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Give an "F" to The *Wall Street Journal's* "Global View" and a "B" to Obama's Global Policy

They've been wrong again and again in their foreign policy predictions: V-Day in Iraq (it's just around the corner); the successful Mideast Democratic Agenda (that delivered Hamas); the winning "color revolutions" in Ukraine and elsewhere ("Good Morning Kyrgyzstan!"). But the commentators on the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page - which is how the Soviet era's *Pravda* would have looked like if Bill Kristol had been the editor - never give up. "The End of Nuclear Diplomacy" screamed the headline of Monday's Global View column authored by neocon pisher Brent Stephens who goes on and on about how the Obama's Administration's pursuit of diplomacy in dealing with Iran's nuclear crisis was strengthening Tehran's hands. He blamed Obama's policy for making it possible for Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva - with the cooperation of with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan - to negotiate the nuclear deal with Iran that was announced on Monday.

"No wonder Mahmoud Ahmadinejad keeps emerging the winner in his diplomatic duels with the West," Stephens argued, adding this insightful prediction: **"However the administration reacts to yesterday's agreement, Iran has all but guaranteed that the Security Council, on which both Turkey and Brazil currently sit, will not approve another round of sanctions."**

"Oh, no! You did it again, Hussein Obama the Appeaser," I was sighing, just as I was switching to C-SPAN where, in what amounted to a clear rebuff of the Brazilian-Turkish diplomatic initiative, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the Obama Administration was moving ahead with a package of new "strong sanctions resolution" against Iran that was expected to win the support of the UN Security Council after Washington had succeeded in securing support from both Russia and China for the draft resolution. Clinton described the proposed sanctions "as convincing an answer to the efforts

undertaken by Tehran over the last few days as any we could provide" and raised doubts about the significance of the deal announced on Monday. "There are a number of unanswered questions regarding the announcement coming from Tehran," she told U.S. lawmakers during a Congressional hearing on Tuesday.

And here were the headlines on the front page of the *Financial Times* on Wednesday; "US Turns diplomatic tables. Major powers agree draft UN resolution. Iran faces fresh sanctions."

My comments here are not driven by any sense of Schadenfreude (well, just a little bit...) We've all been wrong many times and so on. But the real problem is that it was Obama's predecessor and the advice he was receiving for Stephens and his ideological buddies that were responsible for the current mess in the Persian Gulf. The ousting of Saddam Hussein and the collapse of Iraq -- that is now ruled by Shiite religious political parties with ties to Tehran -- helped destroy the only power that was counterbalancing Iran in the Persian Gulf and created the conditions for the growing regional assertiveness of Iran, while free elections pressed by W. resulted in electoral wins for two of Iran's partners in the Levant, Hamas (in Palestine) and Hizbollah (in Lebanon).

Moreover, the nuclear deal with Iran negotiated by Brazil and Turkey demonstrates the more aggressive diplomatic role that Brasilia and Ankara have been pursuing in the geo-political arena, including by challenging American policies as they exploit the geo-strategic and geo-economic weakness of the United States in the aftermath of the military and economic fiascos produced by President George W. Bush during his two terms in office. And BTW, have you noticed that Brazil and Turkey are democracies while China and Russia are not?

But here is what Stephens didn't mention in his commentary: The failure on the part of Brazil and Turkey to win the backing of China and Russia for their initiative displayed the success Obama's more pragmatic diplomatic approach. And I thought that based on the neoconservative dogma, democracies are supposed to support the U.S. and vice versa.

Like Indonesia and South Africa, Brazil and Turkey are two emerging middle powers, each with an ambition to play leadership role in its important region of the world -- Brazil in Latin America; Turkey in the Middle East. They have been projecting their growing power by pursuing policies that in some cases run contrary to the interests of the United State, their strategic ally during the Cold War (in fact, Turkey remains a member of the U.S.-led NATO) and seem to be more in line of those of America's global (China) and regional (Russia; Iran) rivals.

Turkey and Brazil are both currently "rotating" members of the UN Security Council; but unlike the five permanent Security Council members (U.S.; Russia; France; Great Britain; China) the two lack the power to veto resolutions brought before the UN leadership body. If indeed, as Clinton suggested on Tuesday, Russia and China were going to support new sanctions against Iran such a development would deal a blow to the Turkey-Brazil Iran initiative. (Germany, a member of the so-called P5+1 group conducting negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, also supports the sanctions).

Winning over the support of the Chinese and the Russians for sanctions against Iran was a clear evidence that Obama's efforts to co-opt Beijing and Russia to U.S. Iran policy through

a series of diplomatic compromises (setting aside sanctions against China over its currency policy; scrapping the controversial missile defense shield program in Eastern Europe that Russia had opposed), and an energized nuclear proliferation agenda -- ridiculed by conservative pundits as "appeasement" has paid off.

Indeed, any major diplomatic success on the part of middle powers like Turkey and Brazil requires the support of China and/or Russia, the only two players who have the power to upset American policies in the UN Security Council and other global arenas. That Barack and Hil(lary) were able to checkmate "Lula" and his Turkish buddy on the diplomatic chess board, was a clear sign that President Obama is a skilful player.

I would not describe this outcome an American diplomatic victory. But unlike Bush who proved to be a total loser while managing the diplomacy of the Iraq War - antagonizing Russia and China as well as Germany and France and other American allies who were opposed to that U.S. military adventure, Obama has been effective in building strong international consensus in support for what he is trying to do in Iran (and I'm not sure what that is) while insisting that military force will only be applied as the last resort -- if and when diplomacy fails. Give him a "B" for that.

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