

Iran and US General Election Debates (from 2004-2016)

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Abstract

This paper examines US general election debates to discover whether or not the Republican and Democratic candidates equally present Iran as a major US foreign policy issue. Petrocik's Issue Ownership theory was employed as the theoretical framework of this paper. The Issue Ownership theory asserts that since American voters perceive the Republican and Democratic parties to handle different sets of political, social, and economic issues better than their opponents, each party will highlight and emphasize issues that they are regarded to own during elections. In this regard, Petrocik's theory predicts that since the Republican party is perceived to handle foreign policy and national security-related issues better than their Democratic opponents by American voters, their candidates are more likely to bring up foreign policy-related issues while Democrats are more likely to avoid such issues during presidential campaigns. Overall, 13 US general election debate transcripts from among the 16 General debates held from 2004 to 2016 were selected for analysis using the Critical Case Sampling

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approach. The analysis, which utilized the Critical Framework Analysis method, resulted in seven major thematic categories concerning Iran: nuclear program, threat, sanctions, negotiations, war, Iran's influence, and sponsorship of terrorism. The study finds that although Republican candidates did present Iran as a major foreign policy issue more frequently than their opponents in US general election debates, there was an element of convergence on Iran. Therefore, contrary to what the Issue Ownership theory would have predicted, the Democrats did not typically avoid nor showed any hesitancy talking about Iran.

Keywords: Issue Ownership Theory, US General Election Debates, Critical Framework Analysis, Foreign Policy, Iran

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Introduction

In the final Presidential debate of the 2012 election, when asked about what he would do if Iran attacked Israel, President Obama pledged that “if Israel is attacked, America will stand With Israel” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a). In the same night, Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee, raised Iran as “the greatest threat that the world faces, the greatest national security threat is a nuclear Iran,” more than three times (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a). The argument on the Iranian nuclear threat was raised over and over for the rest of this debate. Similarly, in the 2008 General debates, McCain, the Republican nominee, emphasized the threat of Iran and promised he would strike Iran if the Iranian-Israeli conflict leads to war because they can “never allow a second Holocaust to take place” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008b).

The threat of a nuclear Iran and the way to deal with it have been an issue of the US Presidential campaigns since the 2004 election. In the 2004 General debates, the Democratic nominee John Kerry warned the Americans about the danger that a nuclear Iran would expose to the world. In the same debates, President Bush categorize Iran as a part of the “Axis of Evil” along with Iraq and North Korea (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004b). The Iranian threat was also a significant issue of the 2016 General debates. Donald Trump described the “Iran deal” as the “worst deal” he has “ever seen negotiated,” and Hillary Clinton in response argued that the “Iran deal” put “a lid on Iran’s nuclear program without firing a single shot” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016a).

During the past two decades, Iran has always been presented as

an important foreign policy issue during US presidential campaigns. It has been a topic of the foreign policy sections of the General debates, it has been threatened with more sanctions and even war, it has been warned about, and it has always been mentioned when discussing the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Being the second most frequently mentioned country in US General Election debates (Figure 1) of the twenty-first century, Iran's place in US presidential elections is indeed an interesting and yet under-investigated topic that requires further analysis and examination.

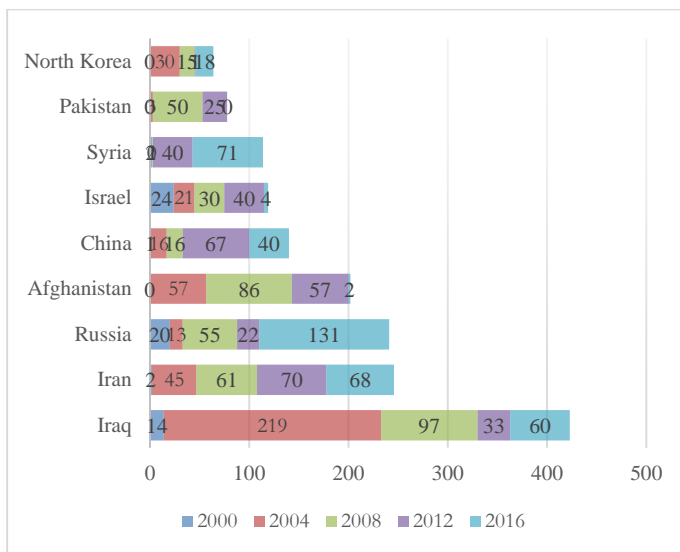


Figure 1. Times that the most Frequent Countries have been Mentioned in The US General Election Debates 2000-2016

Note. This figure is prepared by the authors. The count includes the name of each country, the name of each country's capital, and the nationality of each country. The data is drawn from a python script employed to search within the General debates corpus.

Tensions between the United States and Iran have steadily escalated during the past twenty years. According to the latest Gallup public polls (2020), almost 88 percent of Americans consider Iran an unfavorable state. This has resulted in consistent discussions about

how to deal with the Iranian threat in most US political arena. The General Election debates have played a significant milieu for Presidential nominees to present their policies concerning Iran. Looking into these debates would provide illuminating answers to important questions. This paper elucidates the ways Iran is presented, discussed, and raised through the General Election debates. Moreover, it aims to find whether there is a consensus between the Republican and Democratic candidates regarding the issue of Iran. The following are the main research questions of the study:

1. Which foreign policy themes do the Republican and Democratic candidates consider most important regarding Iran?
2. Do the Republican and Democratic candidates diverge or converge on Iran as a US foreign policy issue?
3. The study developed a hypothesis based on the public polls conducted by the Gallup organization (2020). The following is the main hypothesis of the study:

Since the Republican Party is perceived by the American public (Gallup, 2020) to be better at handling the US foreign policy and national security issues, within the General Election debates, the Republican candidates are more likely to raise Iran as a US foreign policy and national security-related issue.

During General debates, Presidential candidates seek to portray themselves in the best way without the help of campaign managers and advisers (Wells, 1999). Epwene argues that the General Election debates are considered to “serve as a forum in which candidates articulate their positions and stances before the American people” (Epwene, 2017: 42). Citizens can gain information from political campaign debates in different ways. Benoit (2014: 2) describes the main paths that information can reach voters. First, voters can get campaign messages directly by watching political debates. Second, they can indirectly access that information through political discussion with friends, family members, and co-workers who have seen the debates. Third, campaign messages can reach voters through the news media coverage of the debates directly or indirectly via political

discussions of the news regarding those debates (Benoit, 2014: 2).

Debates affect voters in several ways. Researching the effects of General Election debates, Benoit and Hansen (2004) report the increase in issue salience and issue knowledge on viewers. They suggest that citizens who watch the Presidential debates have more issues to use when evaluating candidates (Benoit & Hansen, 2004). Moreover, having an agenda-setting effect, debates can increase the importance of some issues and decrease others for voters (Weaver et al., 2004). Previous literature (Aldrich et al., 1989; Weaver et al., 2004) indicates that the candidates are well aware of this agenda-setting effect.

The Presidential debates can make a significant difference in viewers' perception of the two candidates (Benoit, 2014: 6). McKinney and Warner (2013) indicate that almost seven percent of voters change their vote decision from undecided to a candidate preference based on what they conclude from General Election debates. Also, Miller and Krosnick (2000) claim that if a Presidential candidate portrays an issue as important during a debate, the voters and the news media will also evaluate that issue as significant and important. Carlin and McKinney (1994: 204) report that "debates attract the greatest media coverage of any single campaign event." According to Benoit (2014: 5), on average, over 59 million people have watched the General Election debates from 1960 to 2008. Adding all numbers, the total viewership of all General Election debates, including Presidential and Vice-presidential, exceeds two billion through 2016 (Commission on Presidential Debates, n.d.). Voth (2017: 77) remarks that "by comparison, televised Presidential debates currently tend to dwarf the political conventions that take place in August and September and exert considerable political persuasion." So, the General debates are a proper medium for further analysis.

Methodology

This study followed the five stages of the Critical Framework Analysis method proposed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). These

five stages include the familiarization, identification of a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation phases of qualitative data collection. First, in the familiarization stage, the researcher thoroughly read the debates' transcripts to understand what each transcript contained. Essentially, "familiarization involves immersion in the data: listening to tapes, reading transcripts, studying observational notes" (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Next, a set of themes were identified in a line-by-line analysis of the debates' transcripts. Then, each passage that was directly or indirectly referring to "Iran" (both in the moderators' questions and the candidates' answers) was assigned to a thematic frame category in the indexing stage. Each thematic category was color-coded and given numbers in the transcript corpus. Next, the thematic categories were plotted on charts, tables, and graphs with quantitative values. Finally, these graphs were interpreted and discussed in the data analysis section completing all five steps of the Critical Framework Approach (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994).

Data Collection: The researchers downloaded and accessed each debate transcript for the selected sample unit from the online archives of the Commission on Presidential Debates (Debates.com) and prepared them. Each transcript was fully scanned and cleared of all errors, including grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors. The number of data coded pages was 691, with an average page length of 53 pages per debate transcript.

Sampling: The study used a critical case sampling to select the General Election debates' transcripts. According to Etikan (2016), the critical case sampling is a method where "a select number of important or 'critical' cases are selected and then examined." Furthermore, the critical case sampling is a type of purposive sampling, also known as non-probability sampling, which is recommended by scholars to be used when the research is dealing with qualitative data and mixed method approaches (Coyne, 1997; Etikan, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Tongco, 2005). Using this method, the researchers first identified the whole universe of General debates. Overall, there have been 43 General debates

(Presidential and Vice-presidential combined) from 1960 to 2016. Then, the researchers chose debates' transcripts in which the word "Iran" has been mentioned at least one time. Because the paper focuses on how Iran is presented through the debates, the researchers excluded transcripts with no mention of Iran. Reading the transcripts, the researchers did not find any instance where the candidates referred to Iran without mentioning its name at least once. In all, there have been 24 debates where Iran is referred to at least one time.

In order to identify General debates year where Iran is a critical and significant issue, the researchers first calculated the mean. Then they selected the election years with a higher value than the calculated average. The result was four General Elections, including 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 General debates. As a consequence, employing a total population sampling, the final selection for analysis produced 13 transcripts in which "Iran" was referred to. So, the sampling used in this study reveal what is frequent in the debates' transcripts and provide an in-depth analysis of what the candidates discuss concerning Iran.

Unit of Analysis: This study used the General Election debates' transcripts as its data source and sampling units. Each transcript accompanying its major questions, the candidates' responses, and its follow-ups were considered a single unit of analysis to identify issues and themes discussed during debates. Each transcript was then carefully read, analyzed, and coded from the starting point to the final sentences articulated by any of the candidates or moderators in the debate.

Working from theory provided this study the opportunity to focus on transcripts in which "Iran" appears to be a salient foreign policy issue. The first Bush-Kerry September 30, 2004 Presidential debate presented a starting point for sample selection due to the candidates' extensive and significant mentioning of "Iran" and its leaders through their discussions. In this particular debate, "Iran" was mentioned more than 17 times, showing the critical role it played in that election year. Overall, in the 2004 general election

debates, “Iran” was mentioned more than 45 times in three out of four Presidential and Vice-presidential debates.

Reading through the transcripts, the researchers noticed that in all four Vice-presidential debates from 2004 to 2016 General Elections, “Iran” was significantly mentioned (more than 75 times overall). In fact, it was one of the major foreign policy issues that the moderators questioned and the Vice-presidential candidates discussed over and over through their debates. Therefore, the transcripts of the Vice-presidential debates play an integral part in this study.

I- Issue Ownership Theory

This paper employs the Issue Ownership theory to uncover how each party depicts Iran. Also, it intends to find whether there is a leaning in parties’ proposals and discussions during debates to raise Iran as a national security threat to the United States.

The literature on Issue Ownership theory is extensive (Benoit, 2018; Budge, 2015; Damore, 2005; Egan, 2008; Petrocik, 1996; Simon, 2002). Issue ownership theory proposes that a set of policy issues are considered to be better handled by a specific party rather than the others, so those parties' candidates have more advantage emphasizing those issues (Petrocik, 1996). Petrocik (1996) argues that Presidential candidates emphasize more on issues owned by their political party and talk less about issues that are considered to be owned by their opposing party. In other words, in the US Presidential election, "Democrats discuss Democratic issues more – and Republican issues less – than Republicans" (Benoit, 2018).

According to Petrocik (1996), in terms of Issue Ownership theory, the political campaigns insist more on their owned policy issues and try to evade the issues that help their opponents. The essential argument here is that candidates emphasize issues during the campaign, hoping for their emphasis to put an agenda-setting effect on the voters, so those issues become more salient for the voters (Weaver et al., 2004). In this regard, this argument presumes that if an issue obtains higher saliency during the campaign, it is more

likely to influence voters' decisions (Benoit, 2014: 90). Therefore, the more a candidate stresses a particular issue during the debates, the more that issue is salient to the voters (Petrocik, 1996).

A recent example that validates the saliency aspect of the Issue Ownership theory was the 2004 Presidential election (Gadarian, 2010). Gadarian (2010) argues that the ultimate reason for George W. Bush's re-election in the 2004 Presidential race was in the way the American public viewed the Republican party as the "owner" of the foreign policy issue. Also, in a series of experiments conducted by Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1994), the participants "were exposed to either one or no campaign advertisement and news report dealing with the same issue," and the advertisement "was aired by either the Democratic or Republican candidate contesting the race;" it was found that Democratic candidates benefited more when the campaign focused on unemployment while Republican candidates were helped more by ads about crime. Simon (2002: 91) suggests that winning in elections does not come through dialoguing on the issues owned by the opponents, but a candidate wins when he devotes his resources campaigning on issues that favor his own party.

Political parties can own issues in two different ways. First, "political parties can gradually acquire ownership of an issue over time" (Benoit, 2018). Budge (2015) asserts that parties are always tied to particular issues by their record and origin, so they are not able to disown their issues deliberately. Thus, it is in their best interest to raise and promote the most associated issues with their record (Budge, 2015). The other way to obtain ownership over issues is for the challenging party to put the blame of "current difficulties" on the "record of incumbent" (Petrocik, 1996). For example, according to Petrocik (1996), difficulties such as "wars, failed international or domestic policies, unemployment, and inflation, or official corruption" can help the challenging party own those issues.

Petrocik (1996) notes that the Republican party has "owned" the issue of foreign policy and national security since 1980. According to Gadarian (2010), "issue ownership implies that in so

far as an election is about foreign policy and voters concentrate on foreign policy, Republican candidates should benefit." Goble and Holm (2009) state that the Republican Party generally "owns" the national security issue, making it an advantageous position to hold onto and raise in the Presidential campaigns. Hickey and Gandhi (2019) assert the tendency of the Republican Party candidates to talk and emphasize more on foreign policy and national security issues. Moreover, Egan (2008) estimates that in recent decades, the American voters have trusted the Republican Party more than the Democratic Party in doing a better job at handling the issue of terrorism by an average of 15 percentage points and the foreign policy issue by 11 percentage points. Therefore, as an overwhelming body of literature agrees on the Republican Party's ownership of the foreign policy and national security issues, this paper tries to find whether this ownership applies to Iran as a US foreign policy issue as well.

II- Results

The study analyzed the General Election debates to find what themes were most discussed, and whether a divergence or convergence existed between the two major US political parties concerning Iran. The researchers identified themes highly debated regarding Iran during the debates. The identified themes were indexed and charted, and interpreted based on Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) Critical Framework Analysis method.

Research Question 1: Which foreign policy themes do the Republican and Democratic candidates consider most important regarding Iran?

The first research question tried to categorize themes regarding Iran within the General election debates' transcripts. In this regard, the analysis of the study resulted in 8 thematic categories, including nuclear program, threat, sanctions, negotiations, war, Iran's influence, sponsor of terrorism, and a couple of insignificant themes categorized under "Other." The "Other" thematic category consists of non-frequent themes dispersed through the debates such

as the Green Revolution, helping the Iranian reformers, and indicting the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Because these themes were not significantly mentioned and they were inconsistently appeared through the debates, the study does not discuss them. The seven most frequent and significant thematic categories are described as follows.

The nuclear program thematic category includes the word of nuclear weapons along with nuclear power and nuclear program. The threat thematic category includes the phrases nuclear threat, cyber threat, the threat to the world, and the threat to Israel. The sanctions thematic category consists of sanctions, crippling sanctions, and pressure. The negotiations thematic category includes negotiations, diplomacy, talks, and the Iran deal. The war thematic category consists of war, military strike, and preemptive action. Iran's influence thematic category contains Iran's advancing influence in Iraq, Syria, the Middle East, and North Korea. The sponsor of terrorism thematic category consists of the exact words of its title along with the theme of IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) acting as a terrorist organization. Tables 1 and 2 show the analyzed thematic distribution of the General Election debates.

Table 1. Thematic Categories Identified in the US General Election Debates (2004-2016)

THEMES	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY %
NUCLEAR PROGRAM	90	31.25
THREAT	48	16.67
SANCTIONS	47	16.32
NEGOTIATIONS	45	15.63
WAR	27	9.38
IRAN'S INFLUENCE	16	5.56
SPONSOR OF TERRORISM	8	2.78
OTHER	7	2.43
TOTAL	288	100.00

Note. This table is prepared by the authors.

Table 2. Thematic Distribution by Election Year

Themes Election Y.	Nuclear w.	Threat	Sanctions	Negotiations	War	Iran's Inf.	Sponsor of T.
2004	9	10	7	5	1	0	2
2008	20	20	7	15	6	5	2
2012	39	13	25	8	17	2	2
2016	22	5	8	17	3	9	2
Totals/281	90	48	47	45	27	16	8

Note. This table is prepared by the authors.

Analyzing the thematic distribution through the sampled transcripts (Table 1) indicated that Presidential and Vice-presidential candidates across the aisle were deeply concerned with the Iranians getting knowledge and enough nuclear material to build a nuclear weapon. This theme was consistently mentioned through every debate sampled for the analysis both by the Republican and Democratic candidates. the nuclear program theme was frequently discussed in the 2012 Presidential election. For example, in 2012, the Republican candidate Mitt Romney, criticizing the Obama administration Foreign policy, in multiple discussions, argued that “Look, I look at what’s happening around the world, and I see Iran four years closer to a bomb” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a). Besides, responding to a question about the possibility of a conflict between Iran and Israel, President Obama pledged that “as long as I’m President of the United States, Iran will not get a nuclear weapon” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a).

The second highly debated thematic category is the theme of threat. In the 2004 General debates, it was the Democratic candidate John Kerry and his Vice-presidential nominee Senator Edwards who portrayed Iran as a threat to the United States and its allies such as Israel multiple times. At least 4 times through the 2004 debates, the Democratic candidates referred to Iran as a dangerous country. In the 2008 General debates, both the Democratic and Republican candidates frequently referred to Iran as a threat to the United States, Israel, and the world. The

Republican candidate John McCain warned multiple times that Iran is a serious threat suggesting that “it is a threat not only in this region but around the world” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). On the other hand, the Democratic candidate Barack Obama referred to a nuclear Iran as a game-changer, one that “not only would it threaten Israel, a country that is our stalwart ally, but it would also create an environment in which you could set off an arms race in this Middle East” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). In contrast to the 2004 debates, in the 2012 General debates, it was the Republican candidates that were trying to portray Iran as a significant threat to the United States national security. In all 3 sampled transcripts of 2012 General debates, Republican candidate Mitt Romney and his Vice-president nominee Congressman Ryan stressed Iran as “the greatest threat that the world faces, the greatest national security threat is a nuclear Iran” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012b).

The next thematic category is the theme of sanctions. This theme ranks as the third most debated theme concerning Iran within the sampled transcripts. Both the Democratic and Republican candidates frequently referred to this theme through the debates. The 2012 General debates could be interpreted as the most contested race between the Democratic and Republican candidates in terms of who has sanctioned Iran more and who is the right candidate that can fill the loopholes in the sanctioning process. Both candidates across the aisle discussed the need for more sanctions on Iran at least 25 times during the 2012 General debates. The Democratic Vice-president nominee Biden referred to sanctions that the Obama administration had put on Iran as “the most crippling sanctions in the history of sanctions,” several times during his debate (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012b). On the other hand, his Republican opponent Ryan complained about the Obama administration undermining the sanction (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012b).

Negotiations was the theme with frequent references all over the sampled transcripts, but there was no consensus among the

opposing parties on the existence of diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran. Kerry criticized the absence of a US official in the early stages of negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear program (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004a). Bush defended his approach of not directly talking to the Iranians (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004a). Obama asked for direct talks between the United States and the senior Iranian officials (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). On the other hand, McCain attacked Obama's position on the direct talks with the Iranian officials several times (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). In 2016, the concept of negotiations shifted from having bilateral and multilateral talks with the Iranians to the "Iran deal" that has already been made a year earlier. The Republicans stressed the mismanagement of the "Iran deal" in all four 2016 General Election debates. Trump referred to it as "the worst deal" that he has "ever seen negotiated" (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016a). In contrast, Clinton referred to the "Iran deal" as a success that "put a lid on Iran's nuclear program without firing a single shot" (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016a). So, despite the aforementioned thematic categories, there was almost no consensus among the Republican and the Democratic candidates on the theme of negotiations.

The thematic category of war was not as frequent as the other themes discussed above, but it appeared mostly in the 2008 and 2012 General debates. In 2008, Obama accused McCain of having the intention to "bomb Iran" (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). Although McCain refused this allegation, when a member of the audience asked him in case that a military confrontation between Iran and Israel breaks out, should they wait for the United Nations Security Council approval for attacking Iran, he responded that "let me say that we obviously would not wait for the United Nations Security Council" (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008b). The war theme was also repeatedly referred to in the 2012 General debates. Romney pledged that in case of an Iranian-Israeli conflict, his administration would "have their [Israel] back, not just

diplomatically, not just culturally, but militarily” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a). President Obama suggested that the war should be “the last resort,” but also pledged that “if Israel is attacked, America will stand with Israel” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a).

Iran’s influence in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Syria, was another theme of the General debates. In 2008, both the Democratic and Republican candidates agreed that war in Iraq has resulted in a significant Iranian influence. McCain argued that “the consequences of defeat” in Iraq “would have been increased Iranian influence” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). Obama discussed that “ironically, the single thing that has strengthened Iran over the last several years has been the war in Iraq” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). Trump warned several times that Iran is “taking over Iraq” and that Iran has gained more influence in Syria and Yemen (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016d). Clinton also noted that Iran has significant influence in Syria’s civil war (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016d).

The last thematic category is the phrase sponsor of terrorism. This theme was mentioned at least once, in the General debates, in every election year from 2004 to 2016. Edwards, the Democratic Vice-presidential nominee, referred to Iran as “the largest state sponsor of terrorism on the planet” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004b). McCain wanted to declare IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) as “a sponsor of terrorism” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008a). The Republican Vice-presidential nominee Ryan described Iran as “the world’s largest sponsor of terrorism” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012b). Obama referred to Iran as “a state sponsor of terrorism” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012b). Trump mentioned Iran as “the number one terror state” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016b).

The analysis shows that overall, the Republican candidates (54 percent) discuss more thematic categories related to Iran as oppose

to their Democratic opponents (46 percent). The results indicate that the Republican candidates discuss five out of seven thematic categories more than the Democratic Candidates. These five thematic categories include threat, negotiations, war, Iran's influence, and sponsor of terrorism. On the other hand, the Democratic candidates debated the nuclear program and sanctions themes more. Figure 2 shows the difference between the Republican and Democratic candidates regarding the themes related to Iran.

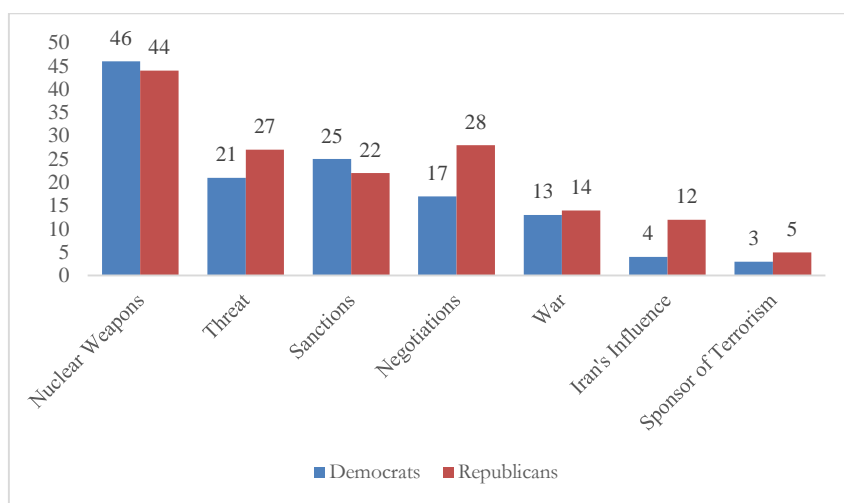


Figure 2. Thematic Distribution among Democrats and Republicans Regarding Iran

Note. This figure is prepared by the authors

The data analysis (Figure 2) revealed that the Republican candidates were more concerned with issues regarding Iran than the Democratic candidates. They were dominant while debating 5 thematic categories. Furthermore, regarding the last 2 categories (nuclear program and sanctions thematic categories), they did not diverge from discussing these issues. However, they mentioned them by a margin of 2 (nuclear program) and 3 (sanctions) times less than the Democratic candidates. In contrast, the Democratic candidates were less likely to debate the thematic categories that

the Republican candidates seemed to be more concerned with. The thematic categories that the Democratic candidates were more likely to diverge from include threat (a margin of 22 percent), negotiations (a margin of 39 percent), and Iran's influence (a margin of 67 percent). Below, Tables 3 (Republican) and 4 (Democratic) present a detailed analysis of each Presidential tickets' discussion of the identified thematic categories.

Table 3. Thematic Distribution by Each Republican Ticket/Year

Republican Ticket	Bush-Cheney	McCain-Palin	Romney-Ryan	Trump-Pence
Themes/Election Year	2004	2008	2012	2016
Nuclear program	3	10	23	8
Threat	2	12	10	3
Sanctions	3	4	11	4
Negotiations	4	7	4	13
War	0	4	9	1
Iran's Influence	0	3	2	7
Sponsor of Terrorism	1	1	1	2
Totals/152	13	41	60	38

Note. This table is prepared by the authors.

Table 4. Thematic Distribution by Each Democratic Ticket/Year

Democratic Ticket	Kerry-Edwards	Obama-Biden	Obama-Biden	Clinton-Kaine
Themes/Election Year	2004	2008	2012	2016
Nuclear program	6	10	16	14
Threat	8	8	3	2
Sanctions	4	3	14	4
Negotiations	1	8	4	4
War	1	2	8	2
Iran's Influence	0	2	0	2
Sponsor of Terrorism	1	1	1	0
Totals/129	21	34	46	28

Note. This table is prepared by the authors

Tables 3 and 4 indicate that the Iran-related thematic categories were most debated in the 2012 General debates. In those particular debates, both the Republican and Democratic candidates had multiple discussions regarding how to prevent Iran from getting access to a nuclear weapon, its threat to the United States and its allies, including Israel, and the role that the “crippling sanctions” play in that prevention. In addition, the 2012 General debates encompass the most lead and follow-up questions, specifically mentioning Iran (Figure 3).

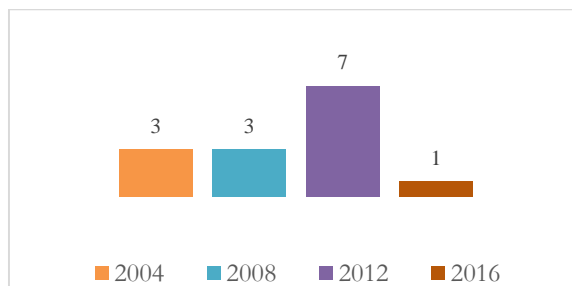


Figure 3. Lead and Follow-up Question Specifically Mentioning Iran (2004-2016)

Note. This figure is prepared by the authors

Research Question 2: Do the Republican and Democratic candidates diverge or converge on Iran as a US foreign policy issue?

Using MAXQDA software, the study conducted an analysis of the times each candidate has mentioned Iran, Iranian leaders, including the words “Ayatollah,” “mullahs,” “Ahmadinejad,” and Iranian capital Tehran to gain a better insight into the sampled transcripts. Looking into the transcripts, the researchers found that both the Republican and Democratic candidates sometimes referred to countries by mentioning their capitals or leaders' names. Below, Figure 4 shows the results from the analysis.

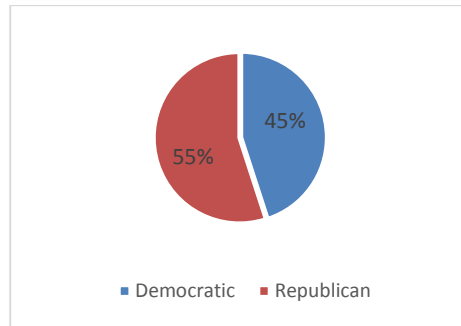


Figure 4. Times Republican and Democratic Candidates Have Mentioned Iran (2004-2016)

Note. This figure is prepared by the authors

The results from Tables 3, 4, and Figure 4 indicate that the Republicans are more likely to discuss Iran and put more emphasis on the thematic categories related to Iran. They are also shown to mention Iran and its leaders more (10 percent margin) than the Democratic candidates through the debates. The results are aligned with the Issue Ownership theory's premise that the Republicans would emphasize the foreign policy issues more than the Democrats (Benoit, 2018; Petrocik, 1996). So, when looking from the quantitative perspective, some level of divergence exists in the study of the thematic categories regarding Iran. However, the results from the qualitative analysis are somewhat different. The qualitative analysis conducted in the study did not find Democratic candidates avoiding the issue of Iran. Instead, when the leading questions or the discussions were about Iran-related issues, the Democratic candidates took an active role in debating how to deal with Iran. The results in Figure 2 support this argument showing that the Democrats were even emphasizing two thematic categories, including nuclear program and sanctions, more than the Republican rivals. Furthermore, the study's qualitative analysis phase (Figure 2) found that the Democratic candidates, while mentioning Iran, were discussing the same seven thematic categories as the Republican candidates. Thus, an element of divergence exists between the qualitative and quantitative findings of the analysis.

Though the quantitative analysis shows some level of divergence from the Democratic candidates while discussing Iran, the qualitative analysis does not support this finding. It indicates the existence of a convergence where the Republican and Democratic candidates are debating Iran.

III- Discussion

According to the data analysis presented above, the study's hypothesis was confirmed, so the Republican candidates were more likely to raise Iran as a US foreign policy and national security-related issue. This statement is in line with the Issue Ownership theory's argument with respect to foreign and national security-related issues being "owned" by the Republican party. However, looking into the qualitative data, the study did not find any evidence of Democrats avoiding the issue of Iran. Instead, the study noticed that the Democratic candidates discussed every question posed by the moderators or audience on the issue of Iran through the course of the General debates. Moreover, the Democrats did not try to diverge on the issue and more or less emphasized the same seven thematic categories as the Republicans with regard to Iran. The issue of Iran's nuclear program was highly discussed through all the General Election debates sampled by the study. In this particular subject, the study found that both the Democratic and Republican candidates were repetitively addressing the danger of a "nuclear Iran." In fact, the analysis showed that the Democrats raised Iran's nuclear threat slightly more than the Republican candidates. For instance, John Edwards, the Democratic Vice-presidential nominee in the 2004 General debates, while attacking the Bush administration, argued that "the reality about Iran is that Iran has moved forward with their nuclear program on their [Bush administration] watch" (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004b). While answering a question about the war in Iraq, the Democratic candidate John Kerry warned that "this President [George W. Bush] rushed to war; pushed our allies aside, and Iran now is more dangerous, and so is North Korea, with nuclear

weapons” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004c). Also, in the 2008 General Election debates, the Democratic candidate Barack Obama did not avoid any Iran-related questions. The issue of sanctioning Iran was the other subject that the Democratic candidates discussed more than the Republicans (Figure 2). For example, in the 2012 General Election Debates, President Obama boasted that his administration has been able to organize “the strongest coalition and the strongest sanctions against Iran in history, and it is crippling their [Iranian] economy” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2012a). Raising the issue of sanctioning Iran by the Democratic candidates was not limited to the 2012 General debates. In the 2016 General Election Debates, in multiple times, the Democratic Vice-president Nominee Senator Kaine claimed that Hillary Clinton played the most crucial role in building “the sanctions regime around the world that stopped the Iranian nuclear program” (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2016b).

The results from the 2004 General debates analysis were not in accordance with the rest of the sampled debates. In these particular debates, the Democratic candidates discussed Iran more than the Republican counterparts (Table 4). In multiple debates, Kerry claimed that Iran has become “more dangerous” due to the Bush administration mishandling the war in Iraq (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004a). An explanation for this inconsistency is the effect that the incumbent candidates like President Bush or President Obama may have while campaigning for re-election (Petrocik, 1996). The Issue Ownership theory argues that political parties might temporarily “own” issues that were not previously “owned” by them when their opponent is the sitting president (Benoit, 2018; Petrocik, 1996). So, the Republican candidates’ divergent and the Democratic candidates’ emphasis on the issue of Iran could be explained in this context.

As Figure 2 shows, the Democratic candidates did not avoid discussing Iran as a national security-related issue which, according to the Issue Ownership theory, is supposed to be “owned” by the Republican Party (Petrocik, 1996). Instead, they actively took part

in the discussions when Iran-related issues were raised. In some particular issues (nuclear program and sanctions), they even raised the case of Iran more frequently than the Republican opponents. So, an act of divergence —a core argument in the Issue Ownership theory— did not mainly occur between the Republican and Democratic candidates in the case of Iran. On the contrary, the Iran-related issues were highly debated between both parties' candidates, which presented a level of convergence.

Looking into the General Election debates, the study argues that some sort of dialogue did occur between the Republican and Democratic candidates in the case of Iran. Furthermore, a level of convergence was evident because both parties' candidates discussed the same seven Iran-related issues through the General Election debates. In this regard, Damore (2005) suggests that opposing candidates frequently discuss the same issues through their campaign debates. In every election, candidates try to discuss and show their willingness to resolve the issues that matter the most to the electorate (Damore, 2005). Gadarian (2010) argues that, despite what was perceived by the Issue Ownership theory on the idea of foreign policy issues being always owned by the Republican party, "the salience of foreign policy may not always be a net benefit for Republican candidates." Furthermore, Budge (2015) suggests that the advantage that a political party enjoys when emphasizing specific issues "can be enhanced or lost by its handling of the campaign." In this regard, Sigelman and Buell (2004) call for "the need to rethink" saliency theories, including the Issue Ownership theory, as they fall short in explaining the issue convergence that occurs through the course of Presidential campaigns. They suggest "the notion of a tit-for-tat sequence," in explaining the issue convergence perspective, where one side's emphasis on a specific issue "may generate pressure on the other side to do likewise, producing a continuous process of mutual adjustment" (Sigelman & Buell, 2004). This notion was very evident in the study's sampled transcripts where the Republican and Democratic candidates engaged in multiple long consistent

discussions about the Iran-related issues. Therefore, with support from its findings, the study argues that, at least during the past four General Election cycles, the Republican and Democratic candidates have converged on Iran as a major US foreign policy issue, and both parties see it to their advantage to actively discuss and elaborate on where they stand on Iran.

Conclusion

This study tried to examine how Iran is presented and discussed within the milieu of US General Election debates. The study employed a critical case sampling to drive a sample from General debates' transcripts. Following the Critical Framework Analysis, the study identified significant Iran-related thematic categories. In this regard, it identified seven thematic categories concerning the issue of Iran. These thematic categories include nuclear program, threat, sanctions, negotiations, war, Iran's influence, and sponsorship of terrorism. The study also found that while the Democrats did talk less about Iran, they did not avoid any lead or follow-up questions posed about the issue of Iran as the Issue Ownership theory would have predicted. The Issue Ownership theory suggests that the Republican and Democratic candidates do not typically discuss the same issues and instead try to emphasize their owned issues and avoid issues that the public perceives as owned by the opposition (Petrocik, 1996). On Iran, however, this does not seem to be the case. While it is true that Republicans are more likely to bring up the case of Iran as an important foreign policy issue, the Democratic candidates neither avoid nor show any hesitancy to actively talk about Iran whenever appropriate. This suggests that, at least during the past four General Election cycles, the Republican and Democratic candidates have converged on Iran as a major US foreign policy issue, and both parties see it to their advantage to actively discuss and elaborate on where they stand on Iran.

The present study sought to answer some important questions on the role that Iran-related foreign policy issues play in the US

General Election debates. However, more questions still remain unanswered. Researching the US Primary debates could result in a rich understanding of each party's perspective on the issue of Iran. Primary debates feature different views towards a particular issue because, in the Primaries, more candidates with different backgrounds have a chance to lay out their plans. This will help to gain an in-depth knowledge of the voices within each party and to examine what differences and similarities each candidate hold within and across parties with respect to the issue of Iran. A comparison between what the candidates have argued in the Primaries and what they emphasized through the General debates would also enhance the analysis. This study focused only on the case of Iran, so for the findings to be generalized other cases should be analyzed as well. Through familiarization with the transcripts, the researchers noticed other countries being mentioned and discussed upon as foreign policy and national security-related issues. These countries included Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, China, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan. Further analysis of how each of these cases was discussed within the General debates is needed to see how different the candidates deal with each case. Finally, a study on what the candidates emphasized through the campaign trail and General debates and what policies they implement when they get elected could reveal the extent to which their promises have been kept. It is important to examine how the candidates' discussions concerning Iran and other foreign policy issues within the General debates have turned out in the real world.

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Pro-Iran-Deal Actors and US Foreign Policy 2011-2015

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Abstract

During Iran agreement in 2011 to 2015 a pro-Iran deal campaign has started in the U.S. Critical questions for Iranian are that: who were these people? Who funded them? From whom they got their information? This study tried to answer these questions by following the pro-Iran deal actors from 2011 to 2015 in the United States. Therefore, a couple of actors were found who were in favor of the Iran deal. The work then followed the money and information transformation data of these pro-Iran deal actors. The article got into a socio-diagram of the interrelation of pro-deal funders and actors with the help of NVIVO 12 software. It also followed the role of the Obama administration in this network. The social network theory of power by Castells (2007) was used that indicates the importance of the social network in gaining discourse power to program specific networks according to the interests and values of the programmers. So, by the help of theory the article concluded that the Obama administration programmed a significant network to have the influence and the power to sell the deal in U.S.; besides, the network tried to influence Obama policy toward Iran. The articles also categorized the supporters of the deal into eight groups: institutions in prevention of nuclear weapons, the Iranian community, political advocacy groups, religious groups, think tank associations, Jewish institutions, those related to Obama administration and free funders.

Keywords: Iran Deal, American Civil Societies, Obama, Network Analysis, pro Iran-deal network

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Introduction

Iran's nuclear issue prompted an extraordinary level of involvement by groups outside the U.S. government. Think tanks, political advocacy organizations, nonprofit associations, pro-Israel, religious groups, media outlets, arms control organizations, and others tried on both sides of the debate to influence the outcome. In April 2015, 70 national organizations wrote a letter to Congress in support of the Iran deal. In July 2015, dozens of other organizations held a meeting opposing the agreement to make Congress vote it down. Participants on both sides used social media, advertising on Television, or got help from media personalities, retired generals, prominent former politicians, and others to rail against the deal or pro deal.

A selected history and other instruments were used extensively by opponents or supporters of the nuclear deal in both Tehran and Washington to frame the rhetoric. Many American Interest groups reinforced Iran-U.S. relations' misperceptions and dark history to the point that stepping out of this reinforcing cycle seems to be nearly impossible. They tried to downgrade the deal by different means to force the Obama administration to withdraw from the agreement. Opponents of the deal pictured Iran as an "evil regime" trying to acquire nuclear weapons at all costs. They mentioned Iran as a supporter of terrorism, an abuser of human rights, who has hurt Americans in history and should not be trusted.

Contrary to these groups, some civil societies tried to sell the Iran Deal to the masses and publish new information contrary to Iran's rigid conflicting societal beliefs. These American actors tried to develop tolerance, trust, an understanding of Persian culture,

acceptance, and understanding of the Iranian side to gain American support on the “Iran deal.” Their main job, on the one hand, was targeting lawmakers to make them support the deal. On the other hand, they targeted the U.S.’s society to push lawmakers to support the agreement. Because of the rigidity of negative societal beliefs about Iran in the United States, these actors’ job was so hard.

This study followed the pro-Iran deal content from 2011 to 2015 in the United States and found a couple of non-state actors in favor of the deal. The work also had a brief investigation on the funders against the deal. The work followed the money transformation data, the human exchange, and information transformation among the pro-deal actors and analyzed the relationship of the actors. At last, the researcher got into a network of actors who were interrelated financially or informationally. A socio-diagram of the interrelation of pro-deal funders and actors has been presented in the last part.

Theoretical Framework

Membership Network Analysis: “Social network analysis aims to understand a community by mapping the relationships that connect them as a network and then draw individuals, groups within the web, and associations between the individuals” (Domhoff, 2002). The Social network analysis structure comprises node entities, such as humans, and ties, such as relationships. The technique will generate diagrams that will show the relationships between individuals and community (Rousseau, 2002).

Many scholars expanded the social network analysis (Leavitt, 1951; Moreno & Jennings 1938; Freeman and Webster, 1994; Barabasi & Albert 1999; Freeman, 2004). Freeman (2004) elaborates on the four characteristics of social network analysis: (1) It consists of the intuition that links among social actors (2) It is based on the acquisition and study of data that record social relations that link participants (3) It draws heavily on graphic imagery to demonstrate the patterning of those links (4) it generates mathematical and computational models to describe and explain

those patterns.

Domhoff (2002) indicated that network analysis should happen in three steps. First, the researcher should identify the members that are active in this issue - organizational affiliation and financial affiliation are the linking relations -. Second step is tracing the money flow among the members. The third step is the analysis of the verbal or written output of the network, policy recommendations, reports, advertisements, etc. That will lead us to the ideology of these members. Therefore, this work identified the members of the network, and traced the money flow among them. For the third step the work analyzed the content they published to see if their content were pro-Iran deal or not. Visual representation of social networks in a meaningful way has been presented to convey the message of the research and results. This research used NVIVO 12 to show the results.

Castells' Network Theory of Power indicates that communication and information are constantly a source of power (2007). Power has been introduced by Weber meaning imposing the will of one over another. The sources of this kind of power are oppression, domination, [threat of] violence (Ibid). Castells believes that the creation of opinion (the impact on public consciousness and thought of individuals) has always been a more effective mechanism of power than torture (2007). So, networks use soft power techniques and operate by information operation and perception management to attract rather than coerce (Fuchs, 2009).

One obvious fact in this theory is the increasing power of actors by enhancing the network. Based on network theory of Castells (2009), power network is mechanisms and processes that interact with network structures to yield certain outcomes for individuals and groups. So, network-making power is the power to program specific networks according to the interests and values of the programmers, and the power to switch different networks following the strategic alliances between the dominant actors of various networks (Sharlamanov & Demiri, 2018).

In this article researcher draw a network society that were in

favor of the deal. These people tried to make content for the public to make them agree upon dealing with Iran. This network had a good access to internet and other resources since it was funded and had connection with Obama administration. By the help of theory, we can say that, Obama and supporters of the deal for increasing their power in selling the deal to the people conducted a network and managed a soft power strategy.

I- American Supporters of the Deal

Supporters had different participations, including making media content, making public panels and conferences, making public campaigns, making T.V. advertisements, and writing letters to Congress or administration. Here we will look at the prominent supporters of the deal; the ones who had significant participation in support of the deal for every year from 2011 to 2015 or funded more than \$100,000 in support of the deal. All the supporters of the deal and their typology have been listed in Appendix A. In this part, the analyze of the groups active on the issue has been presented. The supporting groups has been divided to eight categories: free funders, institutions in prevention of nuclear weapons, the Iranian community, political advocacy groups, religious groups, think tank associations, Jewish institutions and those related to Obama administration.

Funders: Four prominent individual funders helped the Iran deal. Number one was Eli Broad, who is also a Jewish millionaire, helped the supporters of the deal (Jett, 2018); he signed an open letter in favor of the agreement (Abramovitch, 2015). Steven Spielberg, a Jewish movie maker millionaire was the prominent financial supporter of the deal. He gave President Obama an award for his work on the Iran deal (Ho, 2015). Ted Turner, the founder of CNN, besides S. Daniel Abraham, a Jewish millionaire, supported the deal (Weisman & Confessore, 2015). George Soros by different institutions gave \$68,500 billion to Iran Deal supporters like Ploughshares or JStreet (Ho, 2015). Ploughshares Fund's annual report indicates that in 2015 Open Society – that

belongs to Gorge Soros - gave more than 100,000 to them in supporting the Iran deal (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). Soros, among the Iranians, is infamous because of his controversial support of the 2009 movements in Iran. But he was one of the most prominent supporters of negotiation (not war) with Iran through its institution Open Society since 2011 (Jett, 2018).

Many foundations related to milioners also supported the deal. Carnegie Corporation of New York, Democracy Alliance, the Rockefeller Brothers, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (Arms Control Association, 2019), the Schooner Foundation, Susan and Bill Oberndorf Funding (Ho, 2015), Colombe Foundation, Ford Foundation and Open Society Foundation was significant donors of the deal (Ploughshares Fund, 2016). Here we discuss the prominent ones.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace was founded in 1910. They indicated that it was developed to promote peace through analysis and development of fresh policy ideas and direct engagement and collaboration with decision-makers. Its prominent donors are William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Catherine James Paglia/Robert and Ardis James Foundation, Robert and Mary Carswell, and John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation (Carnegie Endowment, n.d.; Smerconish, 2015). Ploughshares Fund also funded more than 100,000 to Carnegie Endowment (Ploughshares Fund, 2015).

Democracy Alliance had supported Iran deal. George Soros, Amber, and Steve funded it (Vogel, 2014). Nahal Toosi in Politico indicated that members of Democracy Alliance, besides other democratic donors, wrote a letter to Congress and urged them to approve the Iran deal since without deal, “it will make a military strike or a nuclear-armed Iran” (Toosi, 2015a). The Alliance keeps its donations secret, but many of its recommended groups have been reported. One of the most critical receivers is the Center for American Progress and Media Matters for America, which was founded to criticize the left mainstream media and which supported the Iran deal (Markay, 2014).

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund has given at least \$425,000 to the deal's supporters (Ho, 2015). Ploughshares Fund also mentioned Rockefeller Brothers as one of its prominent donors in 2015 (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). (Rockefeller Brothers, n.d.). Brodsky (2017) from Huffington Post argued that "the Rockefeller Brothers Fund spent millions of dollars since 2003 promoting a nuclear agreement with Iran, mainly through The Iran Project." Brodsky indicates that after the 9/11 attacks, "The Rockefeller Brothers Fund's president, Stephen Heintz, became more infatuated with Iran, and he began thinking about "its geostrategic importance and its relation to the Sunni world" (Brodsky, 2017). William Luers headed Rockefeller's brothers' Iran Project in cooperation with the United Nations Association of the U.S. (Brodsky, 2017).

Washington Post indicated that Bill Oberndorf from Susan and Bill Oberndorf funding, a hedge fund manager, helped more than \$100,000 to Ploughshares in 2015 and became the most crucial sponsor of Ploughshares (Ho, 2015). Ploughshares also listed Oberndorf as the funder who gave more than 100,000 to support the deal (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). This funding made many criticisms that "such funding predates the groups' advocacy work on Iran" but in 2015 the institution replied that "the money certainly helped lay the groundwork for the groups' activism on the issue" (Ho, 2015).

Colombe Foundation funded the Arms Control Association (Arms Control Association, 2019) and Rethink media (Rethink Media, 2019) in favor of the deal. Ford Foundation also had funded supporters of the deal like Rethink Media (Rethink Media, 2019). The William and Flora Hewlett (Hewlett) is one of the wealthiest grant makers in the United States (Smerconish, 2015; Hewlett Foundation, n.d). It donated more than \$100,000 to Ploughshares in support of the deal (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation gave Ploughshares more than 100,000 to support the deal (Ploughshares Fund, 2015).

Security Institutions: Ploughshares Fund, Arms Control Association (ACA), and Center for Arms Control and Non-

Proliferation, institutions affiliated as institutions against nuclear weapons, were active on the Iran deal. Ploughshares is the most significant organization in funding Iran nuclear deal. The Ploughshares Fund has introduced itself an international charity, which tries to increase global security and remove the world's atomic weapons or a publicly supported foundation that funds, organizes, and innovates projects to "realize a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons" (Ploughshares Fund, n.d.). Ploughshares was very active in the issue of the Iran Deal (Nichols, 2016). Joe Cirincione, its President, said on July 14, 2015, that Iran Deal was a victory for American national security since the U.S. concurred to prevent Iran from making a "nuclear bomb without a single U.S. soldier."

Ploughshares Fund assembled a network of over 85 organizations and 200 individuals in favor of the Iran deal. All the grantees wrote and responded in popular media and pooled ideas of the people. They tried to inform the public and policymakers about the merits of the deal. They have partnerships with think tanks and engaged with similar organizations, connected diplomats with social media, made conferences and panels, and raised funding from supporters of the deal.

Ploughshares' largest donors (those contributing \$100,000 or more) from 2011 to 2015 include billionaire Bill Oberndorf, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Schooner Foundation, according to Ploughshares' 2014, 2015, and 2016 annual reports. Open Society Foundation, which belongs to Soros, was previously the leading donor of Ploughshares (Rondeau, 2015). Bill Oberndorf helped more than \$100,000 to Ploughshares (Ho, 2015). Ploughshares listed 90 funders that gave it \$4.6 million (Ploughshares Fund, 2016), while in one donation, AIPAC gave \$19 million to groups against the deal (Biscobing, 2015).

Ploughshares Fund and its grantees raised and disbursed over \$11 million in grants from 2011 to 2015 (Ho, 2015). Ploughshares

Fund has given at least \$803,000 to groups supporting the deal (Ho, 2015). Approximately 60 percent of the money ploughshares received was funding for the Iran deal (Jett, 2018). The detailed financial report of Ploughshares published on its website indicates that in three constant years 2014, 2015 and 2016, Ploughshares supported the Atlantic Council, the Center for New American Security, Friends Committee on National Legislation, MoveOn.org, JStreet, the National Iranian American Council, and National Public Radio (NPR) (Ploughshares Fund, 2015, 2016), Arms Control Association (Arms Control Association, 2019), the Federation of American Scientists, The Iran Project, Stimson Center, The Jewish Chronicle, Institute for Science and International Security, and The Center for American Progress (Ploughshares Fund, 2015, 2016). Ploughshares funded National Public Radio (NPR) \$100,000 to “support national security reporting with an emphasis on themes and stories related to nuclear security topics” (The Guardian, 2016).

Ploughshares also “gave money to the Center for Public Integrity, which supports the influential nonprofit news outlet ProPublica, along with left-leaning publications such as Mother Jones and the Nation to beef-up their Iran coverage” (Hemingway, 2018). PRI’s The World, Link TV, National Public Radio, Fox News, the Hill, Huffington Post, CNN, Politico funded by Ploughshares and published the produced contents made by Ploughshares (Ploughshares Fund, 2011b).

Ploughshares is the host of many former policymakers. Joe Cirincione, a nuclear expert who served as a staff member on the House Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Government Operations, is its President. He also worked at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace as a director (Jett, 2018: p86). Secretary of State George Shultz and former Secretary of Defense William Cohen also are associated with Ploughshares. Chuck Hagel –Former Security of Defense- was on the Ploughshares board. Robert Creamer - consultant to the Democratic National Committee- was hosted by Ploughshares. Ploughshares

also had partnerships with the Institute for Policy Studies (Rondeau, 2015; Institute for Policy Studies, n.d.; Cirincione, 2015b). Former CIA covert officer Valerie Plame also worked for Ploughshares in September 2015 (Rondeau, 2011).

The relation between Ploughshares Fund and Obama administration became very problematic during the Iran deal. An interview was published in New York Times with Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications of the White House during Obama. Rhodes, in that interview, talked about how the Obama team used groups like Ploughshares Fund and Iran Project to effectively carry the message of the White House in the nuclear deal. He was quoted that “we created an echo chamber, [...]. They [the independent experts and journalists] were saying things that validated what we had given them to say” (Samuels, 2016). He directly referred to White House’s relation with Ploughshares and assured that we made opponents of the deal crazy by our echo chamber:

In the absence of rational discourse, we will discourse the [expletive] out of this. We had test drives to know who would carry our message effectively and how to use outside groups like Ploughshares, the Iran Project, and whomever else. So, we knew the tactics that worked. We drove them [an opponent of the deal] crazy (Samuels, 2016).

Arms Control Association is a think tank active in arms control. It provides information for the press and policymakers (Arms Control Association, n.d.). The group supported the Iran Deal and indicated that “a group of 30 leading nuclear nonproliferation specialists named Iran Deal a vitally important step forward for the security and stability of the world” (Arms Control Association, n.d.). On its website, ACA notes it had gotten support from the Colombe Foundation, the Ploughshares Fund (\$36,500 in 2011), and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$275,000 in 2010) (Arms Control Association, n.d.). It also has a monthly Journal, and many of its publications are referenced in prominent mass media. So, its products are considered in the content analysis part of this dissertation.

Council for a Livable World is a Washington-based nonprofit “advocacy organization dedicated to eliminating the U.S. arsenal of nuclear weapons” (Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, n.d.). The Council was founded in 1962. Its research center is the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, which provides research to members of Congress and their staff (Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, n.d.). They shaped “the debate on options to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, with a focus on congressional outreach and production of infographics.” They got funding from Ploughshares about \$14,800 (Ploughshares Fund, 2016).

Iranian Community Affiliation: National Iranian American Council¹ indicates that it is funded by the Iranian-American community and prominent American foundations with over 8000 donors (NIAC, 2011e; NIAC, n.d.). NIAC enclosed that it got \$591,500 between 2006 and 2015 from PARSA Community Foundation (NIAC, 2011e), Ploughshares (\$150,000) (Ploughshares Fund, 2015), and Rockefeller Brothers Fund (NIAC, n.d.). PARSA has awarded six grants, a total of \$571,000, to four enterprising nonprofits that NIAC was one of them. It also said that NIAC received money from Soros’s Open Society Institute (Rondeau, 2015). Business Insider, in an article, indicated that NIAC has been at the forefront of encouraging engagement with Iran (Rozen, 2015).

NIAC has relations with policymakers to influence them about Iran. NIAC hosted Ambassador Thomas Pickering to lead a panel discussion on “Finding the Nuclear Fix.” Trita Parsi, Reza Marashi, and Sahar Nowrouzadeh are associated with NIAC. Trita Parsi started to work in 1997 as a political consultant for Congressman Robert Ney of Ohio. Reza Marashi worked for the Office of Iranian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. Sahar Nowrouzadeh was a top adviser on Iran policy and National Security Council director

1. From now on we use abbreviation of NIAC instead of National American Council

for Iran at the White House. NIAC created NIAC Action to run advertisements supporting the agreement (Vaez, 2015d). In September 2016, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes spoke at the NIAC conference to highlight the White House's Alliance (NIAC, 2016). He inclined that now is the moment "when you bring the public with you, and you bring all of the organizations like NIAC and Jewish Voice for Peace, and everybody is there as a part of the deal and trying to make things happen" (NIAC, 2016).

Alan Eyre, the State Department's Persian-language spokesperson, regularly participated as a keynote speaker at the NIAC Conference (NIAC, 2015b) and, even the State Department and U.S. embassy in Jeddah arranged a series of lectures for Trita Parsi in Saudi Arabia about U.S.-Iran relations (NIAC, 2010). In an article, "Meet the Iran Lobby," Lee Smith described Parsi as "the tip of the spear of the Iran Lobby," who "won a defining battle over the direction of American foreign policy" (Smith, 2015). Influential figures had presented in NIAC like Thomas Pickering as its advisory board - Pickering was also in Iran Project. NIAC has more than 100 products every year that quite a significant number of them were reflected in U.S. mass media.

Political Advocacy Groups: International Crisis Group was one of the important advocates of Iran Deal. The members of Crisis Group on Iran were Gareth Evans, its then-president and a leading nonproliferation statesman; Ali Vaez as a senior analyst and core writer on Iran issue; and Robert Malley as an analyst (The International Crisis Group, n.d.; 2015). Vaez engaged in negotiations of Iran and the P5+1/E3+3 from 2013 to the previous resolution. Vaez participated in 22 rounds of talks with Iran at all levels and exchanged viewpoints with different parties. Vaez had a prominent role in elaborating both sides' viewpoints to the media or, as they say, to sell the deal to the people of the United States with the help of social and mass media like The Atlantic, New York Times, NPR, Reuters; social media like Twitter.

Crisis Group Twitter has 147,000 followers, and Ali Vaez separately has 29,000 followers with a significant number of

followers. Crisis Group indicates that “media commentaries by Vaez were circulated among negotiators as he sought to build support for the deal in public opinion, especially in the U.S.” (The International Crisis Group, 2015). Different news agencies made the Crisis Group quotations or managed interviews with the analysts. Ploughshares 2015 report shows that this institution funded the International Crisis Group “to support research and advocacy efforts to inform the debate about the P5+1 and Iran framework agreement and potential final deal to resolve concerns over Iran’s nuclear program” by \$150,000 (Ploughshares Fund, 2016).

Among the board of trustees of Crisis Group, George Soros and his son Alexander Soros are present.

As Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications of White House said in his interview with New York Times, Iran Project was one of those “echo chambers” that brought the voice of the Obama team to the people (Samuels, 2016). Rhodes indicates that the Obama team used groups like Ploughshares and Iran Project to effectively carry the message of the White House in the nuclear deal. Laura Rozen is affiliated with the institution and tried hard on the Iran issue. Iran Project was set up by former ambassador Tom Pickering and supported dozens of high-ranking U.S. foreign policymakers, including two former National Security Advisors, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski (The Iran Project, n.d.).

Iran Project got plenty of fundings from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (Brodsky, 2017). Brodsky (2017) in Huffington Post pointed out that Stephen Heintz, the President of Rockefeller Brother, established The Iran Project in cooperation with the United Nations Association of the U.S. headed by William Luers. Iran Project was quite influential in the deal itself as well. As Hillary Clinton’s emails demonstrate, “a 10-page plan sent to her by four key members of The Iran Project provided the blueprint for America’s strategy with Iran” (Brodsky, 2017).

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Under-Secretary of State William Burns had a meeting in December 2010 with four key

leaders of The Iran Project -Heintz, Luers, Pickering, and Wisner - (Unclassified U.S. Department of States Cases, 2015). Pickering emailed Clinton their 10-page plan that “provides fuller detail on the ideas we discussed on December 22, 2010.” They called it “Toward a New Policy on Iran,” which provided an outline for U.S. policy toward the Islamic Republic, which should not be “regime change.”

We propose that you urge the President to instruct you to open a direct relationship with Iran. The burden rests on the U.S. to convince an uncertain Iranian leadership to come out of its shell. President Obama must find a way to communicate directly with the Supreme Leader a U.S. desire to open official talks,” and it should be conducted through a personal emissary he appoints to deliver oral messages (Heintz et al., 2010).

They ask for a respectful tone toward Iran, which can be mutual recognition of Iran’s legitimate interests in the area. They also assure that with Iran acting as America’s partner in the Middle East, there will be an opportunity to help establish “a regional security structure aimed at giving Iran and the Gulf states a greater sense of stability.” This would allow the U.S. and Iran “to develop together approaches to... eventually weaken Iran’s support for Hamas and Hezbollah.” They argued that the U.S. should immediately redeem Iran, end its isolation, and cooperate with Tehran on mutual interest:

A U.S. offer to cooperate with Iran as an equal partner on one or more non-nuclear issues will set the stage for [sic] more fruitful discussion of the nuclear issue. The U.S. will improve chances markedly to get Iran to deal seriously with the nuclear issues by starting with an offer to cooperate on other problems in the region (Heintz et al., 2010).

Their email to Clinton elaborated on an understanding of Fatwa, which Ayatollah Khamenei issued. They detailed that:

The Leader’s Fatwa against the building or use of nuclear weapons could establish an excellent basis for discussions with the aim of the agreement for greater IAEA access to Iran’s nuclear

program to assure the world about Iran's nuclear intentions and develop an arrangement regarding enrichment (Heintz et al., 2010).

Religious Groups: Lots of religious groups inside the U.S. announced their support of the Iran deal. They called their support by writing letters to Congress and sending statements to their followers to support the agreement (Gould, 2015). In 2014 a group of 340 rabbis from multiple strands of Judaism released a letter urging lawmakers to vote for the deal. Catholic groups made the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops call their anti-war stances.

Rev. Al Sharpton called on black churches to "mobilize in support of the nuclear deal" and support of Rev. Dr. David Jefferson Sr. of the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Newark, N.J., of the deal and their plans to have a conversation about the deal with one of the most prominent congregants: Democratic Sen. Cory Booker. Jefferson said the "debate around the Iran deal reminded him of the anti-Vietnam War movement and how Martin Luther King Jr. spoke out against the conflict in a famous speech at Riverside Church in New York City" (Toosi, 2015b).

Dr. Jefferson said this deal is above Republican or Democrat; this is about conscience and conviction. Toosi assured that the "conference of Catholic Bishops has long supported the deal; the Vatican also has spoken favorably of the agreement" with Iran (Toosi, 2015b). Bob Cooke, a Catholic activist with Pax Christi International, organized a letter in support of the deal to be sent to Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.). Top 50 Maryland Catholic leaders conducted a letter by the signature of the massive "to the Jewish senator who is the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee" to encourage him to support the deal (Toosi, 2015b).

Patrick Carolan, executive director of the Franciscan Action Network, "said his group is targeting Catholic lawmakers in particular but also believes some members of Congress who have already come out against the deal could be persuaded to reconsider" (Toosi, 2015b). The Friends Committee on National Legislation is the most prominent of these active groups in the Iran discussion.

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)¹ which Quakers donate was active in supporting the Iran deal. For instance, the Friends Committee arranged a letter, signed by over 50 religious' leaders, and sent to Congress urging the legislators to "remember the wisdom of Jesus" and approve the agreement (Toosi, 2015b). It also has some visibility in the house hearing. Ploughshares Fund, in its annual report in 2015, indicates that it has given \$75,000 to FCNL for gathering activists and religious leaders in support of the deal, educate and mobilize a "network to help shape the public debate about policy options to stop Iran`s nuclear program without war by educating Congress and people about possible options" (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). This institution is studied in the content analysis section.

Think Tanks Associations: Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) introduce itself as the "first progressive multi-issue think tank that fights for world security based on principles of mutual respect, human rights, and international law," which aims to facilitate "true democracy and challenge concentrated wealth, corporate influence, and military power" (Jett, 2018: p. 394). IPS looked deeply at the security issues in the Middle East. Phyllis Bennis, the IPS-affiliated expert, defended the nuclear agreement in an article in Al Jazeera, where she explained how the IAEA inspections worked (Bennis, 2012).

George Soros's Open Society Foundation has provided support to IPS (Joffe, 2013). IPS publishes its data on mass media or Twitter (Institute for Policy Studies, n.d.). IPS received \$36,000 from Ploughshares Fund to "support increased coverage of Iran-related issues, including rapid response reporting to debunk misinformation and investigative pieces exploring the domestic politics at play in the U.S." (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). This institution was excluded from the research since it did not meet the requirements of this study.

1. From now on we use abbreviation of FCNL instead of Friends Committee on National Legislation

The Atlantic Council is the other American think tank in the field of international affairs which was active on the issue of Iran. They were founded in 1961. The Atlantic Council's vision is to promote constructive leadership and engagement in foreign affairs based on the Atlantic Community's central role in Meeting Global Challenges (The Atlantic Council, n.d. a). The Atlantic Council was founded to promote the collaboration between North America and Europe (Small, 1998). The Atlantic Council declared it is a nonpartisan institution, with members "from the moderate internationalist wings of both parties" in the United States (The Atlantic Council, n.d. b). The most critical funders of the Council are the U.S. government and NATO (The Atlantic Council, n.d. b). Ploughshares funded The Atlantic (Ploughshares Fund, 2015). The experts of this institution, including Barbara Slavin, had more than 20 products in U.S. Media. So, it was included in the content analysis part.

Jewish Institutions: The entire Jewish community in the U.S. was not against the deal. J Street—which is a pro-Israel institution—supported Iran nuclear deal. It stood beside the senators who supported the Iran Nuclear deal (Beinart, 2015). It called Iran nuclear deal a historic deal that avoided war (Beinart, 2015). George Soros, also Jewish, was the most prominent and made significant contributions to the Ploughshares Fund and J Street. He gave JStreet \$250,000 from 2007 to 2010. J Street led an inclusive campaign to support the deal the days before the final vote in Congress.

In July 2015, J Street took out a full-page advertisement in The New York Times urging Congress to refrain from "sabotaging" the nuclear agreement. J Street also ran T.V. ads and built a website to stump for the accord (Staff, 2016). The Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Skoll Global Threats Fund (a Jewish organization) donated at least \$200,000 over the same three-year period to J Street (Jett, 2018).

J Street is not trying to resolve conflict with Iran, but JStreet was positive to an agreement and presented a different image of

Iran because of the deal. The Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Skoll Global Threats Fund, two Jewish organizations, donated at least \$200,000 over the same three-year period (Scribd, 2014). None of these institutions had more than ten productions every year. So, they were excluded from content analysis in this research.

Media: Ploughshares Fund has funded National Public Radio¹ \$100,000 to “support national security reporting with an emphasis on themes and stories related to nuclear security topics” (Ploughshares Fund, 2015 & The Guardian, 2016). Business Insider claimed that “a group that helped the White House sell the Iran deal - Ploughshares Fund - gave NPR \$100,000 to report on it” (Klapper, 2016). Weekly Standards assures that “Ploughshares Fund bought and paid for this favorable NPR coverage, giving the news outlet \$100,000 last year and \$700,000 in grants over a decade” (Hemingway, 2018).

Critics accused this funding as a way to influence the public mind. NPR denied such connection since NPR’s rules strictly forbid such pay-to-play arrangements (Staff, 2016). To show that Ploughshares fund did not have any changes in its policies, NPR analyzed its stories about the Iran Deal in 2015 and the first half and 2016. Their study found 118 stories neutral; in the other 136 reports, 160 people spoke in favor of the deal, and 102 were against it even though the critics didn’t convince and claimed that NPR was influenced (Staff, 2016). Cirincione, in his article in The Huffington Post, supported Ploughshares’ stood point on the Iran issue and indicated that “Our support of independent media such as NPR ... does not influence the editorial content of their coverage in any way, nor would we want it to” (Staff, 2016).

Ploughshares Fund, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Colombe Foundation, and the Open Society Foundation funded Rethink Media during Iran negotiations (Influence Watch, n.d.; Jett, 2018). Peter Ferenbach, one of the core staff of Rethink Media, explained: “the difficulty of selling the Iran

1. From now on we use abbreviation of NPR instead of National Public Radio

nuclear deal to the American public, given Iran's long history of relations" (Vadum, 2017). Rethink provided a massive list of resources and talking points for their partners to support the Iran deal (Meir, 2015). Rethink usually uses Twitter to expand its contents.

Media Matters with the help of the Daily Beast (Rondeau, 2015) was active on Iran during nuclear deal. Media Matters conducts a counter narrative against Fox News Channel during nuclear deal. For years, conservatives have accused Media Matters of being a front organization for Mr. Soros (Shear, 2010). It was also financed from moveon.org (York, 2004).

Obama Team: The role of the Obama team in this partnership is also essential to investigate. An article was published in The New York Times Magazine, which conducted an interview with Ben Rhodes, the deputy national security adviser for Strategic Communications. The article implies that Ben Rhodes has "pushed Obama to sell the deal to media" (Samuels, 2016). He was the manager of the campaign to protect the Iran Deal in media to gain the support of people for it. The article also indicates that Obama made a "war room" to respond to the talks against the deal (Samuels, 2016). Jett, in his book, claims that one story that appeared in the Free Beacon did have an element of truth was about the efforts by Rhodes to work with pro-deal groups like the Ploughshares Fund to support the agreement (Jett, 2018). Rhodes seems to give the media the information that they intended to be published.

On June 2, 2011, December 8, 2011, November 19, 2013, February 27, 2014, and July 27, 2012, partners for peace-building with Iran wrote letters to Congress and President in support of Iran negotiations and expressed their anxiety about putting sanctions on Iran¹ (Parsi, 2011h; Abdi, 2013b). On January 14, 2014, a letter was written to the President, and seventy-two institutions supported it. In 2015, it called for some organizations' key changes to Corker-

1. The names of all pro-deal agents have been attached in Appendix A

Melendez Iran Bill (NIAC, 2015c).

II- Socio-Diagram

The Socio-diagram below shows the relations of prominent supporters of the Iran Deal in the U.S. The only institutions are listed here are the significant ones (got more than 50,000 from funders or had significant media participation during 2011 to 2015 on the Iran issue). The data is analyzed, mapped, and drawn by NVivo 12 software. The Socio-diagram visualizes the relations. Three types of relationships are defined: financed (black line), information deliberation (red line), associated/partnerships (yellow line). The color of lines shows the feature of relation. The direction of lines shows the direction of relations. For example, Ploughshares funded NIAC; so, a black line is directed from Ploughshares to NIAC. Yellow lines show the cooperation. Iran Project sent the “Iran Plan” to the U.S. administration, and also Ben Rhodes elaborated on the partnership of this institution with the White House that “carried the message of White House in the nuclear deal,” so a two-way yellow line is drawn between the Iran Project and Obama administration. The Redline shows the transformation of information. For example, FCNL indicates that they got their information from the White House, so a red line is directed from Obama Administration to FCNL. Since the core of this dissertation was on the published content of these institutions, I organized the mass of every bubble on the amount of published content. So, the mass of bubbles shows the amount of data that was published in mass media by that institution. NIAC and NPR had the most significant amount of published data, so they have the biggest bubbles. After that, The Arms Control Association Ploughshares Fund stands at the next level. Atlantic Council, Crisis Group, and FCNL are the next group. Others have the least content. The purple bubbles are institutions that made content for media, funded others, or got financed. The blue bubbles are the agents that mostly financed others (funders). The gray bubble shows the Obama administration. For example, Daily Beast is an institution that got

money and produced content, so its bubble is in purple. We should keep in mind that this socio-diagram just shows the network of the Pro-Iran deal lobby. The content that was produced by them cannot be put into the unfreezing perspective.

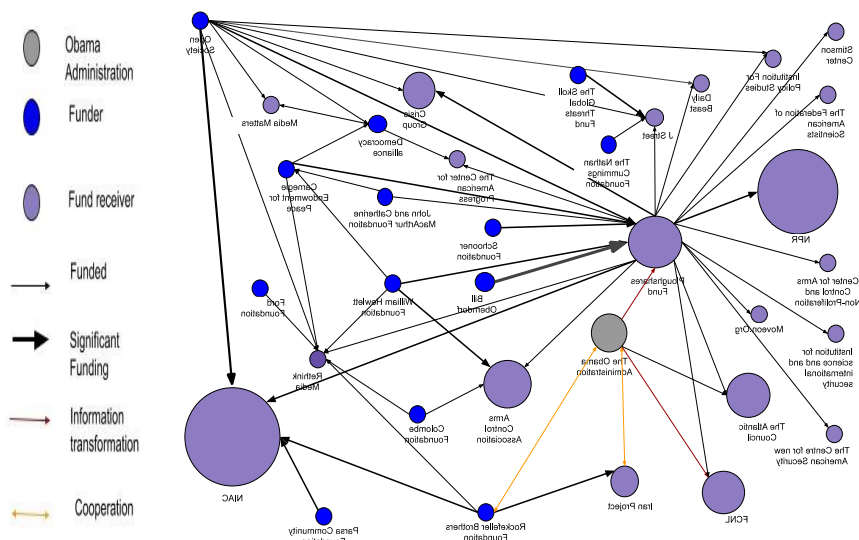


Figure 2: Socio-Diagram of American Supporters of Nuclear Deal, Derived from NVIVO

Conclusion

The ones involved in pro-deal discourse had an affiliation, association, or financial partnership and constructed a network. A diverse range of institutions was involved in the pro-deal debate, even from those against the existence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. But, the majority of supporters were democrats and arms control institutions. Finances of the ones opposing the deal were more significant and less transparent than the adversary group. It was tough to trace the money transferring of groups in opposition to the deal. They also had much better sponsors. Just one institution donated \$20 million against the agreement.

The number of Islamophobic organizations present in the debate was significant. The number and financial support of those who were against the deal were higher than the supporting group.

They expanded fear, xenophobia, and racism in their arguments against the agreement. They insisted on the threat of terrorism. The number and funding of the pro-Iran deal network were limited compared to those against the deal. Their funding was transparent and available. The pro-deal institutions produced data countering the present rhetoric about Iran.

Ploughshares is the core participant in organizing and collecting a network on the deal. A significant number of arrows drives from The Ploughshares Fund in socio-diagram indicate that this institution is the most active in this network. Rhode's interview shows that Ploughshares had a close relationship with the Obama administration. As they are acclaimed, the U.S. administration made the information and encouraged them to do the research. The most vital funder of the Ploughshare Fund was Bill Oberndorf. Other significant funders of the pro-deal network were Gorge Soros (Open Society) and Rockefeller's Brothers. The most productive institutions in mass media were NIAC and NPR, which got grantees from Ploughshares Fund.

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From Strategic Similarity to Tactical Differences: Iran and the 2020 US Presidential Elections

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Abstract

The competition of candidates has always influenced the US presidential election in explaining domestic and foreign policy issues and providing solutions to overcome the crises ahead. During the election campaign in foreign policy, several issues were raised. These include threats from Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran's Islamic Republic. In the present article, the issue of Iran in the 2020 US presidential election has been examined in two levels: strategic imagery and tactical approaches. The question of the present study is, "what were the similarities and differences between the two sides on the issue of Iran?" In response to this question, the following research hypothesis is proposed. In Biden and Trump's campaign policies at the level of strategic explanation, Iran is in a similar situation in terms of being at the macro level of security threats, but at the level of tactics and methods of dealing, Trump seeks to score points all at once in the form of pressure policy. It was maximal, and Biden sought to take advantage of transatlantic multilateralism and gradual and gradual scoring by criticizing Trump's approach. The data collection method in the present study is documentary and the analysis method are descriptive-descriptive.

Keywords: Iran Sanctions, Nuclear Talks, US Presidential Election, Maximum

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Introduction

The US presidential election is important to many countries because of its pivotal role in world politics. Therefore, many countries in the world follow the content of the election campaign. Because the content of a candidate's contest is highly influential in the direction of foreign policy after the victory of one of the candidates, the monitoring of US electoral developments is not pursued only at the level of superficial political rhetoric, and always pursues strategic rivals and allies in terms of strategic importance. Campaigning in the United States covers a wide range of foreign and domestic policy issues, and foreign policy issues are injected into public opinion through specific perceptual channels by ruling elites during the campaign, raising political sensitivities. (Walker,2021: 9) In American public opinion, foreign policy is perceived by voters from the perspective of existing opportunities and threats, and candidates always use their discourses to formulate and articulate threats and opportunities in foreign policy and highlight some threats and opportunities work (United States of America: 2020 presidential election,2021) The Iran has been one of the countries that is of great importance in US foreign policy and campaigning and has always been portrayed threateningly by American candidates. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Iran has always been represented as a threatening actor for the values and interests of the United States and its allies in the West Asian region. Threatening and unfavorable representations of Iran's foreign policy behavior for various political and economic reasons to legitimize US hostile policies toward Iran have become commonplace.

There are significant differences in Iran's blackened representation and the methods the candidates propose in dealing with Iran, and the Republican and Democratic parties have not had the same consensus. In the US election campaign, dealing with the Iran is pursued at two levels of strategic explanation and tactical prescription. In this article, the author seeks to examine the differences and strategic and tactical similarities between dealing with the "Iran" concept in the foreign policy of Trump and Biden, the US presidential candidates during the 2020 presidential campaign. The importance of the Iranian debate in this round of the election campaign is that a large part of the strategic vision of the winning candidate in the face of sanctions against the Iran is extracted and implemented through these campaigns.

The question of the present study is what are the similarities and differences between the issue of the Iran in the foreign policy of Biden and Trump during the election campaign at both strategic and tactical levels? In response to this question, the following research hypothesis is proposed In Biden and Trump's campaign policies, at the level of strategic explanation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in terms of being at the macro level of security threats, the situation is similar, but at the level of tactics and methods, Trump seeks to score points at once and simultaneously pursues the policy of maximum pressure. By criticizing Trump's method, Biden sought to take advantage of transatlantic multilateralism and to take gradual and gradual advantage. The data collection method in the present study is documentary and the analysis method is explanatory-descriptive.

Theoretical Framework

The Framework of the present study consists of three phases. The first phase is to categorize the issues and challenges raised by the candidates in the presidential election, divided into domestic and foreign policy challenges. In this phase, the candidates seek to formulate and demarcate between internal and external issues and explain their relationship by separating the challenges into two

categories. The Chinese challenge, for example, is a foreign policy issue that is also related to domestic policy issues. In the 2020 US presidential election, Corona was the link between China and domestic politics. (The Future of US Policy Toward China Recommendations for The Biden administration,2020)

The second phase goes back to how to meet foreign policy challenges. In this phase, there are two levels of political-security verbal action. The first level of verbal activism relates to the threat-opportunity-based explanation of the foreign policy actor. The second level of verbal activism goes back to the value judgment of threat-opportunity. In the first level of action, the foreign actor is presented in the form of an organized image as a source of threat or opportunity for Americans' well-being and existential and moral values. In the second level, after explaining and illustrating, the proposed actor is judged in terms of the good and bad of his behaviors by the standards of American society and elite. In this phase, two critical questions of strategic importance of the actor in foreign policy and the reasons for its importance in both levels of action are explained. Russia, for example, is at a high level of strategic threat because of "threats to democratic values" and "regional expansionist policies" as well as "cyber and electoral threats." (Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections,2020)

As a complement to the second phase, the third phase is devoted to the method of dealing with foreign policy actors. Collision methods are divided into two categories: hardware and software methods. Hardware methods range from extensive military confrontation to limited and selective military confrontation. The software method includes sanctions, negotiations, media operations, and a combination of these. What is related to soft and semi-hard war falls into the second category. One of the significant challenges to the US foreign policy elite is to formulate and balance soft and hard tools in achieving strategic goals. (Blackwill, 2020:15) Infiltration of lobbies and influential currents in the second and third phases is done in the think tanks, political and legal lobbies and media tools. Perceptions based on

the strategic priorities of the candidates and their foreign policy team are the focus of these groups.

I- Iran in the US Presidential Election

The US election arena is the place where candidates raise domestic and foreign policy threats and opportunities to collect electoral credits for state electoral colleges to enter the White House. (Parry, 2020: 7) Foreign policy focuses primarily on formulating external threats to the security and well-being of American citizens in the presidential election. Lectures and televised debates show how candidates are portrayed and explain foreign threats. (Nowruzpour and Mohammad Alipour, 1398: 240) The issue of the Iran in the US presidential race has always been raised with varying degrees of intensity and weakness. (Geranmayeh, 2020: 4) The driving forces behind Iran's threat in the presidential election have survived in different periods with varying degrees of influence. Political currents and lobbying and strategic documents have been among the lines influencing the threatening ideas and portrayals of Iran in the minds of American voters.

Strategic Documents; A Structural View of the Iranian Challenge: Formalization of strategic national security documents has a long history in the United States. The current structure of these documents began at the suggestion of George Kennan, the former US ambassador to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. (Leffler, 2006: 8) In this regard, the Reagan administration also drafted the first national security strategy document, which was presented and published in 1987. (Drew, 1988: 55) Since then, 17 official national security strategy documents have been drafted by various governments, and the Bill Clinton administration has been more active than all other governments in presenting 7 national security strategy documents. (A National Security Strategy for A New Century, 1999) The documents of the US National Security Strategy in different periods and in chronological order are:

1-US National Security Strategies under Ronald Reagan (1987, 1988)

2- US National Security Strategies under George W. Bush (1990, 1991, 1993)

3- US National Security Strategies under Bill Clinton (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000)

4- US National Security Strategies under George W. Bush (2002, 2006)

5- US National Security Strategies under Barack Obama (2010, 2015)

6- US National Security Strategy under Donald Trump (2017)

US National Security Strategies under Barack Obama: The first strategy of the Obama administration in the 2010 document deals with the Iran in two main parts. The document discusses Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs and outlines US stereotypes about Iran's peaceful nuclear program. (Kuzmarov, 2019: 197) In the section related to the relations between the two countries, while the United States is ready for dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the traditional positions of this country towards the Iran have been repeated. (Bartley, 2020: 71) In the 2015 document of the US National Security Strategy, threats such as the emergence of terrorism are mentioned again. (Torrance, 2016: 100) The threats mentioned in this document were formulated when terrorist groups such as ISIS had taken control of large parts of Iraq and Syria. Another issue that was emphasized in this document is cyber threats from other countries. The US intention in this section was to counter the cyber activities of China, Russia and Iran. (Vakili and Keyvan Hosseini, 1400: 20) In addition to addressing Russia and China, the document also included the continuation of North Korea's missile and nuclear programs and Iran's nuclear program. In this document, more emphasis was placed on the nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Beigon, 2019: 91)

US National Security Strategy under Donald Trump (2017): The US National Security Strategy document for 2017 was strongly influenced by the atmosphere of negative American nationalism. The document sought to demonstrate its goal of strengthening America's national power through an aggressive

approach. In this document, in addition to addressing Iran, the scope of US threats against countries such as China and Russia also increased. (Mcfarland, 2019: 45) The US strategy during the Trump era in different areas such as the revolutionary system of Iran, Russia, China, North Korea, the fight against terrorism, etc. is different from previous documents. One of the highlights of this document is its detailed coverage of Iran. This document mentions Iran 12 times and the regional threats posed by Iran. (Hanson, 2019: 200) Among the accusations that are claimed in this document against the Iran are: Iran`s regional activities; Support for Shia groups, missile program and its nuclear program.

In the US National Security Strategy (2017) to counter the above threats, the US government has also made the following proposals to counter the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- Efforts to establish missile defense systems against Iran and North Korea;
- Creating deterrence against Iran;
- Dealing with Iranian-backed groups, including Hezbollah;
- Reducing influence and limiting Iran's military presence in the region (NSS, 2017).

The document states that the regional balance is changing to the detriment of the United States. In this regard, the Iran is also mentioned and it is emphasized that the United States will cooperate with European powers in the face of global threats, including Iran. (Hastedt, 2020: 308)

Iranophobia in Trump and Biden Election Debates :During the 2020 US presidential election, Biden and Trump and their assistants Harris and Pence debated on various foreign and domestic policy issues. The two rounds of Trump-Biden debates focused on various foreign policy issues, from the North Korean threat to Iran, Russia and China. The issue of Iran was raised in these debates at two levels: the importance of strategic threats and tactics. Both candidates saw Iran as a strategic threat to the United States that threatens US allies and interests. (Debate transcript: Trump, Biden final presidential debate moderated by Kristen

Welker, 2020) Cyber threats and interference in US elections were other claims that Biden and Trump considered to be related to Iran. (Donald Trump & Joe Biden Presidential Debate Transcript, 2020) In the second debate, Joe Biden mentioned Iran's interference in the US elections to damage the security of the elections and considered it an example of interference in US sovereignty. Trump also cited Iranian and Russian involvement in the US election, citing National Intelligence Director John Radcliffe reports. (Debate transcript: Trump, Biden final presidential debate moderated by Kristen Welker, 2020)

Iranophobia in the Harris-Pence Election Debate: The second round of debates was held in the Harris and Pence debates. The issue of Iran was raised at this level of debate in the form of the JCPOA and the Iranian missile attack on the US base of Ain al-Assad in Iraq. Criticizing Trump's withdrawal from the BRICS agreement, Harris criticized the rise of US nuclear enrichment and the isolationist unilateralism of the United States. (Read the full transcript of Vice-Presidential Debate between Mike Pence and Kamala Harris, 2020) Pence defended the US withdrawal from the JCPOA agreement, saying that its continuation would strengthen Iran's economic structures. (Mike Pence, Kamala Harris discuss, 2020) On the subject of the assassination of Major General Soleimani and the missile attack on the Ain al-Assad base, Harris attributed the assassination to the American soldiers. While Pence, by strengthening Major General Soleimani's perceived threat, considered this action right and in the interests of the United States. (Pence vs. Harris: Four takeaways from the only VP debate, 2020)

II- Think Tanks and Anti-Iranian Strategies

Influence currents are another factor influencing challenging US foreign policy priorities alongside strategic documents. Influential currents seek to manipulate strategic priorities and foreign policy threats by entering think tanks, legal and political institutions, and infiltrating the intellectual circles of decision-making elites. Along with strategic documents, these currents constitute complementary

resources and feed the collective fears. As tools of influential think tanks, Audiovisual media play the role of transmitting illusory and oriented concepts and images. Fox News, for example, played a pivotal role in producing anti-Iranian reporting content and analytical ideation in the hot days of the election for candidates. (Abdullahi Nejad and Omid, 1399: 160)

Trump's Maximum Pressure Policy: Trump's foreign policy toward Iran's nuclear program is rooted in Jackson's Republican ideology and security. (Jahanian and Islami, 1399: 39) Jacksonism is one of the four main currents of American foreign policy. These currents include Hamiltonism, Wilsonism, Jeffersonism, and Jacksonism. The Reagan administration's view of maximum restraint and pressure against the Soviet Union, enshrined in the 1983 NSDD-75 National Security Order, was hailed as a successful version of curbing Iran's nuclear program and regional influence during the Trump era. (Schultz, 2019: 15) In the maximum pressure approach, Trump and Pompeo were at the center of advancing this strategy, and the Mark Dubowitz-based Defense of Democracy Foundation played the role of theorist.

Mark Dubowitz is one of the leaders of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in the United States, which has advised various governments, especially Republicans in the White House, on arms control and economic control of the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Mousavi and Rozavi, 1399: 131) One of the main institutions that Dubowitz insists on intensifying is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is the main institution in protecting the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The main strategy proposed by Dubowitz and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies is to "weaken the governing, security and military institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran" using various methods. (Juneau, 2019: 26) One of the main institutions that Dubowitz insists on intensifying is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is known as the main institution in the protection of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The US declaration of the IRGC as a terrorist organization was one of the important

proposals of this organization and Dubowitz to the Trump administration.

Sanctions and military threats are the most significant tools of the maximum pressure approach. Hardware tools the threat of military attack and software economic sanctions have always been on the table of Republican and Democratic decision-makers. (Nouri and Hosseini, 1398: 195) The United States has sanctioned Iran 35 times since the beginning of the revolution, 24 times during the time of the Democrats and 11 times during the time of the Republicans. (Iran Sanctions, 2021: 30) With 11 sanctions, Obama holds the record for sanctions against Iran, which is in fact the most severe sanctions in history against a country. In a 2019 Gallup poll, while 11 percent of Democrats wanted to use the military option to counter Iran's nuclear activities, 25 percent of Republicans voted in favor. In other words, the belligerence against Iran among Republicans is more than double that of members of the Democratic Party. (Younis, 2019) Republican Trump extended and increased the sanctions of the Obama era for various strategic reasons, and by withdrawing from the JCPOA agreement, he increased the tensions with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Trump's foreign policy toward the Iran was based on maximum pressure - maximum concessions. One of the most significant criticisms of Trump to Barack Obama and his foreign policy team has been to give the Iran the opportunity for regional mobility and freedom of action in exchange for the signing of the JCPOA agreement in 2015. (Dehshiar and Nourani, 1399: 54) Unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA agreement and pursuing the strategy of maximum pressure through the start of a hybrid war with the Iran is a set of Trump's efforts to intensify political and economic pressures against the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Hosseini, 1398: 31) The purpose of Trump's favorable negotiations was to change Iran's behavior simultaneously in the three areas of nuclear, missile and regional influence. The regional layer of pressure strategy can be summarized in coalition building pressures and military threats, lack of access to regional markets and political coalition building.

(Saeed Karami and Mousavi, 1398: 171) The most important think tanks and think tanks for Trump's foreign policy, apart from the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (which has the major impact on the Trump administration's strategy towards Iran), are the Heritage Foundation, Business Partners Freedom, American Enterprise Institute for the Advancement of the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Heritage Foundation: The Heritage Foundation has always made many executive proposals to Trump in the field of countering Iran's threats to the United States. There are significant similarities between the Heritage Foundation's literature on Iran and Donald Trump's political literature on Iran. With 38 influential proposals, it is the most influential foundation in Trump's foreign policy. In a report to the future US administration, the think tank presented "seven proposals to confront the Islamic Republic" after JCPOA. The most important suggestions are:

The first suggestion; Intensification of sanctions against Iran with the cooperation of Congress: The US government should immediately revive all sanctions imposed on Iran, which were suspended under the Vienna Agreement, and increase sanctions by interacting with Congress and supporting Iran's nuclear program. Focus on terrorism, the ballistic missile program, interference in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, as well as human rights abuses and, of course, the detention of four Americans on Iranian soil. The new US administration should also designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization and sanction non-Iranian companies that have business with the Revolutionary Guards.

The second proposal; Strengthening US allies, especially the Zionist regime: The nuclear deal has had a devastating effect on US bilateral relations with its allies, especially the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia. The next US administration must pay special attention to safeguarding the important security interests of the United States and its allies in the region and contain Iran by creating the desired balance of power in the region. Washington should increase its arms sales to the Zionist regime, Saudi Arabia and other

members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which Tehran threatens.

Third suggestion; Prevent nuclear proliferation: The Obama administration's agreement with Iran will lead to the expansion of a range of nuclear programs among threatened countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt. To prevent such a consequence, the next US administration needs to reassure these countries that it will take military action against Iran if it increases its nuclear capabilities and repel the Iranian military threat to their interests

The fourth proposal; Negotiating with Iran for a better deal: The Obama administration has been weak in negotiating with Iran, and it was clear that Washington needed a nuclear deal more than Tehran. This made it possible for Iran to bargain, and they cleverly took advantage of this situation. The next US administration must seek an agreement with Iran that permanently halt its nuclear program. This requires at least the following:

- Stop Iran's uranium enrichment activities.
- Destroying a significant part of Iran's nuclear infrastructure, especially Fordow, Natanz and Arak heavy water facilities.
- Carry out strong inspections at all times and prompt monitoring
- Finally, establish a clear and expeditious process (James, 2018).

Foundation for the Defense of Democracies: The Foundation for the Defense of Democracies has made many efforts to declare the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist by publishing numerous articles and sending experts to Congress. (Hennigan, 2018) After the Trump administration took office, these efforts doubled. The US Congress took the first step in this direction and passed a law called "CAATSA"¹ requiring the government to declare the Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization within 90 days. In this context, Trump acted in the way proposed by the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy long ago. The

1. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act

Foundation for the Defense of Democracies has sought to impose extensive sanctions on the US Congress and President by producing anti-human rights and anti-democracy reports from security and judicial institutions in Iran.

III- Biden's Strategy

Democrat ideas and advice are first sent to a small inner circle of Biden advisers, including Anthony Blinken, Jake Sullivan, Ariel Heinz, Brian McQueen and Julie Smith, and then presented by Biden. Democrats such as Jake Sullivan, Ilan Goldenberg, Daniel Benin, Van Deepen, Robert Einhorn, and Richard Neveu are building Biden's critical approach to Trump's containment strategy and his unilateral withdrawal from the BJP. The think tanks of the Center for International and Strategic Studies in Washington, DC, the New America Security Center, and the Brookings Institution are among the pro-Democrat think tanks with a multilateralist approach.

Anthony Blinken, one of Biden's foreign policy strategists, has stated that "Iran must return to full BRICS adherence. Otherwise, and until [Iran] does so, it is clear that all sanctions will remain in place." "(Quinn, 2021) In addition to returning Iran to its obligations, sanctions against Tehran will be maintained until a stronger and longer-term agreement is reached." "The next US administration [Biden] should start the process of negotiating the next agreement as soon as it returns to the UN Security Council" (Russell, 2020). "We need to extend the timing of the so-called sunset restrictions. We also need to try to strengthen other elements in the agreement." In a joint note with William Burns in the New York Times, Sullivan described any expectation from Tehran that the sanctions would be lifted without agreeing to a supplementary agreement, despite acknowledging that their government had withdrawn from the agreement, despite Iran's full adherence to the IAEA nuclear deal. They did. (Burns and Sullivan, 2019)

In Sullivan's view, the connection between the agreed areas is such that "we should not hold nuclear diplomacy hostage for the sake of regional diplomacy, but we should find ways to make connections

and pursue both goals ... When we first addressed this issue, our friends in the Persian Gulf repeatedly said that do not make regional issues the focal point of the talks, because we are on it if we are not at the negotiating table. "Be guided." (Detrow, 2020) Sullivan's strategy for controlling Iran is based on "gradual scoring." Sullivan believes that a new agreement should be signed with Iran that would increase the timing of the so-called sunset restrictions. However, accepting this proposal from Iran seems very difficult. Jake Sullivan believes that the United States should separate nuclear diplomacy from regional diplomacy. He has argued that if Iran resumes its commitments, the Biden administration will ease sanctions on Iran in 2021. He argues that countries should lead regional diplomacy in the region (Quinn, 2021).

Using diplomatic tools to gradually and maximize concessions from the Iran is a common chapter of Sullivan and Benaim's views. I believe that where the military is at a standstill, using the tools of "negotiation and pressure" is a good solution. In a joint note with Sullivan, Benaim proposed the idea of parallel and engaging negotiations with the Iran in three parallel areas: missile, regional and nuclear. Like Sullivan, the American strategist believes that Trump's policy of maximizing US pressure and leaving the negotiating table and the BRICS agreement has failed strategically.

The document said that the Democrats will stop the Trump administration from moving toward war with Iran and put nuclear diplomacy, de-escalation, and regional dialogue on the agenda. The Democrats will stop the Trump administration from moving toward war with Iran and put nuclear diplomacy, de-escalation and regional dialogue on the agenda, the document said. "We believe that the Comprehensive Joint Action Plan is the best way to cut off all Iranian nuclear program. The unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the IAEA separates us from our allies and paves the way for Iran to resume its pursuit of nuclear program." That is why a return to mutual adherence to this agreement is so urgent: a nuclear deal has always been meant to be the beginning, not the end, of our diplomacy with Iran. "Its threatening activities, including regional militancy,

support ballistic missiles." (Detrow, 2020)

The ideological roots of Joe Biden's approach to US foreign policy toward Iran can be seen in his critical views of Trump. Joe Biden announced in 2013 that the United States intended to prevent rather than contain Iran. Prevention policy means that if the United States assures that Iran is not an imminent threat but that its potential threat may become an actual threat, it will try to neutralize the existing threat through military means. However, in the policy of containment, the United States must strengthen its military and economic allies in the region to act as a barrier against the target country and prevent its influence. In fact, in prevention policy, the United States relies more on its military capability and seeks to prevent the target country from achieving a particular capability. (Forgey, 2019)

The use of multilateral leverage and achieving a more comprehensive agreement on nuclear restrictions have formed the most important lines of Biden's foreign policy strategy towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. Criticizing Trump, he said, "Trump has made America's rivals rude and shattered US leverage to meet national security challenges, from North Korea to Iran, from Syria to Afghanistan and Venezuela." Has done business against America's friends and foes that have hurt the middle class, we will work with our allies to strengthen and extend it, we will use targeted sanctions against human rights abuses, we will support terrorism and "We will continue Iran's ballistic missile program." (Robinson, 2021)

IV- Negotiations Scenarios in the Biden Administration

With the beginning of the 13th government, the continuation of the nuclear talks is one of the possibilities facing the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Various scenarios for the future of BRICS and US sanctions can be drawn using their drivers. The following are five possible scenarios for the continuation or termination of the Vienna talks.

Scenario 1; Suspension of Nuclear Talks: In the suspension of nuclear negotiations scenario, the negotiating parties will not deviate

from their maximum positions. By leaving the negotiating table, they seek to strengthen their positions and strategic assets to strengthen bargaining in the next rounds of negotiations. In the first scenario, the Americans seek to criticize all their demands, such as the Trump era, by dragging the negotiations into a strategic stalemate, and the Iran has repeatedly stated that meeting all US conditions is not be achieved. In this scenario, if the nuclear talks are interrupted, the possibility of increasing the level of enrichment in Iran's nuclear facilities will increase. In this scenario, the American's demand for the continuation of negotiations and its entry into the missile and regional fields will not be accepted by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The United States will not accept the option of lifting all sanctions and guaranteeing the non-return of sanctions.

Scenario 2; Erosive Negotiations Without Scoring: At the forefront of this scenario is US confidence in the widespread impact of sanctions on Iran's economic structure and the increasing pressure on Iran to surrender in the medium term. The second driver in this scenario is the US confidence in reducing Iran's economic resilience and the absence of widespread economic reforms. In the second scenario, negotiations with the 13th government will continue to waste time for sanctions to have a more profound impact on the economy. In this scenario, the Americans will seek to legitimize sanctions by taking a dialogue-oriented stance. Putting the Iran in the erosive spiral of negotiations for negotiation and not granting economic concessions will be the most important goal of the United States in this scenario. On the other hand, the 13th administration will leave the negotiating table with a pragmatic and result-oriented view of the negotiations if the Americans continue fruitless negotiations.

Scenario 3; Exhaustive Negotiations: In the third scenario, given the serious incentive of Iran to increase the level of enrichment and reduce the level of supervision of the Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear breakout time will reach two months and the Americans to increase Iran's acquisition of nuclear capability beyond the grant of limited economic concessions will

take action. For example, the limited sale of oil, the transferring money through the import of basic goods through INSTEX credit line to circumvent sanctions. In this scenario, oil concessions on goods and the intensified sanctions by foreign companies that are parties to the contract with Iran to stop Iran's enrichment will occur below 20 percent.

Scenario 4; Nuclear Talks with Step-by-Step Scoring: The most important driver of the fourth scenario will be the increase in threat perception by the Americans due to the increase in the level and amount of enrichment at enrichment sites in Iran. In the fourth scenario, the Americans will agree to a plan to control the sale of oil and transfer the proceeds in foreign currency to Iran to return Iran to the Vienna Agreement and raise the issue of overlapping terrorist and nuclear sanctions. In the regional and missile areas will be in the next stages. In this scenario, limited economic concessions will be agreed separately to reduce the level of enrichment in the form of limited oil sales with limited transfer of foreign exchange earnings, and further lifting of economic sanctions will be linked to agreements in missile and regional areas.

Scenario 5; Revival of JCPOA: The most important driver of the fifth scenario will be increasing Iran's nuclear enrichment to more than 60 percent, reducing the level of IAEA oversight, and increasing Iran's economic resilience in the coming years. In this scenario, due to the costly option of a military confrontation with Iran and Iran's reaching the level of nuclear enrichment, more than 20% of Iran's missile and regional containment priorities will be removed from the US agenda and a return to the JCPOA agreement will be on the Biden government's agenda. This scenario will be the most favorable scenario for the Iran and the Biden government's worst-case scenario.

Conclusion

In this article we argued that, the failure of Trump's maximum pressure strategy of on the Iran to bring the country to the negotiating table and gain more concessions has led to increased criticism of his

administration. Biden presented his different solutions during the election campaign by revealing Trump's defeat against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Harris responded to Mike Pence's claims in two rounds of debates by criticizing Democrats. Both candidates shared a strategic vision for promoting Iran's military, nuclear, and regional threats to US foreign policy. Upstream US security documents and influential political and security currents also highlighted Iran's strategic threat to both candidates.

The difference between Biden's negotiating approach to Trump at the tactical level and how strategic interests are received and secured is during the reorganization of the nuclear talks. By putting the Twelve Conditions on the negotiating table and resolving the missile, nuclear and regional issues in a single and one-step manner, and instead of lifting economic sanctions, Trump has brought the negotiation situation to a strategic stalemate and pursued it in the form of economic pressures. Putting Iran in a position of strategic isolation and tactical contraction. Trump's foreign policy team has raised unprecedented and crippling sanctions in this context. Trump's hybrid warfare with hardware and software tools using one-on-one negotiation tactics failed to achieve his desired outcome.

With the beginning of Biden's presidency, he has two legacies of unilateral US sanctions and the failure of Iran to return to the negotiating table. Biden has the goal of controlling Iran through smart power, but the step-by-step, interconnected negotiation plan proposed by his foreign policy team has had a different tactic than Trump's foreign policy team. Reaching a nuclear agreement by removing the time limit clause instead of lifting some of the sanctions and continuing negotiations to the missile and regional areas in a gradual manner until all issues are on the table and the lifting of all sanctions in a spiral and feasible process. Returning to the first point is the negotiating model of Biden's foreign policy team. In this plan, if Iran stops in the nuclear talks and does not enter the missile and regional talks, the agreement in the first nuclear phase will be canceled.

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Turning the Tide: The Imperatives for Rescuing the Iran Nuclear Deal

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Abstract

After three years of enduring the immense failures and fallouts of the US “maximum pressure” sanctions imposed on Iran in the aftermath of the Trump administration’s withdrawal from the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) in 2018, the Biden administration has signalled an important shift by promising to conduct a foreign policy that leads with diplomacy. The EU-brokered negotiations that have already taken place during the first half of 2021, although encountering some tactical obstacles and lack of momentum, nonetheless offer grounds for cautious optimism that the JCPOA can be rescued and that the return of all signatories to full compliance with the terms and conditions of the deal can be secured.

The critical question which this article addresses is what are the key imperatives required for a durable outcome of the upcoming negotiations. This research is based on a critique of the failures of the Trump administration’s “maximum pressure” sanctions from the *Ethical or Just War* theoretical framework and the *Utilitarian* and *Realist* perspectives. The research methodology are critical observation and empirical analysis. The article’s survey of the historical trajectory of US sanctions against Iran also supports this critique by clearly demonstrating that during periods of US over-reliance on sanctions to the exclusion of other foreign policy tools, including those of diplomacy, political engagement and economic incentivization, successive administrations failed to advance their

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foreign policy goals and objectives vis-à-vis Iran.

The article argues that rescuing Iran nuclear deal and restoring its advantages for all signatories will require the implementation of essential US policy changes. It will also be necessary for the EU foreign policy establishment to direct its efforts to reinforce Biden's inclination to return to the JCPOA in good faith with demonstrable full commitment to the terms of the original deal.

Keywords: JCPOA, Nuclear negotiations, Iran Nuclear deal, Maximum pressure

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Introduction

In 2018 the US administration withdrew from the JCPOA¹ and unilaterally-imposed severe comprehensive sanctions on Iran. Withdrawing from the deal and violating UNSCR 2231 was a total departure from the approach adopted by the Obama administration and it also went against the expressed policy positions of all other signatories to the JCPOA. The Trump administration's approach was also widely regarded as having failed to achieve any of its stated objectives. Instead, the strategy has adversely impacted US-Iran relations, regional peace and stability, future prospects for multilateral nuclear diplomacy, transatlantic relations and the reputation and credibility of the United States as a diplomatic actor on the international stage.

In an effort to reverse the foreign policy failure inherent in the preceding administration's "maximum pressure" approach towards Iran, the Biden administration has signalled a major change of policy by promising to revert to multilateral approaches that lead with diplomacy. However, tangible and effective results are yet to be seen in relation to reviving the JCPOA. Despite some tactical obstacles facing the heretofore six rounds of negotiations in Vienna, broad agreement has already been reached on some of the parameters of substantive issues. In particular, positive signals have emerged regarding the sequencing options for the US return to the deal and Iran's reversal of its measures which

1. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, (JCPOA) was a multilateral agreement that is more commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal. It was signed by Iran, the US, China, Russia, France, Germany and the UK in 2015.

seem to be beyond the terms of the agreement.

This article provides a brief outline of the background and context to US sanctions on Iran. It describes how sanctions have dominated the US approach to Iran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, yet they have failed to exert any real changes or policy outcomes. Adopting the theoretical approach of *Just War* theory, the demonstrable ethical failures of US sanctions are presented. This is followed by an analysis of US sanctions policy from the *Utilitarian* theoretical perspective. Within this framework, the lack of a discernible objective or coherent strategy and the absence of a credible negotiation track are identified as key flaws of the US approach. Considering recent diplomatic and political developments influencing the procedure and substance of the negotiations, this paper argues that a set of key requirements still need to be fulfilled in order for a successful outcome to be achieved in the JCPOA negotiations currently underway. The research methodology applied in this article is critical observation and empirical analysis.

I- The Ethical Perspective – Sanctions as Alternative to War?

Sanctions have been the core feature of US Iran policy since 1979 (Katzman, 2020: 1) and the “mainstay of U.S. strategies” towards Iran (O’Sullivan, 2003: 45). For over four decades Iran has been subjected to a myriad of different types of sanctions (trade, financial, targeted and comprehensive sanctions) operating at different levels including unilateral, bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels (Felbermayr et al., 2019: 18).

Dominant political discourses in the US often present these sanctions as a humane alternative to war. However, such an assumption is categorically refuted by research. In fact, many studies adopting an ethical theoretical framework, particularly those situated within the *Just War* tradition, argue that key policy considerations need to focus on the extent to which the authorization and imposition of sanctions can be morally-justified

(Winkler, 1999). In this sense, *Just War* theory supplies an analytical framework that decision makers can utilize to assess the conditions under which sanctions can be imposed according to ethical principles.

The current sanctions imposed unilaterally on Iran by the United States following its withdrawal from the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) in May 2018 represent the “most sweeping sanctions” of any country in the world (Katzman, 2020: 71). Unprecedented in their scope and application, they apply to almost every sector of the Iranian economy amounting to “A big bus that punishes a total population of 80 million” (Fitzpatrick, 2020: 95). The IMF reported that “a dramatic worsening of macroeconomic conditions” occurred in Iran in 2018 and 2019, resulting in “severe distress” (Bozorgmehr, 2019). By 2019 it was clear that Iran was facing the worst economic recession since 1988, the final year of the Iran-Iraq war, with revenue contractions of more than \$40bn (Johnson, 2019; see also Kautilya and Bravish, 2019). The collapse in oil exports had a particularly detrimental effect (IMF, 2019: 3). GDP contracted by 12% during 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 following the re-imposition of sanctions and GDP is expected to remain as low as 1.7% for 2020-2021 (World Bank, 2021: 3-4). Export trade fell by 29% and imports plummeted by 56%, while investment rates contracted by 17% (World Bank, 2021: 4). Other indicators of macro-economic stability have also been seriously impacted by sanctions. In 2020-2021 inflation was continuing to increase upwards by 36.4% while the Rial had depreciated by over 65% (World Bank, 2021: 4).

Moreover, US government claims that sanctions constitute an effective means of pressuring target governments such as Iran are directly contradicted by the reality that “maximum pressure” sanctions have inflicted more harm on the Iranian population than its leadership (Dassa Kaye, 2019) with insufficient protection being afforded to people by the so-called humanitarian exemptions (Kokabisaghi; 2018: 374). Sanctions have adversely impacted the standards of living and economic security of most Iranians

(Kautilya and Bravish, 2019: 189), with the impact being particularly felt in relation to rising inflation and unemployment (Mazumbara, 2019). There has been a sharp drop in living standards with the brunt of the hardship being faced by people earning low incomes, particularly since inflation has soared and 14.3% of the population are estimated to be living in absolute poverty (World Bank, 2021: xii).

Sanctions have also had devastating consequences for public health provision (Marks, 1999) resulting in severe disruptions to the supplies of food and medicine despite such supplies being theoretically exempt from sanctions (De Vries, Portela and Guijarro-Usobiaga, 2014:7-8). For instance, although food and medicine are technically exempt, some international companies have ceased trading with Iran because of difficulties in receiving payments. Thus, it is commonplace that many financial, insurance and shipping businesses and “, anyone else who wants to ever deal with the US have been spooked by the American hostility” (Dizard, 2019). Sanctions have also “drastically constrained Iran’s capacity to finance humanitarian imports” (Human Rights Watch, 2019) and this has, in turn, resulted in scarce supplies of some medicines and medical equipment (Aloosh, 2018; Benjamin, 2019; Setayesh and Mackey, 2016), thereby threatening the health of millions of Iranians (Human Rights Watch, 2019). By mid-2019, imports of medical supplies had fallen by 60% from the previous year, disrupting the domestic manufacture of medicines (Akbarpour and Abbasi, 2015: 3471; Kebriaeezadeh, 2019; Kheirandish et al., 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic not only severely compounded the dire economic effects of “maximum pressure campaign” (Maloney, 2020), it also exacerbated sanctions’ debilitation of medical commerce. Critics highlighted the ways in which sanctions undermined Iran’s early response to Covid-19 and limited the government’s options in dealing with the health impacts and economic fallout. Above all, Covid-19 exposed the detrimental cumulative impact of sanctions on Iran’s health system as every stage of the response to the pandemic from prevention, diagnosis,

and treatment was directly and indirectly adversely impacted (Takian et al., 2020: 1035).

However, notwithstanding the enormous humanitarian impact of the US sanctions policy on Iran outlined above this policy has been retained more or less in one form or another for over four decades, thereby giving rise to questions regarding its efficacy and/or effectiveness in achieving foreign policy goals and objectives.

II- The Utilitarian Perspective – Assessing the “Effectiveness” of US Sanctions against Iran?

Much of the research on sanctions adopts an *Utilitarian* approach and centres on investigating the level of effectiveness achieved by sanctions and explaining the factors and conditions that account for their success or failure as a foreign policy tool (Bonetti, 1998; Brooks, 2002; Drury, 2000; Elliott and Hufbauer, 1999; Hufbauer and Oegg, 2000; Martin, 1992; Mastanduno, 1999; Pape, 1997; von Sponeck, 2000). Moreover, assessing *comparative utility* requires an evaluation of “whether sanctions were the right course to pursue in a given instance, even when the performance of sanctions was itself favourable another approach - one relying primarily on different tools - might have yielded greater benefits at lower costs, be they humanitarian, political, diplomatic, or economic...[Thus], only by comparing sanctions to other available policy options can a study assess the comparative utility of sanctions”(O’Sullivan, 2003: 30).

In order to assess effectiveness, therefore, it is imperative to analyse the ways that sanctions interact with the political context of the target country in order to address how the performance of sanctions compares with that of other strategies that might have been employed in their place. For instance, the *Realist* theoretical model views sanctions as rarely influencing state’s policies or behaviours, acknowledging as it does the essential dilemma faced by sanctions (as an inherently economic tool) in seeking to exert political outcomes. It also gives due consideration to the political

reality that when faced with the devastating economic impact of sanctions, target states (as essentially political actors) base their decision on how to respond on “whether they consider their political objectives to be worth the economic costs” (Pape, 1997: 94).

In theoretical and foreign policy terms, sanctions against Iran have had several stated goals. One overarching objective has been to place “unsustainable pressure on the population and isolate the target country in a way that the popular discontent will trigger a change of the institutions and in turn a change of policy” (Macaluso, 2014: 21). Other aims included halting Iran’s nuclear enrichment programme, compelling Iran to move towards negotiations, as well as signalling opposition to the domestic human rights situation (Clawson, 2010). An additional goal of US foreign policy has been to influence the dynamics of regional politics by orchestrated the economic and political isolation of Iran through containment via sanctions (*Takeyh* and Maloney, 2011: 1302-3).

However, these objectives have for the most part failed. Prior to the Trump administration, US governments had more or less adhered to what was termed the “dual-track” policy on Iran, whose purported aim was a negotiated outcome through escalated deployments of economic pressure with the threat of military force remaining present in the background. However, the bifurcated strategy’s achievements have “always been open to question” with the main issue being that while “sanctions have imposed heavy financial and political costs on the Islamic Republic” they “failed to achieve their intended policy result” (*Takeyh* and Maloney, 2011: 1298, 1312).

Prior to the JCPOA, the impact of sanctions in exerting changes to Iranian policies and calculi was both uncertain and questionable. Instead, sanctions had morphed into ‘[an] awkward blend of containment and behaviour change espousing different objectives, including the unstated, but largely assumed objective of ‘regime change’” (O’Sullivan, 2003: 45-47). Notwithstanding their

ineffectiveness in securing US foreign policy objectives. By the early 2000s, sanctions had become an integral part of US policy toward Iran, weakening rather than facilitating US interests in Iran because sanctions had essentially blocked all channels of political and diplomatic engagement and there was little hope of lasting relationships.

III- Sanctions as a Means to an End – the Road to the JCPOA?

As outlined above, the absence of a credible and serious negotiations option as part of the dual track approach was one of the most critical drawbacks of the US sanctions policy prior to the JCPOA (2015). While the Obama-era sanctions (2006-2013) also adhered to the dual track approach inherited from previous administrations, his administration's policy also involved a more pronounced shift towards the negotiations track and it was this change which proved most effective in reaching agreement on Iran's disputed nuclear programme. Significantly, within the Obama foreign policy framework, sanctions were envisaged as complementing rather than replacing other policies and their easing would be offered in exchange for policy changes by Iran as part of different negotiation stages and outcomes.

While it has been argued that the conditions for the negotiation process that led to the JCPOA were brought about by the severe comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iran by the Obama administration from 2011-2015, it is doubtful if that policy alone achieved this outcome. Instead, what appears to have been the most impactful dimension of the Obama administration's policy towards Iran was its demonstration from the outset that its real commitment to direct negotiations without preconditions was the core feature of its overall strategy (Tayekh and Maloney, 2001: 1304). Thus, although the Obama administration's Iran strategy was a sanctions-led approach its ultimate goal was to convince Iran to participate in negotiations. Also, it was envisaged that those negotiations would be limited to the nuclear programme and thus focused on a

negotiated outcome that was consistent, straightforward, modest and achievable (O’Sullivan, 2010:11-12).

Significantly, the JCPOA was based on a sound assessment of Iran’s calculi and it successfully balanced positive incentives with economic coercion alongside a reliable commitment to a negotiated outcome. The strategy of compartmentalising the nuclear issue as the “theoretical cornerstone for talks with Iran” was also a particularly successful one (Sariolghalam, 2020). President Obama also introduced another major, yet often overlooked, policy shift in the US-Iran relational dynamic by no longer insisting on the perquisite that an Iranian strategic shift would have to precede a nuclear agreement. Instead, his administration pursued the nuclear-first deal as a means of expanding future possibilities for wider rapprochement.

The JCPOA was greeted on the international stage as a robust non-proliferation agreement. It promised the very real chance of a “win-win solution” fulfilling international, regional and US security interests and it was widely regarded as “the one mechanism in the past 35 years that has reliably constrained Iran’s nuclear program” (Nephew and Goldenberg, 2018). Also, because the deal wasn’t a “one-sided triumph” imposed by Washington and it acknowledged Iranian vital interests, there was a good chance that it would endure and offer real and lasting benefits (Walt, 2012 [E3]).

All in all, Obama’s diplomatic approach towards Iran was considered relatively fruitful because sanctions were viewed as a tactical means of achieving a negotiated outcome aimed at the resolution of issues relating to Iran’s nuclear programme. This was sufficient to secure Iran’s engagement in what seemed to have been a credible process of negotiations whereby Iran could secure major sanctions relief and preserve its right to develop a peaceful nuclear programme under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Both sides also made considerable efforts to construct an international consensus to secure multilateral support for the nuclear deal. Once the United States demonstrated that it would implement sanctions as a means rather than merely an end, Iran showed its willingness to get

seriously engaged in negotiating the deal.

To conclude, the Obama strategy was ultimately successful precisely because it focused squarely on policy ends rather than merely means; namely, a multilateral negotiated outcome endorsed by the international community and it was the United States' "shift away from that policy of threats and pressure and towards serious diplomacy aiming at a reconciliation of interests" that actually made the Iran nuclear deal possible (Fathollah-Nejad, 2014: 62; see also, Vaez, 2019).

IV- The Failure of Maximum Pressure:

In a total departure from the Obama presidency's Iran policy, the Trump administration violated the multilaterally-agreed and internationally-supported JCPOA by withdrawing US participation from the deal in 2018. After the US withdrawal, Secretary of State Pompeo outlined the administration's "New Iran Strategy" as consisting of a list of twelve conditions that Iran had to fulfil in order to avoid the imposition of the "strongest sanctions in history." These demands included: supplying complete information on all dimensions of its historical and present-day nuclear programme, ending all enrichment activities and ballistic missile development and providing the IAEA with complete access to every site in the country, releasing all US citizens from prison, ceasing its support for Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Iraqi Shia military organisations and the Houthi rebels, withdrawing all Iranian military from Syria and changing its resistance posture towards Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Pompeo, 2018).

After it became apparent that Iran was unable to acquiesce to these demands and ruled out the possibility of renegotiating an already-negotiated deal that had been endorsed by the international community and supported in full by all other signatories to the deal, the Trump administration imposed the "full force" of economic sanctions in its "maximum pressure" policy which instigated sanctions to a far greater degree than previous administrations.. These actions were undertaken despite IAEA reports that Iran had

been in full compliance with the JCPOA and remained in compliance for an entire year after the Trump administration's decision to withdraw.

In contrast to the Obama administration's approach, the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran has been described as the "worst-case scenario" of sanctions episodes - devoid of any clearly-delineated and precisely-defined goal (Ashford and Glaser, 2017: 1, 7). Moreover, despite President Trump's own intermittent statements indicating that he would welcome negotiations, there was never any credible elaboration of a negotiation's strategy and/or the conditions that would constitute grounds for the lifting of sanctions (Nephew 2019, 6-7). In this sense, the Trump Administration's view of sanctions was purely tactical and devoid of any long-term vision on how to "turn tactical advantages into strategic accomplishments" (Blanc 2020: 1).

The Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy also sought to realize an extremely wide series of unrealistic demands including the containment of Iran through political isolation, and economic debilitation as a means of curtailing its influence in the wider region (Sariolghalam, 2020). However, the twelve demands stipulated by Secretary Pompeo as the conditions for the lifting of sanctions would have involved such an entire shift in Iran's strategic regional policy towards supporting US interests as to be considered "next to impossible" to achieve (Fathollah-Nejad, 2014: 50-51). Essentially, Iran's acquiescence to these demands would have amounted to sweeping concessions on vital interests, especially its inalienable right to sovereignty and its defence of national security (Posen, 2020).

The tactics-centric approach pursued by the Trump administration, therefore, inevitably fell into serious "strategic drift" and it ultimately proved incapable of changing Iran's view of its options (Nephew, 2019: 7). In addition to the complications caused by the "maximum pressure" policy's overreach, another critical flaw was that there was considerable confusion regarding the conditions and contexts that would constitute grounds for the

lifting of sanctions (Abdelal and Bros, 2020).

Viewed from the *Utilitarian* perspective, given the extent of these limitations and miscalculations and the primacy accorded to tactics over strategy, it is not surprising that “maximum pressure” has been an abysmal failure. Aside from its failure to exert changes to Iran’s nuclear or regional policies, it has also been detrimental to long-term US strategic and geopolitical interests in the region (Jalalpour, 2020). Ironically, the most urgent current requirement is for American policy to completely reverse course by demonstrating unequivocally that it is no longer dependent on such a failed “maximum pressure” sanctions approach to achieve its foreign policy goals. Moreover, within this context, the only realistic and feasible strategy that is likely to produce any positive outcome would be for all parties to fully return to the engagement process embodied in the JCPOA while at the same time guaranteeing that Iran’s participation in this process will result in the easing and lifting of sanctions.

From a realistic point of view, the US “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran failed because it was wrong to assume that the Iranian government considered the goal of ensuring access to international trade and commerce more important than its goals of maintaining it. The policy also accorded an unwarranted primacy to tactics over strategy which in effect turned sanctions into the end rather than the means. In this sense it was hardly surprising that “maximum pressure” failed to generate any incentive that could have gained political traction in Iran. In conclusion, therefore, the key lesson to be drawn from the failure of the “maximum pressure” campaign is that instead of relying on sanctions alone, a “well-rounded approach” that would have incorporated different forms of political inducements with credible negotiation opportunities would have had a far greater chance of success (Masters, 2019).

V- Charting a New Way Forward

Trump’s election defeat in November 2020 was an important turning point for US politics. With particular respect to Iran where

the costs and consequences of his administration's failure have been most gravely felt, there was an urgent requirement that the new Biden-led administration adopt an entirely different approach (Tharoor, 2020). Given the fiasco of the "maximum pressure" policy, the Biden administration's rhetorical commitment to rejoin the nuclear deal and to uphold its international commitments was greeted with guarded optimism.

The fact that the JCPOA has been widely acclaimed as an outstanding accomplishment of multilateral diplomacy must continue to be recognized as an important milestone. It is most fortuitous that a convergence already exists within academic and diplomatic communities on the most workable and durable solutions. This convergence clearly points in the direction of a genuine win-win negotiation process which can be achieved if all parties recommit to the letter and the spirit of the JCPOA.

Since President Biden's inauguration Iran's negotiators have been cautiously monitoring his administration's willingness and capacity to turn the tide of coercion, particularly in relation to easing and lifting sanctions and restoring the credibility of the JCPOA as a durable multilateral framework for future US-Iran relations. Taking into account the role played by domestic partisan politics and foreign-run lobby groups on policy-making processes in Washington, as well as European political agendas and regional politics in the Persian Gulf, a number of scenarios might be posited on what a renewed US policy towards Iran might look like. Of particular significance is charting the ways in which that policy could present real opportunities for the Biden administration to constructively reengage with Iran with a view to embarking on a new and mutually-beneficial course. The Biden-led administration has acknowledged that a more coherent and consensual approach which would encompass a broader set of measures in relation to Iran is required. This in turn would require substantive political engagement based on real negotiation opportunities.

In response to initial signals of change in the US

Administration, Iran's former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pointed out that the onus was on the United States to demonstrate its commitment to return to compliance with the JCPOA, lift all illegal sanctions imposed by the Trump administration and compensate for the damage done to Iran as a result of "maximum pressure." (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

After agreeing to enter EU-brokered talks in Vienna earlier this year, US representatives participated in six rounds of talks over a period of three months. A seventh round, purportedly the final round, will be held in due course and it is likely that the new administration in Iran led by President Ebrahim Raisi will complete the process. These negotiations have already encountered some tactical obstacles that reflect the very real "challenge of moving from agreement in principle to practice" (Rafati, 2021). There has also been considerable concern that without appreciable changes in US policy on Iran and the immediate implementation of tangible policy measures, the Biden Administration runs the risk of falling victim to policy stalemate and/or drift. For this reason, both the United States and Iran are cognizant that time is a crucial factor in concluding a successful negotiations process (Fahim and De Young, 2021).

Notwithstanding these obstacles, however, broad agreement has been reached during the negotiations on some of the parameters of substantive issues. In particular, positive signals have emerged regarding the sequencing options for the US return to the deal and Iran's reversal of its breaches of the deal. This synchronized step-by-step return to the deal would enable the JCPOA to be restored on a secure footing that over time could constitute the foundation for follow-on agreements on issues of mutual concern (International Crisis Group, 2021).

In the context of the critical nature of the current impasse in US-Iran relations, the Biden administration must demonstrate a strong commitment to a more feasible and less coercive strategy. It must present a clear and coherent roadmap to all signatories of the

JCPOA forthwith. Moreover, it is imperative that this roadmap detail how the United States will reinstate the nuclear deal, return to compliance with UNSCR 2231 and commit to further talks to address mutual concerns and interests (Singh 2020). In addition, the United States will need to work collaboratively with the other signatories of the JCPOA in order to revive the nuclear deal and ensure its effective implementation (Karlin and Wittes, 2020). A prerequisite for reengagement on the part of all the signatories to the JCPOA, but especially Iran, is that the United States “pursue a more realistic agenda on nuclear issues” (Burns and Sullivan, 2019). At the very least, it is imperative that the current impasse not be used opportunistically as a means of extracting further so-called concessions from Iran.

Secondly, it will be absolutely essential that any diplomatic track be preceded by the lifting of US sanctions that were illegitimately and disingenuously-imposed to begin with. In fact, the bottom line from the perspective of Iran and the wider international community is that sanctions’ lifting constitutes the single most important precondition for a return to the comprehensive deal that continued to enjoy almost universal support long after it had been abandoned by the United States in one of the most flagrant violations of international law in recent times.

Within the current international context dominated by an unprecedented pandemic and socio-economic crisis it is now more essential than ever that the United States change course and recommit to multilateral approaches to overcoming the current impasse caused by “maximum pressure” sanctions.

Conclusion

In order to save JCPOA and overcome the current stalemate that is hindering the resumption of negotiations, the wave of unilateral US sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran must be lifted. A new impetus is needed with principled diplomacy and result-focused leadership from key actors on the international stage. The European

parties to the nuclear deal have a pivotal role. While they have resisted the tremendous pressure exerted by the Trump administration to abandon the JCPOA, they have nonetheless failed to fulfil their own obligations under the nuclear deal. However, political excuses mainly attributed to open and hidden American intimidation campaigns seem not to be working any more. The European signatories of the JCPOA should now focus on reviving the deal as agreed upon in 2015.

Diplomatic manoeuvrings to gain extra leverage beyond the terms of the deal will be counterproductive. In this context, the EU foreign policy establishment should direct its efforts to reinforce Biden's inclination to return to the JCPOA in good faith with demonstrable full commitment to the terms of the original deal. This seems to be the only viable way to turn the tide on the failed "maximum pressure" approach which has directly precipitated the current diplomatic impasse. It remains to be seen how President Biden's Administration will deliver on his promised policies particularly if he encounters internal pressure from oppositional partisan factions within the wider US political system and external pressure from Israel and Saudi Arabia to act contrary to his stated foreign policy objectives.

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The Transatlantic Relations and NATO: A Comparison between Bush and Obama Administration and its Impact on Iran

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Abstract

This article examines the security relations between Europe and the USA in the framework of NATO and during Bush and Obama administration. The author tried to show that the security relations between Europe and America started from the time of absolute dependence of Europe on Washington and, later on with the development of the European Union and also NATO, this dependence has gradually turned into a mutual strategic cooperation. On the other hand, Europe attempts to form a defensive and security structure independently of the United States and mainly in the framework of NATO, which this has led to an improvement in the defense treaties between the Eastern Europe countries. It seems that Europe seeks to play an equally important role to the USA and is using NATO as a powerful tool for this purpose. In fact, by developing its relations with NATO, EU is trying to show the capabilities of Europe in crisis management and to make itself independent of the USA. However, America's attitude towards NATO across the Atlantic is sometimes different and conservative and democrat governments in America prefer either a mutual coalition or an American initiative.

Keywords: European Union (EU), United States of America (USA), NATO, security relations, strategic cooperation.

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Introduction

After the Cold War, America continued its policies by entering and interfering in Europe's affairs. Apart from the impact of strengthening NATO and the continued US presence in Europe, the mutual interests of Western Europe and the United States were also defined in terms of strengthening NATO. On this basis, a decision was made to strengthen NATO as the cornerstone of the cooperation between the transatlantic countries and to develop it with the purpose of protecting the national independence, stable life and freedom of the Eastern Europe democracies and with the aim of creating the New Peace Structure in Europe. With regard to the extension of NATO towards the east, it should be noted that it was Germany which proposed this idea for the first time in 1993 to promote and ensure stability in its eastern borders. The elite of the American ministry of foreign affairs not only supported this, but also claimed that the attempt to extend NATO towards the east can help to build stability in the Central and Eastern Europe countries and ensure NATO's survival and consequently, America's presence in Europe.

All these issues were raised when later on the EU decided to extend itself. Therefore, the extension of the EU could be a powerful tool for the expansion of NATO. From this perspective, America's foreign policies after September 11th were the same policies followed in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the neo-conservatives' and democrats' approach was different in the framework of NATO and each has taken different measures with regard to cooperation between the two sides of the Atlantic. Both the historical events on 11th of September and the Arabian Spring

were really effective in this process. NATO, Europe and America became united in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars but when the main motivation for these wars were no longer there, many countries left the coalition leaving America to grapple with many problems. America had a different approach to the Libyan people's movement and did not want to be directly involved in bombing Libya. America's approach to the happenings and developments in Egypt were paradoxical while it has not been willing to have military intervention in Syria in reaction to the events in this country. Is there a difference between neo-conservatives' and democrats' ideology or is it the new global conditions that calls for different measures by America and Bush and Obama administrations are influential in this process? The present study is an attempt to find an appropriate response to the existing questions in this regard.

Theoretical Framework

Neo-realism can be used as a theoretical framework to analyze the foreign policy of the United States and European countries in relation to NATO. Neo-realism has the power to explain the motives, goals, decision-making process and foreign policy behaviors of the two Atlantic countries. However, it should be noted that this theory, like other existing theories, does not have sufficient capability to analyze all aspects and totality of NATO members' foreign policy. (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2012: 32) The various dimensions of the model and decision-making process, national interests and goals, security, resources and determinants and foreign policy behavior of the two Atlantic countries can be explained in a new framework of realism.

The US hegemon seeks to maintain and increase its security by establishing and increasing its influence over other countries, including NATO European countries because American security is not just about maximizing control over its national resource and power; In addition, it is provided and strengthened by influencing how other countries use their power. This strategy is directly pursued and implemented by creating asymmetric interdependence

through bilateral relations or indirectly within the framework of regional and international organizations and institutions such as NATO. The United States seeks to play a major or at least influential role in these organizations. Under these circumstances, some European countries, especially Germany and France, naturally show relative resistance and protests against the hegemonic desires of the United States.

I- North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NATO, the acronym for North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was formed after the Second World War and as a reaction to the threat posed by the Soviet Union with the purpose of ensuring the security of the member countries particularly the Western Europe countries. Following the Second World War and by 1991, in the Yalta conference in February of 1945 after the Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill negotiations, the map of Europe was redrawn and with the formation of a bipolar system and with the world being divided between two superpowers (i.e., Soviet Union and America), countries had to become attracted to one of the two power poles as the last resort. As Europe is described during and after war it, “first it was diminished, then divided and finally armed to the teeth” (Sarraf Yazdi, 1381: 100).

When European countries were exposed to threats from the Soviet Union and Moscow gained access to nuclear weapons and hydrogenic bombs, formation of the Warsaw Pact, and production of ballistic missiles and Cuba’s missile crisis between 1949 and 1962, which were all indicative of the existence of a dangerous enemy, Europeans felt obliged to pay attention to NATO more than before. First, Europeans tried to ensure their security. Five countries including England, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Defense Treaty in March of 1948. Following Soviet Union’s interference in Eastern Europe and with Europe being exposed to the penetrating communism, the need for America’s presence was felt to establish security in Europe in the framework of a defense treaty.

There were negotiations between America, Canada and the five countries involved in the Brussels Treaty in Washington on sixth of July in 1948 for signing the North Atlantic Treaty and finally with Italy, Denmark, Norway, Island and Portugal joining, it was signed. As it has been suggested so far, before 1991, the motivation behind this treaty was to create a security belt around western democracies and to lay siege on the communism superpower and its moons, which later on gathered up in the framework of the Warsaw Pact. What is not clear now is the philosophy behind the existence of NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

According to the NATO statute, which is consistent with article 51 of the United Nations Charter and aimed to establish collective security, encounter invasion and preserve international peace, the main concern of the treaty was to defend the member countries and establish regional security. In line with this purpose, with the lobbying of the United States, Greece and Turkey in 1952 and West Germany in 1955 also joined NATO. In this way, they opened the path to arming the disarmed Germany and prevented the formation of exclusively national forces in Germany. Then Spain in 1982 and Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in 1999 entered into the Treaty. As the last stage of the development of NATO, Bulgaria, Stoyan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia and Montenegro joined the Treaty. (Aminian, 2005: 15)

II- US-Europe Relations

European countries and America developed extensive economic relations and interdependence in the years following the Cold War. Based on the statistics, in 2000 America had 22% of the trades in the European Union and European Union accounted for 19% of the trades in America. Furthermore, America represented 77% of the direct foreign investments made in Europe and two-third of the foreign investment in America was owned by the Europeans. This level of relations is of high priority and very high compared to the other countries and regions. For instance, Europeans' annual investment

only in Texas is more than the total of Japanese investment in 50 states in America and America's investment in Europe is equal to all the investments in the world (Baldwin, 2003; 30).

The existing connections in the economic arena are, on the one hand, indicative and a manifestation of common interests and political and security connections between these two areas and, on the other, promoted this relationship. Despite this relationship, there were still many conflicts between America and its European allies especially France. Although in one case even these conflicts led France to get out of the military structure of NATO, due to the existing threat of the powerful Soviet Union, they were overshadowed by the perception of the existing threat and was not reflected in the relationship between these two regions.

By the end of the 1990s, with the philosophy of the existence of NATO being questioned, the conflicts between Europe and America became more obvious. By the end of the twentieth century, the conflicts within the Europe continent and extraterritorial missions for NATO opened a new horizon for NATO. Confronting the new crises and also crisis management and missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo were considered as a new test for NATO.

In the post-Cold-War period, European countries limited themselves to the issues within their continent and did not play an active role in the issues related to international security. Economic problems in these countries also led to a large reduction in their military budget and investments in defense research. The sharp decline in the military budgets and, consequently, a decrease in their throughput in European countries along with the increase in military budget and focus on military technology and capabilities in America widened the gap between America and Europe in this respect. This huge gap was manifested in the 78-day operation of NATO against Yugoslavia in the Kosovo issue in 1999. In this operation, which was carried out by NATO, about 90 percent of the equipments used by the fighters of the United States were exactly-guided and 100 percent of the traffic and the ability to constrain Yugoslavia's abilities, 90

percent of air-to-ground surveillance and 80 percent of the fueling missions of the air tankers were carried out by the United States of America (Lansford and Tashev, 2005: 292).

Before the events of September 11th, America attempted to justify its interfering policies in the world affairs referring to them as humanitarian interference and the promotion of human rights, but due to conflicting views and interests, Europeans took different measures and followed different and independent policies and Russia sought strategic cooperation with China in order to strike a balance of power against America and Shanghai group was formed in line with this purpose (Sussex, 2003: 39). NATO was also influenced by these conflicts to a certain extent. Although three countries of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic had joined NATO in 1999, even the development of convergence between these three countries had created a growing dissatisfaction within NATO and it was gradually turning into a useless and conflicting organization.

The events of September 11th, which were a unique operation and a new method of modern war, had unique effects in the international relations and fundamentally changed the structure of international system and nature and form of relations, threats, unions and even the concepts. This event had also an influence on the form of relations and interactions between the great world powers.

It can be stated that the September 11th events had a considerable extensive impact upon all the important dimensions of international relations. Under the influence of these effects, transatlantic relations after September 11th can be examined and evaluated in the framework of three different time periods. These periods include:

The Golden Time of Receiving Support from America: Posing a common, dangerous and new enemy and introducing unifying and justifying concepts such as the seriousness of the danger of terrorism and “fighting terrorism” put the great powers of the world in the same front and some countries recognized the need to join this front in cooperation with the great powers to ensure

that their interests are satisfied. America also attempted to introduce numerous advantages to the countries for joining this front. Strategic considerations also led some of the powers to join this new union. For instance, Pakistan for proving its dependence on Washington, India and moderate Arabic countries due to the danger and threats they felt existed for their internal security and finally China and Russia for gaining legal justification for the suppression of internal opposition quickly joined this union (Cohen-Tanugi, 2003: 54).

Immediately after the September 11th, NATO resorted to article five of its statute for the first time in its history in support of America; this very important article allows and justifies using military forces of the member countries when one of the members is under attack. On 8th of October in the same year, North Atlantic Council agreed to take eight military measures in support of America and in the fight against terrorism. These measures included increasing informational cooperation, helping the allies and other countries which are likely to be under terrorist attacks, ensuring security for American bases, providing the facilities and equipment needed for fighting terrorism, supporting and facilitating the anti-terrorism flight operations, providing access to all the ports and air space of the member countries for America and the allies in the fight against terrorism and using the sea forces in the eastern Mediterranean for supporting the operations against terrorism (Lansford and Tashev, 2005: 288). In line with this, Ivax planes of the member countries were dismissed to provide support for America's Airspace.

Before September 11th, the legal and security cooperation between America and its European allies was quite limited. The September 11th events changed the environment in which transatlantic security cooperation was formed. This change in the security and operational relations were manifested in three areas:

- Police and legal cooperation: exchange of information, arrestments,
- Agreement to target the financial network of the terrorists

and blocking financial accounts,

- Commitment to promote security for air lines.

Therefore, the mutual Atlantic relations approached the highest level of friendship and union. The first head of state to go to Washington after the September 11th attacks and announce all-out support for America was Jacques Chirac, the president of France. During this period, this country, which up to that time had raised the flag of disagreement with America, had a close cooperation with Americans in informational, security, marine, juridical and police operations. *Le Monde's* headline to the British on 13th of September was symbolic: "We are All Americans". In this way, Europeans were the first and the most committed to offer assistance to Americans to fulfill their responsibility in NATO.

It was due to this alignment and the basic role of NATO in this connection that Armitage, America's Deputy Secretary of Defense at the time praised these countries' participation in the fight against terrorism in his journey to Hungary and Romania in March of 2002 and said "September 11th tested the effectiveness of NATO and the countries requesting for membership (Shearman, 2004).

During this period, NATO witnessed a turning point that not only tested and evolved the role and the special duty of NATO but also determined its future and established its role as the main and the most basic structure that put America and Europe together in the strategic policies and security issues (Lansford and Tashev, 2005: 29). NATO attempted to take the pivotal and fundamental role in the war against terrorism in Prague and Istanbul Leadership Summit in 2002 and 2004.

The Period of Returning to Coordination and Cooperation: NATO's quick and successful reaction after September 11th confirmed its efficiency and the fundamental reason or motivation for the existence of NATO. The unilateral approach taken by America during the Iraq war again endangered the transatlantic relations and led the relations between the allies to crisis.

Following this crisis, by moderating their behavior, which had endangered the union, the two sides of the Atlantic tried to act

united against the new and growing threats particularly in the Islamic world and what they called the development of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. This issue had a deep reflection within NATO and almost all the concepts and doctrines of NATO were reviewed in light of the threats of terrorism. The most important new document of NATO in this regard is NATO's Military Concept for Defence Against Terrorism, which was approved in 2002 in Prague Leadership Summit.

America and Europe tried to reduce and resolve the tensions in the framework of basic identity commonalities and based on an emphasis on the fact that, as a consequence of globalization, these two areas have become increasingly interdependent. Both sides understood the mutual need for cooperation and moved towards releasing the tensions. In the official document of its national security strategy in 2006, emphasizing this point America stated: we should make the best of the lack of basic conflicts between the great powers. The new era requires new approaches. America realized that it needs Europe for political and military reasons (Binnendijk, 2004: 74). Americans further stated that in the fight against terrorism they need the informational, legal and police organizations in Europe and the higher historic familiarity of Europe with Islam has great benefits for Washington. For historical reasons, geographic location, cultural variety and its diplomatic position and experience, Europe can be the intermediary between Washington and the global community particularly the Islamic world (Cohen-Tanugi, 2003: 55).

As suggested by Rumsfeld, the American Minister of Defense, NATO Response Force was ready to carry out any operations across the globe based on the decision made in the Leadership Summit in Prague. For the first time in October 2005 and in the case of the earthquake in Pakistan, this force sent about 1000 troops with medical and machinery equipment, helicopters and about 11 C130 planes to help the Pakistani government. In addition, interference in Afghanistan (Zorlu, 2004: 35-39) in the framework of the development of the missions of International Security Assistance

Force (ISAF) and in Iraq in the framework of training the security forces were all indicative of the strengthening and increased interference of NATO in international affairs. In this way, NATO not only turned from a defense force into a security force but also got involved in operations with the purpose of nation-building and social engineering.

Without a doubt, one of the most important reasons in the new era, which makes the two sides pursue similar policies is the new concept of security in the international arena. Today, particularly after the September 11th, global security threats have changed so drastically that the old approaches and instruments are no longer effective for sloughing them off. Untraditional threats and the threats posed by social and religious evolutions and not by governments' decisions have led strategists and security decision makers to realize that traditional instruments such as creating balance, deterrence and even confrontation are no longer effective. Besides, there was an issue raised for the western countries: the purposes and capabilities of non-state enemies are not known and this, as a consequence, has led to uncertainty in their security policies. Such feelings of threat and danger put western countries in a united front. The close cooperation of the allies on the two sides of the Atlantic during the second period of Bush's presidency (in 2004) is indicative of the importance the two sides placed on the new security issues. Furthermore, both sides have been forced to reconsider their practices and policies. America, which is still suffering from a painful experience in Iraq and the problems of unilateral action, has now realized that hardware and military superiority cannot in itself help to solve its problems in Iraq.

The issue of dealing with the nuclear power of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the initial coordination between Europe and America in this issue can be also analyzed and examined in the same framework. On the one hand, Europe needs America's support for countering the new threats and in the challenges facing it in the Islamic world and the danger of weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, America also did not want to have

the unpleasant experience of unilateral action in Iraq and deprivation from international support and the support of its allies in Europe and consequent isolation again. These two issues drove them towards taking similar decisions and approaches.

III- A Comparative Analysis of US-Europe Relations During Bush and Obama Administrations

NATO created a union and an invaluable cooperation and partnership between Europe and America. Even When deGaulle withdrew France from NATO Military Command, they still remained a member though unofficially. Beyond the United Nations framework, NATO gave the ordinary people in America and Europe the possibility to know each other and know that their fate is interrelated and intertwined. After the Second World War, both sides learned this invaluable lesson very well. After the end of the Cold War, a major part of the common goal of America and Europe was not achieved. After 1991, for some time the two sides acted as if NATO could continue its job even when there was no enemy to fight against. But when there was no longer an enemy, a gap appeared in NATO.

Europeans did not entirely trust America during the presidency of Bush. They all knew that neo-conservatives' violent view of the world issues and the reaction of the American citizens and the world nations led the democrats to win the elections and Obama could show off his new political approach. Obama had a different view of the issues in Europe and the world and made new suggestions and took new measures with regard to the security issues in NATO. A comparative analysis of the topic seems to be important and useful if we want to have a clear perception of what may happen in the future.

This common threat and new security considerations have caused Europe-Atlantic community to focus strategically on the East and the great Middle East. (Asmus and Jackson, 2005: 47) By extending towards the East and covering a major part of the eastern Europe, NATO presented a new meaning for the concept of the

West and with the introduction of the Islamic world as a threat by NATO, Russia no longer considered the development of this organization a threat. In the new security environment, the West is no longer limited to Western Europe or America and includes eastern Europe and, to some extent, Russia as well. Even the issue of Israel's membership in NATO should be also analyzed and examined in this broad framework.

Such evolutions and similar stances disproved the interpretation of well-known analysts such as Charles Krauthammer and Charles Kupchan, who used such terms of the death of NATO or Atlantic divorce, or the interpretation made by Robert Kagan that America is Martian and European come from Venus, indicating that the two sides are not able to understand one another (Gordon, 76).

Pentagon's strategists announced a change of security doctrine in America in the last months of Obama's first period of presidency. This change was specifically announced by Leon Paneta, the former Minister of Defense in the controversial conference in Singapore. Paneta stated that in America's new approach, the focus of America's military presence will be the Asia-Pacific Ocean area. This meant a decrease in the long and wide presence of America in Europe. Paneta, in fact, reemphasized the announced change in the new American military strategy.

In January 2012, Barrack Obama, the American president, referred to the new military strategy of this country as Defense Strategic Review. This strategy is, to a large extent, focused on wider military presence in Asia-Pacific Ocean and the Middle East. In this strategy, the issue of reducing American forces in Europe has been also pointed out, which is mainly the result of the large decrease in America's military budget. As from the American strategists' point of view, now the major threats are in the Asia-Pacific Ocean area, Pentagon will be naturally more focused on this area.

IV- The Difference between Obama and Bush Administrations

A comparison between the American presidents from all perspectives can be revealing of the differences and similarities. Undoubtedly, Obama and Bush are two presidents with two different approaches although both have a similar role in terms of responsibility and the wills of the American administration system. The difference between Bush and Obama is not limited to their color, race, family, profession and their party preferences. Probably the most important difference between them is their attitude towards government and its role and functions in managing the American society's issues and affairs. How can we analyze and examine the different views of Obama and Bush about government? Where do the differences lie?

Political Thought: The first difference between Obama and Bush is in their view of the concept and nature of state and government in their political thought and philosophy. Bush can be known by what is considered as Reagan Revolution. In other words, Ronald Reagan, the American president from 1980 to 1988, believed that the share of government in economy should be minimized. According to him, a good government is a small government that prepares the workspace for the development of the private section by reducing the rules and regulations. Although, according to Katwala (2008), the head of Fabian Forum, Reagan enlarged the government by increasing the military budget in the defense section of the government, he tried to leave the private section free by removing and reducing the rules.

At the same time, the measures he took with Margaret Thatcher, Britain's right-wing Prime Minister, created an orientation in the West called Thatcher Revolution, Reagan Revolution and Reaganomics upon which George Bush based the evolution of economic thought. Political-economic philosophy of Reagan's followers is in contrast with the statement made by Obama that he will try to fight against what he called "structured greed". This statement indicates that by developing and setting

rules and regulations and interference the government will not let the private section do whatever it wants. The current financial crisis is rooted in Reagan's attitude towards the relationship between economy and the government.

Internal Economic Wheather: This thought and attitude reveals the second most important difference between Obama and Bush, i.e., 'focus on internal affairs of America'. It means that Obama puts the priority on social, hygienic and economic issues and has, accordingly, selected well-known figures to take the positions related to these issues in the government. For instance, senator Thomas Daschle was selected for the Department of Health and Human Services. This concern is indicative of the different understandings and views of Obama and Bush about the role of government.

Bush was mainly focused on foreign security issues and domestic policies were not among his political priorities. The economic status quo in America made attention to domestic policies a requirement for Obama. In his economic movement, Obama sought to keep the three million jobs that were going to be lost the next year. American people also favored a focus on economy and a reform of the health insurance system and energy policies, based on the surveys conducted by Washington and the ABC. Majority American people are optimistic about the measures Obama has taken in this regard.

Internal Political Affairs: The third difference between Obama and Bush in the area of internal affairs, is in Obama's non-partisan orientation, his attempt to use all the forces and involving all the actors in the political arena of America in contrast with Bush's monopolistic attitude. There is an important evidence for this difference; how he prepared his victory speech on 4th of November, 2008. He is one of the few American and even world politicians who writes his own speech and makes the framework of his speech exactly clear to his assistants. When his victory speech was prepared, he ordered his assistants to give more weight to its non-partisan content. In his speech, he also referred to Abraham

Lincoln, who had a historical role in creating unity between different groups and sectors in America.

Obama and Bush are different in their perception of the nature and function of government in the domestic policies arena. What makes this difference prominent is the deep impact of domestic policies followed by all the main political actors particularly America on the foreign and international policies. America's domestic policy is itself an international issue and there are numerous differences in this regard.

Global Affairs: There is also a difference between Obama and Bush in global affairs. Relations with Israel, how to treat Iran, cooperation with Europe in the framework of NATO, economic crisis in Europe and the position of international law and international organizations are the areas in which the two presidents differ from each other both in word and practice. Bush always threatened Iran by bombing, but the phone conversation between Obama and Rouhani was described as a historical step in political and international assemblies.

With regard to the cooperation between America and NATO, Obama took the cooperation with Europe seriously in his first period of presidency and tried to fill the gap between European and American elite. However, concerning NATO's military interference in the Middle East, he avoided the literature and decision logic of neo-conservatives. For example, during the Libyan people's movement, NATO played no role in the frontline and even in the Syria crisis, it looked for considerations not to have military interference in this country. Military coup de tat in Egypt was also considered by America with great caution.

Security Cooperation: A comparative analysis of the Obama and Bush eras in terms of security cooperation on two sides of the Atlantic is also indicative of clear differences. America's dream did not come true in Bush's time and both the American society and the European nations have an inclination towards reforming the forms of cooperation.

America's military strategy has been always formed under

regional and international conditions and internal requirements. It was in this framework that the new American strategy was introduced by Obama in 2009. But, in practice, the government of this country abandoned this strategy due to increased threats and disagreement among its executors. In this year, Obama ordered a 30-thousand-increase in the number of troops in Afghanistan, but at that time also the decision-making structure and Obama's security team made paradoxical decisions and no clear consensus existed in practice, which led to making changes in the security team and finally introduction of new conditions for the withdrawal of American forces.

Finally, although such an environment will strategically stabilize the American government in controlling the regional crises, it will pose problems for it in preparing the ground for regional stability due to the selection of a new security model.

V- NATO-Iran Bilateral Perspective

Bilateral relations of the Atlantic within the framework of NATO outside the main geography of the treaty's activities have raised concerns among some countries, such as Iran. The North Atlantic Organization, a largely political organization left since the Cold War, has continued to consider itself a global power because of its leader's contribution, i.e the USA's, to the international system. NATO, which includes U.S.-led Arab states, is trying to maintain a physical presence in different parts of the world. Meanwhile, the Middle East and Iran are among the regions where this presence is palpable and has special sensitivities. In other words, considering NATO's plans to develop to the East and approach the geographical environment around Iran and its link with U.S. military programs to intervene in the Geopolitical Region of the Middle East, NATO poses a serious threat to Iran. (Divsalar, 2015: 49)

It is an undeniable fact that Iran's neighbourhood with NATO through Turkey, which lasted half a century and provided the ground for Iran's link with the organization under the Cento Treaty, has now entered a new phase, and NATO's presence in Afghanistan

and Iraq, as well as in Central Asian countries, has made its regional and international policies of particular importance in Iran's defense decision-making to enjoy.

On the other hand, due to Iran's approach to the West, especially the United States, it has been recognized as a threat actor and has found an important place in NATO's security approach. The Islamic Republic of Iran has an important place in NATO's security approach because it opposes major powers and lacks compliance with their policies. Through the support of NATO members, the United States is trying to make the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear activities look threatening. NATO's concerns about Iran's expansion of influence in the Arab sphere, e.g. in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Palestine, have led to the adoption of policies, including NATO's expansion toward Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and close security, intelligence and economic cooperation with Arab countries on the Persian Gulf.

NATO's expansion into the East, while having negative impacts on Iran's relations with the European Union, puts more western pressure on Iran, headed by the United States. NATO is trying to reduce Iran's role and influence in the region with the aim of strategically controlling Iran through energy and transportation routes and controlling ethnic, political and ideological movements (Mirfakhraee and Khodaei, 2020: 93).

One of the U.S. actions against Iran has been the deployment of military bases around Iran, which have been conducted both on their own and within the framework of NATO expansion. It can be seen that in the northern countries of Iran, within the framework of NATO's expansion to the east, in the west of Iran with Turkey's presence in NATO and the attack on Iraq, in the east of Iran by attacking Afghanistan and in the south of Iran, cooperation with the Gulf cooperation countries has been able to create a potential military threat against the Islamic Republic, in which NATO plays a key role (Soheili Najafabadi et al., 2020: 189). Given the current situation, two major approaches can also be imagined by Iran towards NATO, ignoring NATO and its presence in the country's

neighbourhood, or even at a higher stage, NATO hostility; the other, paying attention to the reality to better secure the national interest. That is, seeing the reality, but not surrendering purely to them, nor blindly confronting them. The second approach further reflects the relationship between Iran and NATO should be based on regional realities (Divsalar, 2015: 64).

Now could be the time when NATO has openly, definitively and inclusively called on Regional Cooperation, especially in Afghanistan's security. Convergence of interests can lead to strategic cooperation between the two. This factor will itself pave the way for the formation of common identities and the construction of new common interests, which are the main foundations of reconciliation programs in Afghanistan and other geography. (Tishehyar, 2012: 18) Although the views of Iran's political and military elites on NATO's goals and practices are very diverse, the treaty's member states should not forget Iran's deterrent power and regional role. In particular, under the post-Biden situation, Iran tends to attract European NATO actors to a sensible and fair solution when it comes to lifting sanctions on Iran and reviving the JCPOA. However, dialogue is better than confrontation.

Conclusion

In this article, the goals and functions of NATO and also American's and Europeans' policies with regard to security cooperation in the framework of NATO were examined. The importance of national interests of a country does not change with the change of political leaders of that country. But the ideological view or the cultural roots and the values cherished by the parties like democrats and republicans in America or the fundamentalists or reformists in Iran require the use of different techniques, strategies and tools for advancing those interests. However, the mentioned differences sometimes lead to great effects and results.

In America, despite the fact that the exchange of power between the Hawks and Pigeons has not led to absolute solutions

for the domestic or foreign issues of the American society or other nations, the public opinion within America and the world has been also effective in directing and determining the political and social conditions. Therefore, the mass population normally welcome the politicians who create new hopes with the claims of creating change, although after a while these hopes are also weakened in this attritional political fight and are replaced with new hopes and promises and the “Brain Circulation” continues. The elite and the investors in Europe and America did not trust Bush and his performance very much. Budget and financial deficits, his sense of adventure abroad, his security measures, etc. had undermined the authority of America during Bush administration. During his administration, Obama made an attempt to rebuild and reestablish this trust both inside his country and between Europe and America. However, there was a conflict between majority of the Europeans during the last century.

In summary, it can be concluded that the goal of the United States is to ensure stable security in Europe as its backyard and the conflicts between Europe and America are not often fundamental and are not about creation of a hegemony but about interests and the position of Europe in America’s foreign policy and the fact that Europe does not like to be ignored in the future world order. There was a growing uncertainty and concern in Europe about this issue that Washington is not willing involve its old allies, which have now become its staunch allies, in important international decisions as it used to and has gradually downplayed their importance and role. This indicates that the EU tries to increase its bargaining power against America to claim and get its share in the future order of the international system. Although this attempt by the EU to gain this position has appeared in the form of resistance against the influence and dominance of America, it puts an end to decades of compliance with this country.

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National Role Perceptions and Biden's Foreign Policy towards Iran

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Abstract

This article focuses on the concept of national role, which is defined as the perception of foreign policymakers of the position of their nations in the international system. The main argument of this paper is that Joe Biden, as the 46th President of the United States, offers a new definition of national role, which is different from Trump's definition. This national role is made up of elements and ideas that are necessary to understand US foreign policy toward other states, including how to deal with Iran. So, the main question of this paper is “what is the new national role that Biden defines for American identity? What are the most important elements that constitute this new national role? and According to these elements, what can we expect from Biden's administration's foreign policy orientation towards Iran? The research findings show that according to the new perception, the most important national role defined by Biden for the United States is: “respected and moral leadership”, a role that has been severely damaged by Trump's isolationist policies and the most important elements that constitute this new national role are: strengthening alliances, especially with Europeans, emphasizing public opinion satisfaction, using all US capabilities in the form of smart power, selective engagement, multilateralism and institutionalism, liberal internationalism, and diplomacy. This article is a descriptive-analytical article using case theory and the method of data

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collection is based on the existing literature and virtual data.

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Introduction

According to the US Constitution, the president is primarily responsible for formulating and implementing foreign policy. Although in the foreign policy process many formal and informal institutions (Senate, House of Representatives, pressure groups or lobbies) can influence or limit foreign policy decisions, finally the president plays a decisive role, because he is the legal representative of the United States in foreign relations (Peake, 2016: 83). So, by changing the president as the main decision-maker, national role perceptions and foreign policy orientations will change. As a result, in order to understand the new US foreign policy towards other states, including Iran, it is very important to know Biden's perceptions as the 46th President of the United States from the national role and its constituent elements. So, the main question of this paper is "what is the new national role that Biden defines for American identity?", "What are the most important elements that constitute this new national role?" and "According to these elements, what can we expect from Biden's administration's foreign policy orientation toward Iran? In this relation, in speeches and formal statements, he has pledged to renew America's global leadership. In his first post-presidential speech, Biden explicitly stated that he wants to do something to bring the United States back to the world stage. He offered the ideas of "Respected leadership" and "United America" instead the idea of "first America" (Biden, 2020 a). These new definitions and new perceptions affected and changed US foreign policy orientations.

In this regard one of the most important issues facing the Biden administration's foreign policy is how to deal with the Middle East

as one of the most challenging regions in the international system. In this regard “The administration is focusing on three key objectives – resetting the relationship with Saudi Arabia, ending the war in Yemen, and getting the Iran nuclear agreement back on track” (Norman, 2021). It seems that the issue of Iran is more important than the other two issues, because Biden makes the connection between regional stability and an agreement with Iran. According to him “The best way to achieve some stability in the region is to deal with the Iran’s nuclear program” (Biden, 2020 b).

With this introduction and in answer to the main questions of this paper, we will explain the theoretical framework in the first part, focusing on the “National Role Perceptions” in the framework of the “Interpretive Individualism approach”. In the second part, we will check Biden's new definitions of the American national role, and explore the central ideas. In the third part, we will examine Biden's foreign policy towards Iran based on the central ideas of the new national role and its policy-making prescriptions. Finally, we end the paper with a conclusion.

This article is a descriptive-analytical article using case theory and the method of data collection is to review the existing literature and use virtual data.

Theoretical Framework

National Role Perceptions and Foreign Policy Analysis:

“Foreign policy analysis” (FPA) is one of the most important parts of “International Relations” (IR) discipline and includes national objectives and the means to achieve such objectives (Couloumbis and Wolfe, 1990, 114). while International Relations theories highlight the structural limitations of international system and behavioral similarities affected by such structural limitations (actor-general theory), foreign policy analysis is based on the inevitable role of human agency, creation of differences, and focusing on decisions (actor-specific theory) (Hudson, 2005: 11).

FPA has different theoretical approaches. One of the most important of these approaches is “Interpretive Individualism”. In

fact, this approach falls into the category of “Cognitive Theories” in foreign policy analysis. Cognitive theories encompass mental activities such as the observation of different stimuli in an environment; Remembering and recalling information; pattern recognition and problem representation; and complex activities like social judgments, analytic reasoning, and learning. Cognitive psychology also highlights the constraints that prevent individuals from acting as utility-maximizing, fully rational decision-makers. These constraints lead people to rely on a regularly occurring set of cognitive mechanisms to simplify the decision-making process (Rapport, 2017: 3).

So, in analyzing foreign policy, the “Interpretative Individualism” focuses on “perceptions”, “preferences” and “cognition” of foreign policy decision makers regarding the world and its effect in their foreign policy decisions (Carlsnaes, 1992: 249). “National Role” conception is in the context of interpretive individualism approach. It is defined as foreign policy makers' perceptions of their nations' positions in the international system. It includes perceptions of the general kinds of decisions, rules, commitments, and long-term functions associated with these international positions (Wish, 1980: 532). Holsti was one of the first international relations theorists to apply role theory to the international context. He defines national role conceptions as

Policymakers' own definitions of the general types of decisions, commitments, laws, and actions appropriate to their country and the tasks they must perform continuously in the international system if there is a government ... This is their image of the proper orientations and actions of their situation in relation to the external environment or inside it. (Holsti, 1970: 245).

This concept is closely related to the concept of national identity. In fact, effective foreign policy rests upon a shared sense of national identity, of a nation-state's ‘place in the world’, its friends and enemies, its interests and aspirations. These underlying assumptions are embedded in national history and myth, changing slowly over time as political leaders reinterpret them and external

and internal developments reshape them (Hill and Wallace, 1996: 8).

A role conception is a set of norms expressing expected foreign policy behavior and action orientation. It can be thought of as a 'road map' that foreign policy-makers rely on to simplify and facilitate an understanding of a complex political reality (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 3). In other definition, national role conception is the cognitive constructions of decision-makers of 'what the nation naturally stands for and how high it naturally stands, in comparison to others in the international arena'. They can be considered as the core of a grand policy vision through which policy-makers explain the world around them and their state's existence therein (Aras, 2010: 74).

The most important concepts related to the national role conceptions are "Cognitive map", "National Self-image", "Ontological Security" or "Security of the Self" and "Operational Code". According to APA dictionary of psychology cognitive map is a mental understanding of an environment, formed through trial and error as well as observation. Accordingly, self-images include how people sees themselves, something he likes most about itself, that about which it is most disturbed, the ways in which it may want to change, perceptions of the nation's history, conceptions of national purpose and interest, and views of the nation's power and limits. Regarding perceptions of enemies, the theory emphasizes the differences with which parties perceive the same issues, events, policies, and peoples, and suggests such gaps in perception as keys to understanding conflict behavior and interactions. So, National self-images and perceptions of enemies are explicated and analyzed as determinants of various types of conflict behavior (Kaplowitz, 1990: 39).

Self-image may consist of four types:

1. Self-image resulting from how an individual sees oneself.
2. Self-image of how others see a person.
3. Self-image that results from how one sees them.
4. An image of oneself that results from how one perceives

oneself. (Rogers, 1977: 678).

The final concept that relates to national role perception is ontological security. What is emphasized in analyzing the foreign policy relying on the concept of ontological security or Security of the Self is to find out which social acts have been used by the foreign policy makers to meet the identity needs of their states (Mitzen, 2006). Like its physical counterpart, the motivation for ontological security is constant. Some, deep forms of uncertainty threaten this identity security. The reason is that agency requires a stable cognitive environment. Mitzen believes Ontological security is security not of the body but of the self, the subjective sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice. Actors achieve ontological security especially by routinizing their relations with significant others (Mitzen, 2006: 350) Finally the concept of “Operational code” has been developed in the study of international politics to refer to a set of lenses that filter how decision-makers perceive, process, and react to situations involving other countries (Hass, 2021).

I- Biden and American National Role Perceptions

Biden shared his perception of the new US national role in a pre-election article in Foreign Affairs entitled “Why America Must Lead Again,” he proclaimed, “I will take immediate steps to restore democracy, restore US power, and protect the future economy, and once more America will lead the world.” To this commitment he added, “No other nation has that capacity.” He thus explicitly recognized what has been the country’s indispensable role. He announced that “The Biden foreign policy agenda will place the United States back at the head of the table, in a position to work with its allies and partners to mobilize collective action on global threats. The world has not organized itself yet” (Biden, 2020 c: 64-66).

In his first major foreign policy speech as the president of the united states, Biden delivered a ringing message, saying “I want the world to hear today: America is back again....” (Biden, 2021 a). So,

Biden emphasised on “American Respected leadership” or a “Transformational leadership”. This definition of the US global role has a direct impact on the Biden administration's foreign policy. “In times of global crisis, America should lead. We should be the first to offer help to people who are being hurt or are in danger. That’s who we are. That’s who we’ve always been” (Biden, 2021 b).

So, Biden will have to shift the policy with allies from a “transactional American leadership” (This leadership style relies on reward and punishment pairs. Moreover, the leader sets the goals without necessarily including the followers,) toward a more transformational one (encompasses the motivations and ideas of followers.) To do so, the United States needs to be a reliable partner and uphold its commitments (Swielande, 2021: 143).

The role of American values is crucial in this transformational leadership. Joe Biden announced that, as president, he will advance the security, prosperity and values of the United States by taking immediate steps to renew American democracy and alliances and once more place the united states at the head of the table, leading the world to address the most urgent global challenges (The Biden plan, 2021).

I come to talk about crisis and opportunity. About rebuilding the nation, revitalizing our democracy, and winning the future for America... America is rising again. Choosing hope over fear, truth over lies and light over darkness... America is an idea, the most unique idea in history (Biden, 2021 b).

From Biden’s view renewal of American leadership to mobilize global action on global threats is necessary: “The world does not organize itself. American leadership, backed by clear goals and sound strategies, is necessary to effectively address the defining global challenges of our time. In order to lead again, we must restore our credibility and influence” (The Biden plan, 2021). “It falls to the United States to lead the way. No other nation has that capacity. No other nation is built on that [democratic] idea” (Biden, 2020 c: 65). In effect, Biden seeks to show that not only is

America still America, but it's ready to do again what it has successfully done before.

He criticizes the Trump administration for avoiding US global leadership responsibility. He believes that the continuation of this process will lead to the loss of America's control over future developments in the world. So, Biden defines for the United States the role of a "liberal hegemon", This role contradicts Trump's illiberal hegemony. In Biden's view, Trump's illiberal Hegemony alienated much of the imperialist establishment. They determined that it failed to restore US supremacy, undermined soft power, disrupted alliances, weakened the US position against both China and Russia, and set back its ability to manage imperial crises in the Middle East (Kumar, 2021: 3). So, in Biden's view the US must lead, he argues, otherwise one of two outcomes will prevail: "either someone else will take the United States' place, but not in a way that advances our interests and values, or no one will, and chaos will ensue" (Biden, 2020 c, 71).

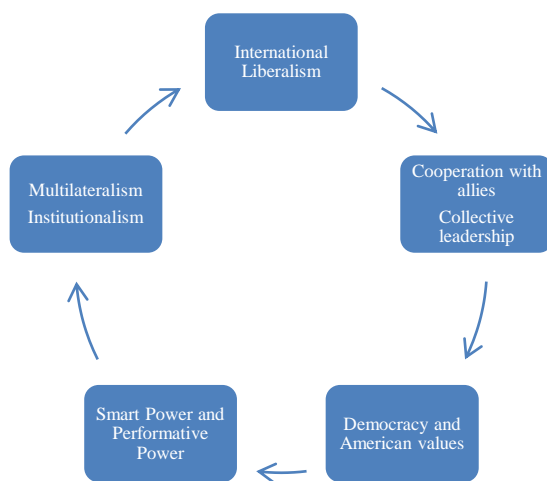


Figure 1. The Most Important Elements of The New American National Role

II- International Liberalism

One of the most important constituting elements of America's new

role is “International liberalism Discourse”. The central idea of this discourse is to manage and change the world or international system through the exercise of American power based on the will and ideals of this country. International liberals argue that the United States’ success has depended on a combination of power, democratic ideas, and liberal internationalist projects, while realists ignore the role of American liberal values and democratic ideas in American foreign policy. (Ikenberry and Kupchan, 2004: 34).

So, Biden’s worldview is rooted in mid-twentieth century liberal internationalism, American exceptionalism and pragmatism. It is internationalist because it aims to create order through multilateral cooperation, partnerships, institutions and rules among a community of states and non-state actors. It is liberal because it is premised upon consent, cooperation and a desire to shape the international environment in favor of liberal democracies. It is exceptional because it adheres to the normative belief that the United States has a special role to play in the history of the world. (Ettinger, 2021: 164).

Ikenberry believes that Biden’s administration has laid out international liberalism agenda of change that aims to put the United States back at the center of progressive liberal leadership to address 21st-century problems (Ikenberry, 2021). One of the elements of this discourse is the emphasis on “selective engagement”. Since the Obama administration, the United States has adopted a less interventionist policy on the international scene. Under Obama, this policy translated into the concepts of nation-building at home and strategic patience; Selective engagement is characterized by the concentration of capacities where it really matters, where it has the biggest impact, where it is essential (Swielande, 2021: 145). So, unlike Trump-era nationalism, Biden emphasizes Obama's policy of selective engagement or pragmatic engagement strategy.

Multilateralism and Institutionalism: Another element shaping the new American role is “Multilateralism and Institutionalism”. Multilateralism is process of organizing relations

between groups of three or more states, a situation in which several different countries or organizations work together to achieve something or deal with a problem. Keohane defines multilateralism as ‘the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions’ (Keohane, 1990, 731).

So, multilateralism is an example of cooperation among world governments and is used in contrast with unilateralism. Unilateralism is when a state acts without regard to the support or interests of other states. For example, the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq is often given as an example of unilateralism in international relations. Multilateralism is believed to be a way to achieve a nation's interest, while promoting stability in the world (Scott, 2013). In multilateralism, the United States defines for itself the role of an active state in global governance. Whereas, in unilateralism, the United States is presented as an isolated and arbitrary state. This strategy is reflected in Trump’s idea of “America alone” or the idea of “America first”.

Throughout the campaign, Biden trumpeted his support for multilateralism. The cornerstones of this approach include strengthening the NATO alliance, partnerships with European Union nations and key relationships with Asia and Oceania, such as those with Australia, Japan, and South Korea (Biden’s Foreign Policy Doctrine, 2021). So, Biden has wisely framed the United States return to multilateralism as a foreign policy for the American middle class, linked to the concrete interests of US citizens. Restoration of the multilateral order, reflected in his early moves to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization and re-affirming the importance of the transatlantic partnership and other traditional alliances.

Multilateralism is associated with institutionalism and multilateral diplomacy. Institutionalism means emphasizing the role of institutions in pursuing America's global interests, an instrumentalist view to institutions in achieving US foreign policy goals. For example, Biden in matters such as: global health security,

climate change or nuclear weapons proliferation emphasizes institutionalism and multilateralism. Biden has acknowledged the reality that there is no national solution to this transnational threat—and that pandemic preparedness cannot stop at the U.S. border. The U.S. president has also moved to revive U.S. arms control and nonproliferation efforts and signaled his intent to downgrade nuclear weapons in U.S. defense policy (The Biden Administration, 2021).

Collective leadership: Another element shaping the new American role is “Collective leadership”. Collective leadership is characterized by a multiple perspective, sharing responsibility, building upon the strengths of others. Eventually, it leads to increased effectiveness, accountability, shared responsibility, sustainability and leveraging motivation. The United States has to make its allies and partners feel part of the strategic process (Swielande, 2021: 135). Biden has returned the United States diplomacy from “America First” of the Trump administration to the traditional style that places importance on its network of alliances. According to Biden, no country can face many challenges alone, from climate change to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, from the aggression of great powers to transnational terrorism, from cyber warfare to mass migration. (The Biden plan, 2021).

We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again... and we'll lead, not merely by the example of our power, but by the power of our example. We'll be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress and security (Biden, 2021 b)

Smart Power and Performative Power: Other elements shaping the new American role are “Smart Power” and “Performative Power”. As president, Biden will promote diplomacy as America's top tool for global engagement. Contrary to the Trump approach of limiting American power to economic and military coercion, Joe Biden will have to deploy the total range of American power capacities. The administration cannot hesitate to use military force if necessary, nor hesitate to resort to economic sanctions, but the incoming president will also need to make use of

soft power (Swielande, 2021: 142).

Biden asserted that the US would stop 'rolling over' in the face of its adversaries, especially those that seek to 'damage and disrupt our democracy.' He emphasized, however, that diplomatic relations will remain an option on the table, as the US would engage when it is 'in America's interest to do so (Biden, 2021 c).

Democracy and American Values: Biden's foreign and security policies are built on democratic security by offering the prospect and promise of a fresh democratic future, not merely a fixed version of the past, while avoiding the pitfalls of democratic exceptionalism (Soare, 2021: 14). In Biden's view, there is no incompatibility between international leadership and rebuilding democracy and to rebuild democracy at home, the US has to strengthen democracy abroad. His goal is to put democracy and democratic values at the heart of US foreign policy, while at the same time rebuilding the "spirit of the nation" after Trump's humiliated it. In this context Biden's approach is twofold. First, he aims to reverse all of Trump's illiberal and undemocratic foreign policy practices. Second, Biden's seeks to restore the US as the "bulwark for global democracy". He has said, "defending America's democratic values is inseparable from advancing our national interest" (Lieber, 2021).

Democracy is the root of our society, the source of our power and the source of our revival. In fact, democracy strengthens our leadership to keep us safe in the world. It is the engine of our ingenuity that drives our economic prosperity. This heart represents who we are and how we see the world and how the world sees us. That is why the United States' ability to become a force for progress in the world and to mobilize collective action at home begins. (Biden's Foreign Policy Doctrine, 2021).

Thus, as part of his effort to reclaim America's leading role on the world stage, Biden proposed hosting a "Summit for Democracy" on December 9-10, 2021 with the participation of US partners around the world and challenges for authoritarian leaders. The summit will serve "to put strengthened democracy back on the

global agenda” (Biden, 2021 d). In his view, by emphasizing the link between internal and external security, the United States can once again wish to use its model of flexibility and the ability of democracy to reform and prosper.

III- Iran and Biden’s Security Priorities

To better understand Biden's foreign policy prospects toward Iran based on new national role perceptions, we must consider his national security priorities. These priorities are divided into internal and external components. At the domestic level, Biden focuses on American domestic problems, the most important of which is how to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and the health of American citizens. At the external level, Biden’s security priorities are divided into three layers:

- Transnational, globalized security challenges, including tackling the global health crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, socio-economic inequality, reforming the international trade system, the governance of emerging technologies consistent with liberal values and curbing irregular migration (Soare, 2021: 16).

Among these challenges, Biden has pledged to make ‘climate change’ a priority in his administration, starting with undoing many of Trump’s environmental decisions via executive order and rejoining the Paris climate accord in his first days in office. He believes: “Climate change and global warming is an existential threat to humanity. We have a moral obligation to deal with it” (Biden, 2020 d).

- Threats posed by China and Russia: In this regard, Biden sees China correctly as the primary geopolitical adversary and as a common reference point for a community of democracies. He also sees confronting China as an economic challenge which he links to domestic economic revival and climate change (Ettinger, 2021: 160). Thus, Challenges from China and Russia (Biden refers to Russia’s interference to American elections and the cyberattacks) and other illiberal authoritarian states present geopolitical

pressures, as does the advance of illiberal nationalism within democratic polities, especially the US. (Ibid: 163).

- Threats posed by Iran and North Korea: To Biden's administration, the nuclear threats of Iran and North Korea are at the third level of national security priorities.

On Iran and North Korea, nuclear programs present serious threats to American security and the security of the world. We're going to be working closely with our allies to address the threats posed by both of these countries through diplomacy as well as stern deterrence (Biden, 2021 b).

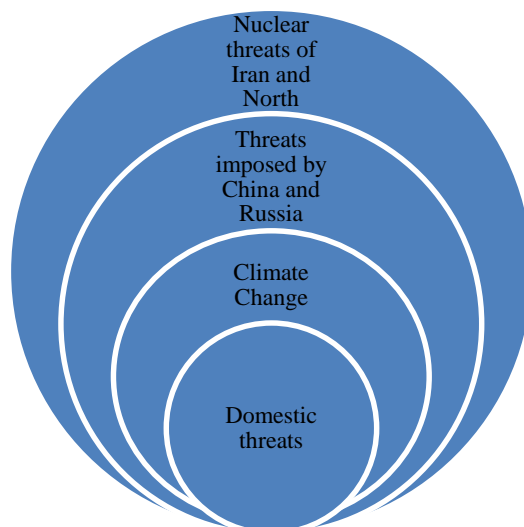


Figure 2. Biden's Representation of US National Security Threats

Biden laid out his plan for relations with Iran in a 13 September written commentary via CNN. Castigating President Donald Trump for a failed 'maximum pressure' policy that 'worsened the threat' from Iran and failed to win the support of a single US ally, Biden made a three-part promise. Firstly, like every incoming US president of this century, he pledged to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The second promise involved a package of diplomatic measures. Biden would rejoin the nuclear accord 'if Iran return[ed] to strict compliance' with the deal. Relatedly, he would

work to strengthen and extend the JCPOA's provisions, while also addressing other issues of concern, among them freeing Americans detained in Iran, condemning Iranian violations of human rights, and helping US regional partners reduce tensions and end regional conflicts, including the war in Yemen. The third part of Biden's plan is to counter Iran's 'destabilizing activities', working closely with Israel and using targeted sanctions against 'Iran's human rights abuses, its support for terrorism' and its ballistic-missile program. These efforts would be made on a parallel track unconnected to nuclear negotiations (Biden, 2020 d).

Biden during the campaign also repeatedly pledged to return to the Iran nuclear deal that President Obama negotiated in 2015 and President Trump abandoned in 2018, although he suggested it needed to be updated and broadened. "If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States would rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations," (Joe Biden on Iran, 2020).

IV- Biden's Foreign Policy Prospects towards Iran

According to Biden's national role new perceptions and Iran's position in the hierarchy of security threats he defines for the United States, the following prospects can be considered for Biden's foreign policy towards Iran:

1. Emphasis on Institutionalism and Multilateralism in Dealing with Iran: Considering these two components, the new US President seeks to establish a 'liberal hegemony' against Trump's 'illiberal hegemony'. According to this definition, Biden's foreign policy in relation to Iran has the following aspects:

- The Biden administration is expected to adopt a less unilaterally confrontational tone in relations with Iran.

- Emphasis on international alliances and cooperation with partners, especially European partners in dealing with Iran. "With our allies, we will work to strengthen and extend the nuclear deal's provisions, while also addressing other issues of concern." (Joe Biden on Iran, 2020).

2. Emphasis on liberal Internationalism in Dealing with Iran: Biden aims to practice a US-centric liberal internationalism that relies more on the consensual aspects of American leadership, and less on the coercive aspects. Those coercive aspects, however, will be part of the program but in pragmatic ways (Ettinger, 2021: 163). According to this definition Biden's foreign policy in relation to Iran has the following aspects:

- Unlikely to use the military option against Iran, because in liberal internationalism, the military option can be used cautiously, in a limited way, in line with liberal interests and values, and with the consent of liberal allies (Keohane, 2012: 125). Therefore, if Iran resorts to missile, nuclear or regional military actions, the Biden's administration will also use the military option. According to Biden, if Iran chooses to confront, he is ready to defend the vital interests of the United States.

- Emphasis on collaborative games: In cooperative games, the actors seek to agree on a set of principles to achieve common goals. Of course, it should be noted that in the relation's game between two States, Iran's strategic cost-benefit calculations is very important.

3. Emphasis on Smart Power in Dealing with Iran: Smart power involves the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion, capacity building, and the projection of power and influence in ways that are cost-effective and have political and social legitimacy, essentially the engagement of both military force and all forms of diplomacy (Crocker, 2007: 13). According to this definition, Joe Biden claimed that there was a 'smarter way to be tough on Iran' during the 2020 US election campaign. He tried to strike a balance between confrontation and selective cooperation defending America's vital interests by confronting threats and abuses, but also engaging with these adversaries "when it's in America's interests to do so." (Lieber, 2021: 7)

According to Biden, Trump was not able to use smart power against Iran. "He ignored our closest allies and walked away alone, without a plan from a deal that put the world's eyes and ears inside

Iran's nuclear program and was verifiably blocking Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon.” (Biden. Sept. 13, 2020). “Iran restarted its nuclear program and became more aggressive, moving the region closer to another disastrous war. In short, Trump’s decisions left us much worse off” (Biden, 2019 a).

From Biden's point of view, the United States’ credibility and leadership in the nonproliferation regime suffered a substantial blow when the Trump administration unilaterally decided to withdraw from the agreement despite universal compliance. So, Biden looks for reclaim the United States’ reputation as a global leader in the nonproliferation regime. This will require new multilateral negotiations, experienced diplomats at the helm, and a willingness to provide sufficient incentives to ensure a diplomatic and peaceful end to Iran’s nuclear program (Mehta, 2021: 11). According to this definition, Biden's foreign policy in relation to Iran has the following aspects:

- ‘Compliance for compliance strategy’: Biden’s ‘compliance for compliance strategy’ can be considered in the context of smart power. “The United States wants Iran to come back into (compliance with) its JCPOA commitments and if does, the United States will do the same” (Joe Biden on Iran, 2020). So, Biden would then use this as a basis for engaging in wider talks with Iran on other issues of concern (Prospects for the Iran nuclear deal, 2020). At the State Department press briefing on February 22, Department Spokesman Ned Price reiterated clearly the administration’s position:

Biden made clear the deal of compliance for compliance: If Iran returns to full compliance with the JCPOA, the United States would be prepared to do the same. We would then use the JCPOA as a basis for a longer and stronger agreement and negotiate follow-on agreements to cover other areas of concern, including Iran’s ballistic missile program (U.S. Foreign Policy, 2021).

But the main problem in this context is the performance of the first trust-building action by each of the actors. In this relation Iran wants the US to lift the sanctions – more than 1,500 of them –

imposed under Trump as a precursor to direct talks, while the US wants Iran to first curb uranium enrichment levels to those agreed in the 2015 deal (Norman, 2021).

- Using diplomacy and sanctions dealing with Iran simultaneously: As stated smart power refers to the combination of hard power and soft power strategies. In Biden's administration, this means using diplomacy and sanctions simultaneously. Over the last two decades, sanctions have become a fundamental tool of American foreign policy. Sanctions are often seen as an alternative to the use of military force in pursuit of specific policy objectives such as non-proliferation. The United States has devoted more resources than any other power to developing sanctions as a core foreign-policy tool, leveraging the dominant position of the US dollar in the global economy ((Batmanghelidj and Rouhi, 2021: 185),

In Biden's words “We will continue to use targeted sanctions against Iran's human rights abuses, its support for terrorism and ballistic missile program” (Biden, 2020 d). Rather, we assume that sanctions will remain a significant tool of US non-proliferation policy in regard to Iran's nuclear activities. So, Biden said he would be prepared to defend vital US interests and US troops, but was ready to ‘walk the path of diplomacy if Iran takes steps to show it is ready too’ (Prospects for the Iran nuclear deal, 2020).

The threat of nuclear proliferation also continues to require careful diplomacy and cooperation among us. We need transparency and communication to minimize the risk of strategic misunderstanding or mistakes... That's why we have said we're prepared to reengage in negotiations with the P5+1 on Iran's nuclear program. We must also address Iran's destabilizing activities across the Middle East, and we're going to work in close cooperation with our European and other partners as we proceed (Biden, 2021, Feb).

Conclusion

This research focuses on national role conception, which is defined

as foreign policy makers' perceptions of their nations' positions in the international system. Therefore, the main purpose of this article was to examine the change in US foreign policy based on the change in Biden's national role. So, the main question of this paper is what is the new national role that Biden defines for American identity? What are the most important elements that constitute this new national role? According to these elements, what can we expect from Biden's administration's foreign policy approach to Iran?

In fact, every newly elected American president enters office promising to implement new policies, to avoid the mistakes of the past, and to promote the country's security, interests, and values (new national role perception). In Biden's view, America First foreign policy (based on Trump's national role perception) isolated the United States from its friends and allies and upended more than 70 years of American leadership in the global community. So, Joe Biden and his senior advisers have signaled that they aim to restore American global leadership and to do so prudently and in close cooperation with US allies. In other words, Biden's entire foreign policy rests on the assumption that America must lead again.

On that occasion, Biden set out a long list of additional commitments. These included facing the global challenges of the climate crisis, nuclear proliferation, and the raging Covid-19 pandemic; championing human rights; upholding the rule of law; uniting the world in fighting to defend democracy; rejoining international institutions; and confronting cyber threats. In fact, the new role that Biden has defined for the United States, includes restore, revitalize, rebuild, reinvent, renovate, rejoin, reform, and reset. There is a clear preference for a return to multilateralism and coordination as the means to solving global problems including dealing with Iran. So, in this article we tried to examine Biden's Foreign Policy Prospects towards Iran based on US new national role perception. We predict Biden's Foreign Policy towards Iran includes elements such as 'institutionalism and multilateralism', 'liberal internationalism' and 'smart power'. Each of these elements creates specific instructions regarding Iran.

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Georgia in Russian Foreign Policy: Implications for Iran

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Abstract

Georgia has experienced many developments since independence because of the presence of Russia and the West in this country, which has played an important role in making a balance of power between Russia and the West. Therefore, examining the factors that have made Georgia's role important will help to identify the issue. So, the main question in this article is what is the role of Georgia in the balance of power between Russia and the West and its impact on Iran's national security? Our hypothesis is, the role of Georgia is important in the balance of power between Russia and the West due to its unique geopolitical position and its pro-western policies, and this orientation has an important impact on Iran's national security. The hypothesis has been investigated according to the assumptions of Kenneth Waltz's balance of power theory and Mackinder's geopolitical theory. Findings show that Georgia, as a small country, has felt threatened by Russia and has tried to join the Western structure, which has highlighted Georgia's role in the balance of power between the two sides. The West has used the energy resources of the Caspian Sea to supply its energy and Georgia is playing a key role in this process, which jeopardizes Russia's policy of monopolizing Europe's energy supply. Thus, the Western military presence in Georgia and Russia's monopoly

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policy to supply energy to the European Union has a negative impact on Iran's national security. The research method is descriptive-explanatory.

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, three countries (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) emerged in the South Caucasus. Georgia is located in the south of the strategic Caucasus Mountains and has a common border with Russia. Georgia is geographically the only country in Central Asia and the South Caucasus that has access to open seas through the Black Sea. After independence, Georgia clashed with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which were autonomously ruled during the Soviet era, and finally reached a peace agreement in 1992, mediated by Russia. Georgia, like other countries after independence, wanted to be free from Russian domination and used Christianity and European identity to join the European Union, especially after the Rose Revolution. After the Rose Revolution, with Saakashvili in power, Georgia wanted to join the European Union. In August 2008, Saakashvili invaded South Ossetia to unite Georgia and seized Tskhinvali, while Russia felt threatened by Western influence in Georgia. During the war, following Saakashvili's mistaken attack on Russian troops in South Ossetia, Russia reacted harshly and occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia and recognized the autonomy of the two regions. Western influence in Georgia was due to Russia's containment and supply of oil and gas resources through Azerbaijan, which launched the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines because the transit of oil and gas resources to Europe was monopolized by Russia, and the West wanted different ways to supply their energy resources. By infiltrating Georgia, the West seeks to take advantage of Russia in the South Caucasus and provide various ways to supply its energy. Due to the military nature of the Caucasus Mountains,

NATO's presence in Georgia was also dangerous for Russia and could have shifted the balance of power in favor of the West. If NATO dominates the Caucasus Mountains in Georgia, it will dominate the Russian plains.

We refer to several studies that have led to the confrontation between Russia and the West in Georgia. Matsaberidze (2015) wrote an article about Russia vs. EU/US through Georgia and Ukraine. He analyzed the construction and transformation of Georgia and Ukraine's post-Soviet security strategy in the context of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy (Near-abroad policy). In his research, he concluded that the wars of 2008 and 2014 could be seen as reactions to the success of the velvet revolutions that encircled the Russian Federation in the region. The wars were aimed at altering the changing international realities in the near abroad, and these wars were also not a revenge for the velvet revolutions—a sign of the rude interference of the West in Russia's near abroad—but the reaction to Russia's international humiliation. The humiliation began with German reunification, continued through Kosovo, and concluded with the EU's eastward expansion to Ukraine's borders. Thus, the soft power applied by the West was countered by military means by the Russian Federation. Russia's drive was aimed at creating buffer zones in Georgia and Ukraine by initiating "frozen conflicts," which could be used as indirect leverage in the hands of the Russian Federation to block the progress of Western aspirations in those two countries. Nilsson (2021) has written an article entitled "Between Russia's 'Hybrid' strategy and Western Ambiguity: Assessing Georgia's Vulnerabilities". He said in this article, Russia's 'hybrid' strategy for neighboring countries highlights the importance of the Russian approach of influence and how these approaches target domestic and foreign vulnerabilities in target countries. This article talked about the different resources that Russia uses against Georgia in terms of military, economic, political, information resources. The article concludes that the current focus on narrative progress in Russia's foreign policy research may divert attention from

addressing strategic weaknesses. In this article, we want to answer this question: what is the role of Georgia in the balance of power between Russia and the west? The role of Georgia is important between Russia and the West due to its unique geopolitical position and its pro-western policies and this orientation has an important impact on Iran's national security. In this article we used the descriptive-explanatory method.

First, we talked about our theoretical framework that we use and after that, we talked about the historical background, and then, we analyzed and explained the geopolitics of Georgia, pro-western policy of Georgia, Georgia between Russia and the West, and impact of this situation on national security of Iran. In the final part, we make the conclusion to our article.

Theoretical Framework

This article is based on the theory of balance of power from Kenneth Waltz. We have connected the balance of power theory with the heartland theory. We explained them in the following:

Balance of Power: The Balance of power was “revived and recast in 1979 with the publication of Kenneth Waltz’s theory of International Politics” (Nixon, 2009, p. 1). The balance of power is historically one of the most important concepts of international politics and the academic discipline of international relations (IR). The balance of power concept is defined as the following:

Two of the assumptions are needed to understand balance of power. First, “the chaotic nature of international politics is key to understanding the behavior of states, which must lead to state balance.” (Simpson, 2018, p. 3). “Second, states are the principle actors in the international system” (Sun, 2014, p. 1).

If a country is emerging in the international system, small countries may see this great power as a threat and unite to counter and balance it to achieve equal weight on the scales. (Andersen, 2018). On the other hand, the father of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz, merely comments that “faced with unbalanced power states try to increase their own strength or they ally with others to bring the

international distribution of power into balance” (Parent & Rosato, 2015, p. 53).

Heartland Theory and Balance of Power Theory: The word Eurasia is a combination of the words Europe and Asia, first coined in 1883 by the Austrian geologist Edward Switzerland. The race to conquer Eurasia continued with the end of the Cold War, and after the Cold War, this geographical area became the focal point of competition between world powers. Central Eurasia is bounded on the west by the Black Sea, on the east by China, on the north by Russia, and on the south by Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. (Koolae, 2017).

The beginning of the geopolitical debate is Hartland's theory. Mackinder's theory of a world power shift is known as the “Heartland Theory”. It reflects the intricate dynamics and relationships between geography, political power, and military strategy intertwined with demographics and economics. These relationships illustrate the features and importance of Heartland's theory (Daniels, 2020). Mackinder explained for the first time “how the “Heartland” region of Eurasia is effective in creating global balance and security, and that a country that controls the region will play a very important role globally” (Vaezzadeh, 2016 p. 541).

According to this statement, he suggested that “the state that dominated the Heartland would possess the necessary geopolitical and economic potential to ultimately control the world politics” (Hel Kafi & Chowdhury, 2021, p. 3). Due to the importance of the region to Russia and its efforts to re-infiltrate the region, the newly independent countries tried to form new alliances in order to survive and escape from Russian domination. According to Kenneth Waltz's balance of power theory, if there is a rising, big, and powerful state in the international system, other smaller states may find this Great Power threatening and will therefore join together to oppose and balance it, to achieve equal weight. Thus, the efforts of the newly independent states to join the new alliances and Russia's efforts to infiltrate the region have created rivalry between the great powers of the region.

I- Historical Background

Cold War: The Cold War period can be characterized as a permanent competition between the West and East blocs, or between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its satellite states” (Cizik & Novák, 2015, p. 3) The South Caucasus was part of the Soviet Union during the cold war. The alliance system dominated by the two superpowers, therefore, divided the entire world into two camps. Western European countries mostly sided with the United States, while Eastern European countries joined the Soviet camp. This is why these alliances are also called "Western" and "Eastern" alliances (Uppal, 2007).

“NATO’s founding document, the North Atlantic Treaty (known as the Washington Treaty) was signed in 1949” (Hillison, 2018, p. 9). By joining NATO, each member state agreed to treat an attack on any other member as an attack on itself. “NATO's collective defense policy was known as deterrence because it was designed to deter (discourage) a Soviet attack. In 1955, the Soviet Union and its allies formed their own military alliance, called the Warsaw Pact, to oppose NATO” (Cronin, 2019, p. 1).

The 1990s Events: Following the collapse of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991, and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO changed its goals for survival. The existence of the NATO alliance before the collapse of the Soviet Union was significant and purposeful. The organization, which was set up to counter Soviet threats and to defend the security of its members against the Eastern threat, had virtually no reason to survive and somehow faced a crisis of legitimacy (Tabatabai & Fathi, 2015). Thus, "by changing NATO's goal from confronting communism and the former Soviet Union to other issues such as Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism the slogan of defending human rights based on the principles of Western liberal democracy, countering the production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ensuring security of extraction and the transfer of energy (oil and gas resources), the need for NATO to continue its life and expand its geographical area to the east became a necessity” (MohammadAliPour & Taremi,

2020, p. 49). The important decision taken by the leaders of the Russia with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union was to make a new policy on the basis of shared values and interests to integration or association with the “political West” (Zagorski, 2019). Russia cooperated in NATO's Partnership for Peace program and formally joined this part of NATO's defense program in May 1995, but with the announcement of NATO's East Development Plan, Relations between the two sides cooled. . NATO announced its expansion plan at a summit in Brussels in the summer of 1994. This in turn led to a hostile reaction from Russia. From the Russians 'point of view, NATO's expansion to the east has been the most important factor in the backwardness of NATO-Russia security cooperation (Ebrahimi & Babri, 2017).

After 9/11: The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were a milestone in international developments. The September 11, 2001 attacks on the united states marked the beginning of a new order proposed by Bush Jr. (the Bush Doctrine) to form a global coalition against terrorism, beginning with the United States entering Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East under the pretext of fighting terrorism and using the coalition military bases (Zargar & Sayad, 2016). At first, Russia supported the US invasion of Afghanistan. Putin expected the United States to respond appropriately, but the United States announced the expansion of NATO to the east, the establishment of military bases and the deployment of missile systems, which caused Russia to lose confidence. These events led Russia to declare in its 2010 national security documents that the United States is the main competitor for the next ten years (Samudi et al., 2010, p. 54).

Georgia has participated in US-led NATO missions in Afghanistan and Iraq since gaining independence in 1991 (Ahmadi et al., 2020). In cooperation with NATO, Georgia had the second-largest number of troops in Iraq after the U.S. In 2012. At the height of the Georgian contribution to Afghanistan, it had more than 2,000 troops serving in some of the deadliest places in Afghanistan, in Helmand and Kandahar Provinces. Today, Georgia has 870 troops

in Afghanistan, making it the largest non-NATO troop contributor to the NATO training mission (Coffey, 2019). In recent days, NATO has tried to leave Afghanistan. During this time, the United States strengthened its bilateral defense ties with Georgia by training and developing infrastructure, which strengthened the Georgian Armed Forces. Therefore, Georgia was able to upgrade its conventional weapons, aircraft and equipment from 2016 onwards, in cooperation with the United States.

II- Geopolitics of Georgia

Georgia is located in the South Caucasus and sits at crucial geographical and cultural crossroads. Georgia has been important for economic and military reasons for centuries. Among the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, only Georgia has access to open seas through the black sea (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Georgia's defense policy has remained the same since 2008. Georgia is trying to find political and financial support for itself. It also considers access to international organizations very important. Georgia remains committed to developing cooperation with NATO. (Kuimova & Wezeman, 2018). Georgia has also participated in international missions, exercises and other activities led by NATO. "Georgia has been one of the top troop contributors (and the top non-NATO contributor) to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, which will end end in 2021" (Welt, 2021, p. 10). Georgia offered its territory, infrastructure, and logistical capabilities for the transit of NATO forces and cargo for Afghanistan.

According to the strategic partnership pact between the United States and Georgia, the United States supports Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore, the firm political support of the U.S. will remain as a main deterrent to Russian aggression (Mnistry Defence of Georgia, 2018). In addition to security and defense, Georgia seeks to enhance economic and trade cooperation through strategic partnership. Tbilisi focuses on the idea of an economic corridor between Asia

and Europe, in which Georgia plays an important role. The idea that Georgia could act as an economic hub to connect European and Asian markets has led to strategic partnerships between the two sides. (Smolnik, 2020). Georgia has been able to realize this idea to some extent because of pipelines such as Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and even the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. Georgia, due to its special geographical location, has also been able to play an important role in diversifying energy routes for Europe (Kazemi, 2020). The United States has sought to advance its national interests by expanding the economic mechanisms of the Caucasus region and the process of energy transfer from east to west and by providing assistance in resolving conflicts. Thus, the United States sought to reduce Russian influence in the region because Russian influence in the Caucasus region jeopardized Western interests.

Russia has a common border with the South Caucasus and Central Asia. In addition it has the first-largest proved reserves of natural gas in the world. Under President Putin, Russia's energy influence has peaked. "Russia uses its energy wealth for three reasons: to gain economic benefits; to maintain, increase and exert its political influence in its perceived sphere of influence, the so-called near abroad; and, should the need arise, to exert political pressure on end-consumers" (Kortweg, 2018, p. 13). The huge volume of oil and gas reserves, access to major consumer markets and having an extensive transit network have created a high potential for Russia. This capability, when used in diplomacy and policy-making, highlights Russia's role as an influential global power. At times, Russia has used energy diplomacy as leverage to counter issues such as EU enlargement and prevent its neighbors from joining NATO, and repeating it in the future could have important consequences for the EU. Georgia is a rival to Russia in the transport of energy and is jeopardizing Russia's interests because Russia wants monopoly of the transit and export of oil and gas resources to the EU. That is why Europe is trying to provide different ways to supply its energy. This has led to warnings among

European countries that depend on Russian energy. These fears stem from Gazprom's decision to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine, Belarus and the war in Georgia, which posed a threat to the corridors of non-Russian European pipelines.

The Georgian government's rapprochement with NATO and the signing of military alliances with the United States, participation in the transfer of Caspian energy, and NATO membership applications limited Russia's influence in the Caucasus. Russia had pressured the country to block reforms leading to Georgia's westernization. In Georgia, Russia tried to show the country that it would pay a heavy price by moving away from Russia, and, on the other hand, it tried to show the West that Russia is sensitive to its Near-abroad countries and reacts to developments around its borders. Although Russia was passive in the 1990s in the face of developments in the Commonwealth of Independent States, but now it uses economic and even military means to defend territory that was formerly part of the Soviet Union.

III- The Pro-Western policy of Georgia

Over the past three decades especially after the independence, "Georgia has faced serious domestic and international problems that have threatened its existence as a sovereign state" (Kakachia, 2013, p. 1). It has also pursued its main goal which has been to escape from the Soviet Union legacy and structure. Georgia rejected post-soviet institutions like Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) (Georgia withdraw in 2008), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (Georgia withdraw in 1999), because it was dominated by Moscow.

In November 2003, the Rose Revolution took place. When Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili came to power, he made Euro-Atlantic integration a priority (Paul & Shiriyev, 2012). in fact "Saakashvili came to power with two key slogans: joining Euro-Atlantic structures and the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity by restoring separatist areas" (Vaezi, 2009, p. 15). "The

Rose Revolution was interpreted as ‘the masses upholding Georgia's national dignity and democratic values’ that implied reentry into Europe” (Kakachia, 2015, p. 174). There were many factors for the revolution, but apart from Georgia's internal factors, the support of the West and international organizations contributed to the Georgian revolution. As a result of the Rose Revolution, the West's influence in Georgia became stronger and Russia's influence weakened. It also provided grounds for confrontation between Russian and Western interests (Koolae, 2012). With the victory of the Rose Revolution, the Georgian system of government changed to a system similar to that of the European Union. The soft power of the west was successful. The balance of power was breaking down and NATO and the EU had infiltrated Russia's backyard.

Georgia, frustrated by Russia-South Ossetia relations, wanted to join NATO as well as EU; this request was strongly opposed by Moscow. In 2008, the separatist crisis in South Ossetia and Abkhazia intensified. Tbilisi occupied the center of South Ossetia (Tskhinvali) in August 2008, then on August 8 Russia sent troops to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and with the deployment of Russian troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Moscow attacked the airports and military bases of Georgia. The war ended with the defeat of Georgia. Russia has recognized the independence of these regions and has expanded political and military cooperation with South Ossetia, so that according to the agreement signed on August 31, 2017 between South Ossetia and Russia, part of the military units of this autonomous region have joined the Russian army (Ghorbani et al, 2018). Russia was dissatisfied with Georgia's decision to join NATO and the European Union and felt threatened. Therefore, “the August War of 2008 was a Russian attempt to stop Georgia's aspiration to join NATO and the EU, or at least to transform it into a vaguer promise for the future” (Matsaberidze, 2015, p. 81). With Saakashvili stepping down and the Dream Party coming to power in 2012, Georgia has sought to maintain a balance between Russia and the West. Accordingly, they approved a new article. Details will be explained below. In March 2013, the

Georgian parliament passed a resolution on foreign policy. Integration into Europe and the Euro-Atlantic was a top foreign policy priority, but the resolution contains dubious paragraphs that indirectly acknowledge Russia's security interests in the region. (Kapanadze, 2014).

In recent years, Georgia has still been pursuing a policy of EU membership, but one of the most important obstacles to Georgia is Russia. One of the conditions for a country to join the EU is that it does not have conflicts with its neighbors. However, Georgia does not have good relations with Russia because Russia separated the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia during the 2008 war and recognized the independence of these republics. Although this raises doubts about Georgia's accession to the European Union, relations between Russia and European countries are working in Georgia's favor. Russia does not have good relations with Europe, and this causes Europe to use Georgia to put pressure on Russia. Another obstacle is that Russia strongly opposes the approach of Europe or NATO to Russia's borders, or the so-called perceived threat of Russia approaching NATO to the buffer zone between Russia and Europe. In early 2019, incumbent Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili said in a speech in France that Georgia would continue its efforts to move closer to the European Union. The president of Georgia showed his strong desire to converge with the European Union.

IV- Georgia between Russia and West

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia considered itself the legitimate successor to the Soviet Union and sought to revive the Eastern Empire. Russia has declared the South Caucasus as part of its vital interests. Russia's security vision in the region is based on preventing the presence of regional and trans-regional powers, especially NATO and the United States. Russia is sensitive to the Caucasus because of its geographical, economic and energy aspects. (Shirazi and Naderi, 2011). Georgia was the first republic in the South Caucasus whose officials distanced their security view

by those of Russia.

After the independence, Georgia suffered from transition repercussions (from communism to democracy) and had limited success in making democratic institution (Ingle, 2020) In addition, the international system was unfamiliar with Georgia. The Great Powers have struggled to control over the Black Sea and the Caspian resources. In the new security environment, Georgia has gained its political and economic significance as a transit corridor for energy supplies. Georgia plays an important role for the United States because the United States is interested in separating the former Soviet republics from Russia. Georgia is important for the EU because it can reduce EU member states' dependence on energy import from Russia and also for Russia because Russia is interested in dominating the region. The main issue lies in geopolitical competition in the Black Sea region and in geopolitical influence in Georgia.

The West is pursuing its own interests in Georgia, "reliance on Russian gas is considered a threat to the wealth, power and security of the EU" (Popovic, 2020, p. 1) because Russia uses energy as a leverage to the European Union, but simultaneously, avoids challenging its influence and interest in the region. The West tries to diversify its energy supply routes through the Caspian Sea and Georgia plays a key role for the West in this respect.

Georgia is like a bridge in the south Caucasus that can connect south-north and east-west energy corridors (Tsursumia, 2015) Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline were made with American support. "One of the results of these two plans is to reduce the dependence of the countries of the east-west transport corridor route on Russia and Iran, which will reduce the influence of these two countries" (Heydari, 2011, p. 221). Georgia is considered a partner and friend for the EU, due to its adherence to the values of liberal democracy and European structures. Pipelines that can export gas to Europe other than Russia are Georgian pipelines that are of great importance to Europe. Russia's approach to energy is based on the monopoly of the South

Caucasus republics 'dependence on it, and it sensitively pursues other countries' energy programs in the region. The South Caucasus is economically important to Russia. The main issue in this regard is oil and energy resources and its transportation or energy corridors (Shirkhani et al, 2018).

V- Impacts on Iran`s National Security

Georgia and Iran don't have a common border but has a common border with Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia is far from Iran due to its western orientation. (Weiss & Zabanova, 2017). "The South Caucasus, situated as it is at the crossroads of Eurasia's major energy and transport corridors, continues to play a vital role in the world's security affairs" (Balla, 2013, p. 1). Iran recognized Georgia's sovereignty after the collapse of the Soviet Union but the relationship between Iran and Georgia is at low level (Rahnejat & Kabiri, 2018). "For centuries, the Caucasus region, due to its regional position and geopolitical and geostrategic importance, has been a place of rivalry and conflict between major regional and trans-regional powers such as Russia, Britain, Iran, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and today the United States" (GhorbaniNezhad et al, 2021, p. 947). Iran's foreign policy towards Georgia is based on maintaining cultural relations and taking into account its national interests. Amirahmadian, 2012) Iran also is trying to "Use Georgian territory for transit purposes to Europe, energy supply and is expanding its cultural and historical relations with Georgia" (Kazemzadeh, 2016, p. 18).

According to Kenneth Waltz's balance of power theory, Georgia as a small and new independent state tries to make alliance with the other countries especially west to be free from domination of Russia. Georgia's pro-western policies and geopolitical position have played a significant role in the balance of power between Russia and the West, and Georgia's role as a balancing country has an impact on Iran's national security. Georgia is trying to join NATO and become a member of the European Union by pursuing pro-Western policies. In term of security, Georgia's cooperation

with NATO and the military presence of NATO in Georgia can have a negative impact on Iran's national security. Furthermore, the geopolitical situation has caused the Caspian Sea energy resources to pass through this country and be exported to the European Union, which is why it is very important for the West, because Russia seeks to monopolize energy exports to Europe. Russia has tried to undermine Georgia's geographical advantage and maintain its monopoly on energy export to Europe.

Therefore, if Georgia acts as a balancing country between Russia and the West independently, it will have a positive impact on Iran's interests, which has been not materialized due to the limitations of Georgia as a small state. But, if Georgia's orientation to the West shifts the balance in favor of the United State, this situation can be considered as negative, because of the hostile relations between the two countries. On the other hand, if Georgia takes a pro-Russian approach, it can be seen in political sense as good for Iran due to the current good relations between Iran and Russia but in terms of Iran's energy exports to Europe, it can be negative due to Russia's policy based on sustaining monopoly on energy exports to Europe.

Tbilisi-Washington relations are based on their common interests in reducing Russian influence in the South Caucasus. Georgia as a small state try to join European structure which creates a balance with Russia. The policy of the United States toward supply energy is to seek diversification of energy sources. "The energy resources of the Caspian Sea are of great importance because the US can reduce its dependence on Persian Gulf energy" (Koolae & Goudarzi, 2014, p. 208). In addition, the US seeks to prevent the infiltration of Iran and Russia in region.

The main goal of the US in South Caucasus is to control energy resources in the Caspian Sea and prevent the formation of any rival power against US sovereignty over the world's energy resources, (Shirazi & Naderi, 2011) as well as control energy corridors. Therefore, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines were built with US support and were commissioned in

2006. These pipelines do not pass through Iran and Russia. They have already jeopardized the interests of Russia and Iran. Also, by connecting the Trans-Caspian pipeline to the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline, Iran and Russia have no role in exporting Turkmen gas to Europe, which also jeopardizes the national interests of both countries. "The United States is trying to undermine Iran's role in the region and pursue a policy of everything without Iran" (Zibakalam et al, 2014, p. 85) in other words, According to US policy toward Iran, if Iran plays an important role in this process, the balance of power between Russia and the West will be upset, which is why the West is trying to involve its allies in energy transfer projects. In this competition, the United States has generally viewed Turkey as able to foster pro-Western policies and discourage Iranian interference in the South Caucasus states. The United States has sought to limit Iran's revenue. Also, by limiting Iran's revenue, it hinders economic recovery and has strengthened Iran's military and political power. In fact, economic leverage is used to threaten Iran's political and military security (Hakim et al, 2015). In addition, "Iran has missed the opportunity to enter a multinational structure for pipeline contracts due to US and even Russian policies toward Tanap-Nabucco pipeline project" (Rahnejat & Kabiri, 2018, p. 156).

After the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015, Iran-Georgia relations improved. In July 2017, at a meeting between President Rouhani and the Prime Minister of Georgia, the President of Iran said: "Iran and Georgia have great potentials and capabilities for development of ties in the field of economics, science and culture". The President also said: "Today, transit is very important in the region, and with regard to connecting Iran's rail system to Astara and Azerbaijan and rail and road connection in Georgia, deepening Tehran-Tbilisi ties in this field can make great developments in the region" (Official Website of the President of Iran, 2017). But with the withdrawal of the United States from JCPOA in 2018, good relations between Iran and Georgia did not continue with maximum pressure on Iran by the

US government. Moreover, during the visit of US National Security Adviser John Bolton to Georgia in October 2018, the development of strategic cooperation between Georgia and the United States and regional security issues were among the topics discussed by John Bolton with Georgian officials (IRNA, 2018). Tbilisi sees Washington as a trans-regional source for diplomatic, security and focal support for infrastructure investment and economic growth. Politically, Georgia's relations are under Western pressure or, depending on geopolitical circumstances, Russia-centered. For these reasons, the political relations between Iran and Georgia are not well developed.

Moscow is sensitive to any presence by third countries in the South Caucasus region. Meanwhile, Iran, with its close relations with Russia, is no exception. From Moscow's point of view, Iran's presence in the Caucasus jeopardizes Russia's interests because Iran has enormous natural resources and its ability to connect the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea. Therefore, Russia is not interested in Iran's presence in the Caucasus. Given that buyers of natural gas cannot easily have an alternative if the flow of gas by the supplier is stopped, so it makes buyers dependent on Russia, or on the other hand, the EU becomes dependent on Russia in terms of energy (Koolae and Rezaei, 2017), in other words, the competition between the West and Russia means that if Iran has an important role in the field of energy transit through Georgia, Russia will lose its most important lever in competition with the West. "Energy is an important factor in enhancing Russia's position in the international system. Government's control over oil and gas pipeline projects has become an important tool for Russia's political, military, and economic influence, and energy production therefore serves Russia's foreign policy goals" (Koolae & Goudarzi, 2014, p. 107).

The war between Georgia and Russia has opened a new chapter of bilateral cooperation between Tehran and Tbilisi. Georgia is desperately seeking a way out of its political dependence on Russia and Iran can play a positive role in this matter. For example, in 2006

Moscow imposed heavy economic sanctions against Georgia, it cut transport links and announced that it would increase current gas price for Georgia from \$110 to \$230 per 1,000 cubic meters (Chitadze, 2012). After this fact, it became clear, why a closer relationship with Iran is so important to Georgia and also why Russia is so sensitive. As a result, Russia is trying to prevent closer ties between Iran and Georgia because it does not want Iran to join energy transit projects to Europe via the Caucasus. Russia believes that if Iran joins the Caucasus energy transfer projects, the geopolitical and geostrategic balance in the Caucasus and Central Asia will change to the detriment of Russia. The situation created by the geopolitical situation and energy transition by Russia has prevented Iran from opportunities such as access to European markets.

Conclusion

During the 2008 war between Georgia and South Ossetia, the Georgian military mistakenly targeted Russian forces in support of its citizens. It led Russia to invade Georgia and occupy the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and recognize the independence of the two regions. Russia thus prevented Georgia from joining NATO and the European Union, because a country that wants to join the European Union should not have a conflict with a neighboring country. We can consider the Russia-Georgia war as Russia's reaction to the victories of the Western soft power in Georgia. With the victory of the Georgian Dream Party in 2012, Georgia has tried to strike a balance between its relations with the West and Russia and not challenge Russia's interests in the region, but Georgia's priority remains to join Western structures.

What has given rise to the rivalry between the West and Russia in the present period is the political, economic, and military importance of Georgia. Georgia's pro-Western policy and geopolitical position have prompted the West and Russia to seek a balance of power in the South Caucasus that makes the role of Georgia important. Therefore, if Georgia acts as a balancing

country between Russia and the West independently, it will have a positive impact on Iran's interests, which has not materialized due to the limitations of Georgia as a small state. But, if Georgia's orientation to the West shifts the balance in favor of the United State, this situation can be considered negative, because of the hostile relations between the two countries, on the other hand, if Georgia takes a pro-Russian approach, it can be seen in the political sense as good for Iran due to the current good relations between Iran and Russia but in terms of Iran's energy exports to Europe, it can be negative due to Russian policy based on sustaining monopoly on energy exports to Europe.

The limitation of Georgia caused this country as a small state and newly independent country close to one side and don't act independently. Georgia pursued a pro-western policy, even after the Dream Party came to power, but simultaneously tried not to challenge Russia's interests. Also, Georgia has distanced itself from Iran in the framework of cooperation with NATO. These conditions are in contrast to the history of Georgia. Georgia-Iran economic cooperation, including energy exports to Europe through Georgia, was not happening due to Western sanctions, and even Iran was excluded from energy transfer projects from the Caspian Sea to Europe. If Georgia turns to Russia, it will lead to good political relations between Iran and Georgia, but this will have a negative impact on energy exports, as Russia will lose its monopoly on energy exports to Europe.

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Iran's Foreign Policy Discourse and the Russia-Georgia-Iran Triangle (2013-2017)

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Abstract

By the advent of various political currents on the realm of power, Iran has witnessed the emergence of sub-discourses which preserve the principles and propositions of the Islamic Revolution's discourse, but differ in the subordinate propositions and inter-discourse developments. The latest is a "Moderationist sub-discourse" that has overcome other sub-discourses as the eleventh state started working in Iran. An important aspect of these sub-discourses is the impacts on foreign policy, especially toward the neighbor countries. In this way, Georgia gets a significant importance due to its geopolitical features and the great deal of historical, cultural and civilizational commonalities to Iran. However, due to regional and international changing conditions along with coming up various foreign policy sub-discourses, the relations between the two countries have had lots of ups and downs. On the other hand, after the Russo-Georgian 2008 war, the Russian Federation has exerted great influence on the Georgian foreign policy; including the relations with Iran. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the question that, regarding Russo-Georgian 2008 war, how the Moderationist foreign policy discourse has affected the Iranian-Georgian relations? Findings of the study

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show that the presence of Moderationist sub discourse of Hassan Rouhani affected Iranian foreign policy and the pessimistic subjective impressions of the Georgian leaders towards the previous Iranian government regarding Russia's 2008 invasion on Georgia. As a result, we have witnessed relative improvement in the relations between two countries in 2013-2017 comparing to the relationships of 2008-2013 period. This research uses descriptive-analytical method.

Keywords: Foreign policy discourse, Moderation, 11th Administration, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran

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Introduction

The study of foreign policy has always been one of the most important and sensitive areas of international relations, which has attracted researchers' attentions due to its dynamic nature. In this regard, in the foreign policy of the Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, despite the relatively tangible presence of a unique order and structure arising from the institutionalized norms of Iran and Islam, as well as the structural determinants of the international system in the history of its foreign policy, Iran has been witnessing developments that could not be ignored. The origins of these developments should be sought in the emergence and development of various political discourses with different approaches, methods and structures that are considered in the international relations literature under the concept of "discourse".

In this regard, developments in the political sphere of countries in general, and in the foreign policy of the countries in particular, are considered as discursive developments, namely, the transformation of the dominant discourse on the political climate of these countries. From this point of view, as new government came to power, there is actually a new discourse which overcomes the others and employs its ideas and doctrines in all areas of economic, cultural, social and political affairs. Also, these discursive developments have taken place at macro and micro levels, which at each level of the transformation affect political systems and structures of the countries on various scales. Perhaps these developments take place at the micro level by considering sub-discourses. Hence the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 was a discourse transformation at macro level that influenced all the

structures of the country and led to the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Subsequently, with the advent of different governments with various mottos and distinct political literature, discursive changes occurred, but not at a large scale similar to the 1979 Islamic revolution (a new sub-discourse gained power) (Jafari & Janbaz, 2016: 94), which is the subject of the present paper.

The moderation discourse of the eleventh government is the latest of these sub-discourses, which dominated other sub-discourses present in the Iran with the presidency of Hassan Rouhani in August 2013. This sub-discourse began with slogans such as avoiding extremism, the balance between idealism and realism, constructive interaction with the world through dialogue, balance developmentalism and similar concepts. On the other hand, due to the regional and global position of the Iran and the issues involved, the main focus was on foreign policy, with the most immediate aspect of it being the nuclear agreement with the P5+1. This agreement and other outcomes of the Moderation discourse in foreign policy have also had an impact on Iran's foreign policy behavior towards other countries.

One of these countries is the Republic of Georgia, due to its unique cultural and geopolitical features, including the religion of Christianity, cultural commonality with Iran, access to free waters and ... has double importance. Hence, the Iran was among the first countries to recognize the independence of this republic, like the other newly independent republics, and began its diplomatic relations with the country. But these relationships have never been stable and could not be considered a regular process. The main reason for this was the changes in the Georgian republic, including the Velvet revolution and the 2008 war with Russia and the recent internal changes in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the emergence of new sub-discourses.

In this paper, we try to analyze the foreign policy discourse of Moderation for Georgia, given Russia's 2008 war against this country. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the question that, regarding Russo-Georgian 2008 war, how the Moderationist foreign

policy discourse has affected the Iranian-Georgian relations?

This research, based on the nature and type of the subject, uses a descriptive-analytical method and the library method to collect data and information.

I- Iranian-Georgian Relations

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the vacuum of power created in the newly independent republics provided the ground for the presence of regional and transnational powers in these countries. In this regard, the Iran was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of these republics, due to their geographical attachment and the existence of cultural and identity commonality. In the early years of independence, Georgia sought to balance its relations with its southern neighbors in order to contain pressure from the north (post Soviet Union Russia) and to achieve better relations with its historic neighbors. In the same vein, Georgia was seriously seeking to identify its sovereignty and independence by Tehran and Ankara (Najafov, 2008: 39). As a result, diplomatic relations between the Iran and the Republic of Georgia started on May 15, 1992 (Agadjanian, Jödicke & Van der Zweerde, 2015: 233). These relationships have seen many ups and downs during different periods which are partly due to the internal conditions of countries and mainly due to the role of the structure of the international system and interventionist powers.

In the first period of relations between the Iran and the Georgian Republic, we have witnessed the establishment, consolidation and deepening of relations between the countries. The actions taken during this period date back to the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani in Iran and also first period of Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia. As the first years of relations, the first years after the independence of Georgia were accompanied by actions taken at both sides, and the agreements signed between the two countries can be considered as initial and effective steps in this regard. During the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, it was believed that if Iran strengthened its economic relations with the

countries of the Caucasus (including Georgia), it could gradually create suitable environment for future political and cultural actions (Vaezi, 2009: 62). Shevardnadze's trip to Iran in 1994, and in return Hashemi Rafsanjani's to Georgia in 1995, and the holding of joint economic commissions between the two countries was in the context of this development of relations in the first period of bilateral relations.

In the later period of relations between the two countries, which lasted from 1996 to 2002 and coincided with the beginning of the second term of office of Eduard Shevardnadze as president until his removal. This period can be divided into two almost opposite halves during which, unlike the declining trend of relations in the first half, a relative development of relations was seen in the second half as well as visits by high-ranking officials of the two countries. But there were still some internal and external obstacles, such as the lack of serious determination by Iran and the obstructionism of the United States that hindered the serious development of relations. The American pressure on Shevardnadze and his country's authorities due to need for the political and economic support of the West, had led to the cancellation of Shevardnadze's trip to Tehran on several occasions despite the necessary concordance and during his first trip to Iran in 1993, never managed to visit Tehran (Amirahmadian & Asgari 2013: 4-5). During his 1993 visit to Tehran, documents were signed between the two countries that established the legal basis for the development of Iran-Georgia cooperation. Of Course, the main role in this meeting should be in the meeting of Shevardnadze when he was the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, and Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution (Ter-oganov, 2004: 95). Although this relationship has not been sustained due to Georgia's West orientation arising from its geopolitical features (Christian population and culture, geopolitical ties with Europe, etc.) and under the pressure from the United States, the relations between Iran and Georgia went cold.

The events of November 2003, which took place after the massive

fraud in the presidential elections in Georgia and subsequent mass demonstrations in this country, led to a peaceful change of government (the victory of the opposition led by Saakashvili and the overthrow of Shevardnadze), which was named the Rose revolution (Jawad, 2005:1). Even though this revolution caused a more pro-Western government to come to power, after this new government came to power in Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which had an appropriate understanding of the situation, emphasized on independence and territorial integrity of Georgia and recognized the new Georgian government, and sent a high-level group to participate in the 2004 presidential inauguration of Georgia. On the other hand, such an understanding by the Georgian government and their tendency towards the development of relations led to Saakashvili's visit to Tehran in 2004 and the signing of new agreements between the two countries. (Amirahmadian & Asgari, 2013: 5). Of course, the role of the Reformist Government's discourse cannot be ignored with strong tendencies toward the West and support for color revolutions in this consolidation of relations derived from West-led, US-led revolution.

With the change of government and the coming of Mahmud Ahmadinejad to power in Iran, the relationship continued to grow (albeit at a lesser pace and less than the first years of independence). Even in 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding on visa waiver between the two countries was signed. According to the memorandum, more than 60,000 Iranian citizens visited Georgia in the following year (Milani, 2016: 15). Meetings of the two countries' officials also took place at higher levels. Although at the same time there was a rumor about the use of Tbilisi airport by the US and Israel, due to the growing gaps and disputes between the Iran and the United States on Iran's nuclear program, while fragile, relations were still at a rather favorable level. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili invitation of Mahmud Ahmadinejad to visit Georgia is a proof to this claim. But the fragility of these relations was due to the strong opposition of the Islamic Republic to the West regarding the sanctions imposed on the Iran's nuclear activities, the more West oriented Georgia after the Red Rose Revolution, the expansion of

Tbilisi-Tel Aviv relations and US pressure on the country to such an extent that economic relations in the Energy field and the Visa waiver agreement and other cooperative measures failed to resist it. The 2008 war of Russia and Georgia and the stance of the Islamic Republic in this regard were a killing blow to these fragile relations. The war, which, through direct military intervention, led to the separation of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia, had an influence range more than other developments affecting the relations between the two countries.

II- The Factor of Russo-Georgian war of 2008

With the coming of Mikhail Saakashvili as the result of the Rose Revolution in Georgia and his intense West tendencies, he came to restore the central government's authority to the separatist regions. In 2004, he tightened controls on the South, increasing pressure on South Ossetia. He also sent several hundred military personnel, police and intelligence personnel to the area with the aim of combating organized crime and smuggling, which according to rumors was organized by the Georgian authorities and some Russian citizens (Nichol, 2009:3). Similar actions were also taken in the Abkhazia area, which led to the clashes between the Georgian forces and the forces of Ossetia and Abkhazia. With the arrival of Russia and other actors, the crisis became more complex over the years of 2006-2008. For example, on April 24, 2008, at the United Nations, the United States, Germany, France, and all the Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia, expressed their concerns about Russia's policies towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in this regard Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili called for negotiations on the Internationalization of peace-keeping operations in these two regions (Cornell, et al., 2008: 9). The Georgian government thus tried to strike a balance against Russia. Eventually, in August 2008, Russia's rapid response to a counter-attack on Georgian military operations in South Ossetia was followed by successive attacks on Georgian troops in both Abkhazia and Ossetia, estimated to be between 35,000 and 40,000

Russian troops and Russian allies against 12 to 15 thousand Georgian troops (Bryce-Rogers, 2013: 349). Eventually, the war ended with the separation of the two regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the granting of autonomy under the Russian banner. The end has never been pleasing to the Georgian government and has always been considered an invasion by the Russians to their sovereignty and integrity.

But with the onset of this war, Tehran remained silent for a while and did not make any special statements. The same delay in announcing the stances made the Georgian authorities upset. In its position, Iran expressed its concern about the military clashes in the South Ossetian region, which resulted in human losses and the killing of defenseless people, and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and relief to the affected people (Birca, 2008). Subsequently, with a slight delay on August 16, 2008, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, in a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov called for a halt to the war and the restoration of peace and stability to the region (Afrasiabi, 2008). Meanwhile, rumors have been made that Iran has been advocating Moscow's action in international media and political space. With the onset and intensification of the clashes, Tehran's newspapers were silent, refraining from deep-seated analysis of the crisis and commenting on the issue. The state media also covered the news in a way to prevent Moscow's protest. It said that there has been a various factor hidden behind the official silence of Iran in this matter. These include Iran's participation with Moscow in opposition to the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Iran's susceptibility to Russia's concerns about its internal security. In the context of the first factor, Tehran and Moscow regard this crisis as a major defeat for the "expansion of NATO to the east" in the shadow of the shameless siding of the Tbilisi government with the West. The second factor becomes more prominent with US plans to deploy a missile shield in Eastern Europe.

Although Georgia's new ambassador, Georgy Janzhaghaev, stated in an interview with the Iranian media in 2009, that after the

war, Mr. Mottaki traveled to Georgia and offered good suggestions from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In response to a frank question about whether it is true that in the opinion of the Georgians, Iran has been in favor of Russia in this dispute, Janzhaghaev replied without denying it: We cannot say that! We were pleased with the visit of Mr. Mottaki to Tbilisi, and Iran had adopted a very balanced stance during the crisis. Iran tried to understand the roots of the crisis. The reality is that Iran has not recognized the separatist republics, and this is the most significant component of Iran's stance in the recent crisis (Mehr News Agency, 2013). From this standpoint and other stances of the Georgians it can be seen that the Georgians have never been satisfied with the stance of the Iran towards this war, and only express their satisfaction with Iran's non-recognition of the isolated areas of the country-which only four member states of United Nations including Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru have recognized their independence (Tekushev, Markedonov & Shevchenko, 2013: 19).

However, lack of support from the West for Georgia against Russia in this war was also a factor in maintaining the narrow link between the Iran and Georgia. After the conflict, the disagreements between the Iran and Russia in areas such as Iran's nuclear case and Russia's support for Western anti-Iranian measures, the failure to deliver the strategic system of anti-aircraft and ballistic S 300 missiles, and other measures taken by the Russians, caused improvement in the relations between Iran and Georgia to some extent and it recovered from the cold state of the early post-war years of 2008 and the recovery was accelerated with the arrival of a new government in Iran in August of 2017. But re-emergence of Iran-Russia relations after the rise of conflicts in the Syrian crisis has further added to the complexities of Iran's and Georgia's steady relations. But the passage of time reflects the relative stability in foreign policy of Moderation discourse towards Georgia.

III- The Factor of JCPOA and Iran-Georgia Relations (2013-2021)

The most Important outcome of the discourse of Moderation and

the government of Hassan Rouhani, can be seen as an agreement on the Islamic Republic's nuclear case and the P5+1. An agreement that led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding which was called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. But this agreement has never been left to the Islamic Republic and the six countries of the opposite side, and the extent of its impact on the allies and opponents of the seven countries was significant. The Republic of Georgia also has not been outside the framework and has been taken effect by his share. A much more important issue is the interaction and neighborhood between Georgia and the East and West (Russia, Europe, and the United States), which has doubled the impact taken from this agreement. In this regard, due to the improvement of relations between the Iran and the West in particular, as the result of JCPOA and with the agreement on lifting the sanctions, many barriers to economic relations with Georgia were virtually eliminated. Though some experts have said that US sabotages in case of lifting the sanctions has led to problems in the economic relations between the Iran and the world, but the mental and psychological effects of JCPOA cannot be ignored.

In this regard, several meetings between the two authorities and the agreements made, especially in the field of economics, can be noted. Congratulation message of Hojat el-Islam Hassan Rouhani to his counterpart Giorgi Margvelashvili on his election as the president of the Georgia Republic (Rouhani, 2013a) and on the occasion of the National Day of Georgia (Rouhani, 2015) was the first step in the reconstruction, consolidation and the development of bilateral relations in 2014. While in 2013, we witnessed this done by Es'hagh Jahangiri, the first deputy of the eleventh government. In February 2015, following an agreement between Iran and the P5+1 states, a telephone conversation between the Georgian prime minister and the President of Iran took place, in order to congratulate the success on the nuclear deal and to emphasize on Georgia's readiness for a new chapter in relations with the Iran (Agenda News Agency, 2016). Perhaps this could be one of the main effects of the moderation discourse on the relations of the Iran

and the Republic of Georgia.

Earlier, President Rouhani's emphasis was placed on developing relations between the two countries in various fields in response to the congratulations from the Prime minister of Georgia on the occasion of his victory in the eleventh presidential election (Rouhani, 2013b). On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, during the meeting of Rouhani and Irakli Gharybashvili, they emphasized on the development of cooperation on water, energy and transit (Official website of the President of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2014a). This was heightened by a meeting with the ambassador of Georgia with Hojat el-Islam Rouhani, with the emphasis and negotiation, in order to create the necessary infrastructure for the development of economic relations (Official website of the President of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2014b). The emphasis on higher levels of cooperation between the two countries also took place on the sidelines of the visit of the Prime minister of Georgia and the delegation to Iran and during the meeting with President Rouhani in fields of gas exports, cooperation for stability and security, and the détente of relations (Official website of the President of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2015). With the expansion of political relations between the two countries, the visit of Mohammad Javad Zarif to Tbilisi was also held in April 2017.

This was the first visit of the Iranian high representative to Georgia in the government of Hassan Rouhani. Meanwhile, the energy sector is perhaps the most important and attractive area for cooperation between Iran and Georgia. With the experience of the Gas crisis in August 2008, and Iran which was exporting gas to Georgia after the crisis (Koozehgar Kaleji, 2017), in the government of Hassan Rouhani, the two countries were considering constructing a natural gas transit pipeline from Iran to Europe from the route of Armenia and Georgia, beyond these exports. In this regard, in July 2016, an agreement was signed between the two countries on this issue (Mehr News Agency, 2016). Another area that was important in this period is tourism, which has a significant portion of Georgia's gross domestic product. After the visa waiver

for trip from Iran to Georgia in November 2010, the number of Iranian tourists in Georgia increased significantly. But again, under the pressure from the United States, after the Georgian government's move to the urgent need to issue visas to Iranians in 2013, the number of Iranian tourists in Georgia declined greatly. Under mounting US pressure, in July 2013 Georgia froze Iranian citizens' and businesses' bank accounts with no prior notice, suspended the visa-free regime, and unilaterally cancelled some earlier agreements and contracts. The restrictions were applied rather indiscriminately and affected many legitimate businesses, dealing a serious blow to Iranian investors' confidence in Georgia. But with the signing the deal between Iran and the P5+1 and the relative improvement of the relations between Iran and Georgia, in 2016, Iran's visa waiver system was reinstated and we witnessed an increase in Iranian tourists to Georgia. About 140,000 Iranian tourists traveled to Georgia this year (Jijelava, 2017: 15).

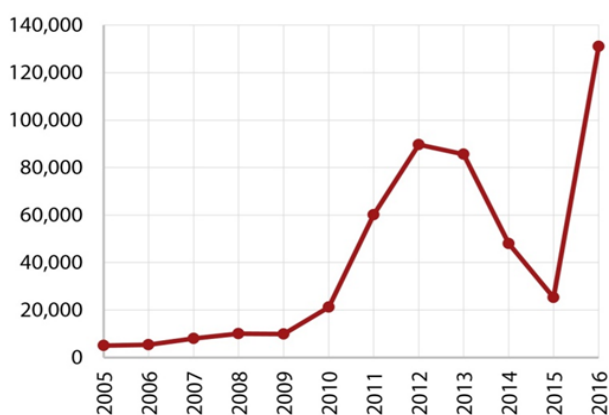


Figure 1. Number of Iranian tourists in Georgia (2005-2016)

Source: (Jijelava, 2017:15)

In addition, Georgia attracted many Iranian companies during the sanctions period, especially in the agriculture, food, and construction industries. Statistics show that trade turnover between Georgia and Iran rose from \$51.4 million in 2009 to \$176.8 million

in 2013; in 2016, it stood at \$131 million (Weiss & Zabanova, 2017: 6). In total, according to Iran's and Georgia's joint economic commission, since 2014, the volume of trade between the two countries has increased by more than 50% (Tamin24, 2017). In addition to these collaborations, the two countries have expressed a tendency to actualize the cultural-civilizational potentials in the scientific and cultural spheres. Signing of contracts between Iranian and Georgian universities, as well as the intensification of Iran's cultural consultations in Georgia through the unveiling of scientific, cultural and artistic works, including the Persian-Georgian dictionary, and the holding of numerous conferences and seminars, verify this claim.

Indeed, the presence of Moderationist sub discourse of Hassan Rouhani affected Iranian foreign policy and the pessimistic subjective impressions of the Georgian leaders towards the previous Iranian government regarding Russia's 2008 invasion on Georgia and we have witnessed relative improvement in the relations between two countries in 2013-2017 comparing to the relationships of 2008-2013 period.

Continuing such a trend could, in addition to improve Iran-Georgia relations to a sustainable level, increase Iran's role in the South Caucasus. Particularly given Iran's and Russia's intercontinental cooperation on regional issues in the Middle East, which has led to a remarkable enhancement of relations between the two countries over the past three decades, there are grounds for further cooperation between them and the neglect of the disputes in the South Caucasus. Previously also, Iran and Russia have experienced constructive cooperation in the Tajik civil war. Although Russia and the West tried to ignore Iran's role in the Karabakh conflict in the Minsk Group, Iran, however, has shown stability in its foreign policy towards Armenia and Azerbaijan, and can play a significant role in regional stability. Hence, it would be possible to even witness an increase in the mediation role of Iran in the Russo-Georgian crisis in the event of faster pacification of the Tehran-Tbilisi relations.

Conclusion

The development of Iran and Georgia relations and the upward trend should be sought in two ways. First, the emphasis of Moderation discourse on relations with the West, and in particular the conclusion of a nuclear agreement with the P5+1, led to the removal of many barriers to the development of economic and political relations between the countries. Second, the mental and emotional burden of Georgia's statesmen fading out on the stances of the Iran towards the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, which led to the separation of parts of Georgia. This mental momentum was due to the change of government in Iran and the hope of changing the new government's perspective on the conflict, and then the reestablishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran's relations with the West; because according to some analyzes, the main reason for the Islamic Republic of Iran's stance regarding the 2008 war was Georgia's relations with the West.

Consequently, it has become an excellent opportunity for the development of relations between the two countries in recent years, when the Iran is investing infrastructure affairs for the development of relations such as the establishment of transit routes (roads and railways), energy pipelines, interim and long-term economic programs, and in particular, the use of cultural and civilian capacities, by establishing the relatively stable relations between the two countries, to witness the exploitation of these conditions in the future. But balancing and equilibrium in relations with the Russian Federation, especially after Russia's attempts to normalize relations with Georgia without solving the problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, could create sensitivities for relations between the two countries. Iran's resistance to Moscow's opposition to the construction of a gas pipeline from Iran-Armenia-Georgia route and, on the other hand the adoption of more conservative approaches by the Georgian government towards its relations with the West, and in particular Israel, could guarantee a continued upward trend in Iran-Georgia current relations. To such an extent that even a mediating role for Iran could be considered Georgian-Russo crisis.

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Iran's Foreign Policy and Economic Development: An Analytical Review

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Abstract

The success of Developmental State in East Asia, once again has proved the role of state in the process of development and shed light on the weakness of Neoclassic theories in their emphasis on the role of market as a balancing force. One of the necessary variables for the formation of a developmental state is the international context. Like many states in East Asia, the path toward development in post-revolution Iran seems to be through the formation of developmental state in the context of the existing international system. But the reality is something different. Therefore, the objectives of the present paper are: 1 - to study the relationship between the international context and formation of developmental state in Iran; 2 – to study the role the United States in the process of formation of developmental state in Iran; 3 – to study the means the US has employed to block the formation of a developmental state in Iran; and, 4 – to study role of Iran's foreign policy behavior in the formation of developmental state. The main question of the present paper is what are the international obstacles to the formation of a developmental government in the Islamic

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Republic of Iran? The main hypothesis of this paper is: International context, US hegemonic status in the international system and various political and economic obstacles and sanctions imposed by the US have prevented the formation of a developmental government in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The findings of the research sustained the hypothesis of this study.

Keywords: Developmental state, international system, Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States of America

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Introduction

One of the effective factors regarding the formation of developmental state is the availability of the international contexts. This variable, along with other variables such as the development elite, efficient bureaucracy, and relative independence of the government, has a considerable share in the formation of a developmental state. On this basis, unlike the Dependency Theory that sees underdevelopment of peripheral states in their relations with the imperial core states, and unlike the classic theories that have confined their attention to the internal issues of states thus ignoring effective external factors, the role of international variable is very important in the formation of a developmental state.

With the emergence of the industrially developed states, specially the United States of America and European countries, the process of the formation of international institutions and organizations after the World War II, on one hand, and their interaction with the member states, on the other hand, have brought about the development of these states in many cases. Although there are criticisms on their performance, in the majority of cases these interactions have paved the way for their development. The developmental states in East Asia are good examples for these interactions. Colonization of Korea and Taiwan by Japan had a great influence on future development of these two countries so that Japanese technology was transferred to these countries in the period of colonization, even until now.

In other words, Japan helped agricultural development, industrialization, development of bureaucracy, formation of institutions as well as accumulation of wealth and human and

material capital during colonization, although it was not a result of its good intention. Moreover, the political, economic and military aids of the United States to these countries in the Cold War context were also important. Malaysia and Singapore enjoyed such advantages as well. After World War II the United States opened its markets to Japan, South Korea and Taiwan to help the promotion of the developmental states. At the same time, the US tolerated their extreme strategy of supporting domestic products.

However, post-revolution Iran's situation in international arena was quite different from the developmental states in East Asia. This is because a revolutionary morale ruled in Iran and sought its mission beyond the national borders. Basically, the new regime had defined its ideal as fighting the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the United States. On the other side, the United States used all ways and means to fight the new revolutionary ending up with sanctions and creation of various obstacles.

On this basis, the central question of this paper is this that "What are the international obstacles to formation of developmental state in the Islamic Republic of Iran?" In response to this question, we have studied four administrations after the revolution, i.e. Transition Government and the administrations known as the Reconstruction, Reformist and Fundamentalist. Each administration in some way has prevented the formation of developmental state in post-revolution Iran. We have tried to provide response to the central question of this paper by using the theory of Constructivism as a theoretical basis.

I- Development in East Asia

In Order to understand the impact of international conditions on formation or promotion of the developmental states better, we will have a short glance on the course of action in East Asian states. This can serve as a basis for the analysis of obstacles to the formation of developmental state in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this connection, the support or lack of support by the international system and the role of the United States as a hegemonic power can

be a supporting or deterring role. One of the most important factors behind development of South Korea and Taiwan was the considerable US supports during the Cold War. As a matter of fact, after disunion, South Korea was seriously subject to Communist threats from inside and outside and Taiwan felt the threat from the Communist China. Therefore, US's East Asian policy paid prime attention to supporting these two countries and consequently granted political, economic and military aids. (Delforouz, 2014: 214)

The successful emergence of East Asian economies cannot be fully understood without considering the context of the Cold War, i.e. the existence of external and internal threats as well as diplomatic, financial and in some cases military aid from the United States (Beeson, 2007: 5-39). Here one of the most critical threats must be one from Asian communism. in the early post-WWII period, concern of the United States with geopolitics prompted the strategy to forge a hub-and-spoke network of bilateral security treaties with Asian "front-line" States. This dependence on the United States protection, however, constrained the security policies of the region's States. Furthermore, the region's economies soon came to depend heavily on the United States market, shipping on average 20 to 30 per cent of their exports to it (Tsunakawa, 2005: 105).

Japan, the most important Asian ally of the United States, was a beneficiary of massive, stimulatory procurements resulting from the Korean War – totalling US\$3.4 billion, or one-fourth of all United States merchandise imports at that time (Cumings, 1984: 38).

In 1953, Korea's economy continued to rely on agriculture. During this period, more than \$ 1,170 million in foreign aid was paid to the South Korean government, particularly through the United Nations and the United States, to rebuild key industries as well as curb inflation. As a result, industrial production grew by an average of 20 percent during 1954-1957, and the Korean economy experienced an average annual growth of 5 percent, which in 1957

reached 72.7 percent. South Korea's economic growth rate fell to 2.6, 6.4, 1.8, and 8.4 percent in 1958, 1959, 1960, and 1961, respectively, following a reduction in US aid to the country. In fact, South Korea's economy relied heavily on US aid after the Korean War, with almost all of its raw materials, consumer goods and food being purchased with US financial and credit assistance. (Burnell & Randala, 2017: 324)

In the case of Taiwan, the United States used this country as the frontline in its fight against Soviet Union and Chinese Communism in between the years 1950 and 1960. In this connection, US economic and military aids to Taiwan played key role in its development. First, Kuomintang government accomplished land reform program with the US technical assistance. Second, the US guaranteed the survival of Kuomintang government in the hard years after the World War II. US financial aids also resulted in increased consumerism in the turbulent years after war. (Amsden, 1979: 373)

Singapore basically lacked domestic capital so it was interested in attracting foreign direct investment from the beginning. Singapore was in the circle of capitalist countries because of suppressing the Leftist groups. The country created desirable political, economic and institutional grounds to turn into the heaven of foreign investors. Therefore, the United States and Western states, with their priority to prevent the spread of Communism, established closer relations with Singapore, so it became the largest country among the developing states to attract foreign direct investment. Malaysia, put atop its agenda attracting foreign direct investment most particularly after coming to the power of Mahathir Mohamad. In the meantime, the capital rush from Korean and Japanese companies played key role in the rapid development of Malaysia. In other words, Malaysia used the same model of Japan and South Korea as a later example of developmental state toward all-out development. (Delforouz, 2014: 215)

The Cold War also provided a “relatively” permissible environment in which the Asian developmental States continued to

protect and nurture their strategically important manufacturing sectors, while the United States maintained a tolerant attitude toward the neo-mercantilist position of its Asian allies (Harvie and Lee, 2002: 10). Referring specifically to Japan, Beeson (2009:15) explains: “[The country] was able to take advantage of a rapidly expanding international economy and relatively unfettered access to important markets in Europe and North America, without having to open up its own markets and, crucially, while maintaining control of the domestic financial system.” The United States policy to keep its market open to Asian Allies, particularly to Japan, was to compensate for costs resulting from its insistence to them on not trading freely with China (Pempel, 2005: 8).

A study of East Asian development governments has shown that there are good international contexts for the development of these countries. These contexts, which include international aid, dismantling, lack of sanctions, foreign investment, etc., have played an effective role in the formation of this type of government. In addition, effective international relations can be considered as another important factor in the formation of East Asian development governments, which can be examined in the form of relations with the United States of America and its support.

II- Iran`s Development and International Obstacles

The foreign policy of the developmental states in the developing countries is of special significance. In this sense, such a policy serves as a bridge to the world of capital and technology. The developmental state is obligated to provide the regional and international contexts in their strategy toward development. In this connection, we can deduct that the macro scientific strategy in foreign relations conforming to the realities of the country and the world can provide appropriate framework for using production factors of other countries and for presenting and marketing domestic products in other countries. (Behkish, 2001: 282) All developmental states have created organizations to attract foreign companies and capital for their development such as Botswana,

South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. (Leftwich, 2005: 215) Historical surveys show that developmental states have been formed before coming into effect of foreign and national capital. This enables the developmental states to play more effective roles in development. (Aqaei and Aabarian, 2011: 18)

Such countries as Iran which seek international identity, and on the other hand, show unconformity with the existing patterns, face coordinated reaction of the international politics. Evidence shows that big powers and regional actors do not pay due attention to adopting unilateral pattern in their confrontation with Iran. They prefer to follow up the bilateral issues through international or regional organizations. In the meantime, American players stress on unilateralism in its approaches but this will be realized when the efforts by international and regional organizations yield no result. (Mottaqi & Poustinchi, 2011: 273)

Iran's position after the revolution had fundamental differences with the post-World War II situation of South East countries. Iran's anti-US policies and its initiative for the unity of Islamic Umma brought into conflict the dependent Arab states in addition to the US and Western states. (Delforouz, 2014: 357) The Iran in its foreign policy maintains value system based on Islamic principles and doctrines that can exert influence on its behavior and foreign policy. When a large number of values are presented in a network of cause and effect, they show a sort of connection, coherence and order that depict system of values. (Rafi'pour, 1999: 270)

This system of value is sometimes conforming to the international system, sometimes not. If we consider the most important characteristics of Iran's foreign policy in its Islamic and revolutionary nature, the Islamic Iran's foreign policy will have challenges with the structure of the international system. An analysis of Islamic Revolution in macro level shows that Iranian Revolution took place in clear contradiction with the international system and presented norms and values that were in open contradiction with interests of the big powers supporting status quo.

Some values were independence, freedom, justice, the right to determine the country's destiny, unity of the oppressed people across the world, wakefulness of the Muslims, legitimacy of the deprived nations, truth-seeking, cooperation and collaboration, as well as fight against hegemony, oppression and suppression, monopoly, foreign military bases, imperialism, etc. (Sotoudeh, 2001: 4)

Dehqani Firouzabadi reasons that developmental foreign policy has an interactive nature and the interaction is of competition-cooperation type with limited tendency toward conflict and confrontation. Another specification of this policy is its interactive externalism and when the national development model is based on exports, this specification is more outstanding. Peaceful coexistence, détente policy, confidence building, multilateralism in world and regional levels are among the principles of developmental foreign Policy. (Dehqani Firouzabadi, 2008: 366)

The Iran built its foreign policy based on the principle of No West, No East in order to advance its policy of independence and no dependency on East or West. Therefore, Iran placed itself in none of the bipolar structures that had been already formed in the Middle East. Joining the either pillar of power was only possible in 80s because the bipolar system and the Cold War were flexible to some extent and there was no serious competition between the two superpowers specially on the Middle East. (Haji Yousefi, 2005: 64)

Whereas the developmental states applied their foreign policies for the economic development, in Iran Islamic norms and values played the key role in its foreign policy. In other words, Islam constitutes the ideological discourse in foreign policy of Iran. It is in the context of this ideological and ontological discourse that the fight against Great Satan, supporting the oppressed, and demand for justice become the principal pillars of Iran's foreign policy. (Dehshiri, 2008-9, 102-3)

In order to understand the international obstacles better, we will study four periods in each of which, depending upon domestic and

international conditions, Iran has faced international obstacles toward the formation of developmental state. By domestic conditions we mean adoption of policies and strategies in Iran's foreign policy and by international conditions we mean the type of confrontation and reaction of the international policy toward Iranian domestic policies.

First Period (1979-1988): This period begins with the transitional government. In the writings related to the study of Iran's foreign policy, the period of the interim government has been mentioned as the period of the rule of expedient or realistic discourse. This 9-month period begins with the Prime Minister of Bazargan and the government of the transitional government and ends with the occupation of the US Embassy by Imam Khomeini students and the resignation of Mehdi Bazargan.

Upon the exit of the Transition Government of Bazargan from official scene of politics, the idealist revolutionary forces took the power and from that time the idealistic gained momentum in Iran's foreign policy and Islamic tenets and principles became the dominant factors in this policy. The efforts, according to Iran's foreign policy, for realization of revolutionary culture, anti-West tendencies, establishment of international just system and taking initiatives for the export of the revolution brought about the appearance of Islamic school foreign policy. (Dehshiri, 2001: 374) The value-centered discourse, while creating chances for meeting the transnational demands and realizing political influence, ideological unity and expanding influence in regional and international level, caused limitations in terms of meeting the national interests, industrial and technological development, economic welfare and gaining international credibility in particular. (Azqandi, 2002: 12-13)

Generally speaking, the most important ideological features in international arena during this period, as affected by the ideological goals of the revolution and the special atmosphere of Iran-Iraq War were: prioritizing Islamic interests over national interests; inflexibility in foreign policy; conflict with the international

system; pursuing all-out independence and self-sufficiency in all areas; unconformity of national goals with the national power and capacity (Ranjbar, 2000: 68); and opposition to the international organizations specially the United Nations as a tool for questioning legitimization of the decisions of countries possessing the right to veto.

In such a condition, the United States felt Washington and its allies' interests at risk and tried to prevent the dominance of Iran's influence. Following a number of unsuccessful attempts for staging coup against the revolutionary regime, the United States at the temptation and encouragement of Saddam Hossein imposed an eight-year war on Iran. Five months before the war, the US officials gave the green light to Saddam to invade Iran and in the meantime enjoy US supports and aids. During the war both pillars of power and their allies supported Saddam and the US was directly involved in military clash with Iran in the final years of war. It was in 1988 that the US shot down an Iranian passenger plane with 290 people onboard. Even the conservative estimation of the US experts put the losses of war imposed on Iran at 450 billion dollars. (Delforouz, 2014: 359)

During the period, the United States imposed sanctions against Iran in many cases such as nullifying contracts for the sale of military equipment to Iran, confiscating billions of dollars of Iran's assets, sanctions on granting loans to Iran, preventing the export of cargoes with dual military and nonmilitary use and preventing international financial grants such as those by the World Bank to Iran. (Yavari and Mohseni, 2009: 15-16)

In this period, due to the dominance of the revolutionary ideals, the legitimacy of international organizations such as the Security Council of the United Nations was questioned inside the country. Human Rights Commission's resolution intensified Iran's case. Despite Iran's long years of membership and its considerable shares in Bretton Woods, Washington, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, due to international pressure, Iran failed to collect required loans but instead insisted on no need to

their loans or guidelines. Presence in the ordinary assemblies of the United States and the specialized organizations such as International Labor Organization, International Telecommunications Union, World Health Organization, etc. was not serious and sensible due to economic problems. (Mosaffa & Amin Mansour, 2013: 22-23)

In summarizing and analyzing this course, we can say One of the effective factors in the formation of a developmental government, as mentioned in the theoretical foundations of this article, is foreign investment. With the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and its identity-seeking and independence-seeking nature, the international system reacted to the Islamic Revolution of Iran by creating investment barriers. Therefore, after the Islamic Revolution and especially with the beginning of the imposed war, a large number of foreign investors withdrew their capital from the country, so that the number of foreign-Iranian joint ventures decreased to 115 companies by the end of 1987. The volume of capital entering the country decreased from 6235 million rials in 1978 to 333 million rials in 1979, which reached zero in 1980.

It is worth mentioning that regardless of the 12 billion rials of capital that was imported to Iran by Japan in 1981, the total capital invested during the years 1357-1372 amounts to 15.8 million rials (Mofruzlu et al, 2015: 206)

Second Period (1989-1997): After the war, Hashemi Rafsanjani's Administration adopted a more pragmatic approach. He concentrated on economic reconstruction and more merging with the international economy. The priority of the foreign policy in this period was improving relations with the Persian Gulf littoral states, especially Saudi Arabia and with the newly independent Central Asian republics plus Russia.

Of course, the government had an eye on improving relations with Europe but such a policy did not mean ignoring Islamic and revolutionary values and principles or leaving enmity with the United States. The United States intensified pressures against Iran

by sticking to such issues as Iran's enmity with the Middle East peace process, Iran's support of terrorism, and supporting Hezbollah of Lebanon. In May 1993, Clinton Administration adopted the dual containment policy against Iran and Iraq that imposed sanctions against the two countries. D'Amato bill completed the sanctions in 1996 against Iran and Libya. (Delforouz, 2014: 360)

When the double containment policy was implemented against Iran, the US foreign policy agents introduced Iran as an undesirable country and a threat in international level. To them, Iran was a country that employed all ways and means to fight US interests. On this basis, signs of reduced economic and technological cooperation appeared such as Iran-Japan cooperation. US restrictions on granting World Bank loans to Iran and its opposition for the transfer of Caucasus oil to Europe through Iran were the reflections of the dual containment policy. (Mottaqi & Poustinchi, 2011: 315)

Another point was this that US sanctions against Iran weakened Iran's bargaining power in its transactions and contracts. Iran had to accept the risks to overcome the impacts of sanctions. (Delforouz, 2014: 360) During this period, the US sanctions forced Iran to sell oil below the market price and buy equipment from brokers at higher prices. These imposed heavy losses on Iranian economy. (Nasri, 2001: 247-248) Sanctions also reduced Iran-US trade volume from 16 percent in 1987 to less than a percent. Moreover, Iran's imports from the United States reduced from two percent until before 1995 to zero level. US exports to Iran were chiefly nuclear reactors, steam boilers, cultural goods, pharmaceutical products, tobacco and machinery but after D'Amato bill US exports confined to books only. (Aziznejad and Seyed Nourani, 2009: 196)

As a result, the experience of structural adjustment in Hashemi Rafsanjani's government faced major shortcomings in its text. The adjustment policy was based on the two axes of attracting foreign investment and receiving loans, but the government failed to attract foreign investment and due to the existence of Political challenges

with the international lending system were also limited. The government received loans at high interest rates. Also, a significant part of the manufactured goods could not reach the global markets and therefore the repayment of loan installments was stopped.

Third Period (1998-2005): This period is known as the Reformist Government. Despite continuation of the détente policy and introducing the slogan of “Dialog among Civilizations” and despite improvisation of relations with the European states, there was no betterment in Iran-US relations. Iran’s foreign policy in this period is distinguished from the previous and next periods in certain areas because of its specific principles, goals and dimensions. In this period too, pursuing national goals was prioritized over the transnational goals. Such national goals as gaining and boosting international reputation and credibility as a logical, accountable and normal state were prioritized. (Dehqani Firouzabadi, 2012: 450)

Despite serious efforts the opponents of Iran-US relations managed to prevent any advancement in this period. During the years 1997-1999 the United States imposed sanctions on Iranian trade partners including the multinational corporations. In 2000 the law on banning Iran from proliferation of military equipment was passed and Iran was deprived of the export guarantees issued by the United States. In the tenure of Bush Jr. Administration, the sanctions were intensified. Following September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States invaded Afghanistan on pretext of fighting terrorism. His administration officially announced its intention to change the regime in Iran in 2000 and in 2002 he placed Iran, Iraq and South Korea on the “axis of evil”. In March 2003 US threatened Iran for many times and said it was the turn of Iran to undergo a change of regime after Iraq. Rapid progress of Iran in its nuclear technology intensified the challenges between Iran and the West. Although an agreement was signed in suspension of enrichment in Paris, the failure of the West in fulfilling its commitments made the fundamentalist 7th Parliament to obligate the state to resume enrichment. This heightened the tensions once again. (Delforouz, 2014: 361)

Also, despite Iran's good relations with Central Asian republics the United States prevent Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan oil transport through Iran to the Persian Gulf by passing anti-Iran laws in 1997. Iran could earn 67.5 million dollars in oil swap. Additionally, the United States prevented laying oil pipeline through Iran from the Central Asian republics to the Persian Gulf. In case of realization of this project Iran could gain at least 210 billion dollars per year. (Yavari & Mohseni, 2009: 44-45)

Therefore, in the reform government, despite the policy of de-escalation and reduction of investment risk, there has been no particular success in attracting foreign investment.

Fourth Period (2005-2013): The most important development in Iran's foreign policy in the beginning of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Administration in 2005 was the change in the nature of foreign policy from reformist and moderate framework to revolutionary-offensive foreign policy. The two approaches were of quite different languages and literatures and still more important, the criteria for analytical reviews were very different. The 9th Government was apparently seeking universality of Islam. Its ideological approach in foreign policy under the influence of Islamic Revolution ideals was in high extremist form. In the context of reproduced foreign policy reflecting Islamic idealism, big powers headed by the United States were the arrogant powers fighting Iran in terms of Islamic glory and the oppressed people of the world not because of diplomatic and geopolitical concerns. (Azqandi, 2012: 143)

In this period the fight against unipolar system and US hegemony is pursued by two strategies: 1) All-out internal fight through unilateral measures in regional and international level; 2) Boosting Iran's power and capability in all military, economic, political and cultural aspects. The fight against US hegemony was pursued in a multilateral framework and external balancing. On this basis, the foreign policy of Iran embarked on regional, trans-regional and international coalition against arrogant system led by the US. Diversification of relations with Asian and African

countries, particularly with Latin American countries took place in this connection. (Dehqani Firouzabadi, 2012: 514)

Therefore, Iran entered into a new phase in its conflict with the West. Ahmadinejad pursued offensive foreign policy. He rejected the solutions for settling the Palestine-Israel conflict that had already been approved in the administrations of Hashemi Rafsanjani and Khatami. He reintroduced Imam Khomeini's saying on Israel (Wipe Israel off the face of the Earth) and said the Holocaust was a fable to legitimize Israeli regime. He also strongly stressed on Iran's indisputable right for access to peaceful nuclear technology. In March 2006 he celebrated Iran's 3.5% uranium enrichment. The United Nations Security Council issued six resolutions against Iran in between the years 2006 and 2010. All resolutions called for preventing the transport of commodities, services and technologies believed to be of dual military and nonmilitary use, preventing new investments or technical partnership in Iran for producing prohibited goods, equipment or technology transfer, freezing the assets or real and legal entities abroad, and the like. The European Union froze the assets of some Iranian banks during the years 2009 and 2010 for three times. (Aziznejad & Seyed Nourani, 2009: 175-182)

Both the US and the EU pursued the sanction objective of restricting Tehran's ability to fund the further development of the nuclear program and resorted to enhanced oil and financial sanctions. Within the framework of the consecutively passed US Congress National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which was signed by Obama in December 2011, the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCPA), and the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act (ITRSHRA), Washington planned to curtail Iran's oil revenues by prohibiting foreign banks from performing transactions with the CBI, which received the country's oil receipts to a great extent. In the context of these sanctions, the Obama administration forced European and Asian countries to refrain from importing Iranian crude oil or at least to reduce their oil imports. As a consequence, the United States effectively caused

the EU to prevent Iran from circumventing its sanction measures (Bassiri Tabrizi and Hanau Santini 2012: 2).

The EU Council on Foreign Relations also aligned itself with the United States in creating obstacles to development in Iran; So that In January 2012, the EU Foreign Affairs Council decided to impose an embargo on Iranian crude oil and petrochemical products, which took effect in July 2012 and was accompanied by, among other things, an insurance ban for oil shipments and a freeze on the CBI's assets. In March of that year, the Belgium-based Society for Worldwide International Financial Transfers (SWIFT) excluded Iranian banks from its network and, thereby, effectively prevented any foreign transactions with them through this network (International Crisis Group 2013: 13–14). Due to the importance of crude oil revenues for the Iranian economy, the US and EU oil and financial sanctions went beyond the targeted selective sanctions.

For the first time in the history of American sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, serious limitations were imposed on the export of oil products (gasoline, diesel fuel, aviation kerosene) to Iran. Since the summer of 2010, a company from any country would surely find itself under U.S. sanctions if its one-time shipment of fuel to Iran was worth more than \$1 million or the overall cost of its shipments more than \$5 million in a one-year period. The same terms apply to any services (insurance, shipment, financing, brokerage) related to fuel trade with Iran. Apart from these measures, the American authorities canceled all provisions loosening restrictions on Iranian imports into the United States that had been adopted at the end of the 1990s. Additionally, Washington prohibited branches and subsidiaries of American companies registered in third countries from trading with Iran. The punitive measures of 2010 also made export-licensing procedures tougher for foreign companies from countries such as the UAE and Malaysia, whose governments were reluctant to prevent the re-export of American goods to Iran. The new sanctions, moreover, reinforced previously existing measures against financial institutions dealing with the Iranian banks suspected to be funding

the Iranian nuclear program. (Kozhanov, 2011: 6)

In connection with the interaction between Iran and regional and international institutions we must say that in the beginning Iranian NGOs experienced relative fall in their regional and international activities, but gradually they managed to boost their presence specially in human rights assemblies. Also, the private sector was put aside from the decision-making process in international and interstate programs. Participation of the women in the delegations for overseas missions reduced to some extent. Playing a role in the secretariats of the international institutions by Iranian employees became weaker. Therefore, Iran's foreign policy in relation with the international organizations and regional arrangements from 2005 until now has been under the influence of such factors as negative approach and performance of these organizations toward Iran in such issues as nuclear dossier as well as Iran's objections to the structure and performance of these organizations, in particular the US Security Council. However, presence in the international assemblies, summits and procedures in line with macro objective of exerting influence on the world issues and participation in the world governance by presenting a different discourse turned into one of the ordinary activities in Iran's diplomacy. (Mosaffa & Amin Mansour, 2013: 35)

III- The Need for Foreign Direct Investment

One of the most important goals of this article is to examine the tools that the United States has used to prevent the formation of a developmental government in the Islamic Republic. In this regard, one of the tools of the United States is to prevent the inflow of foreign capital into Iran, which has been done in various ways. Although part of the reason for the lack of foreign investment in Iran is due to the high risk of investing in Iran, but the same risk has increased due to US actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) statistics show that within 18 years starting from

1990, Iran has managed in total to collect 5/29 billion dollars of FDA whereas Turkey has collected over 145 billion dollars during the period. In this sense, Turkey held the first rank and Iran stood at the 9th rank among the 14 states in the Middle EAST. Also, in terms of investment in stock market, Iran stood last among the 21 countries under study, while according to the 20-year Outlook Plan Iran has to collect at least 45000 billion rials investments to promote the level of technology in the country. (Seyed Nourani, Aziznejad & Tak Roosta, 2008: 210-213)

On the other hand, the status of economic risk in Iran is not better than the state of investment. Statistics show that during the years after the revolution, Iran holds an undesirable rank in national risk (political risk plus risk of economic policymaking, and other risks) in the Middle East, whose risk is still higher than the other regions in the world. For instance, in 1999, Iran stood at the 92nd rank in terms of risk among 100 countries and according to another statistics Iran held the 8th rank among the selected 10 states in the Middle East. (Mosallanejad, 2005: 276-280)

Iran, with its vast oil and gas reserves, needs foreign investment in this area. But US sanctions have severely hampered foreign investment in these sectors. An example of this can be seen in the words of Brian Hook (the US State Department's special representative for Iran): «US sanctions on Iran's oil exports have caused revenue losses for Iran exceeding \$50 billion, severely hindered the country's push to expand refined-product exports, and ended foreign investment in its energy sector». (Brian, 12Dec 2019)

UNCTAD statistics also show a decrease in foreign investment in 2020, the most important reason for this decrease is the US actions against Iran, especially in the energy sector. Foreign direct investment into Iran declined almost 10% in 2020 compared to the year before, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Based on data published in the World Investment Report 2021, the UN agency put Iran's FDI inflow at \$1.34 billion in 2020, which was down 11% compared to \$1.508 billion in 2019. The nuclear agreement opened the way for

a growing number of foreign companies flocking to the Iranian market untapped after years of pent-up demand as a result of years of international sanctions related to its nuclear energy program. However, the flow fell to \$2.37 billion in 2018, mostly under the influence of the Trump administration's unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 agreement.

Conclusion

The foreign policy of the developing countries is of special significance. In this sense, such a policy serves as a bridge to the world of capital and technology. These countries are obligated to provide the regional and international contexts in their strategy toward development. In this connection, we can deduct that the macro scientific strategy in foreign relations conforming to the realities of the country and the world can provide appropriate framework for using production factors of other countries and for presenting and marketing domestic products in other countries. Another specification of this policy is its interactive externalism and when the national development model is based on exports, this specification is more outstanding. Peaceful coexistence, *détente* policy, confidence building, multilateralism in world and regional levels are among the principles of developmental foreign Policy, but Iran's position after the revolution had fundamental differences with the post-World War II situation of the East countries. Iran's anti-US policies and its initiative for the unity of Islamic Umma brought into conflict the dependent Arab states in addition to the US and Western states.

Whereas the developing countries applied their foreign policies for the economic development, in Iran Islamic norms and values played the key role in its foreign policy. In other words, Islam constitutes the ideological discourse in foreign policy of Iran. It is in the context of this ideological and ontological discourse that the fight against Great Satan, supporting the oppressed, and demand for justice become the principal pillars of Iran's foreign policy.

Although the four administrations from 1968 to 1984 took

some steps in conformity with the international norms to achieve détente, promote dialogue among civilizations, official recognition of the international system and the like, the international system, spearheaded by the US in particular, considered the steps not as a positive measure by Iran but as a sign of its weakness and imposed more and more limitations. As a result, the international system prevented the realization of a developmental state in Iran by adopting a confrontational approach, which hindered the formation of a developmental state.

The findings of the present study show that despite the efforts of the Iran to use appropriate international conditions and contexts to develop its infrastructure, but the US obstruction in the form of sanctions, the prevention of foreign investment in Iran, the ban and blocking financial and technical aid, aligning countries, especially the European Union, etc., has largely prevented the formation of a development government in the Islamic Republic.

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Iran and the Global Transition of Power: Perspectives and Viewpoints

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Abstract

Iran, despite great geopolitical and geo-economics potential, faces many complex internal and external predicaments due to its independent foreign policy and lack of dependence on international powers. On one hand, the cooperation of other actors with the severe US sanctions against Iran also seems to be influenced by Iran's independent policy. On the other hand, the change in power relations has shown the signs of the emergence of new world order. In such a circumstance, some believe that Iran can enjoy greater security and enhance its international standing by shifting its orientation toward the new great power. Accordingly, the present study seeks to identify and explain the uncertainties affecting Iran's orientation in the evolution of the international order. The hypothesis is that the drivers of the nuclear agreement or disagreement, the lifting of sanctions against Iran or Iran bypassing the sanctions on the one hand, and the existing critical uncertainties, the anti-Iranian policy of the United States, and the pessimism and mistrust between Iran and the United States, on the other hand, affect Iran's orientation in the changing conditions of the global order. The research aims to examine the conditions and tools of Iran in maintaining an independent and

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active foreign policy. The research method in this article is a combination of the analytical-explanatory retrospective method with a futuristic approach based on scenario building.

Keywords: Iran, world order, future study, China, United States, ambiguity

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was considerable certainty about the dominance of the American unipolar order in the world; the new role of the United States in the global order, and especially its unilateral actions in various regions, was a clear indication of the formation and consolidation of the American order in the world. However, developments in the last three decades, with the rise of European actors, China, and Russia, have made some analysts believe that the unilateral global order is collapsing and multilateral world order is taking shape. China is considered the main rival of the United States in the new international order, but the European Union, Russia, India, etc. will also have a chance to introduce themselves as new powers in this system. This uncertainty has led to bringing up important ideas and debates about the future of the international order. This research, while examining the possibility of the occurrence of a bipolar or multipolar global order, will evaluate scenarios facing Iran in the new world order. The main question of this study is “what are the drivers of Iran's foreign policy towards the evolution of the international order? The paper aims to analyze Iran's status and standing vis-a-vis the new indicators of international powers, as well as the choices facing Tehran. The hypothesis is that the drivers of the nuclear agreement or disagreement, the lifting of sanctions against Iran or Iran bypassing the sanctions on the one hand, and the existing critical uncertainties, the anti-Iranian policy of the United States, and the pessimism and mistrust between Iran and the United States, on the other hand, affect Iran's orientation in the changing conditions of the global order.

Methodology

As there is always a complex set of possible, and likely undesirable or somewhat desirable futures, there is an exploratory approach to this research based on theories of international relations. But at the same time, because the issue is related to the nationality of researchers, it also resorts to a normative approach. Thus, the researchers will attempt to explain the desired scenario, the characteristics and requirements for its realization, as well as the unfavorable and competing scenarios by using Trend Impact Analysis. The goal is to provide an image of future to policymakers and decision makers as a basis for shaping trends. In this regard, three important steps are taken. In the first step, the possible trends and scenarios that exist against the international order are explained. In the second step, the choices that Iran has ahead are discussed. In the third step, strategies that will improve Iran's position will be explored.

It is important to note that this paper is based on several key assumptions. The first assumption is that according to the trends, the international order is on the path of change and Iran's standing will change in the new situation. Another assumption, therefore, is the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and based on this, the prospect of this correlation is explained and analyzed according to the relevant components.

I- Iran and International Order

Current international order: Structure and features: Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crumbling of the bipolar international order, there has been much debate among international theorists about the criteria needed to stabilize the order, or its possible alternatives. In the meantime, one of the most important issues was the possibility of American hegemony in the world, about which there was much disagreement (Lauren, 2008) Although the theoretical currents of international relations, whether realism or idealism and related branches, considered different indicators for hegemony, all believed the existence of a hegemonic

system requires unequal distribution of power and a dominant superpower. Robert Cohen, like Joseph Nye, described the hegemonic state as having the motivation and power to uphold the fundamental rules governing relations between states (Keohane, 1984).

Based on these indicators, competing views were also expressed that the United States is either unable or essentially incapable of establishing hegemony. Wilkinson argued that the United States was a non-hegemonic unipolar power because it could not make other great powers obey it, and sometimes failed in the face of small or medium-sized powers. However, he did not consider non-hegemonic unipolar order to be inherently unstable, and he believed that this system, too, could last for decades (Wilkinson, 1999, p. 143) .

By acknowledging the formation of a unipolar order, Kenneth Waltz, on the other hand, argued that the main reason for the instability of the unipolar system was Russia's ability to restore power, ambition and the US' extensive foreign policy (Waltz, 1993).

By the end of the first decade of the twenty first century, the United States was considered the sole dominant superpower, despite minor disagreements among theorists about the characteristics of a hegemonic power. In recent decade, the conflict of US interests with Russia and then China becoming the second largest economic power in the world, fueled doubts about the stability of the unipolar order, and made the issue of the evolution of the international order a serious debate. Henry Kissinger sees a change in the international order with the advent of China as inevitable, and at the same time believes that the United States will not be able to eliminate the new rival at a low cost with a Cold War approach (Kissinger, 2012) .Charles Kupchan, author of *The End of the American Era*, refers to historical cycles and writes that the end of the United States' era of governance and unilateralism is unavoidable. He argues that as a result of inevitable fluctuation of powers, Europe and later Asia will enter the arena of global powers

and will compete with the United States. According to him, with the beginning of the age of technology and the expansion of human communication, trends have changed and as a result, political, social and identity structures within societies will also change. In this regard, change within the United States will manifest itself in the form of reduced public participation in political processes, on the one hand, and the diminishing role of American national identity, and the widening of various ethnic and racial divisions and faults. Kupchan cites domestic demands in the United States for the country's strategic withdrawal from the regions of conflict as one of the main reasons for the collapse of the unipolar system. According to Kupchan, one of the reasons for the collapse of the unipolar order is the unification of European powers and the emergence of Asian power and its balancing effects on world power (Kupchan, 2003).

Due to the diversification in international relations, the existing global order has entered an era of bipolar or multipolar order. Although the US is yet leading the global politics, different countries' relations have become intertwined. Thus, the US also requires bilateral and multilateral cooperation to resolve the problems which cannot be handled by the US power only (Haass, 2014, p. 70).

The current situation has also led to regional processes to happen independent of a hegemonic power. As a result, regional orders have been carrying more weight in the course of evolution on the international order.

For example, the Syrian crisis and the rise of ISIS from 2014 to its defeat in 2019 had severely affected the world order. Similarly, Coronavirus pandemic and its global implications have increased competition for access to prevention and treatment equipment, rather than increased international cooperation.

Iran's Position in Current International Order: After the Islamic Revolution, Iran placed itself Among the critical discourses of the international order with its pro-Revolution discourse and the slogan of 'neither the East nor the West'. The pro-Revolution

discourse meant Iran's full independence from foreigners and superpowers, its lack of reliance on the Eastern and Western blocs, and its call for a change in international relations in favor of global justice and weak nations. The set of actions taken in the first two years of the Iranian revolution based on 'neither the East nor the West' strategy were as in the following (Valipour-razmi, 2004, pp. 81-83):

A- Withdrawal from The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1979

B- Severing ties with Egypt in 1979, following the conclusion of the Camp David agreement

C- Termination of Chapters 5 and 6 of The Russo-Persian Treaty of Friendship (1921)

D- Membership in the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979

E- Cancellation of the 1959 Iran-US agreement by the Revolution Council in 1979

F- Severing ties with Morocco late 1979

In this regard, some analysts saw the Iraqi invasion on Iran in 1980 as an implicit agreement of the superpowers of the time to counter the pro-Revolution discourse, specifically at a time that Iran claimed to have considerable international presence. The imposed war and all kinds of unilateral and multilateral US sanctions changed the scope of Iran's activities and role. While the fight against Israel was one of the goals of the Islamic Revolution, Iran focused on forming an axis of resistance in the Middle East. In contrast, US Twin Pillars policy (in the pre-Revolution era) also gave way to increased American support for Persian Gulf states, in particular Saudi Arabia (Khosravi, 2008, p. 33). The formation of a coalition of Sunni states in the Persian Gulf led by Saudi Arabia, pushed Iran to form a framework based on axis of resistance.

The security environment of the Middle East has always been an important issue in the national security doctrine of Iran, given historical, cultural, geopolitical and geo-economic considerations, as well as revolutionary and religious discourse. On the other hand, weakening the axis of resistance plays an important role in

advancing the anti-Iranian policies of the United States, Israel and some Arab and Sunni states (Adami & Keshavarzi Moghaddam, 2015, pp. 1-4).

In the last three decades, coinciding with the US efforts for global hegemony, Iran has always enjoyed a high position as one of the influential players in the Middle East due to the axis of resistance. The concept of the axis of resistance, which was formed about three decades ago in the context of regional events, is associated with the names of state actors and military and paramilitary groups in the region, and pursues two common goals: 1. opposing the establishment of a stable Israel; and 2. opposing the establishment of an American-Arab-Israeli order in the Middle East.

At the same time, the actors have a political, economic and security relationship with each other in order to achieve above-mentioned goals. Accordingly, Islamic Republic of Iran, Hezbollah of Lebanon, resistance groups in Palestine have mainly been considered as members of axis of Islamic resistance in the region for the past three decades. However, in the last decade Syria, Ansarullah of Yemen, and Al-Hashd Al-Sha'bi (Popular Mobilization Forces) of Iraq have joined as new members of the axis. In the meantime, the Iran is known as a theorist and the most important member of the resistance axis due to its revolutionary discourse, regional power and its important role in forming, coordinating and providing the axis with material and spiritual support, as well as systematizing the performance of these groups.

The axis gained more authority after emergence of a Shia government in Iraq and then the 33-day war in Lebanon that led to the defeat of Israel and the stabilization of Hezbollah in Lebanon (Adami & Keshavarzi Moghaddam, 2015, pp. 1-4).

According to many analysts, the creation and strengthening of terrorist groups such as ISIS and provoking a civil war in Syria with the aim of overthrowing the government of president Bashar al-Assad and the Shia government of Iraq was a strategy to implicitly weaken the resistance axis and as a result to increase Israel's

security. In fact, Iran's policy, in the framework of presence in Syria, active role in Iraq and supporting Ansarullah in Yemen, is in the framework of resistance axis security strategy and confrontation with Saudi Arabia, Israel and the American order.

Despite the discriminatory policies of many international institutions and organizations in line with US strategy against Iran, Tehran has welcomed membership and active role in all international organizations, institutions, and treaties over the past four decades. Iran is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), while Israel is not a party to either.

II- Iran and The Future Prospect of the International Order

As realists say change of the international order is inevitable, but different scenarios can be suggested about the relations among the actors. Wilkinson identifies possible scenarios as alternatives to the non-hegemonic unipolar situation: bipolar, tripolar (due to the rise of the European Union and China) or multipolar orders (Wilkinson, *Unipolarity without hegemony*, 1999, p. 143). Indicators for the evolution of the international order are as in the following (Hadian, 2003):

1. Inefficiency of the power or powers that shape the international order for international cooperation
2. Increased anarchy
3. Increase or change of power indicators
4. Increased pessimism and competition among states for security
5. Increased the number of the states who claim to be a great power

It can also be deduced from international relations theories that the stages of establishing a new international order include the following steps, which do not necessarily happen in a step-by-step manner, but can also occur in parallel: 1. The state of anarchy and the lack of an international community 2. The balance of

competitive, hostile and sometimes exclusion-oriented power 3. Regionalism and geographical distribution of competitive power.

Following the inefficiency of a super power or powers or the lack of an international community, the first stage in the evolution of the international order is the increase in anarchy, which in turn raises security and survival issues and further increases the efforts of states to win more power. In other words, in anarchy, pessimism increases and conflict in the international environment increases. At the same time, the number of states claiming to be a power is increasing and the interaction of great powers to form institutions and for collaborations is decreasing. In fact, the first stage is a change in the actors' perception of the system, new opportunities and threats. At this stage, the great powers manifest themselves by expressing more power.

Many analysts agree on the definition of great powers, which refers to actors who are able to create a system of interdependence of power and security, and thus have the ability to set the rules of the game, create and control institutions, regimes and manage the existing order. However, different scenarios can be proposed about the hierarchy of the new international system: the re-emergence of a unipolar order with new or former super power, the emergence of a bipolar or multipolar order.

Reading between the lines of what the theorists of the international order say, it can be noted that the vast majority of the theorists believe that a bipolar system is more stable than a multipolar system and that it is in favor of international security. Because in a bipolar order, the great powers have more focus and confidence in their rival's behavior. On the other hand, there is a consensus among the thinkers that the global order can hardly be fully bipolar (Ikenberry, Mastanduno, & Wohlforth, 2009, p. 5) .

As a result, the question of how the actors are combined or organized in a bipolar or multipolar order, raises a variety of possibilities and scenarios. First, a new order will certainly not be formed without the tendency of medium and small actors to major poles. However, at least four different situations can occur vis-a-vis

the future of the current international order:

1. The US's renewed superiority in maintaining a unipolar order; This scenario is less likely due to new power indicators and predictions for the future of global economies (Law, 2018).

2. One of the scenarios about the structure of the future international order is like forming blocs in the era of bipolar world order, meaning that most actors will have to determine their relationship with one of the global powers. In fact, actors outside the blocs are unsafe or will be under more systemic pressures. The possible poles of this system are the United States and China.

3. Another possibility is the emergence of a multipolar system, which is less likely than a bipolar system in the near future. But a case of it, the bipolar or multipolar system, is more likely. In fact, the emergence of a bipolar system with several large powers that can regulate effective regional institutions and regimes.

4. Another scenario, which is much less likely, is based more on a liberal and institutionalist approach. According to this theoretical approach, in the new world order, the regional and international institutions and arrangements that are centered on the great powers, will dominate.

During the Cold War, there was a certain pattern of order based on bipolarity. The military rivalry between the two superpowers and their allies took place in the context of the North-South and East-West order, and the main actors were divided into two blocs. During the period of unilateral US domination, the major players in the world were either in the ranks of US allies or in a position of neutrality and often under US pressure. From this perspective, it seems that one of the problems for explaining the bipolar or multipolar international system has been solved in this framework. In other words, the actors will either be as client states of the global powers or they will be marginalized. But when it comes to new international powers, despite Waltz's traditional definition of five indicators - democracy and land, political mobilization, economic capacity, political stability, and military capability - (Waltz K. , 1979, p. 131) the analysis of their new features in the age of

technology becomes a little more complicated.

To explain the indicators of power in the new order, one can refer to the view of major theoretical approaches to power. From a realism point of view, the balance of power depends primarily on the function of tangible military assets such as armor and nuclear weapons that states possess (Mearsheimer, 2006). Despite the slight differences between theories on the definition of the dimensions of power, the issue that how much power is sufficient is also questionable. At the same time, one of the issues that makes the analysis of power in the new order difficult is the complexity of the system and the change in the indicators of power. In complex systems, actors with asymmetric powers are said to be able to exert influence. On the other hand, the existence of power is essentially dependent on the potential to materialize it.

Iran and Evolution of the International Order: The transition in world order can provoke new discussions about opportunities and limitations it can bring to Iranian foreign policy decision-makers. The new debate is what policy Iran can adopt towards the evolution of the international order and what factors and components will improve Iran's position and that what tools, facilities and restrictions the country has to maintain and improve its position. The answers to these questions can help explain Iran's strategy and predict its future approaches.

Maintaining the Status Quo: This policy aims maintaining the status quo, which is mainly adopted by governments that either cannot have a better choice or the current situation is more suitable for their security and role. What is meant by security here is mainly the secure situation against external threats, which is provided either independently or by combining your power with the power of others. Playing the right role is also related to the efficiency of the government. This policy raises the concern of such a government in the face of a trend that is changing the international order. The usual tool of this policy is diplomacy and balance of power, which can prevent a change in the situation. However, this policy can also come at a cost, such as emphasizing international

order at the cost of any injustice, non-adherence to universal moral principles, and reducing the relative independence of action according to the patterns of the international coalition. Its advantage is also in maintaining the relative stability of the international community and in maintaining the necessary conditions for advancing the former policies.

There are reasons to suggest that Iran does not want to maintain the status quo. Iran has been one of the countries seeking change since the Islamic Revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic. The country has suffered from war, sanctions and anti-Iranian policies of the United States and its allies for decades. Besides, anti-hegemonic and justice-oriented discourse of the Iranian leaders, support the argument why Tehran does not favor preserving the current order.

Adjusting or Changing the Status Quo: This policy is pursued by two groups of actors who either pursue certain values as universal values or consider the current situation to their detriment or unfair. Adopting a reformist or transformational approach depends on a variety of factors. Taking up the type of reformist approach or fundamental change can depend on historical, ideological, geopolitical and even individual factors of decision-makers of states, such as: how much the states that challenges the current system, is capable of changing the status quo or confident about its capabilities. Or how much it believes in the ideology and the establishment of the values it seeks. Richard Rosecrance does not make a big difference between these factors and believes that in order to introduce states that want to change the status quo, it is enough to consider their intentions. Because intentions are as decisive as capabilities (Rosecrance, 2008).

There is a huge difference between states that want to reform or fundamentally change the status quo. States with a reformist approach believe that international cooperation can help strengthen international values and norms and improve the security of states, because fundamental change in the current situation is fraught with costs and threats. The usual tools of this policy, apart from

diplomacy, include international and regional economic, legal, institutional instruments. Multilateralism can perhaps be considered as the main mechanism used by the reformist approach in the international order.

One of the main challenges of this approach is that naturally state actors are always pessimistic about each other's intentions and are always evaluating their intentions. As a result, the coalition of the reformist state with the dominant state will not be sustained under the influence of pessimistic considerations or will not provide much benefit to the dissatisfied state. This will make the reformist state to seek to surpass the dominant power or at least to reach a level similar to the level of the dominant state. Thus, sooner or later the dissatisfied actor will turn to support a fundamental change to the status quo. One of the most recent highlights in this regard is the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, of which the United States withdrew despite full compliance from Iranian side. The US claimed to have uncertainty over Iran's long-term intentions. Donald Trump's withdrawal from many bilateral and multilateral international agreements during his presidency cannot be considered only as his individual choices. A significant portion of these decisions were based on US structural pessimism about the intentions of Washington's European and non-European allies.

An assessment of Iran's foreign policy performance over the past four decades also shows that a domestic faction in Iran, known as the Reformists, which has been in power at intervals, is subject to the policy of reforming the current international situation by gradually increasing the power through international cooperation. However, in the last decade, following the experience of the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal under Donald Trump and the delay of the Joe Biden administration in reviving the agreement, this discourse has been weakened among the elites. On the other hand, the Principlist faction, by adhering to the Principlist discourse with key concepts such as the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the global revolution, fighting corruption and oppression and promoting justice, believes in transnational duties and responsibilities for the

Iran as one of the agents of the divine global government (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2007). In fact, both general approaches in the foreign policy of the Iran consider the foundation of the international order as unfair and emphasize the need to change it.

In general, Iran, in a situation of desire to change the status quo and the evolution of the international order, logically has four choices ahead:

First; Adopting a policy of passive neutrality

Second; Adopting a pro-West policy

Third; Adopting a pro-East policy

Fourth; Adopting an independent active policy

The history of Iran's foreign policy shows that for various historical, geopolitical, cultural and religious reasons in international turning points, even if Iran is inclined to adopt a policy of passive neutrality, it will not be able to stay away from the flood of developments. As said before, one of the stages in the evolution of the international order is the geographical distribution of power, which includes the strategic region of the Middle East.

Therefore, it is more appropriate for Iran to play an active role in international processes. At the same time, given anti-Iranian policies of the West, four decades of sanctions, the West's discriminatory policies against Iran, and as a result of Iran's revisionist approach to the international order, pro-West policies face many doubts in the country.

In fact, if Iran wants to play an influential role in the evolution of the global order and change of the status quo through coalition and alliance, it has only two desirable choices in the direction of anti-hegemonic discourse: either a pro-East policy or an active independent policy. Given that China is the main competitor to the dominant pro-West discourse, the least costly strategy in terms of tools and facilities is an Eastward policy. In this regard, the 25-year strategic cooperation document between Iran and China, as well as Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are mentioned as indicators for Iran's accession to the new pole of the international order. The most important driver of this

scenario is the continuation of US sanctions and the policy of maximum pressure against Iran. Naturally, based on the logic of the foreign policy of all countries, Iran also wants to increase its power, position, influence and resources, and as a result, an independent policy is a more desirable option for Iran.

One of the most important uncertainties facing the scenario of an active independent Iran is the resistance of the great powers to the increasing number of rivals in the international system. Because one of the competing scenarios of the bipolar system is the multipolar situation. A multipolar system means the existence of several states with close military, cultural and economic powers that are able to influence and regulate international relations by forming alliances and coalitions. Analysts believe that in such a system, despite more contradictions, there is less hostility (Deutsch & Singer, 1964). This scenario is reinforced by changing the power indicators and increasing the ability of more actors to exercise power. By that premise, Henry Kissinger cites Europe, China, Japan, Russia, and India as potential rivals to the United States in a multipolar system.

The most important driver for the scenario of an active independent Iran is that the change in the world order strengthens Iran's political-security approaches by turning the conflict of powers against each other, while reducing the pressure on Iran. The main principle in Iran's political-security approach is its strategic self-sufficiency in the transition of the world from the American unilateral order. But the new international conditions will put Iran in a position to choose to join new alliances and institutions that pose new threats and opportunities.

For the past four decades, Iran has been one of the countries that has remained committed to international organizations and institutions, despite its critical discourse toward the unjust structure of the world order. One of the strategies facing Iran is to use international organizations, institutions and arrangements to achieve international peace and security.

If anti-Iranian policies of the US continue, the alternative for

Tehran is to establish strategic relations with one of the Eastern powers, especially China. Prior to the 25-year Iran-China accord, major cooperation between Tehran and Beijing was limited to some not-so-great investments, trade, and agreements on arms and oil. The most important stimulus for this relationship, in addition to Iran's regional position, was the continuation of US hostile policies towards the two countries, which has led Tehran and Beijing to promote the relations into a strategic partnership. There are still ambiguities about the dimensions and future of the agreement. However, the important and indisputable point is the growth of China as a superpower, and the competition between China and the United States in strategic regions including the Middle East, as well as the need to use different capacities to increase Iran's position in the global value chain by using positive relations with this international power. In addition, it should be noted that Iran-China relations, in addition to bilateral will, is affected by regional and international trends, especially the trend of Sino-US relations. In fact, these trends can create different scenarios for Iran-China relations.

Conclusion

The basis of most theories on a change in world order is an emphasis on the unjust, discriminatory, conflicting, and therefore unacceptable nature of the status quo. As noted, not merely critical theorists, but realist theorists, more or less, do not rule out the practical possibility of change because of the natural obstacles to American hegemony, the natural cycle of the international order, and the improbability of hegemonic formation. However, it should be noted that in describing the current situation, we may look at it from a position of value-based opposition. It is not necessarily in Iran's interest to change the international order unless Iran makes a reasonable choice, by predicting the current trend and the following considerations:

Regardless of the difficulty of mapping Iran's national interests in the forthcoming options, logically, views on costs and benefits

may also differ. In other words, all arguments are based on analytical data. But it can be inferred that in the new international order, there will be more opportunities for Iran's strategic self-sufficiency, just as the country was able to avoid joining other actors at the height of tensions with the West, and the Western political pressures and economic sanctions. But the most important driver of this scenario is the nuclear deal and the lifting of the sanctions or neutralizing them. In contrast, the existing critical uncertainties are US anti-Iranian policies over the past four decades and pessimism and mistrust between Iran and the United States.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, after four decades of trial and error in foreign policy, and now with more strategic maturity, is able to secure its interests with a pragmatic approach to international powers.

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Salafism and Saudi Arabia's Middle East Policy Towards Iran (2011-2020)

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Abstract

This article has chosen the theoretical framework of ontological security to explain the impact of Salafism on Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy. The question is why Saudi Arabia has moved towards more support for the Taqlidi Salafist movement over the past decade, and what the identity and security implications of this support have been? The argument of the article is that the role and position of Salafism in Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy should be considered as a continuation of the historical alliance between Al-Saud and Al-Sheikh, which has played an important role in maintaining the identity and security of this actor. But the internal dynamism of the Salafi discourse, the emergence of regional rivalries, and the emergence of the so-called global counter-terrorism literature have shifted the discourse into Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy, leading to differences in identity and security with other Salafi, Sunni, and Islamism currents. The findings of the article show that between 2011 and 2020, Saudi Arabia placed Taqlidi Salafism as a pragmatic current with a conservative reading and close to the official institution of Wahhabism at the center of its Middle East policy, especially in Yemen and Libya. The present article is based on explanatory -analytical approach

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Introduction

The role of Salafi discourse elements in Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy should be considered as a continuation of the historical alliance of Al-Saud and Al-Sheikh in 1744, which played an important role in shaping the identity, security and, interests of this actor. Abdul Wahab, the founder of the Wahhabi movement - a form of Saudi Salafism - and Mohammed bin Saud, the founder of the first Saudi government in the mid-18th century, laid the foundations of an alliance that lasted more than two and a half centuries. It has given Saudi Arabia legitimacy, political power, security, and identity. (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

By segregating Wahhabism internally by Muhammad Ibn-Wahab and controlling foreign policy by Muhammad ibn Saud, Saudi Arabia was able to quickly oust domestic territory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by uniting domestic tribes and launching military campaigns. Justify control of the legitimate Ottoman caliphate. The result of the union of Al-Saud and Al-Sheikh; The third Saudi government, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was established in 1932 and has been able to expand Wahhabi Salafism to various parts of the world over the past century while maintaining the legitimacy of the regime and consolidating the power of the ruling dynasty.

To explain the role and position of Salafism in Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy from 2011 to 2020, the article has chosen the theoretical framework of ontological security. The theoretical contribution of this framework is related to the issue of resolving the conflict between the security and the identity of the Saudi government and the fact that Saudi Arabia is a security-seeking or

identity-oriented state. Most of the existing research literature has analyzed one of the concepts of identity and security as the axis of Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy, while Saudi Arabia's support for the imitative Salafist movement has the ability to analyze these two categories in one context.

There are also questions about how the position of Salafi discourse and groups in Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy from 2011 to 2020 can be explained by ontological security statements. It is also necessary to answer the question of why Saudi Arabia has moved towards more support for the imitative Salafist movement in the last decade, and what are the identity and security effects of this support?

The authors argue that despite Saudi Arabia's continued support for Salafism, due to the internal dynamics of this discourse and the emergence and activation of rival sects, jihadists and the Brotherhood, regional rivalries in the Middle East, and the emergence of the so-called global struggle literature. Against terrorism, the ground was prepared for a change in Saudi Arabia's supportive approach to the integrated Salafist movement.

The findings of the article show that the imitative Salafism - also known by other titles such as Jamia and Mudakhli - due to its adherence to the official institution of Wahhabism and political pragmatism, has been able to play the simultaneous role of identity, i.e. the continuation of Salafi identity for the Saudi government and security. Balance the regional role and neutralize regional and international pressures and find a special place in Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy.

Theoretical Framework

Regarding the use of an appropriate theoretical framework to analyze the position of Salafism in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, two frameworks have always been used in research. The first framework is realist theories that highlight security and interests and explain the position of Salafism in Saudi Middle East politics as a tool in the service of the security and interests of the Saudi

government. The argument of realist theories is that if these two factors threaten, support for this discourse and groups will be affected. The second framework is identity-oriented theories, which are mainly influenced by the school of constructivism, emphasizing identity, discourse, and ideological factors, and explaining Saudi Arabia's foreign policy as identity structures.

The present study has chosen the framework of "ontological security". This theory is one of the new theories in the field of political science and international relations that has been proposed in recent years after the structural transformation to explain the behavior of countries in the international arena. In many cases, instead of seeking physical security, countries seek ontological security in the sense of security of self, existence, and identity (Mitzen, 2006). Ontological security, like the need of countries for physical security, is induced and inferred from the individual level, so that ontological security also requires the character of the government as a wise agent. In fact, cognitive security, like physical security, is a fundamental behavioral motivation of countries in the field of foreign and international policy (Steel, 2013: 12-7).

The theory of ontological security has been used by some international relations researchers such as Jennifer Mitzen and Brent Steele to analyze the motivation of countries' behavior in the field of foreign policy and international politics. These researchers have tried to promote the concept of ontological security from the individual to the national level. In fact, these researchers have extracted the theory of ontological security from Anthony Giddens and his theory of construction.

Giddens developed this concept in his theory of constructivism, defining ontological security as follows: "Such a feeling is reflected in the behavior of government officials and officials." "Ontological security is not just about securing the body, it is about securing itself," says Giddens. (Giddens, 1991: 92)

Although, according to the Saudi realist literature, it is essentially a security-seeking and balancing actor, and has

generally followed realist logic (Ataee and Mansouri Moghadam, 2013) it has not necessarily done so at times. This means that the Saudi government has not deviated from its principles of identity at a time when its material security is at stake. In fact, this simultaneous attention to the two fundamental categories of security and identity can be seen during the last two decades, at times such as 9/11, the 2003 occupation of Iraq, the 2011 Arab uprisings, and in areas such as Syria and Yemen. Libya and Egypt observed.

In this context, ontological security helps to resolve the conflict between security and identity and the issue of whether Saudi Arabia is a security-seeking or identity-oriented state. Because Saudi Arabia, by supporting the Salafi conservative current, i.e. the imitative Salafists, who are politically compromising and do not pose a challenge to the Saudi political system, and consider obedience to the guardian as an inseparable part of their principles, while distinguishing themselves from other groups. Radical Salafists, including the jihadists in the global counter-terrorism system, in addition to providing security for the regime and the survival of the monarchy, have maintained their identity as an important and inviolable issue.

Another contribution that the theoretical framework of ontological security provides to better understand and explain Saudi foreign policy compared to conventional frameworks is the Saudi regime's distinctions from similarities within the framework of Salafist discourse. Some researchers have suggested that the existence of commonalities and interests can be the most decisive cause of hostility and tension. "Convergence between individuals and groups can lead to divergence over time," says Axelrod. The factors that build a common identity - such as pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism, or European identity - can raise feelings of difference" (Axelrod, 1997: 65).

I- The link between Salafism and Wahhabism

Salafism is one of the currents of thought and politics that has

spread over a wide area of the subcontinent, Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa over the past few decades and has played an important role in regional politics. Lexically, the term Salafiyya goes back to the roots of Salaf and in the Arabic lexicon from the word Salaf and Salf in the previous meaning, and it refers to the early periods of Islam and the first three centuries of the history of the Islamic Ummah, as-Sahabah, Tabi'un and Tabi'un Tabi'un. The common historical term Salafi refers to a tendency that calls for following the righteous predecessor and setting him as a role model in the present age (Abu-Rumman, 2017: 36-28).

Simultaneously with the end of the Abbasid caliphate and after the fall of Baghdad in 656 A.H, we are witnessing the emergence of a second Salafi tendency at the hands of Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah al-Harrani and his school with more maturity and enlightenment. This period represents an important change in the formation of the doctrinal and cognitive framework of the Salafi school, so that in this period, conflicts spread between the great Islamic schools as well as within the Sunnis themselves. The books of this team, including the two key books "Minhaj al-Sunnah" and "Al-Aqeedah al-Wasitiyah" and his fatwas, as well as his school of thought, including his students Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, al-Dhahabi, Ibn Kathir, and others, became the intellectual compass of the previous and later Salafi currents (Ihlker, 2018: 33-26).

This line of thought in the contemporary period led to the emergence of the Wahhabi Salafis and continued in the early 18th century until the middle of the 19th century by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the Arabian Peninsula. Abdul Wahab's booklet of Tawhid is considered as the main source of most followers of the Salafi school (Jones, 2018: 15). From this perspective, the stages of formation of the Salafi current can be divided into four stages:

The first stage is "theoretical formation" which starts from Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in the third century AH and in the seventh century AH is theorized by Ibn Taymiyyah and then his students and its foundations and intellectual forms are established. Be. The

second stage is "implementation" by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his disciples, which spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and then to India, Iraq, Yemen, and Africa. The third stage is the "development and promotion" and becoming a powerful and influential current that begins from the beginning of the twentieth century, especially with the fall and collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the division of this state, and the beginning of confrontation with the West by the beginning of the colonial period. Continues in the early seventies. And the fourth stage is the "ideology and jihad" and the emergence of the phenomenon of the formation of Salafi political-jihadi groups, which begins with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and then enters the offensive phase with the formation of al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks (Lacroix, 2010: 147-111). The 2011 Arab uprisings and the establishment of ISIS, which is still present in the Middle East, are a continuation of this phase.

II- Salafism and Saudi Arabia Middle East Policy

From the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 until a decade ago, when the Arab uprisings in the Arab world changed the actor's environment and changed Riyadh's foreign policy, the principles of Saudi foreign diplomacy were based on the policy of maintaining the status quo. According to Sebastian Michel, Saudi national and foreign security policies focus on four main goals: the survival of the regime, maintaining the Islamic way of life at home and abroad, confronting external threats to internal and regional security, and ensuring national welfare and expanding economic influence. in the Islamic world and the Arab world (Gasiorowski, 2015: 176). In the debates over the stability of the Saudi monarchy, Islam has often been involved (Bligh, 1985).

Madawi al-Rasheed emphasizes that religion is the backbone of the Saudi regime's ideology and its influence everywhere. Religion has been used throughout the history of this country to establish legitimacy and maintain the ruling political order. The Islam of Wahhabi scholars has been instrumental in the nation-

building process and has given legitimacy to the royal family of Al-Saud (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

The same view of Wahhabi Islam also spread to the security and identity contexts of Saudi Arabia and turned its foreign policy to a large extent a combination of pragmatism and Salafism (Ebrahimi, 2015).

Gregory Goss also argues that Islam defines Saudi Arabia's role in the world, from hosting the Hajj to playing a role in the formation of Islamic organizations such as the Islamic Conference, the World Union of Muslims, the World Union of Muslim Youth, and financial support for charities. Welfare, establishing mosques and religious schools, and supporting Islamic political groups throughout the Islamic and Arab world. Meanwhile, the Saudi regime relies on religious leaders to validate and approve important decisions in foreign policy (Bush and Ehteshami, 2011: 372-351).

In this context, the role of cultural, ideological and discourse components based on the principles and teachings of the Salafist school, considering Wahhabism, has a special place in the regulation of foreign policy and foreign relations, especially in the Middle East. In fact, the impact of the merger between the Wahhabi Salafis and the Saudi government and the division of the public sphere into religious and political aspects in the second half of the twentieth century, and especially in the seventies of the twentieth century, coincided with the oil eruption and mutual use of the Salafi school (Mandeville, 2021).

It emerged, where the Saudis used the Salafis to serve the goals of the government and the country, and the Salafis also used this relationship specifically in all domestic areas of the country to impose their religious views on society and individuals (Al-Rasheed, 2014: 24)

Almost all contemporary Salafi groups agree on the general lines of Islamic belief and specific jurisprudential-historical authorities from the beginning of the emergence of Hadith in the Middle Ages and then Ibn Taymiyyah to the period of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the new period. The groups differ from the

heritage and literature of the mentioned authorities (Houshang and Paktchi, 2011: 116-107).

Considering the differences, branches and tendencies, as well as the emergence of various readings in the Salafi school, in general, the four main tendencies of this contemporary thought can be distinguished at least in the political arena of the Arab countries.

The first tendency is the "conservative Salafi or scientific and propagandistic Salafi" who chooses the call to Islam and education and does not accept political participation and focuses his efforts on reforming the doctrinal and scientific aspects and responding to the ideas of other deviant Islamic religions. The second tendency is the "imitation Salafi", which is close to the conservative and courtly Salafis of Saudi Arabia and is much more extremist towards other Islamic parties. The party is stable. The third tendency is called "Salafi jihadi", which is completely opposed to other currents, and its political attitude is based on the excommunication of contemporary secular Arab states and takes action for radical and armed change. And the fourth tendency is called "moderate and reformist Salafism", which on the one hand has a combination of Salafi religious beliefs and thoughts, and on the other hand has a movement, organized and even political activity, and believes in political reform and peaceful change (Shihadeh, 2016: 80-57).

III- Taqlidi Salafism in Saudi Arabia's Middle East Policy

Taqlidi Salafism is one of the tendencies within the Salafist movement, which is politically on the right side of the conservative, propagandistic and courtly Salafi line of thought, and is much more radical towards other Islamic parties, and its political attitude is based on the principle of obedience, But the order and non-acceptance of political opposition is strong against them, whether violently or peacefully. The activities of Taqlidi Salafis are focused on propagating, teaching, correcting hadith works, and writing denials on opponents such as Sayyid Qutb, jihadi Salafis, non-Salafi Sunnis, Sufis and Shiites; They oppose any demand for a share from the ruler, oppositional activities ranging from writing an

open letter, a peaceful march and strike to an armed uprising against the ruler, and believe that Muslim rulers are the first to be obeyed. Any remarks or objections to the ruler must be passed on to the ruler secretly and out of desperation. This group has always taken a pro-government stance against other Islamic movements and political opponents, and almost in response to other Islamist groups, specifically the Salafis, who are active or discourse. They have specialized in anti-government politics (Al-Daghashi, 2014: 38-29).

Followers of Muhammad ibn Aman al-Jami and Rabi bin Hadi al-Madakhli in Saudi Arabia, Muqbel bin Hadi al-Wadi'i and his followers in Yemen, followers of Nasser al-Din al-Albani in Jordan, Abdul Malik ibn Ramadan al-Jazairi in Algeria, such as Mohammed Saeed Raslan, Osama al Quasi, Hesham al Bialy and Talaat Zahran in Egypt and Abdul Hadi Wahbi, Saad al-Din al-Kabi in Lebanon, Majdi Hafela, Ashraf Miar, Ayman al-Saadi, Abdul Hakim al-Masri, and Tariq Darman al-Zantani in Libya represent and highlight this line of thought (Al- mushawah, 2012: 116-111).

This school of thought was first established in Medina in the 1990s by Sheikh Muhammad Aman al-Jami, an Abyssinian scholar, and after Al-Jami's death, Sheikh Rabi 'ibn Hadi al-Madkhali, a professor at the Faculty of Hadith at the University of Medina, became the ideologue of this school of thought. Among the ideological features of this current are defending the Saudi government and intellectual confrontation with government opponents such as the jihadist and takfiri Salafis, and confronting partisan currents such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb's thoughts and denouncing democracy (Al-Salafiya Al-Jamiyah, 2012: 113-85).

In fact, today, the Taqlidi Salafi current, which includes a range of characters with sometimes different interpretations, is more commonly known as Jamieh, and especially Madkhali. In this context, the incoming current in Saudi Arabia appeared as an anti-ideology against the current of "Du'a al-Sahwa" or Islamic

Awakening. "Prayer of Sahwa" in the war with Iraq condemned the help of US-led forces; Because they saw Iraq as a Muslim nation. The interlocutors took a stand against them and legitimized the entry of foreign forces into Saudi Arabia and their assistance against Iraq; A position that was close to that of official scholars. The interlocutors further warned of the danger of prominent figures of the Sahwa movement in Saudi Arabia, such as Salman al-Ouda, Muhammad Saeed al-Qahtani, Aid al-Qarni, and Safar al-Hawali.

The Jamies try to advance the goals of the government by issuing fatwas if necessary, and in fact provide a kind of relative acceptance for accepting the unusual behaviors of the government. For example, the fatwa of Abdul Aziz bin Baz, one of the supporters of this group, is very significant in order to normalize the Arab-Israeli relationship (Mirahmadi and Valedbeigi, 2014).

Regardless of the position that the historical alliance between Al-Saud and Al-Sheikh has attained which, in turn, has led to its position in the sources of Saudi foreign policy, the role of ideological and discourse elements in Saudi foreign policy of this actor must also be examined in the regional and International environment.

The rise of Jamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism in Egypt and the rise of Arab nationalism in the streets of the Arab world, influenced by decolonization and the Arab-Israeli issue, left Saudi Arabia without ethnic and nationalist elements within its territory. Was to highlight Islam as a unifying element internally and especially externally. Meanwhile, in the mid-1960s and 1970s, Saudi Arabia launched another wave, the Islamic Ummah, to discredit the pan-Arab wave of Nasserism, advocating cohesion and unity among Muslims. But with the demise of the Pan-Arab project, the issue of pan-Islamism spread among the Arab masses. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia introduced itself as the representative of the Muslims of the world and declared that it is the only Islamic country that is governed according to Islamic law (Sindi, 1986: 72).

In other words, Saudi Pan-Islamism emerged with the aim of overcoming national territorial differences and uniting different

entities in the region, but as a macro-ideology, it became a point of contention with rival identities such as Shiite Pan-Islamism and Brotherhood Pan-Islamism in the 1970s. AD and later (Wehrey, 2017). In fact, this development paved the way for a shift in the direction of Saudi Islamic foreign policy towards differentiation from other discourse and ideological rivals (Lacroix, 2014).

In order to make this distinction, Saudi Arabia provided special support to Salafi groups with different readings, which after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, these groups to other regions, including Chechnya, Kosovo and their countries, including Saudi Arabia returned (Darwich, 2014) which again provided the source of changes in Saudi Arabia's strategy. The source of this change was the second Gulf War in 1991. With the outbreak of the crisis and the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces and the liberation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, fearing for the surrounding developments, allowed the presence of foreign forces in its territory. This permission, which was obtained with the jurisprudential approval of Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz, the head of the Kebar AlUlama Board, angered other Salafi movements, including the jihadists, who accused Saudi Arabia and the Council of Senior Ulama of collaborating with infidels in the land of revelation. These developments also led to the emergence of another Salafi current, the Sahwa al-Islami, which later created the reformist and moderate Salafism. The current criticism of the Saudi rulers and the practical actions of the jihadists led the Saudi domestic arena to radicalism, with the 1995 al-Khobar bombings a turning point in the process. The establishment of al-Qaeda in 1998 and the subsequent attacks of September 11, 2001, in which 15 of the 19 assailants who attacked the World Trade Center were Saudi nationals, led to widespread pressure on Saudi Arabia.

In fact, a trend that began in the early 1990s and culminated in the late 1990s led to two major shifts in Saudi Arabia's pro-Salafist strategy: First, Saudi Arabia's participation in the US-led International Counter-Terrorism Coalition. And second, the shift in Saudi support for Salafi groups to screening. In fact, these two

changes caused Saudi Arabia, while cooperating with the United States to fight terrorist groups, especially inside its territory and also in the region, to cross the border with the jihadist Salafis who legitimized Al-Saud and ruled over the two holy shrines. They were hesitant to make it more specific.

In other words, widespread criticism and, more importantly, jihadist suicide operations inside Saudi Arabia, which at the same time targeted Saudi security and identity, paved the way for a reconsideration of support for the movement (Athanasoulia, 2020: 86-90).

IV- Solving the Problem of Security and Identity in Saudi Middle East Policy

Widespread criticism of the Saudi approach and more importantly, the jihadist suicide operations inside Saudi Arabia, which at the same time targeted Saudi security and identity, paved the way for a reconsideration of support for the movement. It is from this time that the ground is prepared for widespread domestic and regional support for the Taqlidi Salafist movement.

For at least the past decade, the imitative Salafist movement has been able to establish a more effective position and link with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, in the context of the balance between the security components (maintaining the regime's security) and identity (maintaining the monarchy's identity). The reason for this role-playing must be considered at both the discourse and operational levels: At the discourse level, Taqlidi Salafism is a conservative current close to the Saudi senior ulama, emphasizing obedience to the guardian and not allowing the ruler to leave. At the operational level, too, the Taqlidi Salafist has been able to confront rival currents through military and political means.

Over the past decade, Saudi foreign policy has highlighted the role of imitative Salafis in Yemen, Libya, Egypt, and Syria, while distinguishing themselves from jihadist Salafis while playing a role in the Counter-Terrorism Coalition. To continue. a wide range of

tools, such as financial, media, and weapons support from Saudi Arabia, have been used to strengthen the imitation movement against other rival jihadist, Brotherhood, and reform movements (International Crisis Group 2019: 25-33)

Conclusion

The role and position of Salafism in Saudi Arabia's Middle East policy should be considered along with the historical alliance of Al-Saud and Al-Sheikh, which, despite the ups and downs of this relationship, still plays a decisive role in shaping the identity and security of Saudi Arabia. However, the internal dynamics of the Salafist discourse and the escalation of the crisis at the regional level have changed Saudi Arabia's confrontation with this discourse and led Saudi Arabia to differentiate its identity and security with other Salafi, Sunni and Islamist currents.

In this context, Saudi Arabia is trying to combine the security of the regime with the identity of the government, which has always faced significant challenges and crises and is facing the type of considerations, orientations and policies of Saudi foreign policy. Over the past few decades it has made a huge impact, from an Islamist state in the 1960s and 1970s to a Sunni state in the 1980s and 1990s and then a Salafi state supporting a particular conservative reading in the two decades. Twenty-first has changed direction. In other words, the growing support for Salafism in the 21st century, which entered a new phase after 9/11 and then continued with the occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the 2011 Arab uprisings, shows that Saudi Arabia, although seeking to maintain its security and survival as a balancing state in the Middle East system, but it has also manifested its ontological security, that is, its special identity, in the face of Islamist currents.

Hence, the Saudi government has been able to take advantage of the Taqlidi Salafi current and its material and spiritual support; while managing it, within the framework of its strategy, it strives to neutralize the dangers posed by the rise of the jihadist and reformist Salafists, who have many supporters inside Saudi Arabia. Thus,

over the past decade, the Taqlidi Salafist movement has been able to establish a more effective position and link with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, in the context of the balance between the security components (maintaining the regime's security) and identity (maintaining the monarchy's identity).

Manifestations of Saudi support for Taqlidi Salafism in Yemen and Libya have been prominent over the past decade. The Madkhalies in Yemen and Libya, who are in fact the students of Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali, have been able to play their role well within the framework of two levels of identity and security for Saudi Arabia. Despite the Saudi leaders' insistence on a return to moderate Islam domestically and regionally, it seems that support for the Salafi discourse will continue to grow stronger with an emphasis on Taqlidi and pro-Wahhabi readings. However, this support is as long as this current can continue to act in accordance with the security and identity components desired by the kingdom.

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Explaining Iran's Foreign Policy: Ideas, Expectations and Structures (2013-2021)

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Abstract

The importance of coherent foreign policy is due to the foreign policy's impact on countries' survival, development, stability, and security. Different individuals, institutions, organizations have different roles in foreign policy under any conditions in different political systems. This article presumes that foreign policy is the continuation of internal and domestic policy. The present study aims to explain foreign policy by highlighting different and diversity decisions and policies. This article includes a conceptual framework, a section which will explain realistic and idealistic policy, mental foundations of utopian and real policy-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran, explanation of foreign policy and finally the conclusions. The main question is: what effect had plurality of ideas and multiple structures on Iran's foreign policy in the period (2013-2021)? The hypothesis of the research using analytical and explanatory methodology is: During the period (2013-2021), the plurality of ideas and multiple structures as a roadmap have played an important role in the coherence and orientation of Iran's foreign policy. Moreover, Iran's foreign policy decision Making are the result of semantic plurality, structural multiplicity, and different expectations from foreign policy.

Keywords: Realist policy making, Rouhani, Idealist policy making, Iran.

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Introduction

The nature and type of political systems play an important role in the foreign policy-making process. Foreign policy is a function of the dominant ideas and perceptions of the surrounding elites in non-democratic and authoritarian countries. However, foreign policy is impressed by the ideas and expectations of groups, institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, public opinion, and the media in democratic and democratic countries. In the foreign policy process, different individuals, institutions, organizations, and devices are involved with different ideas, perceptions, and expectations, and different roles in different conditions and political systems.

For policy makers, to admit mistake or failure is the worst possible option. Most executive elites resist "Change" and pursue costly policies at all expenses. There are individuals, groups, formal and informal institutions in the governing system that want to continue an approach in any way possible, with no regards for possible consequences; for example, Reza Shah's incorrect policy in World War II (1941) that led to the occupation of Iran by allied forces. Given the necessity and importance of foreign policy in the fate of society and examining the impact of institutions and individuals in determining foreign policy, they should explain this until they can find individuals and institutions in charge that can address these issues.

The present study aims to explain foreign policy by highlighting diversity decisions and policies in this field. This article includes introduction, conceptual framework, realistic and idealistic policy issues, mental foundations of utopian and real

policy-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran, explanation of foreign policy and finally conclusions. Furthermore, this research has used various facts to prove the hypothesis. The main question is: what effect has pluralism and the structure of foreign decision-making had on foreign policy in Iran in the period (2013-2021)? The hypothesis of the research using analytical and explanatory methodology is: During the period 2013-2021, the plurality of ideas and multiple structures as a roadmap have played an important role in the coherence and orientation of Iran's foreign policy. Likewise, Iran's foreign policy and decisions are the result of semantic plurality, structural multiplicity, and different expectations from foreign policy decisions.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model uses the approach of pluralism and structuralism. The pluralist approach refers to influential groups and institutions influencing foreign policy, and the structuralism approach emphasizes effective institutions in the field of foreign policy. In addition, I have used idealistic and realistic policy strategies to explain Iran's foreign and security policy between 2013-2021.

The Concept Of Pluralism: As a correlation of democratic theory, pluralism is one of the most common political discourse concepts in recent decades. The most general sense (the theoretical superiority of multiplicity over monotony and homogeneity) includes all intellectual endeavors that defend diversity against unity. The concept of pluralism in contemporary thoughts, especially about the state, has several meanings and themes, and the subject of our discussion here is political pluralism. Formally, political pluralism is a theory that studies social life based on groups. Pluralism emphasizes that society is composed of many social classes and groups. Therefore, the economic and political system must be such that multiple groups and minorities can compete with each other (Bashirieh, 2001: 65). The assumptions of pluralism are defined as follows:

1. Individuals naturally find unity and solidarity within groups.
2. Groups are real and original people who are composed of like-minded and self-interested people.
3. Specific interests within different groups provide compromise through dialogue, not the implementation of power from above. As a result of this assumption, combine maximum power distribution with the minimum dominance and central control.
4. Contrary to the negative view of political groups versus parties, the pluralists consider different groups' existence to be desirable for the evolution of political societies.

The model of pluralism examines the relationship between state power and groups and social forces. The multiplicity and diversity of energy resources is the central premise of the pluralist view. Political power is the ongoing competition and compromise between different parties representing various interests and profits, such as industrial and commercial groups, labor movements, religious and ethnic groups, etc. This model is influenced by St. Weber, who emphasized the various sources of power in society, and on the other hand, in reaction to the views of some political sociologists, including Pareto and Mosca. They emphasized the existence of an "elite" of unique power in society.

When the decision-maker faces various options offered by different organizations, institutions, and consultants with different approaches and other interests, applying management can achieve a better option. As the highest executive in a structured environment, he listens to the various arguments, seeking to best support a particular choice. Based on the assumption, adequately managed, conflicting views are a weakness. Three conditions are necessary to achieve this:

1. The existence of appropriate distribution among different actors in these resources: power, weight, influence, competence in policy issues, the information in a lot of policy-making problems, analytical resources, and persuasion bargaining skills;
2. participation at the presidential level in organizational

policy-making to monitor and regulate multiple advocacy functions;

3. Spending enough time for discussion and bargaining. (Moshirzadeh, 2017: 19).

Decision-making structure

Foreign policy making structure mean the hierarchy and position that policy-makers observe to formulate and implement foreign policy. Individual actors make foreign policy decisions, institutions, and organizations with a definite status and position in the decision-making process.

I- Idealistic Foreign and Security Policy

The Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic were the sources of significant changes in Iran's fields of culture and politics. The revolution changed the cultural foundation and consequently, the purposes, priorities, and tools of Iran's foreign policy. One pivotal change was the exclusive emphasis on Islamic values and characteristics as a fundamental factor in individuals and groups of Iranians' culture and identity. This real change in the infrastructure of Iranian national identity and existence in determining Iran's foreign policy's purposes and the system had consequences.

The idealists believe that the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which was a continuation of the Prophets' movement, based on Islamic ideology, the unified power of the people, and Imam Khomeini's leadership, outlined the framework of revolutionary activities in Iran and the world. The solidarity and unity of the Muslims of the world and the acceptance of the state (country's) credit boundaries have a particular definition in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. «All Muslims are one nation, and the government of the Iran is obliged to base its general policy on the coalition and unity of Islamic countries and make continuous efforts to achieve the political, economic, and cultural unity of the Islamic world» (Haghighat, 1997: 4).

The revolution and ideology of political Islam in Iran caused

the executive elite in Iran to polarize the international system. It led to ideological policy-making in various institutions, especially in Iran's foreign relations, and strongly influenced the concept and meaning of national interests.

Idealistic policy-making tends to coalition with Colonized nations and oppose the structure of the international system. In order to consider the principle of defending the world oppressed and inviting them to Islam and revolt against governments, and neither Eastern nor Western politics in line with following and implementing the principle of "Nafy-e Sabil" (denial of dominance system) respectively. According to this view, phenomena such as "Country," "Nationality," "Homeland," or "national interests" are not based on modern territorial units or nation-states. Still, according to its Islamic meaning, Islamic "nationality" and "homeland" is defined (Davari, 1364: 84). This kind of view is still present in many decision-making institutions.

The Position of Velayat-e-Faqih in Foreign Policy: Velayat-e Faqih is the center to identify the political power of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the constitution, the position of leadership in the decision-making structure is specific. The 1989 amended Constitutional law increased the Supreme Leader's influence in the political system and expanded his formal and informal institutions' oversight. In the 1979 constitution, the president was accountable only to the people, while in the 1989 constitutional law, the president was accountable to the people and the supreme leader.

On the other hand, this has left the leader free to control the executive and has increased his influence in managing political affairs. The leader's initiative to determine the country's macro policies has also increased, and the leadership has an influential role in explaining the national strategy. It should do in consultation with the Expediency Council. The Supreme Leader exercises his political power in four ways: The Supreme Leader's office, the national representation of the Supreme Leader in the provinces, the representative of the Supreme Leader in national institutions, and

the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Supreme Leader in the Iranian Armed Forces. The Valy-e Faqih also appoints members of the Secretariat and the central council of Friday's Imams and prominent members of the Office of Islamic Propaganda. It can consider the central council of Friday's Imams as a center for measuring the government's political approach concerning domestic and international issues (Ehteshami, 2006: 89-92).

The interpretation of policies and strategies depends on the characteristics and personal qualities of government leaders. According to the constitution, the leader's role is decisive and the center of decision-making and policy-making. According to constitutional law, the Supreme Leader has the supreme decision-making authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Regarding the government decree, making vital political decisions is the leadership duty, and the president does not have such a legal status. Article one hundred and ten of the Constitution of the Republic enumerates responsibilities of leadership. According to this clause, the Islamic system places power institutionally and centrally at the top of the pyramid to create and pulse life within the design and coordination. Some of the leadership duties, according to this paragraph are as follows:

A) Determining the Macro policies of the Iran after consulting the Expediency Council;

B) Supervising the proper implementation of the general policies of the system;

C) General Command of the Armed Forces;

D) Signing the presidential decree after the election of the people.

Revisionism: The Islamic Republic, based on its Islamic teachings and revolutionary mission, seeks to establish an Islamic world and regional order to create a global Islamic society. An order that facilitates and provides the interests and purposes of the Islamic Republic. With the establishment of an opposing political order, the Islamic Republic, will seek to establish a global and regional Islamic order to create a society with behavioral

constraints (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2008: 93). The Islamic State seeks an ideal order. At the beginning of the revolution, the idealists believed that international order had an oppressive and unjust nature and a basis that should be destroyed. With the collapse of the bipolar order, it was replaced by the American-centered, Western-based, and liberal ideology. According to this view, this order has an unjust nature and basis, especially in the economic field, due to its capitalist economy. In the political arena, the United States seeks to establish an American order based on "hegemony." Therefore, the foundations of the American order are considered unjust, and the government of the Iran must work to disrupt and change it instead of the desired order. In the context of an Islamic order, the denial of any dependence on the United States and other great powers, the unjust order of capitalism and political liberalism, and its foundations are emphasized.

In ideal policy-making, the establishment of a world Islamic order and the invitation and unity of Muslims are among the basic goals. According to the revolution leaders, Muslim nations will be able to free themselves from the hegemonic practices of the West and, at the same time, enjoy all the positive manifestations of human civilization in the field of thought and experience by uniting Muslims and reviving their identity (Azghandi, 2010: 55). Adherence to this type of world order is entirely at odds with the international order's foundations or in the rejection of the Westphalian order, which since 1648 has worked as the central axis of the European national –State system. With such a belief in the world and the order of the Islamic world, only laws and procedures can validly derive from the divine will and message. The Islamic Republic, with its pivotal role in the Islamic world, claims a status such as the re-empowerment of the Islamic Ummah. Naturally, the goal of turning Iran into the center of the Islamic world is to abolish the international system of power and completely modernize the relations of world power.

2-3. Idealism:

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali

Khamenei's views have undoubtedly played a key role in determining ideological orientations in the two areas of domestic politics and foreign relations. The Supreme Leader of the Revolution not only has the mission of guiding the Islamic Ummah in all internal and external affairs, but one of his primary duties is to protect "pure Muhammadan Islam" completely. Pure Muhammadan Islam will humiliate the West, led by the America, and the East, led by the Soviet Union; an Islam headed by the oppressed and the world's poor.

The presence of the United States of America as the main enemy of the Islamic Republic in most of Iran's neighboring countries and the attempt to communicate with internal and external elements opposed to the regime has increased the role and position of the ideal government and its affiliated institutions in foreign policy. "Part of the US effort in December 2017 and October 2019 can be seen in the unrest in Iran and the damage to government and non-government offices and institutions." The United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, which had high hopes for internal chaos, did their best to support and incite some internal insurgents and intended to attack the Islamic system. (Kayhan daily, 8/28/2019).

In an article, Javan newspaper also highlighted the United States' role in the events of October 2019. "Washington officials' interventionist statements in support of the insurgents and inciting them to continue the riots show where the protest operations room is controlled. The paper highlights the role of foreign agents in the riots, citing the part of "Michael de Andrea" nicknamed "Ayatollah Mike," a CIA officer in charge of Iran, and his links to separatist groups and the hypocritical terrorist group. It also mentions Saudi Arabia and the UAE's support for the US anti-Iranian plans and Iran's unrest (Javan Newspaper, 9/29/2019).

The Supreme Leader is also distrustful of US officials as part of the system's macro-policy and, therefore, opposes negotiations with the United States: "US officials are not honest in their statements so that we can make progress without negotiations and sanctions. (Ayatollah Khamenei: 23/3/2019). Negotiating with the

United States is a deception. What should we negotiate? what they want? (Ayatollah Khamenei, 5/4/2019). Negotiating with the United States is poison, negotiating with the current US administration is double poison. Negotiating with them is deceptive" (Ayatollah Khamenei, 10/27/2019). The Supreme Leader insists on refusing to renegotiate with the United States: "They want to convince our elites of other (JCPOA)¹ in regional issues and even the constitution under the title of (JCPOA) 2, 3 and 4" (Ayatollah Khamenei: 11/12/2018). General Salami, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, also speaks of the frustration of diplomacy in solving economic problems and economic development. We do not hope that diplomacy can create a way in (JCPOA); what is essential in this economic war is not diplomacy but the revival of the resistance (Salami, 20/2/2018).

The armed forces, especially the IRGC and the Quds Force, play an essential role in formulating, deciding, and implementing the security and defense policies of the Iran in the region to counter the threats posed by the US presence. The presence of the Iranian advisor in Syria and Iraq and its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas, etc. are interpreted in this regard. From this institution's perspective, many measures aim to increase Iran's geopolitical depth of promoting material and spiritual capabilities and capacities.

II- Making Realistic Foreign Policy

Several elements are useful in realistic foreign policy making, the most important of which are mentioned briefly below:

A) The structure of the international system:

- International Economy
- Geopolitics of global powers
- The international legal system

B) Internal power structure:

- The democratic structure of power

1. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

- An Institutional-Legal design of power derived from the constitution (Ministry of Foreign Affairs - military and security forces and...)

- Consequences and effects of sanctions on society

Rouhani's tenure should examine the impact of elitism and masses on foreign policy. During this period, in some stages, populism replaced the structural process in foreign policy decision-making the decision-making structure is somehow affected by some issues. In this way, the elites make policies under the pressure of the masses. On the other hand, the government and the executive elites in the field of foreign policy are pushing the masses towards their goals.

In this case some of the influential institutions in the foreign policy of Rouhani's government are mentioned bellow:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is an important and influential institution in policy-making, decision-making, and foreign policy implementation. The election of the Secretary of State is usually the product of the interaction and consensus of the groups and political parties that win presidential election. According to the political acustom in Iran, the President, with the coordination of the Supreme Leader and his positive opinion, elects the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2009: 268). Government officials react to an issue based on their positions, regardless of their individual or monopoly status. An individual's position in the structure of government, the duties, responsibilities, and loyalties expected of him based on this situation affect an individual's perception of the world and his foreign policy decisions.

According to international relations theories, military institutions should not control foreign policy making process but should implement politicians' decisions, also they should not assume the war to be an independent variable but should consider it as a political tool. While politicians act on practical facts and protect national interests, surrendering politics to militarism is against common sense. (Ghavam, 2007: 233).

Mohammad Javad Zarif, is considered one of the senior ministers in Rouhani's Cabinet as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The foreign minister's membership in the Supreme National Security Council raises his expert opinions at the Islamic Republic's highest decision-making level. During Mr. Rouhani's administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been the most central institution. Rouhani's main purpose was to lift sanctions through de-escalation with the United States. Therefore, the ministry of foreign affairs found its central position in his cabinet. In other words, the essence of Rouhani's policy is revealed in the State Department. But after Trump became US president and left (JCPOA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became inactive, because of disruption in this institution. From Mr. Zarif's perspective, moderation means creating a balance between ideals and reality to direct facts towards idealism. The discourse of moderation in foreign policy is a realistic, and emphasises on the dialogue, constructive interaction and understanding to promote the country's status, prestige, security, and development. (Zarif, 2013).

Oil Ministry: Considering the reliance of the country's budget on oil sales revenue and the need for foreign investment in the oil industry, highlighting this ministry's role and position in Iran's foreign policy decision-making process is of paramount importance. Rouhani's purpose in introducing Zanganeh as Minister of Oil was to use his experience and background to solve various oil industry problems. Zanganeh tried to become one of the most important ministers of the Rouhani's administration by concluding oil contracts with Western companies such as Total, increasing foreign investment in Iran's oil industry, rebuilding the oil industry, and increasing Iran's oil production and sales. Zanganeh also sought to restore Iran's position and role in world oil policies under OPEC.

Supreme National Security Council: In the 1989 amendment to the Iranian constitution, the council added to the institutions and structures of the Islamic Republic. This institution's role is to protect Iran's Islamic Revolution, national interests, and territorial

integrity. The composition of this council (consisting of the heads of the three branches, top officials of the Armed Forces, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Intelligence, and representatives of the Supreme Leader) shows the critical position of this institute in policy-making, decision-making and implementation of Iran's security and defense policies in internal and external domains. For example, this council had a pivotal and critical position in the Iranian nuclear file from 2003 to 2013 but after president Rouhani came to the office, he transferred the nuclear issue to the Foreign Ministry and the possibility of a political and diplomatic settlement increased. He played an essential role in the nuclear negotiation process by supporting Zarif which concluded in signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

III- Realistic Foreign and Security Policy Making

From Rouhani and Zarif's perspective, creating economic development requires desecuritization of Iran foreign policy and normalization of ties with most countries. «To run the country in the economic, social, political, and cultural fields, we must make things desecuritize. Therefore, it should reduce the list of security issues and resolve specific topics in each area .»(Hajiani, 2014: 72).

According to Rouhani, he can introduce Iran as a peaceful, economic and cultural country through constructive interaction with the world, by building trust, pursuing detente, and improving Iran's image through gaining credibility.

In other words, the compatibility of identity ideas, mental structures, and value characteristics of executive elites of Rouhani's state in foreign policy with the international community's Western identity and discipline has led to interaction and detente. Due to the normative, value, and semantic-similarity of the intellectual and executive elites of Rouhani's state's foreign policy with the Western norms and values that dominate the international community, international law, and the rules of the global system, Senior diplomats in charge of direct negotiations, groups of experts in nuclear energy such as Ali Akbar Salehi, who had an advisory and

intelligence role and had studied at Western universities, were chosen in his administration.

The main characteristics of Rouhani's tendency to accept and adhere to Western international norms and rules in foreign policy are:

- Emphasizing peaceful coexistence and avoidance of hostile and conflicting actions against the existing international system;
- Accepting the role of the United Nations and the Security Council on the issue of (JCPOA);
- Emphasizing the role of international organizations and global forums;
- Willingness to attract foreign and international interests, facilities, and investments to participate in domestic economic activities and industrial projects;
- Continuous efforts to improve international and regional relations, including the reconstruction and expansion of political-economic ties with the Persian Gulf countries and the Middle East through the widespread use of bilateral diplomacy and the service of multilateral arrangements.

Realistic Foreign Policy Making and the Structure of the International System: From the perspective of Rouhani and other intellectual and executive elites of the state of moderation, this government's primary purpose is to treat internal damages and eliminate external threats against the Islamic Republic. To achieve this, in foreign policy, Rouhani emphasized interaction with world power, the United States, and at home on economic development. From Rouhani's point of view, considering globalization and integrating Iran into the world economy was necessary so foreign policy orientation from Ahmadinejad's Easternization to Rouhani's Westernization continues by focusing on interaction with the United States. An analysis that the idealists does not accept.

Rouhani's advantage over the nuclear issue due to his years of senior responsibility in the field and Zarif's knowledge with experience and understanding of the international arena led to a peaceful approach and negotiations with the United States. Zarif's

primary mission was de-escalation with the United States, lifting sanctions, strengthening political and economic ties and increasing cooperation with European countries.

Rouhani's government achievement in foreign policy was (JCPOA) which was the result of Iran-US negotiations and a suitable model and achievement for future Iran-US negotiations. Iran resumed talks with the United States to resolve other disputes. Rouhani was the first to use the term (JCPOA) 2 into the country's political literature. During the "Space Technology" Day on February 3, 2016, he enumerated the sanctions damage on the country's economy and his government's efforts to achieve a "comprehensive joint action plan." He said: "we passed (JCPOA) 1, and today we have to start (JCPOA) 2, and everyone, including the proponents and critics of the government, must join us; because we agree in national purposes and the development of the country" (Rouhani, 3/2/2016). Rouhani resumed negotiations with the United States in 2019: by declaring that "whenever the United States cancel oppressive, inaccurate and terrorist sanctions, we have no problem negotiating with it" (Rouhani: 13/09/2019).

Realist policy-makers believe that they should join international treaties to get rid of sanctions. For example, to counter US sanctions, the Expediency Council needs to approve bills related to the FATF (Financial Action Task Force), Iran's accession to the Palermo (Convention on Transnational Organized Crime) (CFT), and the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (CFT).

The Rouhani administration wanted the Expediency Council to approve Iran's accession to the Financial Action Task Force, arguing that the country would suffer more from US sanctions if it does not join the FATF. «Once he said, besides the silent war of the United States against Iran, which caused anger and conflict inside the country, some others inside the country who, instead of participating in sanctions resistance programs, igniting the fire of this silent war with slogan like Down with USA and also by ostentations. Failure to join the fight against money laundering and

FATF conventions will increase sanctions. Lack of anti-sanctions strategy leads any Iranian to be charged with an inappropriate label of pro-sanctions or anti-money laundering allegations against the FATF, all of which are endorsed by the United Nations (Rabiee, 2019). They believe that development and solution of economic problems are closely related to the acceptance of world order and interaction with the dominant world power.

Comparison of Iran's Foreign and Security Policy Making

Fields of comparison	Idealistic foreign policy making	Realistic foreign policy making
Philosophical attitude	Idealism - optimism	Realism - Pessimism
Activists	State, Movements, sub-state	state
International order	Revisionism	maintaining the status quo
Central concept	justice	Power and interest
The nature of power	Strengthen military power and internal capabilities	Economic and cultural power
Great powers	Pessimism about the United States and optimism about China and Russia	Optimism about the United States and the European Union and pessimism about China and Russia
Purpose	Islamic interests	national interests
The nature of order	Islamic order	Western order
Basic concept	Islamic Ummah	Nation- State
Advocators	Conservatives - military institutions and conservatives	Reformists - Moderates -

IV- Research Findings

Foreign Policy-Making of Iran has different characteristics and features that have created opportunities, harms, and challenges to our society. The system of the Iran is democratic; many formal and informal institutions, groups, and organizations are involved in

policy makings and its implementation. It should define a strategy in foreign policy to avoid adopting and implementing contradictory foreign policy approaches.

The gravity of different elements in foreign policy varies in other countries. Ideological, rational, value, normative, emotional, etc., features are significant in different policy systems. Perceptions and misperceptions also play an essential role in policy-making. The success of policies increases the credibility, prestige, dignity, and status of elites and politicians and their failure causes discredit and reduces their political position. Some reasons to inconsistent decisions in Iran's foreign policy include:

- Partisanship and factionalism in the decision-making process (giving priority to partisan interests over national interests): how the specific interests of different institutions affect their attitudes and options. When the representatives of these various institutions make decisions, instead of overcoming the rational choice, the decision results from negotiation and bargaining between them.

- Lack of ability to coordinate formal structures and institutions (intra-systemic contradictions in the field of thought-principles and institutions): there are usually disagreements between individuals, institutions, groups, etc. in the policy-making, but governments gradually make efforts to achieve a unified strategy in the foreign and security policy; they may even make cabinet changes to execute a suitable plan. In Iran, there is no capability or institution to achieve a unified strategy in foreign and security policy.

- Uncertainty of loss limit (insistence on repeating past mistakes, resolving contradictions, and inability to crisis management): Politicians of society do not show that despite the problems and crises in the economy, culture, foreign policy, etc., they change their costly policies and decisions. System outputs (with emphasis on issues and problems) have no feedback. For example, in economics, it is not clear that the national currency's value must depreciate enough to find a fundamental solution. From their perspective should resist the purposes until the situation changes in our favor. But they have not specified how long and to what extent they must pay the

standing fee and who should pay the price.

- West-Centered and East-Centered intellectual rigidity between influential academic and executive elites in foreign policy: Since the Constitutional era, some administrative and mentality elites in Iranian society and intellectual circles are known as Westernization and Easternization, most people who think only of national interests are influential in policy-making and decision-making.

- Lack of pattern in foreign policy: The foreign policy model is a way for states to understand their international purpose. Given the country's limited resources, policymakers must prioritize their programs over maximum benefits. Macro-strategies are not static and evolve based on the country's changing needs, regime change, public opinion pressure, changes in the structure of the international system, and the rise and fall of major powers.

Conclusion

The importance of coherent foreign policy is due to foreign policy's impact on countries' survival, development, stability, and security. The role and importance of foreign policy in some countries makes it the first person to lead and manage it. The Constitution of the Iran has considered Velayat-e- Faqih as a system's general policy plan. On the other hand, the preamble of the constitution also specifies foreign policy duties. Chapter 10 of the Constitution is also relevant. Velay-e-Faqih is the central pillar and heart of the Islamic Republic system and responsible for its general policies. In addition to leading other institutions such as the presidency, the Supreme National Security Council, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they play a foreign policy role.

In idealistic policy-making, by favoring the political order based on religious ideas and Islamic identity over the Western order and emphasizing the concept of "Justice," they tend the Islamic Ummah. They support the Islamic State, Islamic civilization, the Islamic Ummah's interests, and Islamic state and non-state actors in the international system. Simultaneously, realist policy-makers

emphasize the nation-state's role in foreign policy and advocate the national interest by accepting the political order and the global system's Westernist discipline with a subtle critique of that order. In a realistic approach, foreign investment and the use of multinational companies such as Total consider to increase production and reconstruction of the oil industry, and the ratification of the FATF and Palermo is in line with the fight against money laundering and terrorism. But regarding the idealistic policy, the way to save the country from economic problems is to increase domestic capacities and capabilities. International treaties such as the FATF are not in line with Iran's national interest and security, and the United States' strategy toward the Islamic Republic is to overthrow it in different ways and tactics. Therefore, in the negotiations, it seeks to deceive the Iranian agents. The United States does not allow Iran's development and get out of its economic problems; instead, it is an ontological threat to the Islamic Republic. Finally, at the macro-level of decision-making, there is an epistemological and semantic gap between the elites at the international system's order and structure.

Despite contradictory opinions and ideas between officials and managers in foreign and security policy, no significant effort has been made to create consensus. Legal problems, practicality, and to some extent, the love of power and position have caused people with conflicting views on foreign policy to act independently and not have accurate information about each other's decisions and behaviors. More than four decades after the Islamic Revolution, in foreign policy, the executive elites have not achieved a single understanding of politics, foreign policy, national interest, foreign policy purposes, and priorities. Seemingly individuals, groups, factions, and political parties try to sweeten their taste by defining these concepts. Based on the review of Iran's foreign policy output in various political, security and economic fields in the period between 2013-2021, in policy-making and decision-making, different and contradictory policies have been implemented and propaganda has been adopted.

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China's Military Diplomacy and Iran

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Abstract

The main goal of this article is to examine the evolutionary process of organizing and advancing China's military relations and arms diplomacy towards Iran. China is now recognized as the most prominent rising power of Asia-Pacific in the international balance of power. In this regard, the authors of the present study, using the formal statements of china's officials and analyzing documents, have sought to answer this question that "what factors affect the formulation and furtherance of China's arms cooperation with Iran"? The hypothesis put forward to answer this question by the present study suggests that "Analyzing China's approach towards military diplomacy and arms cooperation with Iran can be divided into three separate time frames; Since 1979 to 1990, through military cooperation with Iran and besides earning profits and overcoming technological underdevelopment, Beijing sought to contribute to a more balanced distribution of power in West Asia. Until 2012, China adjusted its military engagement with Iran due to the mounting importance of the US parameter in its foreign policy, but since Xi Jinping took office in 2013, China-which now

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sees itself as a major power-has pursued a more strategic approach towards military ties with Iran.

Keywords: Military Relations, Arms Cooperation, Military Diplomacy, China, Iran

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Introduction

Since the early 1990s, China and Iran, as two ancient Asian civilizations, have for various reasons, developed various levels of military relations in the form of power-building measures such as semi-regular high-level interactions, joint military drills and port visits. The reasons for the deepening of military relations between the two countries can be attributed to various factors, such as Iran's growing need for Chinese weapons, China's special support for Iran's peaceful nuclear program, and the provision of military services by Chinese private and state-owned enterprises to Iran in order to enhance technological capabilities of its ballistic missile systems in terms of range and lethality. Indeed, efforts to engage in cooperation on a variety of issues such as intelligence sharing and security building in the face of US unilateralism and to counteract the transboundary consequences of the activities of fundamentalist and terrorist organizations are another dimension of bilateral military cooperation between Beijing and Tehran.

A study of official statements, and academic sources regarding China's national security suggests that given the existing opportunities and challenges in different periods of time, China's arms policy towards Iran has long been based on differing assumptions; For instance, in the 1980s, the Chinese sought to increase their presence in the strategic region of West Asia through arms cooperation with Iran. In addition to earning money, China was up to attain the military technology from both Western and Eastern blocs indirectly through Iran. However, during the 1990s and 2000s, the Chinese adopted special armaments policies to counter the negative trade balance with Iran caused by the increase

in Iran's oil revenues. In addition, China's political elite sought to deepen the level of arms cooperation with Iran in order to increase pressure on the United States and subsequently divert the international community's attention away from itself. However, it can be said that in recent years, the level and extent of China's military and weapons interactions with Iran have declined for a number of reasons. Among the existing factors are Beijing's unwillingness to limit its relations with Iran and, consequently, to avoid hostility with other regional partners such as Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, Western sanctions imposed on the Iran are seen as another important obstacle that has prevented further deepening of military and arms cooperation between Beijing and Tehran.

In view of the above, by reading Chinese sources, the authors of the present work, using a descriptive-analytical approach are willing to answer the following question:

What factors do affect the formulation and furtherance of China's arms cooperation with Iran?

The hypothesis of this essay suggests that China's approach to pursue arms cooperation and military diplomacy towards Iran was generally a bilateral issue up until the mid-1990s. During this period, through military cooperation with Iran, China besides earning profits and overcoming technological backwardness, sought to contribute to a more balanced distribution of power in West Asia. Until 2012, China adjusted its military engagement with Iran due to the importance of the US component in its foreign policy, but since Xi Jinping took office, China-which now sees itself as a major power-has pursued a more strategic approach towards military ties with Iran.

Meanwhile, in order to provide the necessary answer to the aforementioned question, the authors' efforts have been based on scrutinizing the historical course and ups and downs of Sino-Iranian military relations. In addition, evaluation of the nature of Sino-Iranian military ties during the past decades is another practical goal that has been considered in writing the present essay.

I- Conceptual Framework

Military and arms cooperation and the development of military diplomacy have always been one of the most important and influential aspects of international relations since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and the formation of the nation-states. In other words, Military diplomacy can be described as a set of activities carried out mainly by official defense institutions, as well as other state affiliated organizations, aimed at pursuing the national interests of the state in the domains of security and defense policies. Furthermore, the implementation of military diplomacy should be based on the use of bilateral and multilateral negotiations along with other diplomatic measures. (Pajtinka, 2016) Additionally, Military diplomacy has long been an essential component of international diplomacy and an effective way to strengthen bilateral and regional relations. A noteworthy point here is that in the contemporary era, the transfer of arms has become an important dimension of world politics due to the special role it plays; However, it must be acknowledged that the transfer of conventional weapons not only requires the provision of weapons and military equipment, but also entails a large number of military commitments, which in practice can have long-term consequences (Sachar, 2004: 290).

In recent decades, political and military elites of People's Republic of China (PRC) have decided to make fundamental changes to the PRC's arms policy in order to enhance their country's political-military stance in the international power hierarchy. It is noteworthy that due to these domestic transformations, Beijing's strategic approach shifted from the import of conventional weapons to the strategy of exporting indigenous weapons based on a competitive model. An example of this gradual shift is the fact that China is currently trying to be more active in international markets such as Latin America, Africa and Central Asia, thereby narrowing the field to other actual and potential competitors (Raska and Bitzinger, 2020: 91).

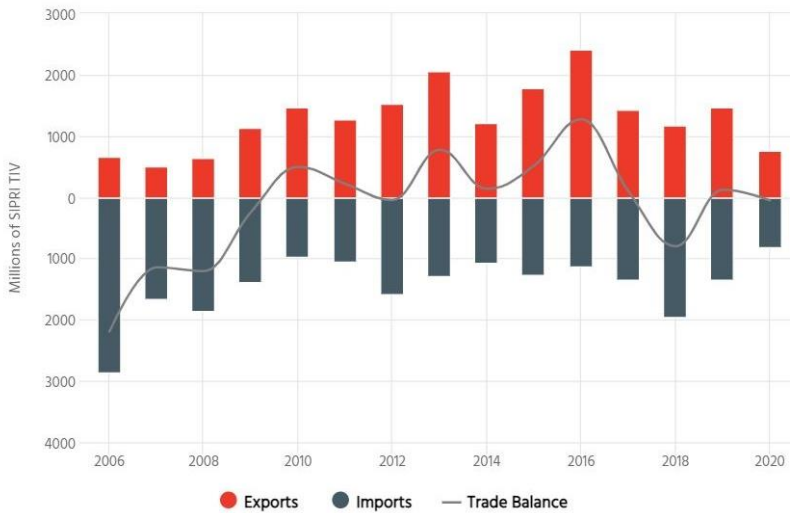


Figure1: China's Conventional Arms Trade Balance

source: China power/ CSIS

Although China's military diplomacy and other domains related to it have played an important role in maintaining national security and military development in various historical periods; since the inauguration of 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, it was Xi Jinping that had opened a new chapter in China's development of military diplomacy. From Xi's point of view, military diplomacy remains an important instrument that can be used to advance diplomatic goals, maintain national security, and modernize the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In addition, he states that military diplomacy has such a critical potential that it can be used not only to maintain and improve the level of relations with neighboring countries, but also to deepen the level of military relations with other armies and governments around the world (Cai, 2016: 92). The strategic approach that President Xi talked about is not just a matter of opinion, because in recent years we have seen, in practice, that Xi's government has taken concrete steps to deepen military cooperation with powerful countries such as Russia and the United States.

For instance, in March 2013, Xi Jinping chose Russian

Federation as his first foreign visit destination since taking office. During his trip to Moscow, he visited the Ministry of Defense and the Operations Command Center of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.¹ In addition, during Xi's tenure, Moscow and Beijing held several joint military exercises called "Maritime Joint Exercise 2013" along with joint counter-terrorism exercises called "Peace Mission 2013". Of course, Xi's adventurism did not end here; because in June 2013, Chinese and American presidents met at the Annenberg estate during which they decided to start a new chapter of bilateral military cooperation based on basic principles such as no military conflict, no confrontation and mutual respect (李, 2014).

But in regard to the defense-security ties between Iran and China, it can be said that over the past decade, the military relations between the two countries, as a result of regional and global dynamics, have entered a new era. In the meantime, the official announcement of "Pivot to Asia" Strategy by former President Barack Obama and rise of Xi Jinping to the highest position of the CCP, both have been among the factors that have accelerated the deepening of the Sino-Iranian relations. A noteworthy point to note about the impact of Xi's rise to power on the Sino-Iranian military relations is that after seizing executive power in Beijing, he sought to enhance China's military relations with other nations around the world under the banner of "Chinese dream". According to his statements, adopting such a strategic approach requires turning the country's foreign policy from the traditional principle of low-level peaceful development to a more active and comprehensive policy (Rezaei, 2021). According to the aforementioned remarks, since 2013, we have seen that the level of military cooperation between China and Iran has greatly expanded.

II- Arms Sales as a Tool for Developing Sino-Iranian Relations

A review of Beijing-Tehran relations shows that during the eight-

1. Xi was the first foreign president to visit Russian ministry of defense

years of Iraq-Iran war, China was named the largest supplier of military equipments to Iran, ahead of the Soviet Union and North Korea. Studies show that since 1982 until 2004, China supplied about \$ 3.8 billion worth of conventional arms to Iran. (Currier & Dorraj, 2009) In addition, it must be acknowledged that China supplied most of Iran's artillery equipments and heavy tanks. On the other hand, Iran provided China with Soviet-made weapons-which it had confiscated from Iraq during the war-and advanced US-made aircrafts (including the Phantom F-4) which had been supplied to Iran under the Shah's regime. In fact, the goal of such collaborations was that China at that time, due to the special strategies it had designed for itself, needed to receive modern military technologies. In this regard, by acquiring aerial refueling technology from Iran, China became able to increase its patrol duration throughout the South China Sea. Iran also sold China a batch of 115 MiG-29s which were flown to Iran by Iraqi Air Force at the beginning of the Gulf War in order to prevent them from being destroyed by the US Air Force (Van Kemenade, 2009: 43).

It also should be noted that military and arms cooperation between Iran and China has long been of a bilateral nature. An example of such an example is that in the form of military exchanges, the Chinese provided Iran with one of key strategic weapons called the Silkworm anti-ship missiles. The reason for the delivery of these missiles to Iran stems from the fact that at that time most of Iran's oil was exported through the Persian Gulf; while Iraq exported its oil through pipelines stretching from Turkey to countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. With the presence of US navy in Persian Gulf at that time, the balance of power was in favor of Iraq, while Iran was largely empty-handed to retaliate against Iraqi attacks. Thus, in 1986, China entered into a \$ 3.1 billion worth of arms deal with Iran, which included the HV2 silkworm anti-ship missiles. In this line, the Chinese anti-ship missiles changed the balance of power in Iran's favor, as they provided for more effective attacks on hostile ships and tankers in the Persian Gulf. At that time, however, China had officially denied

selling silkworm missiles to Iran, yet the United States, for the first time since normalizing relations with the PRC, not only imposed sanctions on China over the sale of this specific type of missiles to Iran in 1987, but even threatened to carry out preventive airstrikes (Garver, 2006: 205-206).

It should be noted that the level of military relations between Iran and China has not been limited to the purchase and sale of military equipments, and has been expanded to cover technology transfer as well. The Sino-Iranian agreement to transfer military technology came into effect when, in 1987, the G7 established a multilateral treaty called the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) to prevent the proliferation of missile technology. Although China later largely accepted the MTCR's commitments and even demanded full accession in 2004, in the early years of implementing the agreement with Iran, Beijing supported its approach with various technical and political arguments. As a result of further negotiations, in the mid-1990s, China provided Iran with a new generation of much more sophisticated C-801 and C-802 anti-ship missiles. Also, 150 C-802S missiles were about to be delivered to Iran, of which only 75 were finally delivered in 1997 due to the US pressures. Years later, Iran succeeded to commence the domestic production line of these missile systems. In addition, China also provided Iran with a number of anti-ship missile launch pads, offensive speedboats, mines and helicopters (Garver, 2006: 181-183).

Following the previous cooperations, in 1997, Iran and China signed an agreement worth about \$ 4.5 billion on the transfer of military technologies, one-third of which included transferring ballistic missile technology to Iran. China had also agreed to assist Iran in setting up factories to produce missile systems (missiles with a range of 800 to 1,240 km that could reach US military bases in Turkey or Israel), helicopters, artillery, aircrafts, rocket launchers, armored vehicles and trucks. Meanwhile, the outbreak of the third Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995-1996 provided the necessary prelude to a new round of negotiations between China

and the United States. In the wake of these talks, which coincided with Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States to meet Bill Clinton, Beijing promised to halt all nuclear cooperations with Iran, in return for authorization of sale of American nuclear reactors to China and relative cessation of US political pressures on PRC over the matters such as Taiwan and human rights. At that time, US was concerned that the dimensions of Iran's nuclear program can eventually be expanded to cover military purposes and Chinese nuclear assistance could further encourage such a possibility. Reports claim that even before Jiang's visit to US, Beijing made assurances to Washington that it will no longer provide Iran with anti-ship cruise missiles such as C-801 and C-802 (Erlanger, 1997). Moreover, even China's former foreign minister, Qian Qichen, wrote a confidential letter to former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announcing the cessation of all Chinese nuclear assistance to Iran (Smith, 1997). In addition, it must be acknowledged that, as another result of this round of talks, the strategic, political and nuclear cooperations between China and the United States significantly expanded. This expansion included China joining the Zanger Committee, which oversees the export of nuclear technology, the implementation of the 1985 US-China nuclear cooperation agreement, lifting of previous US sanctions against China over arms sales to Iran and Pakistan, China's adherence to the MTCR and even cooperation in launching commercial satellites (Van Kemenade, 2009: 53-54).

III- China and Contemporary Iranian Military Doctrine

As highlighted in the previous paragraphs, one of the important aspects of Sino-Iranian military cooperation is technology transfer. In this regard, it can be explicitly acknowledged that China has played an important role in Iran's military modernization and consolidation of Iran's military doctrine. China played an important role in launching Iran's indigenous military-industrial sector by selling missile systems directly to Iran. According to researchers at the Rand Corporation, Chinese design and technology can be found in many series of Iranian missiles; from "Oghab" and "Naze'at"

short-range ballistic missile systems to "Shahab" long-range ballistic missile system. For instance, the Naze'at tactical ballistic missile was developed in cooperation with China in Iran. These missiles, which use solid fuel and have a range of about 100, were built by a group led by Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam during the Iran-Iraq war and played an important role in Iran's military doctrine against Iraq at that time (Wright, 2011: 106).

In addition, Iran has developed its relatively sophisticated anti-ship cruise missiles with the help of China. For example, the development of the high-precision Nasr anti-ship cruise missile system, equivalent to China's C-704 missile is also the result of technical cooperation between Iran and China (Harold and Nader, 2012: 6). The inauguration of the production line of the first series of this missile system was announced after its successful test in 2010. At present, ballistic missiles and naval capabilities are two of the main components of Iran's military doctrine. Since Iran lacks an advanced air force and is unable to overcome this challenge to the sanctions and their subsequent financial and technological difficulties, pursuing the development of various ballistic missile systems and enhancement of their accuracy is essential to establish deterrence against foreign threats especially United States and its regional allies.

In addition to the above, another important issue regarding the impact of Sino-Iranian missile and naval cooperation is that China cooperates with Iran by upgrading its anti-access/Area denial system; a cooperation which increased Iran's deterrent capabilities substantially. Additionally, Iran has not only relied on China to upgrade its anti-access/area denial weapon system, but this cooperation has also provided a suitable foundation for technology transfer. According to some researches, China's continued support for Iran's "A2 / AD" military program indicates that it sees Iran as a key partner in West Asia. In other words, China considers Iran as a revolutionary state which can force the United States to keep its political attention, financial resources and military presence away from the East Asia (Gentry, 2013). The following is a list of some

Iranian cruise and anti-ship missile systems that have a Chinese equivalent; missile systems which with a strong possibility were produced in Iran as an outcome of Sino-Iranian cooperation:

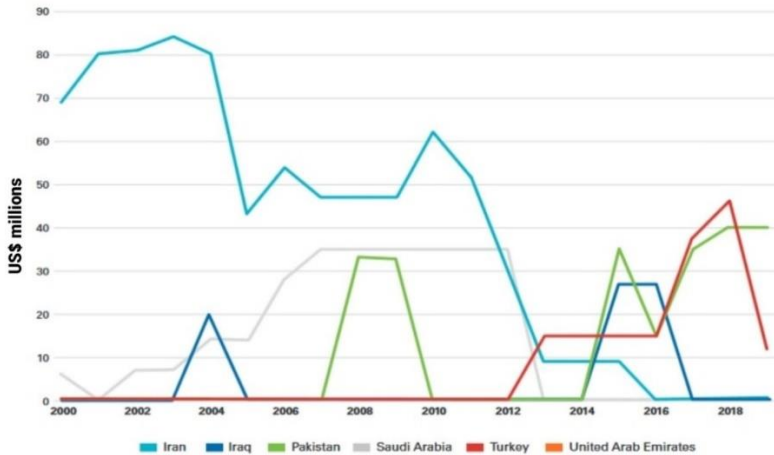
Table 1: Iranian Cruise Missile system and their Chinese equivalents

Development in Iran	Properties	Chinese equivalent	Cruise missile
Late 1990s	Noor-1 missile with an effective range of 40 km (based on C801 technology)/ Noor-2 missile with an effective range of 170 km (based on C802 technology)	C801-C802	Noor
2004	Effective range of 15-20 km /can be guided via radar or television signal	C701- TL-10	Kowsar
2004	effective range of 360 km/ equipped with radar and infrared guidance system	HY-2	Raad
2010	Approximate range of 170 km and radar guidance system	C704	Nasr
2011	Effective range of 200 km/ equipped with radar guidance system	C802-C803	Ghader
2012	effective range of 40-75 km (based on China's C704 and C705 missile systems)/ radar-guided	C704-C705	Zafar
(Gentry, 2013)			

IV- International Sanctions and China's Arms Sales to Iran

Although China's military sales to Iran in the 2000s often continued directly and indirectly through the channels of the third-party states, the level of official Sino-Iranian arms trade has declined steadily since 2005 (Wuthnow, 2015). In this regard, some scholars have attributed this type of reduction in military cooperation largely to Beijing's decision to prioritize its more strategic relationship with Washington over that of Tehran (Harold and Nader, 2012: 6). This argument may seem somewhat plausible at the time when China

had reached to some sort of mutual understanding with the United States in 1997, but as we move away from 1997, the resumption of arms deals between the two countries is again largely on the rise.



Value of Arms Imports of West Asian Countries Figure2:

source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Furthermore, another factor influencing Sino-Iranian military cooperation seems to have been the adoption of UN sanctions against Iran's nuclear program in the 2000s, which placed severe restrictions on the development of Sino-Iranian arms relations, especially in sensitive areas such as nuclear and missile technologies. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Iran remained China's second-largest arms customer after Pakistan with an 8% share until 2010, but since 2005 no official order has been placed between the two countries. The numerical value of the remaining arms trade, according to the Chinese authorities, was the delivery of orders whose contracts were concluded before 2005, so their delivery to Iran did not constitute a violation of international sanctions.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that China has not exported drones to Iran in all these years, while providing various

types to Pakistan or Iran's regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE; equipments that they use in the war in Yemen against the Houthis, one of Iran's key allies in the region. China has not yet welcomed the launch of a newer dimension to its co-operation with Iran. China has not yet welcomed the launch of a newer dimension to its co-operation with Iran on joint arms production. However, this policy has been pursued by Pakistan in the production of the third-generation Chengdu G10 fighter jets and the production of CH4 drones. similar cooperation has been initiated with Saudi Arabia for the production of the same drones (Greer & Batmanghelidj, 2020: 18-20). Even after the conclusion of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2016 and the announcement of a comprehensive strategic partnership between Iran and China, China's arms cooperation with Iran has not returned to normal. Of course, this reduction in Chinese arms exports to Iran is only one part of the story, and in all these years the military cooperation between the two countries has probably continued informally to the extent that even Chinese companies have repeatedly been punished for violating Iran's arms embargo.

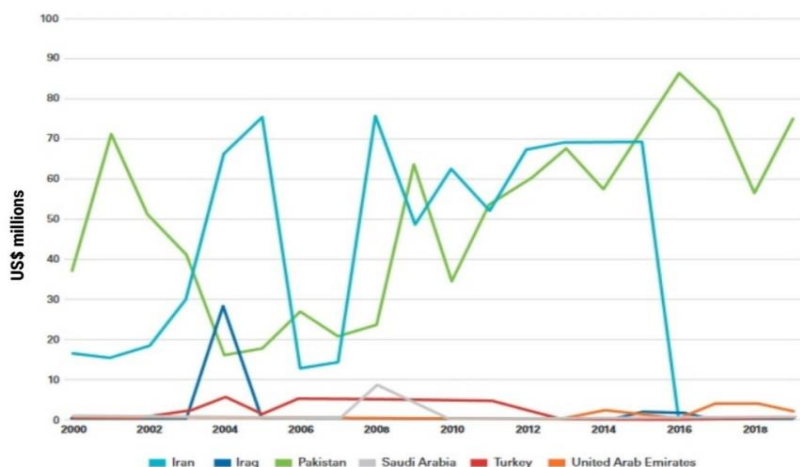


Figure 3. China's Share of Total West Asian Arms Imports from 2000 to 2019

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, from 2002 to 2011, China's total conventional arms sales to Iran reached \$ 727 million, making China the second largest arms supplier to Iran (after Russia) and Iran the second largest arms market for China. In addition, between 2008 and 2011, when Russian arms exports to Iran declined sharply, China replaced Russia and became the largest supplier of arms to Iran (SIPRI, 2012). October 18, 2020, marks the day of lifting 13-year UN arms embargo on Iranian military as a provision of UNSC Resolution 2231. Former president Trump administration's serious efforts in August of that year to extend Iran's arms embargo in the UN Security Council was unsuccessful as China, along with Russian Federation, voted against the resolution. Furthermore, in the text of the informal draft of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Program, which was signed by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries in spring 2021, there are provisions that promise joint production of military equipments as part of the broader cooperation between the two countries.

In addition to the above, one should mention cyber and satellite dimensions of cooperation between the two countries. According to Mohammad Keshavarzzadeh, Iran's ambassador to Beijing, China has agreed to give Iran access to BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (Mehrnews, 2021). Using BeiDou technology, Iran can greatly increase the accuracy of its guiding cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, UAVs and other military capabilities. Also, due to the extensive trade relations between the two countries in the field of telecommunications and the extensive influence of Chinese Telecom companies in Iranian market, the vastness of Sino-Iranian cooperation in the domains of Internet, cyber security and information technology has been expanded as well. For example, Mahmoud Vaezi, Iran's former Minister of Information and Communications Technology, during his visit to China in 2015, met with Lu Wei, China's Chief Executive Officer for Cyber Security and Internet Policy, and Miao Wei, Chinese Minister of Industry and Information Technology. As an outcome of these

meetings, the two countries agreed that year to set up a specialized working group to develop national information networks. China also agreed to finance some of these projects in Iran (Financial Tribune, 2015).

V- China and Disputes over Iran's Nuclear Program

Mounting oppositions to Iran's nuclear program from the United States and its European allies in the past two decades resulted in severe repercussions for Iran which gradually spilled over its relations with China. As one of the consequences, imposition of international sanctions made it harder for Beijing to continue its cooperations with Tehran; especially in military domain. Therefore, analyzing Sino-Iranian military relations necessitates to have a closer look at China's role in Iran's nuclear dispute.

While support for Iran's nuclear program was a key element in Beijing's efforts to strengthen cooperation with Tehran in the 1980s and 1990s, it was finally in 1997 that China abandoned its arms cooperation with Iran under intense US pressure (Garver, 2006). Following the referral of Iran's case of nuclear program to the UN Security Council, China voted in favor of six UN Security Council resolutions against Iran and complied with all the international sanctions against that country since 2012. China has also been actively involved in the nuclear negotiations with Iran as a member of P5+1 group of countries. On the other hand, after US withdrawal of JCPOA under Trump's administration and reimposition of sanctions on Tehran, China despite pursuing political opposition against what it considered as US unilateralism, has largely adhered to US sanctions regime. Of course, alongside this approach, China, by continuing its oil imports from Iran and also establishing unique informal financial arrangements in order to salvage bilateral trade exchanges, has managed to preserve economic relations with Iran. Signing the Sino-Iranian 25-year cooperation program in Tehran by Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in the spring of 2021 and supporting Iran's permanent membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are two

other signs of Chinese relative resistance against US pressures in the past years. It is undeniable that parallel pressure imposed by US on China in the past years regarding a variety of issues such as trade relations, South China sea, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Taiwan, have also provoked Beijing to continue the ongoing Sino-Iranian convergence.

It should be noted that in Chinese scientific and political circles, there are two broad and narrow views on this question that how China should deal with the Iranian nuclear dispute; Some traditional forces, including scholars, the military officers, and even some diplomats, believe that China has a history of friendship with Iran, both in the imperial and modern eras, and that there has been no serious conflict between the two nations. therefore, for safeguarding its regional and political interests, China must continue its close relationship with Iran. Although this view does not necessarily follow the views of the majority, it is largely influenced by Mao's "Three Worlds Theory", which believed that international relations consisted of three political-economic worlds: the first world, the superpowers; The Second World, the allies of the superpowers; And the Third World, the nations of the Non-Aligned Movement. Mao believed that China is a member of the Third World and should not follow the superpowers, according to which China's policy towards Iran should be based on mutual interests and not be influenced by the interests of other countries, especially the superpowers (Hongda, 2011: 54). There is also a narrow view in Chinese decision-making circles that stands for a more favorable relation with the United States at the expense of convergence with Iran. This view endorses closer ties with Iran's main opponent, the United States. Proponents of this approach, influenced by Western theories of international relations are diplomats in contact with Western countries, and some younger generations under the influence of western media. (Hongda, 2011: 56) They also believe that China has far greater interests in the Arab world, especially since China's interest in securing energy resources depends on maintaining political stability throughout the

region and therefore should not be limited to the Iranian supply of oil and gas (磊, 2009: 83).

It should be noted that a positive approach to cooperation with Iran has emerged after the rise of President Xi Jinping to the highest office in Beijing and subsequently pursuing his ambitions to enhance China's position in international system to the great power status in the form of what he called as 'New Type of Great Power Relations'. According to Xi's worldview, China should pursue an active foreign policy and refrain from previous cautious and conservative policies. This new approach is most evident in the remarks made by Chinese state councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Second World Peace forum on June 27, 2013. He implies:

"China is ready to meet the expectations of the international community about its responsibilities and to play a greater role in world peace and common development,"

In addition, Wang stated that China is ready to apply Chinese experience and knowledge in international relations and take the lead by offering public goods and greater participation in global governance (Hong, 2014: 410). Hua Liming, former Chinese ambassador to Tehran, also believes that China, as a major responsible power, should take a step beyond its traditional diplomatic cliché of non-interference and play a more positive role in the issue of Iran's nuclear program-alongside the United States-. (2007). In addition, turmoil and uncertainty will still overshadow regional politics throughout West Asia for the decades to come, and China should play a more active role in the affairs of this region as a responsible actor, thereby establishing the image of a great power for itself (华, 2014: 4).

It is noteworthy that within the framework of Beijing's new doctrine, China tries to play the role of a mediator in resolving the US-Iranian conflict. The reasons for china for trying to play as a mediator in the Iranian nuclear crisis are of significant importance. First of all, the international community wants China to take responsibility as a great power, therefore playing a constructive role-or at least pretending to do so in the nuclear talks can be a

lucrative instrument to depict a responsible and credible face for China. Furthermore, the preservation of China's national interests, Iran's geographical importance and its prominent position in the world energy market are among the factors that require China to pursue a more active role. This approach contributes to China's foreign policy strategy for peaceful development and also enhances its international standing (谢, 2009).

On the other hand, China must participate in resolving the Iranian nuclear dispute, because the regime that will eventually be put in place to resolve this issue will have profound consequences for China itself. In other words, the regime can gradually become the international non-proliferation standard in similar conflicts in other parts of the world, even in China's periphery, including towards Japan or Vietnam and the Philippines, which have also serious nuclear programs (赵, 2015). This approach, while emphasizing the responsibility of China's status as a great power, by adhering to the three principles of "non-proliferation", "peaceful settlement of disputes" and "separation of politics and economics" opposes US politicization of the Iranian nuclear dispute and also calls for a balance between China's national interests and its international responsibilities (吕, 2013: 669).

Thus, in line with China's strategic culture, by pursuing a balanced policy, The PRC will not side with any of the parties to the conflict in West Asia. On the one hand, it is committed to establishing a new kind of great power relationship with the United States, and on the other, it maintains its relations with Iran and refuses to choose between Washington and Tehran (Shen, 2006: 63). By pursuing such a diplomacy, China realizes its energy interests, portrays itself as a great power, secures its strategic interests (including preventing Western powers from monopolizing West Asia, balancing relations with the United States and Iran, and also expanding Chinese influence) and finally preserves the principle of foreign policy independence (孙; 刚, 2016: 3). In addition, it must be acknowledged that adopting such an approach can be categorized as some sort of a "strategic hedging" which

means reducing and controlling existing risks in the midst of competition between regional and extra-regional powers (Garlick and Havlová, 2020: 1).

However, it can be said that the Iranian nuclear dispute has created significant opportunities and challenges for China's foreign policy in West Asia and even in its relations with major powers. Therefore, as international pressures against Iran have mounted, Chinese leaders, considering some critical aspects of their national interests such as the importance of maintaining their reputation as a responsible stakeholder, have adjusted their policy of energy and economic cooperation with Iran. Influenced by this approach, the pattern of China's foreign policy toward Iran underwent some sensitive changes.

VI- Sino-Iranian Military Diplomacy

Indeed, the development of military diplomacy is seen as an important and integral part of China's foreign policy towards Iran. In fact, this policy has expanded with high-level meetings between both sides' military leaders and unprecedented port visits with the participation of the two countries' navies and finally holding joint bilateral and multilateral military exercises. The period of military diplomacy between the two countries was at its peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but after the comprehensive dialogues between China and the United States in 1997, one could witness a fundamental stagnation in this particular dimension of relations. Since then, and especially since 2003 up until 2013, only a handful of high-level meetings between the military leaders of the People's Republic of China and the Iranian army have been reported. Although more or less military engagement and bilateral meetings between senior Chinese military and security officials and Iran continued after the 1990s, it did not regain its former prosperity and it was only after the beginning of nuclear talks between Iran and the P5 + 1 that the bilateral military diplomacy flourished once again.

For instance, former Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan traveled to China in May 2014 to meet Fan Changlong,

deputy chairman of the Central Military Commission, Yang Jiechi, senior diplomat and director of the central foreign affairs commission, and Chang Wanquan, Minister of Defense. A few months later, Habibullah Sayari, the commander of the Iranian Navy, visited China in October 2014. This is the first visit of the Commander of the Iranian Navy to the People's Republic of China. In October 2015, Admiral Sun Jianguo, Deputy Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army, traveled to Iran and signed two military memorandums of understanding in the fields of defense, training, technology, intelligence, cyber, and counter-terrorism (Reuters, 2015). With Xi Jinping's visit to Iran in 2016, all those MOUs became part of the general agreement between Iran and China. In November 2016, for the first time, during the visit of Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan to Iran, a military cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries' defense ministers, which included military exchanges, joint counter-terrorism training, as well as joint military exercises. During this visit, the two sides agreed on the establishment of joint technical and industrial commission along with the joint military commission, the first meeting of which was held in September 2017 in Beijing. The Technical and Industrial Commission covers Sino-Iranian Defense Industry Issues and arms sales, while in the Joint Military Commission, issues such as military training and exercises were to be discussed. (Rezaei, 2021) In September 2018, Amir Hatami, Iranian Minister of Defense, traveled to China at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart and at the head of a high-level defense delegation. In September 2019, Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, also led a high-level delegation to China and met with several officials from the Ministry of Defense and the People's Liberation Army, as well as the Central Military Commission. In December 2019, with the visit of Shao Yuanming, Deputy Chief of Staff of the PLA to Tehran, the second joint military commission of the two countries was held.

Additionally, over the past ten years, China has conducted three joint military exercises and port technical cooperations with Iran.

The first case was in 2014; when two Chinese warships, including the Changchun destroyer, visited Bandar Abbas and conducted joint exercises focusing on maritime security and the fight against piracy. This happened after the Iranian navy helped free the Chinese cargo ship from pirates in the Gulf of Aden. The second case, which occurred in 2017, involved an Iranian destroyer and two Chinese destroyers conducting four days of naval exercises in the eastern part of the Strait of Hormuz. The third exercise was held in December 2019 as a tripartite exercise with the participation of Russian Federation. These exercises, officially called the “Marine Security Belt”, took place in the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. It is noteworthy that China's military engagement in West Asia is not limited to Iran. Since 2010, China has held joint exercises and port cooperations with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Turkey. China has held 20 exercises with Pakistan alone since 2010. In 2010, China even held its first joint exercise with a NATO member, Turkey. China has also tried to establish a kind of balance in its military interactions with Iran and other key actors in the region which can be proved by scrutinizing China's strategic pattern of military cooperation towards West Asia. In this line, in the two years of 2017 and 2019 that China held military drills with Iran, it also conducted similar military drills with Saudi Arabia as well. At the same time, the nature of this type of Chinese military diplomacy is different from that of Iran and other West Asian countries. China conducted the first type of multilateral military diplomacy in the region in the form of a joint military exercise with Iran and Russia. With the exception of China's military diplomacy with Iran, its interactions with the rest of West Asia are influenced by their complex ties with the United States. The United States is so sensitive to its West Asian partners' military interactions with China. For instance, Washington-concerned about the possibility of China's acquisition of US technology-prevented Turkey from flying F-16 fighter jets during the course of the joint Sino-Turkish military exercise. (Kemal, 2010) Through various political and economic leverages,

Washington also tries to discourage West Asian states from conducting joint military cooperations with China. On the other hand, China is not pursuing military cooperation with west Asian countries in order to replace the US military presence in the region. On the contrary, CCP considers the continuation of US military presence in West Asia in line with China's national interests; because as long as US Financial, military and human resources are preoccupied with security challenges in the Middle East, Washington will have less capabilities to use in order to balance China in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, in the past two decades, US presence in West Asia created a security umbrella under which China could pursue its economic and trade interests as a free rider without shouldering any security responsibility. US withdrawal from the region therefore can create a power vacuum which at least in the short run brings instability, uncertainty and unpredictability to the region. However, China sees Iran as a key regional partner in West Asia which has lots of strategic commonalities with. Both China and Iran consider each other as key partners in order to balance what they see as US unilateralism. Tehran considers Sino-Iranian convergence as a key instrument to escape US coerced isolation and also to neutralize sanctions reimposed by US after the withdrawal from JCPOA. On the other hand, China sees Iran as a Key West Asian partner which unlike other regional actors has a much more independent foreign policy. But still there are key factors which make Beijing reluctant about reckless improvement of bilateral relations with Tehran. Instead, China is in favor of a more moderated relations with Iran which can improve gradually if the CCP believe that international environment provides the necessary space to do so. Finally, due to the undeniable political and security dependence of some other West Asian states to the United States which makes it difficult for china to pursue closer military ties with them, China has a much more practical freedom in military contact with Iran; an option which provides China with a leverage to put pressure on the United States in the region (Greer & Batmanghelidj, 2020: 16-17).

Conclusion

As mentioned in the present essay, it is clear that the history of Sino-Iranian military relations dates back to the time of the eight years' war with Iraq; At a time when Iran was under a severe arms embargo and subsequently Tehran was struggling to find any military supplier which could provide it with military equipments, necessary to deter Iraqi offensives. During this period, China provided Tehran with military equipments in order to maintain the regional balance of power in a way that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union could prevail over West Asian politics. Furthermore, in the last two decades, military relations between Iran and China have flourished and as a result, can be named as a key recipient of Chinese weapons. But there also have been a number of obstacles which made it harder for Beijing to extend-or even to maintain- its military relations with Tehran. The International sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program and the following arms embargo made Beijing reluctant to extend military ties with Tehran. But with the rise of Xi Jinping in Beijing, China found Iran as a key leverage against the United States, a view which encouraged the two countries to broaden their relations.

Military cooperation between Iran and China gives Beijing an opportunity to provide it with a place in the region, which has been the sphere of influence of the United States for decades. Supporting the regular meeting of the Joint Commission for Cooperation of National Defense Industries, conducting joint naval, land and air exercises and expanding cooperation in the field of technology and defense industry for the purpose of joint production of military equipments have been among the areas in which the two countries have cooperated in recent years.

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