

Iran's Neutrality in Kuwait Occupation Crisis

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Abstract

A notable number of international relations analysts believe that Iranian foreign policy is based merely on ideological considerations. The present study aims to reject this claim by assessing the policy of neutrality Iran embraced during the Kuwait Occupation Crisis via a descriptive-analytical approach. This article seeks to find an answer to the question of how and why did Iran take a neutral stance in the mentioned crisis? According to the results, the subtle combination of ideological and rational behaviors of the foreign policy decision-makers led to maintaining the territorial integrity of the country and also the re-gaining of economic and military capabilities after the Iran-Iraq war. Findings also show that while some cognitive factors might have affected the secondary goals in the first stage, it never put the national security of the country at risk. Furthermore, after filtering the information, the ultimate decision could lead to maximal gain and minimal loss for Iran which was the key to Iran's regional influence in the past 40 years.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy Decision-making, Islamic Republic of Iran, Neutrality Policy, Kuwait Occupation*

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Introduction

An interesting question constantly raised by foreign policy theorists is how Iran, despite endorsing a supposedly ideological approach, has been able to enhance its political and regional influence and maintain its territorial security while confronting the superpowers of the Persian Gulf and western Asia. To clarify the issue of how Iran has been able to combine ideological foundations and smart calculations in its foreign policy, the nature of Iran's neutrality in the Kuwait Occupation Crisis is examined to provide realistic insights. The reason for adopting neutrality in the Kuwait Occupation Crisis was that this crisis occurred when Iran experienced sensitive circumstances where matters of domestic, regional, and international environments were concerned. Therefore, we can shed light on many hidden aspects of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy and provide better insight into Iran's approach to the crisis in the tumultuous region of the Persian Gulf for the past 40 years.

Declining to accept material capabilities from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, led to this country giving up its competition with the U.S over gaining the domain of influence, and kept it engaged with solving its problems at home. Due to the experience of the United States détente policy failure in the 1970's it was skeptical of the new policy put forward by the Soviet Union (Boyle, 2001: 311) Therefore, in the absence of its rival's interventions, the U.S decided to establish its global hegemony so that if the Soviets were to return to the global competition, it could still have the upper hand. One of the domains which could help the U.S realize its hegemony was broadening its influence in the

Persian Gulf countries, as dominating the oil resources in the region could ensure its security against major rival. In the case of the Soviet decline, it could also establish its exclusive dominance against insider rivals like Japan and Western Europe (Chomsky, 1991, 77). But, at that time, U.S presence in this strategic region encountered various obstacles including Iran and Iraq's opposition, and also the opposition of Arab countries in not welcoming the presence of American forces in their territories due to the American's full-scale support of the Zionist regime; therefore, the U.S needed an approach to remove these obstacles.

The occupation of Kuwait by Saddam, and his decision to not withdraw from this country, which was due to his misunderstanding of the circumstances, provided the U.S with a pretext to overcome the existing obstacles and increase its influence in the strategic region of the Persian Gulf. So the main question raised in this article is that: given these conditions, why and how did the foreign policy decision-makers of the Islamic Republic of Iran adopt the policy of neutrality in this political crisis? The main hypothesis of the research is that Iran first rejected to cooperate with the U.S in attacking that Islamic country of Iraq due to the prohibition instigated by religious teachings and also because of bad experiences in previous cooperation with the United States. But in the second phase, due to the possible threats against national security, the risks of Saddam's dominance over Kuwait for national interests, domestic economic conditions, Iran was not affected by the provocative acts of Saddam and the other internal and regional Islamic groups to enter a war against the U.S and adopting a neutrality policy which could protect its national security and pave the way for revitalizing the economic and military capabilities after the eight-year Imposed War with Iraq.

The way Iran responded to the Kuwait Occupation Crisis showed that, Iran does not behave merely ideologically and based on cognitive elements. Especially, in the face of decisions related to national security, Iran behaves rationally and examines the

losses and gains of the options on the table. In this crisis, despite the cognitive elements which could have led to a cooperation with Iraq after the American attack, the possible security threats caused Iran to remain neutral, even in the case of Israel's entering the war. This study adopts an analytic-descriptive approach and a case-study research method to test the hypothesis. The data was collected thorough library research and interview.

I- Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of the present study was based on the indigenous and modified perceptual poliheuristic model of Alex Mintz, according to which foreign policy decision-making often occurs in two stages. During the first stage, the set of possible options is reduced by applying a “noncompensatory principle” to eliminate any alternative, with an unacceptable return on a critical, typically political, decision dimension. Once the choice set has been reduced to alternatives that are acceptable to the decision maker, the process moves to a second stage, during which the decision maker uses more analytic processing in an attempt to minimize risks and maximize benefits.” (Mintz, 2004: 7).

A major difference between the model used in the current study and that of Mintz is that, given the decision-making structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s foreign policy and the unique role of the Leader, it could not be claimed that some alternatives are removed due to personal interests. In Iran, the power structure is so that the Leader is never affected by the interests of parties or the fear of failure in elections. Yet, it can be claimed that in the first stage of decision-making, the intervention of some cognitive elements by decision-makers dramatically affects the process of eliminating some alternatives. These elements include: Islamic ideology, lack of trust in the U.S, and historical antecedents in collaboration with this country. Therefore, the theoretical model in the current study is that, in the first stage, passing information through the filters of decision-makers' minds and the intervention of some cognitive elements

will lead to the elimination of some alternatives. However, in the second and final stage, the rational behavior of Iran caused the adoption of an alternative which brought about minimal loss and maximal gain.

The reason why this theoretical model was adopted to analyze the neutrality of Iran in the American attack on Iraq is that it deals with both effective cognitive elements having a special role in Iranian foreign policy, and rational behaviors of decision-makers. In Iran, although the cognitive elements, in the first stage, might lead to the elimination of alternatives whose lack of removal might bring about some gains, the experience suggests that, in the second stage, among the remaining alternatives, more often than not, the one adopted by the decision-makers leads to minimal loss and maximal gain for the country. One significant feature of this model is that, ultimately, decision-makers will never engage cognitive elements in decisions related to national security and foreign policy.

However, this model does not claim to be applicable to other decisions Iran has adopted in its foreign policy. Yet, it claims to be helpful in gaining insight into the Iranian foreign policy approach and therefore develops a comprehensive model to analyze the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

II- The Decision-Making Environment

International System: Shifting the international system from "balance of power" to "bipolar" after the first and second World Wars led to an intense rivalry between the two superpowers, the U.S and the Soviet Union. They had competed to gain the domains of influence from 1945 to the end of Cold War at in the early 1990's, especially in newly-independent third world countries. One of the most important parts of the Cold War was the détente of the 1970's. Since the late 1960's, Japan and Europe, enfeebled during the Cold War, gradually revived their enervated economy and this critically endangered the international status of the U.S. This issue, along with the American failure in Vietnam

War, encouraged American leaders to adopt the détente policy with the Soviet Union so that they could overcome their problems.

However, the failure of this policy after concluding the SALT 1 treaty in 1974, made American leaders very pessimistic about the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's efforts to gain more influence in Angola and Ethiopia and to deploy SS20 nuclear missiles to the European part of the country led US leaders such as Brzezinski to conclude that détente policy had been followed by the Soviet Union to develop its domains of influence in Africa through this reconciliation (Westads, 1995: 5). Although Carter adopted a policy which ultimately forced the Soviet Union to sign the SALT 2 agreement in 1979, the Iranian Revolution and the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union renewed the tensions existing between the superpowers.(Wilson, 2013,52).

This caused the U.S to view the détente policy adopted by the Soviet Union in the mid1980's, cynically, due to its decline in material capabilities. George W. Bush and his first circle of advisors, during the Cold War and in Ford Cabinet, who drove the detent policy, possessed major roles: Baker, the Secretary of State, managed Ford's election campaign in 1976, Scowcraft, Bush's National Security Advisor held the same position in the time of Ford, and Cheney, the Defense Secretary, was the Chief of White House Staff. Therefore, they witnessed the failure of the détente in 1970 and the national security concerns that it created as a consequence. This caused the advisors to amplify Bush's cautionary policy towards the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block (Boyle, 1995, 310).

The mindset of American leaders caused them to consider Gorbacheve's Cooperation pledge as deceptive and look at it cynically. George Bush, the then U.S president, maintains "the Soviet Union had previously promised to cooperate with the United States, but only to change course and return to military policy. Therefore, in an amazing era, we have to adjust our optimism with the help of tact, and I am pessimistic" (Boyle, 1995,311). This mentality forced U.S leaders to take advantage of

the entrapment of Russians in internal affairs and pave the way for establishing their global hegemony so that, in rivalry with the Soviet Union after getting out of the crisis, they could have the upper hand and be able to deploy their preferred global order. Being in the Persian Gulf could help the United States achieve this goal in several ways. Dominating the Persian Gulf, which has major resources of oil in the world, could enable them to control the global oil arteries, as the driving force of Japan and Europe's economies, which had become serious rivals to the U.S global hegemony after their economic revival in the 1970s. This goal became even more important in the final years of the Cold War when it was feared that if the Soviet Union collapsed, it would gain the upper hand in expanding its sphere of influence due to the economic capabilities of its Western rivals. Furthermore, establishing the U.S presence in the strategic Persian Gulf could obviate the worries of the U.S over Russian greed in the case of its coming back into the global competition scene.

Regional System: The regional security arrangements in the Persian Gulf at the end of the Cold War was so; Iran, after the revolution, had been converted to a U.S opponent and Iraq which was traditionally considered an ally of the Soviet Union, opposed the U.S presence in the Persian Gulf. But, what worried the American leaders most was the growth of Anti-American sentiments moving toward the East through the Persian Gulf Arab countries particularly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Yemen. This was due to the full-scale supporting of the Israeli government by the U.S. Due to the fear of American weapons being used by Arabs against Israel, the US avoided selling the required weapons to Saudi Arabia. Therefore, a contract was signed with China in 1988 to purchase surface-to-surface missiles. According to Khalid Bin Sultan, the then commander of the Air Force of Saudi Arabia, these purchases were made to protect Saudi Arabia against Israel and Iran, which caused concerns for the US. In this regard, Charles Redman, the then State Department spokesman, considered the security of Israel to be endangered with the

purchase of these missiles by Saudi Arabia (Khalid Bin Sultan, 1995: 137).

In Kuwait, the situation was worse. The influence of the Palestinians, the Egyptians, the Lebanese, and the Syrians in Kuwait's governmental structure, intensified Anti-American and Anti-Israeli sentiments in this country and the normalization of relations with the U.S was problematic. The powerful presence of the Palestinians in Kuwait caused this country to criticize the U.S during the Arab-Israeli conflicts and even threatened to cut the political relations. The unwavering support of Israel by the U.S, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1973, caused Kuwait to incline towards Russia during the years 1974, 1984, and 1989, despite the fact that Kuwait had military cooperation with the U.S. It led to the signing of contracts with the Soviet Union so as to facilitate the buying of military equipment; clearly, this worried the American remarkably (Panaspornprasit, 1992, 68).

Another factor was the establishment of the Arab Cooperation Council by four countries, namely Egypt, Iraq, North Yemen, and Jordan on February 16th, 1989. While the primary goals of the organization were associated with economic approaches, the security concerns of countries such as Jordan led to the emphasis on the coordination of their foreign policy and the signing of a joint defense agreement at the summit in June 1989 in Alexandria, Egypt. Having failed to make peace with Israel, Jordan resumed its territorial claims on the West Bank and East Jerusalem and accompanied Saddam in his anti-Zionist policies (Curtis, 1998: 380).

Therefore, during the time that the US required a stronger presence in the Persian Gulf, not only did the Arab countries of the region (e.g., Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) oppose the presence of the US military forces in their territories, but they also shifted toward the Soviet Union and China to guarantee their security. Moreover, there was also a risk that the members of the newly established Arab Cooperation Council would jeopardize Israel's security and pursue anti-American policies by forming a

comprehensive alliance. The occupation of Kuwait by Saddam under such conditions provided the American politicians with opportunities to obviate the mentioned dangers. It also paved the way for their direct military attendance in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region so that they could take control of the global oil arteries.

III- The Occupation of Kuwait

The imposed Iraq-Iran war led to a \$100 billion debt for Iraq after the war even though the country began the war with \$30 billion in foreign exchange reserves. While Iraq had a powerful military force at the end of the eight-year war with Iran, it suffered from the erosive effects of war in all areas. During the war, Iraq's infrastructures were seriously damaged and its debts to countries, especially the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf area, increased. What added to Iraq's post-war problems was a drop in oil prices, mainly due to increased production by OPEC countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Salinger, 1995: 9-10).

Saddam was infuriated with this phenomenon for two reasons; first of all, he claimed that Iraq fought with Iran as a representative of all Arab countries and experienced damages that must be compensated for by the Arabs, instead they are taking measures to decrease oil costs adding to Iraq's problems. Second of all, the extra oil that Kuwait introduced to the market, which caused the price of oil to fall, was mined from wells that were claimed to be owned by Iraq (Baram, 1993: 10). Saddam's anger at the move prompted him to accuse the Arabs of collaborating with the United States and Israel to strike at the country and posed conditions, including debt relief by the Arabs and the subsequent granting of a \$10 billion loan by Kuwait to refrain from attacking the country, none which were accepted by Kuwait (Musallam, 1996: 94). Therefore, Iraq occupied Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990, and formally annexed Kuwait as its nineteenth province on August 8th of that year, citing the fact that the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border was a colonial issue designed by the British government

(Waldani, 2008: 164).

Meanwhile, not only did the U.S. not do anything to quench the crisis, but also prevented solutions to the crisis in two ways: the first was that the U.S. assured Kuwait that Iraq would never attack Kuwait (Sadeghi, 1397). The other one was that America behaved in such a way with Iraq, as if to show it would never meddle in this crisis. These factors fully dissociated Iraq and Kuwait and culminated in a war whose real winner was the U.S.

IV- Iran's Neutrality

The United States of America and Saddam sent messages simultaneously asking for Iran's cooperation in the war following the occupation of Kuwait. The United States of America sent a message to Iran through the ambassador of Switzerland, which protected the interests of this country in Tehran, announcing its plans to attack Iraq. Over the messages between the two countries, Iran was asked to either collaborate with the Western coalition against Saddam in this crisis or take a neutral stance (Mousavian, 2019). However, in order to persuade Iran to cooperate against Saddam, the United States and the Western Coalition sent a message to Iran 10 days after the occupation of Kuwait, to cooperate with the alliance in exchange for carrots like supplying arms and cooperating with Iran in the Security Council to condemn Saddam in attacking Iran. (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 2013: 348). Therefore, Iran knew about the US's intention to invade Iraq beforehand. After receiving the message in Iran, the Supreme National Security Council convened to discuss the issue. Assessing the course of events shows that the Islamic Republic's decision on this crisis was made in two stages.

Western Coalition: In the first stage, despite being offered to receive incentives from the West, the intervention of cognitive elements particularly the Islamic ideology and lack of trust in the U.S, due to the past experiences of Iranian foreign policy-makers in cooperating with the U.S, were among the main factors which led to the rejection of the call for cooperation with the Western

alliance against Saddam.

The historical experiences of Iranian society have characterized this country as having different cultural layers. Some of the important cultural layers that have affected the foreign policy of the country throughout history include cultural components of ancient Iran, Islamic and religious teachings, and the influence of Western culture components in the new era. Islamic culture became particularly prominent after the Islamic Revolution, unlike the Pahlavi era when the cultural layer of ancient Iran and Western culture prevailed in foreign policy. This is obviously reflected in the attitude and statements of the leaders of Iran. Therefore, religious teachings and the effect of Islam on foreign policy have been highlighted in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of many foreign policy issues. In Article 3 of the Islamic Republic of Iran's constitution, one of the major approaches for serving the overall goals of the Iranian system is characterized as "setting the Iranian foreign policy based on Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all the Muslims and supporting all the Muslims all over the world" (Iranian Constitution, part 16, article 3)

Another reason for rejecting the U.S proposal to cooperate against Saddam was the previous negative experiences with this country. Overall, wide cooperation of the U.S and West with Saddam during the imposed war, US dishonesty in the McFarlane case and failure to keep its promises after Iran's cooperation in freeing Lebanese hostages in Lebanon were among the main reasons for the distrust of foreign policy decision-makers about the new U.S promise to cooperate against Saddam (Mousavian, 2019). After the eight-year war, despite the fact that providing Saddam with military weapons, particularly chemical weapons, brought about many casualties, Iran decided to give a positive response to call for cooperation in regional issues. However, this cooperation from the Iranian side had no result but the breaking of promises from the American side.

In addition to being dishonest about the McFarlane's case,

they did not keep their promises regarding Iran's cooperation for the release of their hostages in Lebanon. Despite his pessimism about the US's change of approach to Iran, the Supreme Leader accepted the request of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the then president, to negotiate with the United States on the release of Western and American hostages in Lebanon. Seeking détente policy at the end of the war to make economic reconstructions, Hashemi Rafsanjani received encouraging messages based on "goodwill vs. goodwill" from Washington. Therefore, he established a committee to manage the project of the release of Western hostages; according to Seyed Hossein Mousavian, Director General of Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a member of this committee, Hashemi Rafsanjani believed that this policy is the starting point for overcoming the past problems between the two countries (Mousavian, 2015: 532).

Some experts believe that one of the significant reasons of rejecting cooperation with the U.S against Saddam was miscalculations of the members of the Iranian Supreme Council of National Security who anticipated defeat of the U.S in a war with Iraq. Ali Khorram, the then director-general of international affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated during the meeting of the Supreme National Security Council to review the response to the US request, "I was at the meeting at the time, where I discussed that if the US has 100 points in terms of military power and war machine, which was not claimed by me and was shared by another institution in another way, how powerful do you think Iraq is? Some were embarrassed to guess. They could not say 80 or 40. I explained the situation gradually and showed them that Iraq has 20 points based on my research in this field, which was still unrealistic. They believed that Iran's power is less than that. I asked them, what about France? I cited an institution that had previously reported the level of power of France, England, and Russia. This institution reported 100, 80, 70, and 70 points for the US, Russia, France, and England, respectively. However, these statistics were shared before the US

invasion. I said, as you can see, those with 70, 80, and 90 points do not have the guts to act against the US. How can you do it with 20 points? It was clear that by that time; 20 points was a low number for Iran. Therefore, this assumption was wrong from the beginning. (Khoram, 2016).

The Decision of Proactive Neutrality: After the rejection of a cooperation with the U.S against Saddam, two alternatives were left: cooperation with Saddam against the U.S, and neutrality. Saddam, even before the Kuwait occupation, via letters to implement Resolution 598, used an anti-American and Anti-Zionist tone to persuade the Iranians to cooperate against the U.S. (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 2011). Many times after the Kuwait occupation, Saddam, through suggestions such as the selling of Iraqi oil to Iran, which would violate the Security Council resolutions, attempted to persuade Iran to support Iraq in the war against the U.S. (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 2013, 283).

Efforts to involve Iran in the war were not limited to Saddam. With the emergence of some signs of agreement between Iran and Iraq over the exchange of prisoners and implementing Resolution 598, the Islamist groups in the region and in the country tried to persuade Iran to cooperate with Saddam. Jordan and Yemen, which had already cooperated with Saddam in the form of the Arab Cooperation Council, before the Kuwait occupation, were among such countries. The Foreign Ministers of the two mentioned countries, after accepting Iran's conditions by Saddam, travelled to Tehran. They asked the Iranian president to help Iraq lift the UN oil sanctions. On September 27th, 1990, 25 leaders of a the Muslim Brotherhood in Islamic-Arabic countries, led by Abdolrahman Khalifa, leader of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, travelled to Tehran to visit the Iranian Supreme Leader and the president to persuade them to help Saddam (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 2013; 314).

Besides, after the invasion of Iraq by the U.S in 1991, some of the political figures in the country criticized the approach of foreign policy decision-makers, asking for entering the war with

the United States. In a speech in the parliament, one of the members stated: “the United States’ thirst for power and the mercenaries of the reactionary regimes in the region are causes of this much trouble in the country... It is very unfortunate for some naive or intimidated people to think that this war is not a cause for concern for us and that people should not be concerned. Today, the Muslim nations of the region, especially the people of Iran, have a religious duty to rise against the infidel forces of the United States, NATO, and Zionism in a holy jihad... I encourage my dear brothers, scholars, authorities, and mujahids to refer to the statements of Imam Khomeini in the book of Tahrir al-Wasilah regarding defense. The situations explained by Imam exactly match our current situation. What has happened today that the United States and global blasphemy invade an Islamic country... Why are the Iranian nation and the Islamic nation completely silent? Don’t we have duties? Isn’t the United States a danger to the Islamic world?... Recent events and crises are reminiscent of Khalid Bin Walid’s confrontation and line-up against the early Islamic superpowers. All of his life, he was the enemy of the prophet of Islam and Muslims. In the end, however, he became a great conqueror for Muslims... What are we afraid of? Let us live and die with dignity. Life under the shadow of the American tyranny is a humiliation for us; it is captivity and a disgrace” (Salam, Newspaper: 1990). However, despite internal and external pressures, Iran decided on an active neutral stance in the crisis of the occupation of Kuwait and the subsequent US invasion of Iraq for the following reasons.

One of the reasons for the disinclination of the foreign policymakers to not enter the war was the complicated economic conditions of 1991. It was only two years past the eight-year war and entering another war was not possible (Mousavian, 2019). Due to reliance on Pahlavi’s regime, many industry owners were threatened after the Islamic revolution in 1978, which led to their selling of all properties and leaving the country along with experts working in these production units. Accordingly, many production

units had suffered interrupted in the production of goods or had been shut down, which not only caused the production to stagnate, but it also pushed the banking system to bankruptcy due to the outflow of capital (Razeghi, 1997: 24).

At the same time, three factors of the imposed war, economic sanctions, and reduced oil prices added to the existing problems of the country. In terms of economic consequences of the war, it could be expressed that the majority of important economic infrastructures, such as transportation, energy, and industry were destroyed. Most of the country's income was spent on the war, and the government failed to correct its economic structures and create the necessary infrastructures. At the end of the war, the main goal of the authorities was only to provide food and livelihood for the people according to the 1987 crisis plan, the rest of the resources were spent on the war and its requirements. Under those circumstances, according to the then head of the Program and Budget Organization, the discussion of investment, import, export, and development was completely meaningless, and the resources were divided into two parts; one part for keeping people alive and one part for the war (Roghani Zanjani, 2014: 168). This situation caused the country's economic security index to fall to a very low level, in a way that Iran ranked 107th out of 117 countries in this index in 1980, which was lower than most low-income countries in the world (Hashemian Esfahani, Gorji, 2007: 67).

In addition to war and international sanctions, world oil prices also fell sharply in the middle of the imposed war, in a way that the price of \$34 for a barrel of oil in 1981 decreased to \$14 in 1984. In addition to seriously damaging the energy infrastructures of the country and decreasing oil exports (World Bank, 1991: 2), the reduced oil prices tremendously affected the government revenues and complicated the management of the country and the war. The mentioned problems created a kind of internal consensus at the end of the war to overcome these issues. Roghani Zanjani, the then head of the Budget and Planning Organization, stated: "the slogan of all the officials at the end of the war was that we

are not a belligerent government and we want to re-build our war-torn country. It was necessary to share this slogan with the world. In fact, we required the support of foreign countries and the creation of conditions for obtaining loans and credit from international forums for large investments (Roghani Zanjani, 2004: 203).

After the occupation of Kuwait by Saddam, the U.S managed to make up a coalition of 28 Western and Islamic countries against Iraq. Given the terrible economic conditions and the country's low military capabilities at the end of the war on one hand, and opposing the presence of American forces in Persian Gulf on the other hand, if Iran had entered the war against the Western coalition, the national security of Iran would be severely endangered.

Accordingly, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the then president of Iran, responded to those who demanded entering the war against the US and Israel in the Friday prayer sermon on January 18th, 1991, "Starting a war with Israel requires the unity of all regional Islamic countries". Pointing out that all of the countries coming to the region (mentioning the west coalition) were Israel's allies, Rafsanjani marked: "let's not deceive the common people; let's tell them the truth. We also believe war with Israel must be started and continued until complete ownership of the Palestinian people. To this end, neighboring countries of Israel must invade it, and the money of oil-rich countries must support this war. We must be united in the war against Israel, which will be soon realized...while we agree that the United States is the center of corruption and must be dealt with, the current crisis in the Persian Gulf prevents us from making a suicide attack" (Kayhan Newspaper, February 1st, 1991). Therefore, in order to maintain national security and the territorial integrity of the country, the Supreme National Security Council decided to refrain from entering the battlefield, even if the Zionist regime was to enter the war or under any other circumstance at that critical time (Sadeghi, 2018).

Preventing the domination of Iraq over Persian Gulf: Domination of Iraq in Kuwait and cooperation with Saddam in the war against the US (even assuming Saddam's victory over the Western coalition) would have consequences such as Saddam's control over the region's oil and geographical resources, which could damage Iran's national interests. Accordingly, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani addressed those who wanted to help Saddam in the war, expressing, "some claim that we must help Iraq. However, they must review this request before making it. It is important to predict what will happen to us after the war. As an Islamic republic and the center of the Islamic revolution, we cannot accept a threat to our vital artery on the south coast. The Iraqis claim ownership of the southern coast, and given this expectation, we cannot enter a war in which Iraq remains in Kuwait and the Persian Gulf becomes an Arab Gulf..." (Kayhan Newspaper: February 3rd, 1991).

So, in the second stage, despite the fact that Iran, based on the Islamic teachings, commits itself to supporting the Islamic countries against global arrogance especially the U.S and the Zionist regime, due to the particular regional, national and international conditions, did not surrender to the national and regional pressures and decided to adopt a neutrality policy. Yet, this does not imply the ignoring of religious values; rather, the necessity of protecting territorial integrity and the realization that "protecting the system is the most important thing" caused the decision makers to consider a combination of ideology and the calculation of loss and gain. The US's extensive coalition against Saddam and the reduction of Iran's economic and military capabilities during the war prevented it from confronting the US military presence in the region and the Zionist regime's ventures. Also any miscalculation could have seriously jeopardized the country's territorial integrity.

Conclusion

An important issue for many foreign policy analysts is why Iran's

regional and international influence has increased over the past 40 years despite the ideological behavior of its government. To answer this question, we assessed one of the most important strategic decisions of Iran during a crisis, which was the taking of a neutral stance. The main question of the research was why and how did the Islamic Republic of Iran adopt a neutrality policy in the Kuwait occupation crisis. To answer this question, we evaluated the process of adopting a neutrality policy by Iran in the Kuwait occupation crisis by citing the information obtained from those who were involved in the decision-making process.

According to the results, the decision was made in a two-stage process. In the first stage, the decision was made based on decision-making Cognitive Models in foreign policy. First, the previous experiences of decision-makers and their dominant thinking system prevented them from cooperating with the West in the fight against Iraq. While some experts believe that cooperation with the US could lead to receiving incentives proposed by this country, experience of cooperation with this country in the case of Afghanistan after September 11th and the nuclear agreement, showed that the United States was extremely likely to break its promise if Iran had cooperated with the West in the Kuwait Occupation Crisis.

In the second stage, the decision was made based on a Rational Actor Model. At this stage, the decision-makers made a wise decision while adhering to Islamic and ideological principles due to the security-related consequences of the available options. In the final stage, the foreign policy decision-makers agreed on taking a neutral stance in the crisis under any circumstances (even if Israel entered the war after a missile attack by Saddam) considering the domestic, regional and international situations, especially the risk to the national security of the country. Therefore, the decision was made merely based on the accurate calculation of the consequences of the two options: cooperation with Saddam and active neutrality. So in the end, the option with the most benefits and least costs for the country was selected.

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