

# Iran-US Confrontation in the International System

Rahbar taleihur

Assistant Professor, International Relations, Farabi University, Tehran, Iran,  
taleihur10@gmail.com

## Abstract

The relationship between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran has been a confrontational one in the past four decades and been influenced by the nature of the Islamic Revolution and its derived system. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States tried to expand its ideals and structure of the desired order by using the power components in international system as a hegemonic power. However, Iran generally considers the US hegemony as a special type of domination and given the nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran with a unique ideological discourse, the resistance against the domination hegemony is necessary and therefore counter-hegemonic strategies and policies have always been Iranian policy priorities. This article aims to investigate the relationships between the two countries by using descriptive-analytical method in the framework of Neo-Gramscianism and in the hegemony power and counter-hegemony forms. The findings of the article show that in order to maintain its position of hegemony, the US has applied policies such as the coercive diplomacy, the soft warfare, de-legitimization of Iran and legitimization of the use of pressure through the international institutions against the country. In response Iran has tried to confront the US hegemonic position by adopting self-reliance policies, by making alliances and coalitions as well as pursuing independent political discourse in international system.

**Keywords:** *United States of America, the Islamic Republic of Iran, hegemony, neo-Gramscian viewpoint*

Received: 04/05/2020

Review: 09/10/2020

Accepted: 15/02/2021

Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter- Spring 2019, pp. 45-72

## **Introduction**

Changes in the structure of the international system and transformations arising from them leave serious effects on the behavior of political players and the players apply appropriate behaviors in the face of other players based on their position in this system. The review of the transformation process on the structure of the international system after the cold war specify that how this structure has been practically converted from a bipolar structure to mono-polar one, and finally, how this structural transformation has led to change the United states position as the only superior power in the system, and in turn, how it could influence on America's foreign policy in the world.

The vast military power of the United States, its dominance in international economic arena, its role in international institutions, its victory in the cold war, its supremacy in liberalism and in general the created gap between its power and other powers has caused the Us scientific community be indicated in the international system as a mono-polar one and that the international security is dependent on the unclaimed hegemony of America and the US applies this hegemony in political arena with its economic, military, technological and cultural powers. Although the United States has the necessary powers in all fields, but gramscianists believe that these present dominant structures are changeable and they are not the permanent ones. They emphasize as well that it can be resisted against the hegemonic structures and alternative structures should be replaced instead of them. Gramsci believed the ideological hegemony is the continuing factor of the capitalist system, as a result, so the economic crisis cannot lead to the

collapse and deterioration of this system. But, first of all, any fundamental changes requires a cultural preparation to break the hegemony of the ruling class. (Hobden and Wyn Jones, 2001: 211)

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which was established on the profound cultural and religious foundation, from the beginning of its victory has not accepted the existing international order and with respect to its global aspirations, this country has presented itself as an anti-hegemonic power and has attempted to challenge the available hegemony order in international system with its policies and strategies. Therefore, the new US-Iran relations and interactions after the Islamic Revolution have led to the mutual hegemonic and anti-hegemonic conflicts and challenges which continue until today. This article aims to examine the confrontation of the two countries from the perspective of hegemony and anti-hegemony issue and that for this purpose the Neo-Gramscianism is used as the theoretical framework of this article.

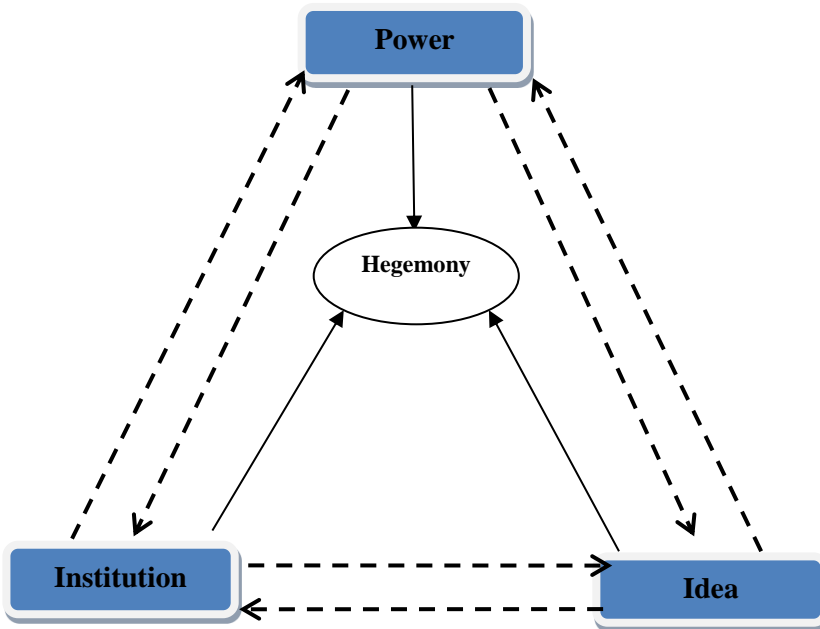
## **I. Theoretical Framework**

The word Hegemony arises from the ways of acting and the dominant layers reflections of the society in the government or the dominant governments, so that these methods of acting and thinking could be accepted and satisfied by the dominant social layers of other governments. These social practices and ideologies that explain and legitimize them can create the foundations of the hegemonic order (Cox, 1996: 151). Cox believes that hegemony is based on a proportional configuration of the financial power, dominant public picture of the world order (including international norms) and a set of institutions for managing the world order. In this manner, from his point of view, hegemony cannot be reduced to force and power. He emphasizes on the symbolic and institutional dimensions of hegemony. From Michael Cox point of view, the major mechanisms for maintaining the hegemony are to internationalize the governments

through free trade and observation of the international institutions (Cox, 1981: 55-126).

According to Cox, only the existence of dominant power in international system cannot create the world order itself. Cox pointed to the failure of the United States to create a stable international order in the period between world wars I and II, despite its advantage on the global level and concludes that the sovereignty of a state cannot lead necessarily to the world order. Cox believed that the hegemony is a sufficient condition for the emergence of the international order and it includes a coordinated set of three basic elements; power, the idea and the institution (Cox, 1983: 102-106).

In general, it can be said that the elements which Michael Cox considered in the context of the hegemony, includes the power, the idea and institution and we consider them in this study as a conceptual model based on the theoretical framework can be explained as follows.



## **II. The US hegemony and its components against Iran**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bipolar structure of the international system that was created after the Second world war collapsed and left profound consequences on the international system. Iraq invasion of Kuwait, the US invasion of Iraq in 1991, that is known as the Gulf War, the signing of a peace agreement between Palestine and Israel in 1991, called as the Gaza-Jericho agreement, signing peace agreement between Jordan and Israel in the same year and adopting a strategy that was called dual containment policy toward Iran and Iraq by the US can be examples of the restructuring the international system. These developments were prominent and highlighted signs of change in the structure of the system and its conversion to a new system under the shadow of America's power (Schulzinger, 1999: 445). Therefore, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, America converted into an uncontested global hegemony. In this regard, the United States has tried to maintain its influence and control over all parts of the world, especially its attempts to prevent the emergence of an independent and regional hegemony against its purposes and interests (Bill, 2001: 89-92).

Iran as a regional power with effective potentials on the international arena is always seeking to influence the existing structures that is being influenced by changes in international relations. The vast and diverse geography of Iran, the combination and quality of the young and prepared demographic structure, the ideological consistency, depth and wideness of its cultural influence, geopolitical position with mutual and strategic impacts on the regional changes and other relative various advantages including the special features of Iran in the international scene (Pishghahifard et al., 2011: 200) that makes Iran as a regional hegemonic power which has been the subject of the US hegemonic policies more than any other country in the world. The identity conflict between Iran and the United States we attempt to examine the US hegemony in the international system by considering these three elements;

**Power:**

America's hard power has been imposed on Iran as a counter-hegemonic power over the past decades in various forms, including direct and indirect campaigns. This form of war-mongering has appeared in the form of coercive diplomacy in recent decades.

According to Alexander Georg “the logic-based of the coercive diplomacy is based on the premise that “diplomacy will be successful if the requests from the opponent are based on the threat of punishment in the face of non-compliance and at the same time, this threat should be considered strong and serious enough by the opponent that can encourage it to submission” (George, 1994: 13).

The aim of the coercive diplomacy is to force and persuade a country to do a specific act such as withdrawing from its policies or positions, changing its ambitions, position or giving up to the will of the persuasive country. “Economic sanctions” and “military threat” are the most important foundations of US coercive diplomacy to maintain its hegemonic position towards Iran and that the United States has taken advantage of these two elements.

The first economic sanction of the United States against Iran was applied after the seizure of its embassy in Tehran and the hostage crisis. with the executive order of the then US president Jimmy Carter; The US sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran intensified at the time of Clinton administration in the 1990s with the aim of changing Iran's behavior and these sanctions were put on the agenda of US officials in the framework of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (D'Amato Act) This law was extended at the time of Jr., Bush and Barack Obama (Hosseini Matin, 2012: 113).

After the rising of Iran's nuclear program, the sanction policy of United States continued with this excuse, but this policy had two very important differences with the previous one: First, these new sanctions had the international aspect. Second, the new sanctions were different generally with the traditional ones that

damaged the people of the sanctioned countries. The smart sanctions act on Iran pursued three objectives, First, to prevent the transmission of the superior and dual-use technology to Iran, second, to prevent the illegal and dangerous activities of individuals and institutions, and third, the financial sanctions (Jacobson, 2008: 74).

At the time of Obama administration, the United States and his secretary of state Hillary Clinton raised the issue of crippling sanctions in the form of coercive diplomacy against Iran. From the beginning of 2009 till the last months of 2009 and in the early months of 2010, a combination of factors, including, some ambiguous reports of the IAEA ( international Atomic Energy Organization ), particularly under the presidency of Yokio Amano, disclosing Fordow enrichment site near Qom, Iranian unrests in 2009, lack of progress in nuclear talks between Iran and the United States, domestic pressures on Obama by the neoconservatives and other factors led to the abandonment of engagement policy and adopting economic sanctions by the US government on Iran (Hosseini Matin, 2012: 222).

Jacob Lew, the US treasury secretary said explicitly that “sanction alternatives are worse” and emphasized that “I do not think any president can decide going beyond the sanctions without wrapping up the available tools”. From his point of view, “sanctions are having their effects and we see this trend in Iran’s GDP( gross domestic product ), the Rial value, unemployment rate and the rate of inflation.” He eventually says, "our goal is to change the decision-making process". (Lew, July1: 2013).

Joseph Biden, vice president of the US president Barack Obama once cited when he was talking to the Jewish leaders “Remember that I told here and you can judge this case about me before the US presidential election that these sanctions will have a devastating effect on the economy of Iran and they will have to think even more severe than the past” (Biden, May8, 2012). Under Obama, the Joint comprehensive plan of action was signed between Iran and the P5 + 1 group and on the basis of its

provisions, sanctions on Iran were lifted but Trump stepped out of the agreement and tightened sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The United States uses military threats as a tool of coercive diplomacy against the Islamic Republic of Iran in addition to unilateral and multilateral sanctions against Islamic republic under the pretext of pursuing nuclear weapons, human rights violation and missile activities. The military threat against Iran was constantly outlined by the White House after highlighting its nuclear program issue. The US military and political officials, particularly the neo-conservative ones like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and John Bolton, who favored pursuing the unilateral approach constantly has repeated the subject of the military attack against Iran. (Hosseini Matin, 2012: 166). The subject of military threat was constantly emphasized at the time of Obama despite serious negotiations to resolve the issue and during the Trump presence at the white house the subject of military threat has been repeatedly raised in his comments.

### **Ideology and Culture**

From the perspective of Cox, only domination and sovereignty of a state in international system do not suffice to create a hegemonic structure, but hegemony is created when the hegemonic player is capable of taking ways of thinking, operation and function of other societies under its own direction and influence. (Cox, 1993: 49-66).

Now, the culture and ideology of the US liberalism have emerged in the form of its soft power. Joseph Nye with regard to the extension of soft power cites Michael Cox analysis about economic orders in the nineteenth century and in the late twentieth century. By following the arguments of Cox, Nye considers the works of Antonio Gramsci about the concept of hegemony. Gramsci's influence on Nye is easily visible: hegemonic acts like the soft power by relying on a set of general principles which guarantee the superiority of one group and at the same time gives the satisfaction to the rest of the other groups. The authors who



follow Gramsci (Neo- Gramscis) agree with this statement of Nye that if the other governments recognize the power of a government as a legitimate power, this government will face less resistance in pursuit of its goals. (Parmar, 2010: 43). In fact, the United States seeks to achieve a global ideological leadership in the world by using its soft power in the form of culture, politics and values (Adami and Qureyshi, 2014: 211-212).

One of the distinctive aspects of the United States in comparison to many western countries is the widespread role of ideas in justifying foreign policy goals and consequently these ideas lead the performance of the country at the global scene. The ideas and values have always been one of the essential and vital factors for the nature of the United States foreign policy performance. (Ketaby, 2012: 123).

The US with contribution of the media have all facilities for sending cultural products into the homes of people around the world with a very attractive appearance and by using them could give a global background to its culture. It can be definitively said that culture and its spreading tools are the most effective factor to extend the hegemony in the changing environment of today's world. (Pour Ahmadi, 2011: 173).

According to the views of soft power theorist, the concept of "soft power" and consequently the "soft warfare" have been entered into the strategic literature, and it can be said that soft warfare is the last loop of the United States strategy series, especially after the rise of the neoconservatives to change inconsistent regimes with their interests, particularly in underdeveloped countries. The committee on the present danger that was active at the time of the cold war for software confrontation with the Soviet Union stopped its activities after the collapse of this country a decade ago. But in the wake of ongoing developments after September 2001, the above-mentioned committee became active again with new members. In October 2005, this committee concluded that the hard and direct war is useless by considering successive failures of the previous years

and called for more attention by the United States to the software project of the "subversion from within". Mark Palmer; a prominent member of this committee and one of the influential member of the US foreign policy opposed explicitly with the idea of military action against the Islamic Republic of Iran in an interview with "Deborasalomode"; the reporter of the New York Times declared that Iran has become a unique power in the Middle East and heartland of the international system in terms of territory, population, manpower, military facilities, rich natural resources and the privileged geographical location, so it can no longer be overthrown by the military attack.

In the committee's report entitled "Iran and the united states, a new approach" that was expressed and concluded by Mark Palmer, the overthrowing the Islamic Republic was recommended in three axes: Harnessing the revolution, media fighting and organizing civil disobedience. In this report, there were 15 general axes that the most important ones are as follows: the use of economic sanctions and creating internal disputes, urging the civil disobedience in student organizations and nongovernmental organizations and unions as an instrument of pressure, increasing political / economic pressure in the nuclear file and sending it to the UN Security Council, inviting young activists from abroad for participating in small seminars, eliminating the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Mobilization Resistance Force (basij) and creating fundamental changes in the Ministry of Intelligence (Mahdavi, 2016: 6).

Therefore, with respect to such attitudes, soft confrontation between the United States and Iran was considered that this confrontation is analyzable in three dimensions.

1) In domestic scene; the orientation of the United States is to change the values from the Islamic Revolution, weakening and undermining the principles and cultural foundations of the Islamic Republic and attempt to show that the Islamic governance model is inefficient, encouraging ethnic conflicts, following the strategy of the regime change and overthrowing the government through

cultural influence. The existing of the anti-Iranian institutions and entities in the United States and allocating huge funds for this confrontation is the symbol of this performance.

2) At the regional level; creating the gap between Islamic countries, putting Iranian people against Arab people, Shiite against Sunni, pursuing the Iran phobia policy among Arabic countries.

3) At the international level, efforts are focused on showing bad image of Iran which is opposed to the international peace and security. Having the institutional, political and organizational instruments like the UN Security Council, has allowed the US to isolate this political unit with security issue of Iran's foreign policy through international sanctions. Several years of dispute about Iran's nuclear program are a strong proof of this claim (Rostami Gholami Hassan Abadi, 2016: 228).

### **De-legitimization of Iran:**

The United States during the last decades has pursued the policy of de-legitimization against the Islamic republic of Iran in the eyes of the world public opinion by assigning some titles to the Islamic Republic and has emphasized on them in the media which are at its disposal. It is worth mentioning that these media have global dimension, so by pursuing iranophobia propaganda in these media, some unreal titles are being associated in the minds of the audiences about Iran. Among them two titles have been outlined and are emphasized more than any others that we will point them out.

### **Sponsor of Terrorism:**

One of the constant accusations against Iran that has been addressed by the United States is the accusation of supporting terrorism by Iran. US officials attribute a wide range of terrorist activities to Iran's political and security apparatus and through this, they attempt to simplify remarkably the complex issues of the international security.

Accordingly, the centerpiece of the regional challenge

between Iran and the United States is this issue that Iran recognizes Hezbollah and Hamas movements in its foundations of identity framework, national and Islamic interests, because they attempt and fight to determine their own destiny and the Islamic Republic considers defending them as an appropriate duty. In contrast, the United States considers them as terrorist movements and Iranian support is seen as the state sponsor of the terrorism (Rostami and Gholami Hassan Abadi, 2016: 221).

### **Violation of Human Rights:**

In US foreign policy, human rights issue have had a very effective role in accomplishing the country's global hegemonic position. Zbigniew Brzezinski once mentioned in his famous book "Power and Principle" that the aim of adopting the human rights policy is to protect America's interests in the long-term and its political maneuver and said: When Carter came to power; a fundamental change in America's foreign policy was created toward Iran and the world. There was a moral vacuum inside and outside of the united states and so the Carter's human rights policy began to act in order to fill the political vacuum. By adopting the human rights policy, America's prestige was revived. The United States was going to be alone in the world, so first, by relying on human rights policy it could have saved itself from being alone. Second, America's interests became guarantee in the long-term. Third, America by relying to such a policy could gain some privileges in arms race and reduction of the nuclear weapons from the Soviets Union and the most important thing was to use the human rights policy as a strong shield and an antidote against the Russians' propaganda that believed America is an imperialist country (Brzezinski, 2000: 98).

One of the most challenging areas between Iran and the United States is the human rights issue. Based on the ideas, the political and social structures of the two different systems, the conflict's perspectives about human rights have been brought into the realm of objectivity. While the United States evaluates the human rights and its indices from a liberal perspective and

believes that anyone who is outside of this area is a violator of human rights actually shows that the political issues will be heavily involved in this evaluation. The Islamic Republic based on its constitution, political Islam, and the dominant discourse on Islamic rationality has a different view to the human rights in comparison with the West. The domination of two different perspectives in the field of human rights has led to one of the most stable areas of conflict between the two countries (Rostami and Gholami Hassan Abadi, 2016: 221).

### **Legitimizing Pressure Through International Institutions:**

Robert Cox believes that the international institutions are effective in 5 items regarding hegemonic power in global norms:

1. They guarantee the laws related to facilitating the expansion of the global hegemonic order.
2. They are the product of hegemonic global order.
3. They legitimize ideologically to the norms of global order.
4. They are the selection tools of the elites from the other countries.
5. They attract anti-hegemonic ideas (Cox, 1983: 62).

Michael Cox emphasized that the international institutions use processes to eliminate anti-hegemonic movements. They absorb the counter-hegemonic potential ideas and put them in a line with the hegemonic doctrine (Cox, 1983: 62).

The United States plays a greater role in the management of the world order as one of the founders of the United Nations and many other influential international institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Therefore, these institutions and international organizations often act as an instrument of the US foreign policy to the national interests of the United States. In fact, the background of such support is the political and economic power of the US and its existence as consensus providing power in international scene. The country plays an important role in directing the policy by supplying 25 percent of the UN budgets on the one hand and on the other, the WTO members cannot make a

decision without considering the US political and economic attitudes due to the high volume of the economic power and influence of the US dollar in international economy. The United States has taken control of the world economic order with the implementation of the American liberal economic system in global economy. So the United States looks with a strategic approach to the international institutions such as the United Nations, especially the Security Council, the International Atomic Energy Organization, WTO and international norms such as human rights and use them as an executive arm in its foreign policy approach in international system. (Anami Alamdari, 2008: 33)

The US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew on June 2016 in an exclusive interview with the CNN TV network admitted the fact that: "The American leadership role in institutions such as the UN, the world bank and the international monetary fund is not just an economic issue, but it is linked to the US role in the world and promotion of the American values." Jacob Lew emphasized again in an interview with the Bloomberg television network in the April 2016 that, "America cooperates with a great number of the international institutions, including the International Monetary Fund" in order to boycott countries such as Iran. He stated. "We're working with international institutions such as the international monetary fund to impose sanctions properly and effectively and to stop the financial transactions to individuals and entities [Iran] that are under the sanctions list (Lew, 2016).

To understand the role of the United Nations as a tool of the United States consider John Bolton's statements; the former ambassador of the United States to the UN is so significant that in a controversial statements about the UN he said: " the UN is valuable, if it serve directly the America's interests and the most effective council of the UN is the Security Council that the united states is the only permanent member (Ismaili, 2016).

An example of the instrumental use of the UN Security Council was Iran's nuclear program that the United States with its

influence in the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Security Council took Iran's nuclear file to the Security Council as a political and security one, while it was being examined from the technical and legal aspects in the agency and attempted to convince other members of the security council to support the sanction resolutions against Iran.

### **III. Iran's anti-hegemony components**

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the United States as a dominant hegemony that is trying to dominate other countries by material and spiritual tools and given the nature of the ruling regime in Iran, fight against the domination and arrogance has been put at the forefront of the Islamic Republic of Iran policies, as a result, Iran is subject to the hegemonic threats more than any other countries and has attempted to use the appropriate policies to confront these threats which in this section, we will attempt to examine the anti-hegemonic components of the Islamic Republic of Iran that include self-reliance, coalition building, unity and the use of soft power to affect other countries.

#### **Self-Reliance:**

Islamic Republic of Iran by understanding regional changes and obtaining experience from the past three decades evaluates that the only way of its survival is an attempt to create self-reliance at all strategic, military and tactical levels.

Iran's defense strategy which is one of the main foundations of self-reliance has the comprehensive deterrence and the purpose of this deterrence is both symmetrical and asymmetrical ones. The reason that the Islamic Republic of Iran has chosen this kind of strategy is that the threats which the country is facing in its neighborhood and at the international level are both related to the above-mentioned cases; That is, part of this threat is the traditional symmetrical ones such as the threat of Israel or the United States and the other part is an asymmetric threats such as infiltration of terrorist groups to the Iranian border and the support which some countries render to these groups to perform some other measures

which could be named as a form of asymmetrical warfare. (Bagheri Dowlatabadi, 2013: 41).

Iran with its own defensive strategy seeks to increase the destructive capacity and to create disorder in operations and stability of the US stationed forces in the region. This strategy has frightened the US regional allies and it will probably turn down some regional countries aspirations for gaining the support of the US policies that in its own turn will increase the political, financial and human costs for Americans. Iran has the largest growing arsenal of ballistic missiles in the Middle East and access to these missiles provides necessary capabilities to improve and increase its defensive power. Tehran considers conventional missiles as the main part of its strategy to deter revenge and retaliation if necessary against foreign forces in the region such as the US military forces. (Blair.2009: 56).

The Islamic Republic of Iran pursues the self-reliance in economic sphere with particular emphasis on the economy of resistance. The term of the resistance economy was outlined for the first time in 2010 by the supreme leader of the Islamic revolution. He identifies the resistance economy as a confrontational way against US unjust imposed sanctions. (Ezzati et al., 1394: 17-18).

Economic resistance is a special term and a model of economic conditions which the country's economic mechanisms will be designed by an active state participation which is based on the assumption of maximum usage of sanctions and pressures in order to be self-reliant in economic activities. In fact, the "resistance economy, "is a theoretical and practical basis for modeling a special kind of economy which prepares the ground to deal with sanctions actively more than ever before. In this approach, the acquisition of wealth and national income will be followed that can strengthen the country's bargaining power in international political scene and therefore the country will not be forced to abandon its ideological goals in political sphere due to the economic pressures (Torabzadeh Jahromy, 2013: 33).



### **Alliance and Coalition:**

Kenneth Waltz believes in the theory of "balance of threat" who believes that states attempt to adopt convergence and balance against the threatening government when they face a common threat based on a common and political vision. He believes that the states not only keep balance of power, but also they unite with each other in the face of the "common threat". In other words, the states unite with each other against those countries that pose a great threat to them in the international system. Waltz notes on this basis that the goal of the alliance and coalition building is not necessarily facing the most powerful state (Walt, 1987: 263), Martin White believes that the outcome of alliances is to strengthen the security of allies and promotion of their interests in its outside world (Wight, 1978: 122).

Alliances and coalition building have an important place in "looking to the east" policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since 2005 with the beginig of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad presidency in Iran, some factors such as the "critical looking" theory to the international system, the need for alliance buildings with other reluctant and dissatisfied powers, the unfavorable surrounding environment, deep geopolitical and ideological differences with neighbors and ultimately the specific and negative attitudes of Iranian conservative elites to the international systems, the policy of "looking to the East" was proposed that was a general and hidden form of the Iran's foreign policy ambitions but became a strategic approach in Iran's foreign policy that in its framework, the expansion of relationships with countries such as China, Russia and India was emphasized more than ever before and by a general definition it was more defined to include, African and some Latin American countries (Hunter, 2010: 117).

Iran opted the policy of looking to the east for confronting the hegemonic attitudes of the United States and adopted alliance and coalition buildings policy as its priority in its foreign policy approaches. By pursuing this policy, it tried to form coalitions with some emerging world powers such as Russia and China and

also tried to cement its strategic relations with the Syrian government which was pursuing the same policy..

According to Stephen Walt, Iran strategic cooperation with Russia and China is part of an efforts of three countries (Iran, Russia and China)for counterbalancing against the pervasive American power. According to Stephen Walt, Russia and Iran have gradually expanded their strategic partnership since 2000 at least as part of an effort in response to the growing influence of the United States in the region. Walt insists that Russia and Iran have begun their joint efforts to limit the influence of the US and its allies (Turkey and Israel). The Iran-Russia cooperation is a strategic response to American efforts to expand its influence in the region through cooperation with Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan (Walt, 2004: 14).

However, apart from any perspective that we have had to the alliance between Iran, Russia and China, what has been specified in the relationship between these countries is the Counter-hegemonic nature of this alliance that has created a common interest for them in recent years., Although there are ups and downs in this relationship, but in general, it should be accepted that this level of relationship with Russia and China has also been valuable for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Of course this serves the US interests in creating an international consensus against Iran Iran's look to Russia and China is utopian and based on the ideological rationality at the level of macro issues. Iran sees Russia and China as the states to restrain the west threats more than anything else. Accordingly, Iran's look to Russia and China is macro-oriented and internationally to weaken and reduce the political, security and the economic constraints (Jafari and Zulfaqari, 2013: 36). The importance of building alliance and coalition with Russia and China is that these countries adopt pragmatic policies in international system and it is obvious that if these two powers had adopted a political front against Iran as western powers had pursued this policy over the past couple of decades, the global consensus against Iran could be completed by

the United States and, as a result, Iran would have faced severe restrictions in international scene. But the revisionist policies of the two countries in international system have led to modify confrontational policies of the United States against Iran.

Besides coalition and alliance building to confront the hegemony of the west, the coalition and alliance under the title of the Axis of Resistance has also been considered by Iran. The formation of an axis of resistance which include Iran, Syria and Hezbollah is one of the biggest threats that have been able to challenge the American interests in the region. The best impact that this axis has had on the US interests in the region since its formation is emergence of a discourse under the title of resistance.

Lawrence J. Goldstein believes that in the event of the US attack on Tehran, Iran's activities won't be limited to the Gulf region, but Lebanon will be the main scene of Iranian operations in this country. Hezbollah is an effective tool in Iran's hands for stimulation of the United States and Israel to show a severe reactions which will damage their credibility in the region. An example of this is the "Anger Cluster" offensive operations on April 1995. Goldstein adds that "Iran with punishment of the United States in Lebanon could remind the country that if it tries to provoke the unrests, bad days would be returned "(Goldstein, 2000: 121-213).

The main indexes of resistance discourse are, the opposition to foreign intervention, formation of endogenous security, antagonism to Israel, opposition to Arabconservatism and the rotten form of its governance, opposition to the US presence in the region, using oil as an instrument to pressure the west, supporting the Palestinian cause, the acceptance of the forgotten role of people to determine their own destiny, the strength of Shiite minorities in alternative democracies, the revival of Islamist thoughts and finally the growing role of the Islamist movements under the title of the Islamic awakening. These indexes are the ones which were mentioned above and are completely in opposition to the US interests. Insisting on components of this

discourse has led in increasing the costs of this country's presence in the region while its benefits are being reduced. Basically, this issue is very important because the US did not face any serious opposition in the region to meet its goals and interests before the Islamic Revolution and formation of the resistance axis (Parsa and Motaharnia, 2014: 132-133).

The axis of resistance are more than a tactical alliance. Therefore the US congress middle east experts believe that the relationship between Iran, Syria and Hezbollah is not merely tactical, but has been a strategic one. In recent years Iranian policies in the region, especially after Iran support of Gazan people in the 22-day war with Isreal and in the 33-day war of Hezbollah with Isreal and failure of the Zionist regime in achieving its goal by waging the war these attacks, the popularity of Iran was expanded in the public opinion of Syria and Lebanon. Syria has increasingly distant itself away from the west and has gotten closer to Iran. Experts of the region have mentioned it as a flip to the United States (Casey, 2011:16). With the beginning of the Syrian crisis and cooperation of Iran and Hezbollah with Syria to confront terrorist groups, this axis is getting closer to each other and their cooperation with Russia has been the main cause of Syria's invincibility.

### **Ideas:**

In spite of having no excellent rate in terms of material components in comparison with other big playes, the Islamic republic of Iran is considered as a peripheral player in international system structure in which the hegemonic powers attempts to marginalize it repeatedly After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran could create a counter-hegemonic bloc by pursuing an independent ideology, and a unique discourse which confronted the hegemonic powers discourse and that was its culture and its components rather than military and economic confrontation. In fact, the late Imam Khomeini as the ideologist of the Islamic Revolution by introducing a new discourse and meaningful framework for the international system challenged the

dominant discourse and the common transcendental concepts in the global system that had been imposed by the United States as the hegemonic player (Pour Ahmadi, 2011: 175) and it was the same thing that Gramsci believed. He believed the ideological hegemony was the continuing factor of the capitalist system and so, the economic crisis cannot merely lead to collapse of the system, but initially any fundamental change requires a cultural preparation to break the hegemony of the ruling class. He believed that the resistance against the capitalist hegemony of the west requires the compensator hegemonic resources and the concepts that are made expertly by an independent, moral and intellectual leadership to confront with the conventional wisdom of the system elegantly (Pourahmadi, 2011:174).

The Religious nature of this revolution presented a particular model in the field of governance in some countries in the Islamic world and on the one hand it was looking for an alternative to the socialist and marxist discourse and on the other it was looking for an alternative for the liberal democracy. " Khomynism" was considered as a fundamental threat against the interests of the west by providing a third way to address the religious element in politics and liberation struggles in regional and global domination. The discourse could challenge the liberal democracy and the ruling patterns of political economy in the field of cultural geography particularly in the Middle East with its software approach. The Justice-oriented, task-oriented, defending the oppressed and dominant bravery of the Islamic Revolution discourse are the most basic soft threats against the interests and behavioral model of the United States (Rostami and Gholami, 2016: 227).

Michel Foucault argues that: the "soft power of the revolution lies in its spiritual message that transmits to the world, the world that the mere materiality surrounds it and its politics are extremely vacated from the religion and spirituality. In the west, after the Renaissance, the importance of the political spirituality and its role in shaping, controlling and supervising the government and

the human community has been ignored. Iranian people have dream of a returning to morality and religion in their minds in the modern and secular era. Foucault knows this lost (spirituality) and says: "searching for something that we ( westerners) have lost after the Renaissance and the great crisis of the Christianity" Foucault knows the Iranian Revolution as "the soul of a soulless world. (Foucault,1998: 42)

In fact, what worries the United States is not Iran's military power nor its economic one (at least at the current time) rather, its concern is the soft power that has its roots in Iranian culture and Shiite ideology and presents a new model to manage the society. There is the contrast and negative attitudes between Iran and the United States to each other based on conflicting ideological foundations of the two countries as well as macro strategies and different goals of the two countries foreign policies.. Nye believes, "now there is no powerful bloc in the way of the united states which relies on its military and technologies, but what has been able to challenge the United States is the power of ideology and Islamic revivals (Nye, 1387: 176).

Immanuel wallerstein considers "Khomynism" as a threat to the interests of the west and the United States which challenges the west-oriented discourse and the economic-political interests of the west with an ideological approach, especially in the Geo-Economic and Geo-Cultural region of the Middle-East (Shakeri Khoie and Ahmadzadeh 2011: 70).

"Robert Snyder" emphasizes the role of the Islamic revolution against the US liberal and hegemonic order and knows the revolution as the revival factor of the political Islam and the emergence of the Islamic movements in the region that challenges the present international, liberal and secular orders (Snyder, 1999:43).

Fawaz Gerges emphasizes on the superior position of the revolution and its founder and says: "There are more than fifty thousand websites about Imam Khomeini, the Iranian Islamic revolution and hundreds of books, articles and research about it

have been published. All of them show that the Islamic Iran has been in the minds of the west, given the fact that before the revolution, Iran was known only by some governments and high-ranking politicians as well as some well-known arm producing companies (Gerges, 1382: 69).

John Esposito a western intellectual says about the importance of Iran's Islamic Revolution: "friends and enemies believe the Iranian revolution has had a great impact on the Islamic world and the west and from the first days of the revolution, Iran has consciously provided a universal idea of it. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini insisted that the revolution has its roots in Islamic principles and it belongs to all oppressed people of the world, both Shiites and non-Shiites. After the revolution, many Muslim students saw Iran as their model regardless of their sectarian affiliations. Thus, Sunni students of the "Aljamaato Islamy" announced in Cairo University that the revolution of the Iranian people should be deeply studied and we should gain benefits of this model. In fact, both the elites and the public rarely consider the revolution as a Shiite victory. Many Muslims consider it as defeat of the evil forces and the triumph of the third World on American imperialism "(Esposito, 2009: 325-327).

Robin Wright, an analyst and a famous American journalist refers to Islamic resurgence after the victory of the Islamic revolution and the collapse of the communism as another sign of the Islamic model success for the victory of the opposition and says: "Thirteen years after the establishment of the first modern religious state in Iran, once again Islam has been proposed as a strong political thinking in the world and the new wave of Islamic resurgence has been ubiquitous that with the demise of communism, Islam is considered as one of the ideological competitors of the west in the future (Wright, 1374: 13).

## **Conclusion**

Hegemony is formed when a country is superior to other powers in all political, economic, cultural and military spheres. A

hegemonic country has qualitative and quantitative distinctions in terms of all categories of power it has established. In addition, its economic structure has been accepted in the world and the super-structure of the ruling hegemony has also been accepted and has gained global legitimacy. Its Political and cultural values are not faced with serious competition in the world and its political concepts as well as valuable patterns are ubiquitous in the world. According to the hegemonic theories, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States became a global hegemony without facing any rivals. In this regard, the United States attempted to maintain its influence and control over all parts of the world and prevented the emergence of regional independent hegemonies that could be a potential opposition to its goals and interests.

The Islamic revolution in Iran with its international goals and aspirations in a strategic region of the Persian Gulf and the greater middle east challenged the dominant global powers at that time and caused a fundamental change in regional and global patterns of power distribution. It created a confrontational approach to the hegemony of United States of America. Now that after nearly four decades of conflict between the two countries, not only this confrontational approach been adjusted, but it has also intensified that is arising from the nature of the relation between the hegemony and anti-hegemonic players. Due to the nature of the conflict and divergence that are arising from the ideological perspective and the normative system of the two countries, it seems that the adjustment of this model and converting it to an interactive model is not possible simply and requires a fundamental change in the behavior of the United States toward Iran. The Americans behavior toward the Islamic republic of Iran is originated in the differences between the two countries system of governments. In fact, these differences are intrinsic and the confrontation is strategic and according to the emphasis of the Neo-Gramscianists on the continuity of the hegemony through generating consent, it seems that if the United States wants to



continue its hegemony, it must change its approach toward Iran and consider Iran as a great power that is influential in the regional and international developments. Although it must be admitted that the confrontation against hegemony and unilateralism of the United States approach has been pursued by some other great regional and global powers as well.

## References

- Adami, A., and Qureyshi M., (2015), "The decline of America's soft power, measures and components" *World Policy Journal*, Volume IV, Issue 4.
- Anami Alamdari, S., (2008), "The soft threats, the model of strategic confrontation between the  
against Iran," Tehran, Center for Research and Documentation presidency.
- Bagheri Chokamy, S., (2013), "the development of strategies to confront the soft warfare in the fourth decade of the Islamic Revolution", *Journal of Strategic Defense Studies*, Issue 54, winter.
- Bagheri Dowlatabadi, A., (2014), "theoretical approach for the development of relations between Iran and Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union to now," *Central Eurasia Studies Journal*, Volume 7, Issue 1, spring and summer.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew (2000), *power and principles (memories of Brzezinski)*, translates by Saghiyan, M., first edition.
- Bilis, John., and Smith Steve (2003), *Globalization policy: international relations in the new era*, Tehran, First Edition, Abrar International Studies and Research Institute.
- Biden, Joseph (May 8, 2012); "Remarks by the Vice President to the Rabbinical Assembly Leadership"; White House, Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/08/remarks-vice-president-rabbinical-assembly-leadership>.
- Bill, James A. (2001), "The Politics of Hegemony: The United States and Iran," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VIII, No. 3. September.
- Blair, Dennis (2009), *Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, available at: [www.nic.org](http://www.nic.org).
- Casey, L. Addis (2011), "Lebanon: Back ground and U.S Relations", *Congressional Research Service*, New York.
- Cox, Robert (1981), "Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, pp: 126-55.
- Cox, R. (1983) 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 12 (2): 162-175.
- Cox, Robert W. (1993), "Gramsci; Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method", in Stephen Gill (Ed.), *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International*

- Relations, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cox, Robert W. (1996), with Timothy Sinclair, *Approaches toward Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Esposito, John. Al., (2009), *Iranian revolution and the global impact of it*, Translation: Modir Shanehchi. M. Tehran: Iran's Reconstruction Center of Islam, third edition.
- Ezzati, M. et al. (2015), "The impact of the performing the general policies of the economy of resistance in the face of economic sanctions" *Strategic Defense Studies Quarterly*, Issue 61, autumn.
- Foucault, Michel (1998), *what is in the Iranians dream*, translated by Hussein Joker Hamedani, Tehran, Hermes.
- Goldstein, Lawrence J. (2000), "Economic sanctions: political causes and economic impact", *Foreign Policy magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 2.
- George, Alexander (1994); □*Theory and Practice*, in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2nd edition. Boulder, CO: West view Press.
- Gerges, Fawaz (2004), *America and Political Islam*, translated: Syed Mohammad Kamal, Sarvarian, Tehran, Institute for Strategic Studies.
- Hobden, Stephen and Wyn Jones, Richard. (2001), "Marxist Theories of International Relations", in John Bails and Steve Smith (Eds.), *The Globalization of world Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press.
- Hosseini Matin, SM., (2012), *Confrontation between America and Iran in the post-Cold War*, Tehran, Abrar Institute.
- Hunter, Shirin Tahmaaseb, (2010), *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post –Soviet Era*, California and London, Prager.
- Ismail, B., (2016), "The heavy shadow of Washington on the decisions of the UN" Mehr News Agency, accessible at: <http://www.mehrnews.com/news/3676602/>
- Jacobson, Michael (2008), "sanction against Iran: A Promising Struggle", *Washington Quarterly*
- Jafari, AA. and Zolfaghari, V., (2013), "Relationships between Iran and Russia, the convergence or divergence," *Central Eurasia Studies*, Issue 12, Summer and Fall.
- Ketabi, Mahmoud et.al. (2012), "The soft power and hegemonic strategy of America" *Journal of Political Science* "Issue II.
- Lew, Jacob (June 30, 2013),"Conversation with ASPEN Ideas Festival 2013", The ASPEN Institute, <http://www.aspenideas.org/sites/default/files/images/AIF-Pages/In-Conversation-with-Jacob-Lew.pdf>.
- Lew, Jacob (2016), *Interwiev with Blombering*, access in: [https:// www. bloomberg.com/news/videos/2016-03-30/treasury-secretary- -Charlie-rose](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2016-03-30/treasury-secretary--Charlie-rose).
- Mahdavi, S. (2016), *A shocking report*, Kayhan newspaper, Iran.
- Nye, Joseph (2007), *the soft power, the success tools for in international politics*, Translated by: Rohani, M., and Zolfaghari M., Tehran, Imam Sadiq University.
- Parsa, R., and Motaharnia, M., (2014), "Impact of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah axis on

- America's interests in the Middle East", Journal of defense policy, Issue 86, Spring.
- Parmar, Inderjit and Michael Cox (2011), the soft power and US foreign policy, translation; Alireza Tayeb, Tehran, Institute for Strategic Studies.
- Pishgahifard, Z. et al. (2011), " The position of the soft power in the national power with the emphasis on the Islamic Republic of Iran " strategy Quarterly Journal, Issue 61, Winter.
- Pour Ahmadi, H., and Roholamin Saidi (2011) the relationship between culture and hegemony in the world: Gramscianism approach, Journal of Political and International Approaches, Number 28.
- Rostami, F., and Hassan Abadi M., (2016), "The causes of the continuing dispute between Iran and America after the nuclear deal", World Policy Journal, Volume V, Number 2.
- Shakeri Khoie and Davod Ahmad Zadeh (2012), Discourses Islamic Revolution lesson, Tabriz, Aydin.
- Schulzinger. Robert (1999), American Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century, Oxford University Press.
- Snyder, Robert (1999), the US and third world revolutionary states understanding the breakdown in relations, international studies quarterly 43.
- Torabzadeh Jahromy, Mohammed Sadiq et.al., (2013), "To examine the dominations and components of the economy of resistance affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Ayatollah Khamenei thought" Studies Islamic Revolution Journal, Issue 32, Spring.
- Wright, Robin (1995), "Islam, Democracy and the West", translated by Alireza Tayeb, foreign policy journal, Issue 1, spring.
- Walt, Stephen (1987), the Origins of Alliance, Ithaca: Cornel University Press.
- Walt, Stephen. M, (2004), "Can the United States Be Balanced? If So How?" Prepared for Delivery at the 2004.
- Wight, Martin (1978), Power Politics, New York: Holmes& Maier.