstacle to expand energy cooperation between Iran and Russia in recent years is international sanctions against foreign companies investing in oil and gas industries of Iran. This has limited the presence of Russian major oil and gas companies in Iran's energy industries and due to the international pressure, they prefer to avoid massive investments in this section.⁸

8. The 2010 US sanctions for Iran confirmed the rule of \$20 million as a maximal amount of possible investment in Iran's oil and gas sector. They also specified that if a company was involved in a number of investment projects within a 12-month period, funds invested in each project must not exceed \$5 million, and their total sum must not be more than \$20 million (Kozhanov A, .Nikolay 2016). These sanctions prevented the investment plans of Russian energy companies to invest in Iran.

7. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE BRICS STATES TO THE UNSC TO RESOLVE THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Iran has had a nuclear program for close to 50 years, beginning with a research reactor purchased from the United States in 1959. The Shah's plan to build 23 nuclear power reactors by the 1990s was regarded as grandiose, but not necessarily viewed as a "back door" to a nuclear weapons program, possibly because Iran did not then seek the technologies to enrich or reprocess its own fuel. There were a few suspicions of a nuclear weapons program, but these abated in the decade between the Iranian 1979 revolution and the end of the Iran-Iraq war, both of which brought a halt to nuclear activities (Squassoni S., 1-2:2006).

Iran's current plans — to construct seven nuclear power plants (1000 MW each) by 2025 — are still ambitious, particularly for a state with considerable oil and gas reserves. Iran argues, as it did in the 1970s, that nuclear power is necessary for rising domestic energy consumption, while oil and gas are needed to generate foreign currency. Few observers believe that such an ambitious program is necessary or economic for Iran (Squassoni S., 2:2006). Since 2003, negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program have proceeded on two levels — the 1st level refers to IAEA inspectors and at the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna, and the 2nd one, with the European Union foreign ministers (known as the EU-3) of Germany, the UK, and France. In 2006, the EU-3 were joined by Russia, China and the United States after Iran's noncompliance was reported to the UNSC (Squassoni S., 4:2006).

On August 31, 2006, the IAEA reported that Iran had failed to suspend enrichment-related activities and that there were still outstanding issues. Iran's failure to halt enrichment by August 31 has prompted discussion among UNSC members on sanctions. Reportedly, the United States favors a travel ban and freezing assets of key Iranian leaders. However, Russia did not favor sanctions (Myers S. Lee, 2006). Iran's nuclear program has prompted contrasting opinions in which the US has tended to adopt a policy of isolation and confrontation while the EU has sought 'conditional engagement' which rewards the BRICs have advocated the greater dialogue and negotiation between

Iran and the West (Burton G., 217-219:2015), (Sridharan V., 2013). But at the same time they have not rejected US-led sanctions; between 2006 and 2010, when all four BRICs were on the UNSC, four sets of sanction were presented voted on and passed against Iran. However, their interpretation of resulting sanctions is selective, claiming that the US imposed ones are unilateral (Burton G., 217-219:2015).

The reasons for the BRICs' mixed approach two fold:

First, economic considerations play a key role. China and India want access to Iran's energy supplies, but fear confrontation with the USA and the West. Beijing is concerned for its commercial relations with the US, the West and the Middle East while New Delhi's growing political and economic partnership with the US since the late 1990s could be undermined by developing further relations with Iran. China has not only imposed significant amounts of Iranian oil, but increased it (especially ultra light) between 2013 and 2014. At the same time, China stayed on the right side of the US by reducing the amount of crude it imported and thereby being exempted from sanctions. Meanwhile, Russia is unwilling to tie itself of Tehran's proposal to establish a gas equivalent of OPEC; although the Iranian proposal would enable both countries to corner the sector, Moscow wants a free hand when dealing with customers (Burton G., 217-219:2015).

Second, three of the four BRIC countries have been complicit in Iran's nuclear program. Between 1985 and 1997 China helped Tehran develop its nuclear capabilities. Since the late 1990s Moscow assisted helped build the nuclear plant at Bushehr and offered Iranians enriched uranium. At the same time, Russia is concerned about Iran's prospect of nuclear weapons, as it will contribute to both the Middle East instability and the regulatory region of the former Soviet space between Iran and Russia (Richter and Loiko, 2013) (Burton G., 217-219:2015) - although this did not prevent it from reaching an agreement to complete the construction of two nuclear power plants in June 2014. In 2005, India agreed on a strategic partnership, including a 10-year defensive framework agreement and a nuclear cooperation in 2005. In view of all these, sanctions were imposed by Washington on many Indian scientists between 2004 and 2006, who are believed to have provided nuclear aid to Iran. The prospect of additional and stricter sanctions has led to further fears about India's oil imports and investment, including an

earlier pipeline proposal between India and Iran (Kronstandt et al, 35-36:2011), (Burton G., 217-219:2015). Despite the negative behavior of the West, the BRICS have resisted the imposition of sanctions on Iran for the alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons. At the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 that took place in Delhi, the BRICS Member States made a statement for a political and diplomatic solution through dialogue. China, South Africa and especially India are importers of Iranian oil, while Russia and Brazil have significant trade and investment relations with Iran. India's incentives (with regard to Iran) focus on energy needs. That is why India needs to maintain a long-term friendly relationship and resists being forced to follow the orders of other countries (Kornegay, Francis A., Bohler-Muller, Narnia, 2013).

Brazil has played an important role in all the countries in the negotiations of the Iranian nuclear program. Brazil, in the past, has tried to act as a mediator between Iran and the West in an attempt to support its desire to introduce itself into the world as a great force (Kornegay, Francis A., Bohler-Muller, Narnia, 2013). Brazil's policy on Iran's nuclear program is a good example of its approach to international security. Iran is seeking an agreement on its nuclear energy development program, which it claims to be for non-military purposes. However, there is a widespread suspicion in the international community that Iran is planning to develop nuclear weapons, a policy that would be contrary to the NPT Treaty (which states that countries that do not have the capacity to develop nuclear weapons they should not seek to acquire) that Iran has signed. The situation in Brazil is similar to that of Iran, as the country is currently working equally with the development of nuclear power. In 2009, Iran announced it wants to enrich uranium at a much higher level than the amount it needs to meet its energy needs. Initially, the United States, France and Russia have suggested that Iran should not be enriched by uranium itself, but instead agree to be supplied with uranium in exchange or in France or Russia (Gray K., Murphy N. C., 2014).

The idea was to ensure that Iran would not develop the capacity to produce a nuclear bomb. Iran expressed interest in the initiative but later retired and continued to enrich uranium. This has given rise to suspicion of Iran's true intentions among UNSC members. In this context, Brazil and Turkey intervened and broached with a joint declaration with Iran on May 17th 2010, according to which the fuel exchange agreement will be held to allow Iran to develop a further nuclear energy program. However, the P5

and Germany argued that the statement was a trick from Iran to buy time, while continuing to enrich uranium. Thus, in June 2010 a new Security Council resolution was issued against Iran (Gray K., Murphy N. C., 2014). The Brazilian government was disappointed with this process, believing that the Security Council had prematurely abandoned diplomacy and dialogue (Biehl S. and Fujii E., 2010). The goal of Brazil was to protect the sovereign rights of NPT members to develop nuclear energy for peaceful means. Opposition parties and Brazilian NGOs argue that the Iranian government is violating human rights on a massive scale. However, the reason the Brazilian government protects Iran is to protect the rights of a middle power, such as Brazil itself, under the NPT agreement. Interestingly, China and Russia were in disagreement with Brazil on this issue (Gray K., Murphy N. C., 2014).

Despite the difficulties faced by Iran in talks on its nuclear program at the UN, the role of the BRICS has been catalytic. Indeed, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon singled out China by congratulating her on her telephone conversation with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Wang Explained: *«China is not a focus of the contradiction and that enables it to carry out active mediation in a more just and objective way. Especially at some important points when the negotiation met with the difficulties and reached the deadlocks, China had actively explored ideas and approaches to resolve the problems and put forward its own solutions from a perspective taking into consideration of the common interests of all parties»*. In other words, because China is a relatively neutral partner (Beijing has no interest in seeing a nuclear-armed Iran, but also frowns on the sanctions put in place against Tehran), it was able to act as a credible mediator when the talks deadlocked (Tiezzi S., 2015).

Behind the scenes, however, it seems that China's main function was to push back against the United States and Europe on the issue of sanctions relief. While China stood with the Western powers in insisting Iran give up its ambitions for nuclear weapons, Beijing and Moscow took Iran's side in calling for more rapid sanctions relief, particularly from the conventional arms embargo put in place by the UN. As U.S. Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman delicately put it, *“the partners were not together”* on the issue of the arms embargo, making it one of the last sticking points resolved in the negotiations. China and Russia also reportedly opposed the “snap-back” provision, which would allow the return of UN sanctions should Iran be found non-

compliant—without the possibility of a Russian or Chinese veto. There are obvious economic reasons for this stance—both China and Russia hope to exports arms to Iran, and China also seeks access to Iranian markets and oil fields (Tiezzi S., 2015).

Following the Iranian presidential election in 2013, and a shift from Ahmadinejad's conflict policy to Rouhani's reformist, negotiations were resumed in November, between Iran and the P5 +1 group. The reason for this shift is partly due to Rouhani's promise to bring bring a measure of rationality to Iran's chaotic politics (Mohsen Milani, 2013), (Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi, 2013).

8. CONCLUSIONS

As stated by John Mearsheimer⁹: *«There are no status quo powers in the international system, save for the occasional hegemon that wants to maintain its dominating position over potential rivals. Great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power; on the contrary, they face a constant incentive to change it in their favor»* (Mearsheimer J., 25-26: 2001). As above mentioned, hegemonic states, such as the US, use their power to create a series of political and economic structures and norms of behavior that enhance the stability of the system while promoting their own security (Levy S. J., 354-355:2002). Iran's leaders have asserted that the country's nuclear program is peaceful in nature. They have done little, however, to make it easy for the international community to believe them. It is Tehran's responsibility to do a much better job at reassuring the international community of its intentions. The preceding argument, recommending a regional solution to the regional dimension of the problem, is that Iran's Muslim regional peers should make it clear to Iran that nuclear weaponization is not in Iran's long-term interest, and should seek credible assurances that Iran intends to remain a non-nuclearweapon state (Shenna J. S., 23-23).

The fact that a Middle East country, which is rich in oil and gas (such as Iran), and maintains good diplomatic and commercial relations with emerging economies (such as China, Russia and India), coupled with the possession of nuclear warheads, would put risking a balance in the region and would help shift the global economic influence from the G7 to the BRICS.

BRICS countries, apparently, are trying to change the current power distribution in favor of it, using its most powerful means, which is diplomacy. Iran, although a member state of the NPT, has technically violated some of the treaty's obligations and its program is still under international control by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In addition, concerns about Iran are not limited to its nuclear activities. Iran has been accused of supporting organizations (such as Hezbollah) to destabilize governments in various countries in the region. Governments, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which are US-friendly, are contributing significantly to the US oil market. The United States, therefore, watches the increasing influence and prestige of Iran with great concern (Weiss L., 2009).

In the normalization of the relations between the West and Iran, the role of the BRICS was important. China has agreed with Western states that Iran would have to abandon its ambitions for nuclear weapons. Beijing and Moscow insisted on lightening sanctions. Unlike Western countries, Russia and China are not opposed to an independent Iranian nuclear fuel cycle, including an enrichment capability. Given their economic and strategic interests, they have and will continue to oppose extensive sanctions as long as they think that Iran hasn't crossed the line dividing a threshold capability from manufacturing nuclear weapons. If Iran were to cross the line, however, their commitment to the NPT would incline them to support firm counter-measures. Russia, for example, has made clear on several occasions that an Iranian bomb would be incompatible with Russia's security. One of the reasons why Russia and China seem indifferent about a further tightening of sanctions is that they regard Iran's current non-compliance with UNSC resolutions as different in nature from non-compliance with treaty commitments (Shenna J. S., 23-23).

Furthermore, India needs to maintain a long-term friendly relationship and resists being forced to follow the orders of other countries (Kornegay, Francis A., Bohler-Muller, Narnia, 2013). Energy imports (crude oil and natural gas) are a huge burden on the Indian economy. Sanctions on Iran reduced the energy imports from that country. This is likely to be reversed when sanctions are lifted. The TAPI pipeline, which promises to deliver Turkmen gas to India, is potentially stuck across two obstacles, Afghanistan and Pakistan. While Afghanistan can neither fund nor guarantee safe transit due to its fragile internal situation, Pakistan is still unwilling to facilitate this pipeline to India citing technical and security issues. In such a situation, natural gas from Turkmenistan could come directly to Chahbahar port and thereafter taken either through an under-sea pipeline or by containers to India (Agarwal R., 2015).

Regarding Brazil's stance to Tehran's nuclear program, the Brazilian government believes that new and tougher sanctions on Iran would not work. It would only contribute to strengthening Iran's position in the region and strengthening the hardliners within Iranian society and the Iranian government (Ramalho A., 2010). As far as South Africa is concern, this African nation has earned a favorable business environment in Iran. Since the reestablishment of economic relations, South Africa has increased business investments across several sectors in Iran. SASOL, a state owned

energy company, made significant investments in Iran and established a joint venture, Ayra SASOL, with the Iranian National Petrochemical Company. SASOL subsequently sold its shares of the joint venture for an undisclosed amount after taking about \$300 million USD in write-downs. South African telecommunication giant MTN has large interest in the Iranian market (Fakude T., 2016).

Furthermore, Iran considers that in order to improve its economy and its innovation, it is imperative to enter into trade and diplomatic agreements with the BRICS. In order to achieve this, Tehran should strengthen its energy ties with the BRICS - in particular with China and India- in the oil and gas sectors. Furthermore, Tehran should maintain oil supplies to South Africa and to consider supplying the African country with LNG in the future. Through the Iran and BRICS energy links, all six countries could also benefit from other areas, such as their influence on other regional organizations. For example, Iran is a member of OPEC and Russia, through its close diplomatic relations with Tehran, seeks to maintain good relations with this international energy policy organization. At the moment, Iran is in a transitional phase with regard to its economy model, which from a stagnant economy is trying to move into a market economy. To sum up, today BRICS plays a very important role in the system of international security. It works as an accelerator of those changes which are on the way now. The group due to their economic growth, economic capabilities and their active foreign policy, gains influence in the decision-making process on international security issues (Slonskaya M., 10: 2015).

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