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Iran and The United States Foreign Policy towards Kurdistan

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Abstract

This article seeks to identify and explain the impact of US foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurdistan on the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially since 2003. The main question of this article is: What is the impact of US foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurdistan on the military security dimension of the Islamic Republic of Iran? the research hypothesis is formulated as follows: the US foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurdistan since 2003 has been influencing the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran in structural and behavioral dimensions including: the formation of anti-Iranian armed groups and formation of regional coalitions. Stimulating the separatist tendencies of the Kurds in the northwest, especially the counter-revolutionary and dissident Kurds can be seen as behavioral part of the u.s presence effect in Iran`s securtty policy.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy, Military Security, Iraqi Kurdistan, the USA, the Islamic Republic of Iran*

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Introduction

Following its continuous presence in western Asia after the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and after a year and a half of diplomatic warfare in international forums against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, United States attacked the country in March 2003.

The US military presence in Iraq and its policies towards the Iraqi Kurdistan before and after the occupation of Iraq led to the formation of a federal system in Iraq, and the Iraqi constitution in 2005 recognized Kurdistan as a federal state. Four years after the occupation of Iraq in 2007, the United States reopened its diplomatic office in Erbil, Iraq, which then turned into a Consulate in 2011.

The construction of the world's largest consulate by the United States in Erbil reflects the specific goals and policies of the United States for Iraq and western Asia, which it has sought to implement through Kurdistan; in the same vein, the United States has even sought to forge a Sunni army in recent years, but that goal has not been achieved. (Moradi, 1397: 42)

Since the establishment of the US Consulate in Erbil, the US involvement in Iraqi Kurdistan has increased. In recent years, the United States has taken some stands on the developments in Iraqi Kurdistan in order to support the Kurds. The US foreign policy in the Iraqi Kurdistan has taken on different dimensions in recent years since the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and has affected its near environment, including the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On the other hand, one of aspect of national security is the military security, which is of high importance. Military security is

mainly related to the security of national borders and boundaries. Given the proximity of the Iraqi Kurdistan to Iran and the US effort to create military insecurity in the periphery of the Islamic Republic of Iran, monitoring and identifying the US foreign policy in Iraqi Kurdistan is a priority for Iranian policymakers and decision-makers. Therefore, as the US foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan affects the security of the western Asia and consequently the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the study of the US foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan is the main object of the present article.

I. Theoretical Framework

The theory of realism defines world politics on the basis of the competition of states over their national interests. Realism is the most important and stable theory of the international relations. The appeal of this theory is usually due to its proximity to the performance of politicians as well as the conventional understanding of international politics. Also, despite the common principles and aspects among realist theorists, this school is not a completely unified whole.

Like human beings whose motivation is survival, governments will resort to violence, if possible alone or in alliance with each other, against any other government or factor that prevents them from achieving their goals. Violence and war are inherent issues in international politics. Therefore, fear is considered as a motivating factor for the behavior of players in international political scene. (Chegnizadeh, 1389: 14)

Despite the diversity of views and various classifications, realists agree on three common analytical bases in explaining the state and performance of government in the anarchic and competitive arenas of the international system:

1. Governmentalism: Identifying the government as the main actor with absolute internal sovereignty.
2. The principle of survival: the effort to maintain existence and provide security in every possible way
3. Self-help: trying to

ensure one's security without relying on others, even if it leads to the insecurity of other actors and leads to security bottlenecks and mysteries. (Chegnizadeh, 1389: 14)

The concept of military security is also an objective, real and tangible category, overseeing the capabilities, capabilities and efficiency of the armed forces in protecting territorial and border security, protection of the people and national interests, and the ability to counter and defeat threats and military operations of enemies and achieving military superiority. (Rashidzadeh, 2014: 36)

Military security is related to the interaction between the offensive and armed defense capabilities of governments and their perception of each other intentions. (Buzan, 2008: 34)

Studies show that US foreign policy in Iraqi Kurdistan is primarily due to US presence in the region to curb the power of countries such as Iran and Turkey, and the issue of Zionist security is of a paramount importance to the US in the region than anything else. Consistent with realism in other words, the US approach to Iraqi Kurdistan often has a security and political dimension, and the country seeks to establish a foothold in the region and increase its power to control developments in the West Asian region.

II. US Foreign Policy Elements in Iraqi Kurdistan:

In recent decades, the United States has designed and implemented a number of policies toward Iraqi Kurdistan. The geopolitical and oil resources of the Kurdistan region has many attractions for the United States, which is why the country has always sought to keep its presence and dominate the region. In addition, the United States has always tried to strengthen the position of the Zionist regime in the region. Controlling regional powers such as Iran and Turkey is another factor that has increased the US motivation to play a role in Iraqi Kurdistan and exercising influence on it is another goal of the US presence in Kurdistan. To achieve the above- mentioned goals, it is pursuing

the following policies in this region:

Dividing Iraq

Initially the United States sought to implement the policy of a "powerful secular state" in Iraq, but the weakness of the Iraqi government led to the failure of this policy and it pursued the second phase of its foreign policy in the form of more support for federalism and power sharing system (Dehghani Firoozabadi and Khediri, 2013: 26). One of the policies of the United States in recent years towards Iraqi Kurdistan has been the separation of this region from Iraq. If, according to US policy, Iraq is divided and Kurdistan is separated from the country, the western parts of Iraq will be allocated for the settlement of the Palestinians. If this policy is implemented, it will lead to major changes in the region, with dire consequences. It will cause frictions between governments and the nations of this region and ultimately they will be drag into the new war (Mullah Omar Issa, 2001: 404)

The Americans have been among those who have openly outlined plans for the future of western Asia and its demarcations for years, and some current or former officials still explicitly call for the secession of Iraqi Kurdistan and even downsizing other countries in the region. Former US ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton has said that the United States should recognize a referendum on the fate of the Iraqi Kurdistan. "The Kurds have long been ignored," he said. Therefore, if they have a decision to achieve independence in Iraqi Kurdistan, I think the United States should recognize it." (Khalili, 2017: 29)

Despite its declared policy of opposition to the referendum and the independence of the Iraqi Kurdistan, it has been one of the most important accelerators in the process of Kurdish secession for more than two decades. Among them is the role of the United States in establishing no-fly zones, as well as assisting Kurdish leaders in drafting a federal Iraqi constitution after the occupation, with the Kurds being the main winners. Similarly, over the past few years, the United States, along with some European countries, including Germany, have been the most important supplier of

weapons to Kurdish forces in Iraq and Syria, with the main result being the determination of the hardware dimensions required in the disintegration process. The Kurds have been seeking and increasing their power in a possible war with the Iraqi government forces. Accordingly, the declared policy of the United States in opposing the referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan is not in line with its practical actions in support of the Kurds. (Khalili, 2017: 29)

The plan for the disintegration of western Asia, which some neoconservative American theorists such as Bernard Lewis and American politicians such as O'Donnell had proposed and even mapped out several years ago, is now achieving its goals and now that the Arab world is embroiled in ethnic-religious tensions, a new space for the implementation of that plan has been found. The west Asian disintegration plans by Louis and Yannon to create new demarcations in western Asia is at the site of ethnic and religious fault lines. Recent plans have been designed on exactly the same basis and on ethnic and religious faults. The center of these plans are Syria and Iraq. Solution B or Plan B lays in Iraqi Kurdistan. In fact, with the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan, the process of Balkanization and disintegration of West Asia begins (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008: 197).

Key tools by which the United States seeks to put pressure on the countries of the region is to support federalism (hidden autonomy) in the Iraqi Kurdistan region; Undoubtedly, the success of this project will strengthen the independence-seeking tendencies of the Kurdish people in the region. In addition, the structure of the Iraqi constitution has been formulated with the intervention of the United States in such a way that it is a privileged position for the 20% of the Kurdish population. The US effort to divide Iraq is based on the components that meets the US needs, namely security and the establishment of a government that supports the region for the US interests. In this way, on the one hand, the United States prepares the ground for the separation and independence of Iraqi Kurdistan, and on the other, it tries to bring a strong national government to power to ensure security in Iraq.

Hence, the United States carries out two contradictory activities at the same time, but the result of both is in the interests of this country. Given the actions and activities that the United States has done in Iraq since 1990, it has prepared the ground for the disintegration of Iraq, but for the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan, the role of regional and international powers must also be taken into account.. (Moradi, 1397: 19)

The strategic goal of the United States and the Zionist regime, which has been on the agenda for years, is to divide Iraq and other western Asian countries to ensure the security of the Zionist regime.

"Iraq's disintegration is the only way to stabilize the country." Even now, the Americans have an elite and sovereign consensus on the partition of Iraq and the independence of the Kurdistan Region, but they simply do not consider the current situation suitable for declaring the independence of the Kurdistan Region, which means that with the slightest turn in US foreign policy, Kurdish independence will be possible in time and this is an alarm for neighboring countries, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Khabir Magazine, 2017: 18)

Fighting Terrorism

The west Asian region is experiencing one of its most volatile periods, a period of instability which is largely the product of the activities of terrorist groups in the region. Meanwhile, the US policies are one of the factors that have provided sufficient space for terrorist groups to operate in the region. In the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States put counterterrorism at the top of its foreign policy priorities by creating a global counter-terrorism dialogue and seeking to strengthen its military presence in the west Asian region By organizing a full-scale battle against terrorist groups and their allies. But a look at the security situation in west Asia today raises doubts about the effectiveness of the US foreign policy against terrorism. (Takhshid and Jalaian Mehri, 2017: 42)

In addition to ethnic divergence in the United States,

Americans are trying to emphasize the human rights pressures of forcing West Asian countries to relocate, so the short-term goal of the United States is to destabilize and identify its challenging forces.

Because of the threat it faced, the United States took action at home, abroad, in government, and in governance that showed fragmentation, poor crisis management, and confusion but over the time, the US National Security Agency turned this actual and potential threat into a tool for its long-term interests. Therefore, George W. Bush's national security doctrine was established in the field of international relations and the issue of combating terrorism became an agent of internal and external unity and cohesion and the grounds for the formation of a new world order was put on the US agenda. (Sadeghi, 1386: 117)

American policy can be considered a kind of "continuation with change." After 9/11, the two issues of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction became intertwined. The United States has plans for both. The Americans' goal in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is to promote and consolidate international disarmament regimes, which they believe need to be standardized.

In the fight against terrorism, Americans consider the source of terrorism to be the two causes of poverty and ignorance. Poverty is due to the unequal distribution of facilities and wealth, and ignorance is due to the sociability of prejudice in the education system. The current situation is also unstable because the existing governments are not able to control the terrorist forces. They refer to these governments as "weak states" and see "good governance" as the solution. The two issues of strengthening international regimes and promoting good governance will be permanent elements of US foreign policy in the future. (Dehshiri, 2006: 18)

The allegations prompted the United States to expand its military presence in the West Asian region after the 9/11 under the pretext of fighting terrorism. One of the areas that has witnessed a

large scale US military presence is Iraq. After Afghanistan, Iraq was the second country to be invaded by the United States under the pretext of its links between the then-President Saddam Hussein and terrorist groups and his pursuit of nuclear weapons. The United States expanded its military presence in Iraq after the invasion and occupation of this country. This presence interfered in the political pillars of Iraq and influenced the future of this country. One of the areas of the US military presence and its influence in Iraq is the Kurdistan region. Under the pretext of fighting terrorism, the United States became militarily present in Iraq and tried to influence the issues of Kurdistan and subsequently the strategic issues of the region with this policy.

Prior to the military invasion of Iraq, the United States sought to strengthen the Kurds against Saddam Hussein's government by establishing a no-fly zone. After the occupation of Iraq, under the influence of the US military presence in this country, it made demands and moved towards independence.

The United States has sought to pursue its goals in the region by having a military presence in Iraq and supporting Kurdistan under the pretext of fighting terrorism. Undoubtedly, the policy of US military presence in Iraq affects the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which will be discussed in the next section.

Strengthening Iran's Containment

The central goal of the Americans' engagement with Iraqi Kurdistan is to monitor Iran and Syria and strike at these two axes of resistance in the region through Iraqi Kurdistan. In this regard, the Zionist regime has established one of the most active Mossad centers in the Iraqi Kurdistan region so that it can easily manage the activities of Iran and Syria and its destructive plans in these countries from these centers. The United States has always had a very close relationship with Iraqi Kurdistan authorities and has sought to influence Iraq's neighboring countries in this way. The proximity of the Iraqi central government's views to Iran has led Washington to seek to establish relations with the Iraqi Kurdish

region. The construction of the largest consulate office in this region which is the world largest consulate can't be imagined as just an ordinary US consulate mission, but also a major center for political, military and even espionage activities and monitoring the actions and behavior of US opponents in the region. The usual activities of each consulate include special services such as issuing visas and business facilities, but the United States also wants to strengthen its long-term ties with the Kurds. In fact, after failing to influence the central government of Iraq, the US government seeks to establish bases with political cover but with military and intelligence functions in order to plan to counter the policies of Iraq's neighboring countries, especially Iran. (Moradi, 1397: 43)

US concerns about Iran's efforts to forge closer ties with Kurdish parties in Iraqi Kurdistan are growing, prompting the United States and Iran to confront each other quietly in Iraqi Kurdistan. The US policy toward northern Iraq is guided by its National Security Council and its strategy of containment of Iran in the region. The importance of the political situation in Iraq in the future for the United States and Iran has led both countries to work in Iraqi Kurdistan in order to influence the new political developments by influencing Kurdish parties. The US covert efforts to control Iran have drawn the leaders of two rival parties in Iraqi Kurdistan to the United States in recent years. Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani arrived in Washington at the invitation of the United States and met with the US Secretary of State and other officials and signed a peace agreement at the US State Department in the presence of the US Secretary of State. Under the agreement, the two Iraqi Kurdish groups put aside their differences and agreed to jointly run the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq. The Americans signed the Washington agreement between the two parties, Patriotic Union and Democratic Party, in addition to preventing the Kurds from reconciling with the Ba'athist regime in the past and influencing the Kurds (so that the Iraqi Kurds owe themselves to the United States) thus preventing

Iranian influence in Kurdistan. They consider Iraq as a strategic goal. (Mullah Omar Al-Issa, 2001: 205)

Concerns about the growing power and influence of Shiite parties, potentially Pro-Iranians, forced Washington to seek a counterweight to Iraq's future federalist structure. The existence of relative stability in the northern regions of Iraq was one of the few points of American mental reliance. "Only a small number of American troops were stationed in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Although the Kurds never threatened the Americans militarily, they were able to achieve the desired goals by supporting the United States in overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Since the Kurds have formed the second largest parliamentary bloc and the largest secular group, the United States' interest in the Kurds has grown to an unprecedented level. The Kurds became an important issue for Americans from then on. They gradually defended the establishment of secularism in Iraq and succeeded the failed moderates such as Iyad Allawi, and became a factor in striking a balance between Shiites and Sunnis, acting as an arbiter between them and resolving disputes. (Jafreh, Manti and Rahgovi, 1390: 72)

The US policy toward Iraq under Bush Sr. after the invasion of Kuwait was based on restriction, siege, and weakening its government.

the policy of "limiting" and weakening Iraq continued as before, and it became clear that the United States was locking the Iraqi regime in a cage. By implementing this policy, the United States tried to prevent the growth and supremacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the regional and supra-regional arenas. Thus, the policy of limiting and weakening Iraq was deemed necessary to confront the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Rouhi, 2008: 12)

The United States and the Zionist regime are the two main foreign actors opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Iraqi Kurdistan region and supporters of Iraqi Kurdistan's independence behind-the-scenes, whose actions in this region are in conflict with the security of west Asian countries. The regional approach of the

United States to reduce Iran's influence in Iraq has also put on the US agenda the weakening of Iran's relations with the Iraqi Kurds.

Therefore, the United States has pursued weakening of relations between Iran and the Iraqi Kurds in an effort to strengthen its control over Iran. In this regard, in 2007, contrary to international custom, US forces occupied the consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the city of Erbil during a military operation and arrested five Iranian diplomats. (Rouhi, 2008: 12)

Weakening the Axis of Resistance

Ahmad Dastmalchi, the former ambassador of Iran to Lebanon, in an interview with a reporter of the Young Journalists Club, which was published on the club's website in February 2017, said about increasing Israeli-UAE cooperation in the region: I believe an American-Zionist coalition has been formed in the region led by Saudi Arabia. It is also part of this coalition. He added: "This coalition is trying to be in full coordination with the Zionist regime in order to fight and confront the axis of resistance." Regarding the increase of US troops in Iraqi Kurdistan, he noted: "The United States is trying to establish itself in northern Iraq and eastern Syria, and with the cooperation of ISIS operatives and the PKK forces, these areas are being used for their own purposes and disintegration of Syria." and finally blocking the path of resistance. (Dastmalchi, Young Journalists Club, 11/19/96. Available at: WWW.yjc.ir)

Hussein Amir Abdullahian, a former diplomat and an expert on the Arab-Asian region, said in a special news conference in June 2017: "The Americans want to weaken the axis of resistance. Saudi Arabia is trying to legitimize Trump's power to counter and confront. Iran and the axis of resistance in the name of fighting terrorism. Abdullahian believes that the Americans, with the support of Saudi Arabia, intend to form a new coalition against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region. (Amir Abdullahian, Nation House News Agency, available at: WWW.icana.ir)

Amir Mousavi, director of the Center for Strategic Research and International Relations in Iran, told a news conference in Iraq

on December 2009: "The goal of the Americans and their allies in the west Asian region is to weaken the Shiites, because the axis of resistance is Shiite- oriented. The Zionist regime is well aware that it is the Shiites who can destroy them. The Americans in Iraqi Kurdistan are also trying to exploit the protests to purge the politicians who have been active since 2003 so that some being replaced with the young, technocratic, self-centered, secular trends to increase their own influence and weaken the axis of resistance. (Mousavi, Islamic Azad University News Agency available at: <https://ana.ir>)

Expanding Influence in Iraq

"The main goal of the United States in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein regime was to establish a federal government in the country in order to expand its influence in Iraq by weakening the central government and establishing a strong foothold in the region.

After the invasion of Iraq, the United States sought to establish a strong, secular central government with western inclinations. The failure to achieve this goal and the division of the Iraqi political scene into Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish groups, and the rise of Shiites to power after the 2004 elections, prompted the country to exploit interventions (divisions between the three Iraqi factions) to keep the country afloat. Being among the above- mentioned three groups, the Kurdistan region, due to its geopolitical position, natural resources and energy, its better economic and security situation than other parts of Iraq, is the largest political minority in Iraq with secular tendencies a tool to influence Iran, Turkey and Syria Kurds was more in line with the US goals and interests when necessary, as well as the Kurds' need for western support to achieve its political independence, and as a result, the Kurds became the best input from a marginal ally to a strategic one for the United States. The remarks of Gen. G. Garner, the first US military ruler in Iraq, clearly show the importance of the region to the United States: "If American efforts in Iraq fail, the independence of the Kurds must be defended. Just as the Philippines was the American platform for the

preservation of the pacific, Kurdistan in this century can be the American platform for western Asia” (Dehghani Firoozabadi and Khediri, 2013: 8)

The cornerstone of the largest US consulate in the world was laid on July 6, 2016 in the presence of US consul general in Erbil Ken Gross, the US Ambassador to Baghdad Douglas Suleiman and the then Prime Minister Nichirvan Barzani in Erbil. It was the largest US consulate in the world. The US government reopened its diplomatic office in Erbil four years after the occupation of Iraq in 2007 and in 2011 it officially became a consulate.

The construction of the largest US consulate in Erbil also indicates that the United States has prepared plans for Iraq and the west Asian region, which it will seek to implement in the future through the Kurdistan Region. In this way, the United States even in the past years sought to form a Sunni army, which, of course, did not materialize. (Moradi, 1397: 42)

Creating and Strengthening Anti-Iran Armed Groups

Although Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government officials have repeatedly stated that they are indifferent to the fate of Kurds in other countries and do not support them, this has prevented Kurdish opposition groups (KDP and PJAK) and Turkey (PKK) from gathering in no parts of Iraqi Kurdistan. In addition to the Kurds who are living in four west Asian countries (Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran), the Kurdish diaspora of 600,000 in major cities of the world is a soft component of the power of Kurdish society, which energizes the life of Kurds as a middle class and productive populations. In short, it can be said that the collective will of the Kurds is to strengthen and consolidate the solidarity of the Kurdish community in Erbil in order to lead the life of the free Kurds; However, this solidarity between the Kurds has created misunderstandings against them and turned this opportunity into a threat. (Nasri, 2006: 194)

Support for insurgent and terrorist groups to achieve specific goals is rooted in US foreign policy. In addition, the United States has turned a blind eye to the financial assistance of its allies, such

as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to terrorist groups, thereby indirectly reinforcing these groups. Former US President Barack Obama used his special power to prevent any disruption in the process of equipping and strengthening terrorist groups, and the federal law banning the transfer of weapons to terrorist groups and their supporters under the pretext of the importance of sending weapons. For these groups, the US national interest was ignored. As a result of such policy, terrorist groups were strengthened and moderate groups were encouraged to join them; an event that has led to the development of the field of activity and the increase in the power of terrorist groups in the region. (Takhshid and Jalaian Mehri, 2017: 45)

The most dangerous policy of the US-backed Kurdish regional government is to turn the northern region of Iraq into a base for PJAK and PKK forces to carry out terrorist attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran. This policy could affect Iraqi-Iranian Kurdish relations; However, there are several reports that show PJAK terrorist attacks are carried out with the support and assistance of the US military, training and intelligence elements (Rouhi, 2008: 16).

With a military presence in Iraqi Kurdistan, the United States has formed a security shield for counter-revolutionary groups. Countless reports indicate that American generals and experts regularly visit the headquarters of counter-revolutionary groups and provide them with the necessary instructions. Seymour Hersh, the New Yorker's November 27, 2008, research correspondent, uncovered US and Zionist aid to counter-revolutionary groups. Hersh writes: The United States has promised Turkey to end the activities of the PKK-affiliated Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iran. The United States and the Zionists have illegally provided equipment and training to the group. The Zionists and the United States, who have lost the conflict with Iran in various fields, have identified and of course, promoted such a group. Some are trying to fill the gap of their direct presence, especially in Iran.

In the Iraqi Kurdistan region, the United States has supported

groups to put pressure on Iran. If the PJAK group has not been eliminated or expelled from northern Iraq, it is because the Americans are pressuring them to stay there whenever they want, in the form of the PKK to Turkey and in the form of PJAK to Iran by putting pressure, the Americans equip them and give them facilities.

III. The Impact of US Policies towards Iraqi Kurdistan

The US policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan is not only not in the interests of the citizens of Iraqi Kurdistan, but will create major problems for the countries of the region in various economic, political, security and social fields and pose a serious threat to neighboring countries. The region of Kurdistan will be like the Iran, Turkey, Syria and will affect the national security of these countries. Given that the Islamic Republic of Iran shares a border with the Kurdistan Region and cities bordering the region have a Kurdish population, the negative consequences of US policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan are critical to the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially in the long run.

Structural Impact

Any structural change on the border between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan or deep inside Iraqi Kurdistan will have a structurally negative security impact on Iran. The structural impact of US policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan on the military security of the Islamic Republic varies; establishment of regional alliances, establishment of armed structures against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the western and northwestern border regions, establishment of multilateral military mechanisms with NATO, Arab countries in the region and the Zionist regime in the medium and long term, establishment of bilateral security defense mechanisms with Iraqi Kurds are one of the structural effects of US policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan on the military security of of Iran.

The Behavioral Impact

Given that one of the policies of the United States towards Iraqi Kurdistan is the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan, this policy has

mental-emotional effects on Iranian Kurds and is a basis for strengthening Kurdish nationalism in the Kurdish regions of Iran.

In addition, the US presence (given its hostile policies against the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past three decades) in northern Iraq, has affected Iran's national security on Iran's western borders. One of the strategies of the American neo-conservatives during the Bush Jr. term in office to change the regime in Iran was to provide financial-logistical support to the Iranian opposition in Iraq, a strategy that gradually caught the attention of US politicians in both the Republican and Democratic parties. Looking at US security documents, it can be seen that the US policies in this area are the same in different administrations. Due to the strengthening of Iranian Kurdish opposition parties by the United States, including the PJAK opposition group, tensions in Iranian Kurdistan have increased after the US invasion of Iraq. (Gadimi and Ghorbani Sheikhneshin, 2012: 76)

The US policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan will have adverse effects, especially militarily, on peripheral countries namely the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, and Syria, and even more so given the current political situation in Iran, due to linguistic, cultural, and religious commonalities. Any action and interference in the military-political and cultural affairs in Iraqi Kurdistan region will also affect the Iranian Kurds and in a way affect the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The US policies in Iraq will affect demographic, ethnic, and racial issues in Iran and new threats will be emerged with a new approach, eliminating military security threats, that is, the protection from danger and harm. Regarding the behavioral impact of US policies toward Iraqi Kurdistan on the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, it can be said that the behavioral impact of US Policies on Iraqi Kurdistan is very threatening to Iran. The US has invested more in Iraq and that has made things harder for Iran.

Stimulating the separatist tendencies of the northwestern Kurds, especially the counter-revolutionary and dissident Kurds,

and intensifying the enemy's intelligence activities in the west and northwest of the country, the US presence in Kurdistan can reduce Iran's presence and influence in Kurdistan and its mobilization. The possibilities of the Kurdish counter-revolutionary activities against Iran's military security, the increase of the Zionist regime activities in the region, the bridging of this region to attack the goals and interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the presence of US and Israeli forces in the Iraqi Kurdistan region have a negative impact on Iran's military security.

Conclusion

The US foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan is theoretically framed in terms of realism. In this regard, the US approach to Iraqi Kurdistan is mostly of a security-political approach, and the country seeks to gain influence and power to control the developments in western Asia.

In brief, it can be said that: part of the US policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan makes a structural impact on the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran including: the establishment of anti-Iranian armed groups, the establishment of multilateral military mechanisms, the establishment of bilateral security defense mechanisms and the formation of regional coalitions are among the structural effects of the US policies towards Iraqi Kurdistan in the military security of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In addition, part of the US policy in Iraqi Kurdistan is to pave the way for stimulating the secessionist tendencies of the Kurds in Iran's northwest, especially the counter-revolutionary groups, and intensifying the enemy's intelligence activities in the west. The US presence in Kurdistan could lead to the mobilization of Kurdish counter-revolutionary forces against military security; increasing the presence of the Zionist regime in the region; putting the region at the forefront of threats against the goals and interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The presence of the US forces and the Zionist regime in Iraqi Kurdistan are among the behavioral effects of US policies.

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Brexit and its Impacts on Iran-EU Relationship

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Abstract

The British people vote to withdraw from the European Union (Brexit) in 23 June 2016 referendum is one of the most important events occurred in the European Union since its formation. Brexit can highly affect the future status of the EU in the international system and the relationship between the EU and other regions of the world. Withdrawal of the UK from European Union occurred after the agreement reached between Iran and E3+3 on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and at the time when Iran-EU relationship seemed to improve, so this departure can highly shape and affect Iran-EU relationship. The question this paper addresses is that how the Brexit would affect the relationship between the EU and Iran. To answer this question, the hypothesis proposed here is that the Brexit would improve the relationship between Islamic Republic of Iran and the European Union by decreasing the transatlantic weight and the US-oriented tendency in the EU. This article uses descriptive-analytical approach.

Keywords: *Brexit, Iran, European Union (EU), Britain, United States, Transatlanticism*

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Introduction

The years following the second world war witnessed the enormous efforts of Europe to improve the level of convergence and unification among European countries. The European Union (then the European Community), as the result of these efforts, is considered a wonderful phenomenon in international relations studies which not only increased the number of actors in the international scene and brought the international studies out of the single issue of governing states, but also helped to moderate the subject of national sovereignty. However, this transition did not happen that smoothly, and the convergence of European countries in the post-world war II highly experienced its ebb and flows, and faced various challenges (Naghibzadeh, 2003: 6).

One of the significant challenges was that there were certain paradoxical approaches and policies among some European states, especially influential ones. No state among European states has ever proved so problematic and has created severe contrasts in different phases of the integration process than the UK.

It is worth mentioning that even Britain tried to continue its historical balancing policy among European countries as well as between the US and the EC/EU after joining the bloc. On the other hand, the UK has always been more inclined toward its transatlantic partner, and has prioritized the US over her relationship with European countries. The reason lies in the shared history, an overlap in religion and a common language and legal system which formed a specific relationship between them known as the “special relationship” which is the exceptionally close political, diplomatic, cultural, economic, military and historical

relations. Former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt once said: “the Atlantic Ocean between England and America is broader than the channel between England and continental Europe” (Häussler, 2015: 2).

This preference policy led to some disagreement in the UK over the EU policies and finally a proposal for withdrawal from the bloc was put forward. The issue of remaining or leaving the EU has been raised since the late 1980s, and has always been a major concern for the British politicians and policy makers, especially for the Conservative activists. This party promised to hold a referendum when it came to power in 2010.

The 23 June 2016 referendum and the British vote for Brexit is one of the important (some experts believe the most important) developments occurred in the European Union since its formation. The immediate effects of Brexit soon affected the international markets and many speculations have been raised on the issue of the EU fate, and the UK relationship with the EU and other states. This referendum and the popular vote to leave the EU would have short-term and long-term consequences at different levels. The Brexit consequences on international relations and the EU relationship with other regions and states on the global scene would show itself in the near future especially after the real Brexit would happen.

Various countries all over the world are more or less affected by the Brexit and the Islamic Republic of Iran is no exception in this regard. Iran, as one of the regional, influential and emerging powers, has been affected in one way or another by the Brexit. The EU- Iran relationship in the post- Islamic revolution has experienced ups and downs, and this relationship has always been under the influence of both sides' domestic developments. For example, the creation of the European single currency (the Euro), the convergence of the EU member states' foreign policy and the EU energy policy are among the domestic issues for the EU which have deeply affected the Iranian economy and foreign policy. Iran and the European Union are considered important trade partners

for each other and except during the past couple of years (sanctioning Iran over its nuclear program and ensuing dispute between the two sides), they have enjoyed high levels of trade and commerce in the past two decades. The Islamic Republic of Iran has also considered the European Union as an important counterbalance against the United States on various occasions, especially after the EU played an important role in the nuclear deal reached between Iran and P5+1 group which was called Iran nuclear deal the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in this regard Iran- EU relationship would be affected by the EU domestic developments including the Brexit.

Now the question that this paper addresses is that how the Brexit would affect the relationship between the EU and Iran. To answer this question, the hypothesis proposed here is that the Brexit would improve the relationship between Iran and the European Union by decreasing the transatlantic weight and the US-oriented tendency in the EU.

After briefly reviewing the historical relationship and ups and downs of the relations between Britain and the European Union and the causes and consequences of the Brexit, finally the effects of Brexit on the EU- Iran relationship would be examined. To do so, this paper uses analytical-descriptive approach.

Theoretical Framework

The rise of integration theories in International Relations owed European developments after Second World War. There are considerable theories which try to explain the nature and process of integration in this era. These theories attempt to clear why and how European Union established and how works to now. Functionalism, federalism, intergovernmentalism, transactionalism and neofunctionalism are the substantial theories of European integration.

In these theoretical approach, it seems to intergovernmentalism can explain integration and disintegration in European Union better than others. Intergovernmentalism emphasises the role of

the nation state in integration, and argues that the nation state is not becoming obsolete due to European integration. Alan Milward, an intergovernmentalist writer, argued that the national governments of the member states were the primary actors in the process of European integration, and rather than being weakened by it as some of their sovereignty was delegated to the EU, they became strengthened by the process. This is because in some policy areas it is in the member states' interest to pool sovereignty. Intergovernmentalists argue that they are able to explain periods of radical change in the EU as when the interests of the member states governments converge and they have shared goals, and periods of slower integration as when the governments' preferences diverge and they cannot agree. They continually emphasise the role of national governments and the bargaining between them in the integration process (Hatton, 2011: 1).

Some scholar uses from integration theories to clarify the nature of Brexit and disintegration in the Union. In integration theories, it seems to intergovernmentalism has more capability to explain disintegration in European Union. Intergovernmentalism provides a better perspective on recent developments especially Brexit. It suggests that states who question further European integration or threatening to repatriate competences, like the UK, do so by appealing to their 'national interest'. If Europe should disintegrate, it will certainly be left to the nation states to pick up the pieces (Clemm, 2013).

Yet, as Clemm (2013) argued that the theory insufficiently explains why integration occurs. Intergovernmentalism, meanwhile, defines national interest mostly in economic terms. But this ignores that European disintegration heavily hinges on social factors that economics can't explain. If the UK government wants to repatriate matters of national security to Britain, is it really following its economic interest? Or does it just cater for the EU-skepticism of the British electorate? Populations (and hence electorates) may have EU-skeptic or EU-friendly (or EU-ignorant) preferences that are perhaps economically irrational but

nonetheless relevant for explaining integration or predicting disintegration. Few theories of European integration have accounted for ‘softer’, i.e. sociological factors.”

However, some scholar such as Erik Jones (2016) believed that “the British vote to leave the European Union (EU) has introduced a new political dynamic in Europe. For lack of a better term, let’s call it ‘disintegration’. The problem is that we know very little about the many different motivations and other forces at work. Disintegration is not integration in reverse. We cannot simply take the many different models or interpretations of what brought European countries together and run them backward to understand events as they are unfolding. We cannot use past experience as much of a guide to anticipate future events or developments either. Lacking a coherent theory of disintegration, we are left to rely primarily on guesswork.”

I. UK-EU Relationship on Historical Views

The idea of a united Europe, dating centuries ago, was not fulfilled until after the World War II. The continent of Europe which was shattered by the two world wars was in need of peace, and European countries came to the conclusion that forming some kind of union constituting of the then main states of Western Europe (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) was the best solution to achieve this peace. So the first major step toward European integration took place in 1950 and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and then the European Community (EC) were established respectively in 1951 and 1967. The first enlargement took place in 1973 by the accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom and later Greece, Spain and Portugal in the 1980s. Following the creation of the European Union in November 1993, it has enlarged to include a further sixteen countries by July 2013. Now it involves 28 European countries.

The reasons for having a European supranational organization lied in the political and economic motives. The political motive

was based on the idea that only a supranational organization could eliminate the threat of war between the European countries. And the economic motive rested on the belief that larger markets would promote competition, and thus lead to greater productivity and higher standards of living. In short, the principal goal was to promote and expand cooperation among member states in economics and trade, social issues, foreign policy, security and defense, and judicial matters. But not all countries shared the same idea from the beginning. The relationship between the European Union (then the EC) and Britain proved problematic since the early days of its formation. The British government initially refused to participate in the negotiations leading to the setting up of the European communities in the 1950s, then applied to join in the 1960s and was twice rejected. Entry was finally negotiated in 1971 and Britain became a member in 1973.

As the history shows, the UK's relationship with Europe has always played a major role in the British politics and various politicians were and still are influenced by how this relationship works. It was thought in the United Kingdom that conceding power to any outside body meant the loss of national sovereignty, so the UK was initially more interested in creating a European free trade area which would not involve any sacrifice of national sovereignty. Therefore, in 1959 the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was created by countries like Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Portugal, Iceland and Switzerland, with Finland as an associate member. But Britain soon found out that she was at the danger of economic and political isolation if she refused to join the Community, and finally Britain became a member in 1973.

On the whole, this relationship has been, and remains, controversial. Gordon Brown once said: "Since the end of the Second World War Britain has faced no question more important and more contentious than that of our relationship with Europe" (Brown, 1997).

Britain held its first national referendum on the issue of

whether she should remain a part of the EEC (which she had joined in 1973). The importance of this referendum was that for the first time the population had been asked to decide on a specific issue, and also the fact that entering the EEC shifted the center of powers from British laws to Brussels and European law which had priority over the former wherever they may conflict.

The second referendum held in 23 June 2016 was the turning point in the UK-EU relationship in which “Leave” won by 52% to 48%. The turnout was 71.8% – more than 30 million people voting. This referendum was held given the Article 50, the EU treaty’s withdrawal clause which is about “the right of a Member State to withdraw from the European Union introduced for the first time with the Lisbon Treaty” (Article 50, 2016).

This referendum led to the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron who resigned on the day after losing the referendum. He is the second Prime Minister who resigned over the issue of EU – the first one was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

II. The Causes and Consequences of Brexit

But how and why the idea of Brexit (the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union is commonly known as Brexit) pervaded in the UK? Since the early days, more conspicuously in Thatcher and John Major periods, the issues of parliamentary sovereignty and national interests always made the relationship between Britain and the EU not go smoothly. The transfer of powers from the UK to Brussels and the problems over the EU budget that the UK believed it unjustifiably contributed to it highly, the EU immigration policy and that the number of the EU workers in the UK has grown quite substantially in recent years, the existence of many rules on business, the disagreement of the two sides over the environmental law, negotiating treaties, labor rights, human rights under the Charter of Fundamental Rights along with other old problems such as national identity (epitomized in the form of Britishness), and the fact that the

British people never really felt themselves as European are among the issues that led to the In/ Out referendum being held to decide over the fate of the UK and as seen, people chose to leave the EU. The truth behind the result, achieved under the high level of propaganda of Eurosceptic such as the UKIP (the UK Independence Party) or that people themselves chose to exit the EU after pondering over it carefully, remains unclear as there were, and still are, some requests for holding a second referendum on Brexit.

But what are the possible consequences of Brexit for the EU? In today's interconnected world, countries are trying to connect themselves with other countries, and Brexit would deprive the EU of a strong ally in fighting global challenges. There is no need to say that by cutting ties with the European system and going back to its old system, the UK would incur much cost on the EU and so the block has to redesign most of its programs. The EU also has to make up for the loss of the UK's budget contribution, and this means the increased contributions of other member-states.

Brexit not only impacts the EU as a whole, but it also affects individual countries. This effect is seen, for example, in France in the form of boosting her anti- euro, anti- immigration party – the national front party – less than a year before the presidential elections. The leader of this party, Marine Le Pen, as the next year's possible presidential election candidate “has already seized on the in-out campaign to call for a similar referendum on French membership if she wins powers” (Chassany et al, 2016).

In general, Brexit seems to trigger the anti- EU sentiment in various countries, and this may lead to the domino effect of leaving the EU – what currently concerns the German policy-makers. If this domino effect takes place over time, the Union sooner or later would face its demise, and the European integration process that united 28 countries during the past 40 years would disintegrate.

In a Union that now uncertainty pervades over its future, issues such as security, foreign policy and border control are yet

to be addressed. Britain has been crucial to many of the EU's policies on foreign, security and defense policies. Losing Britain could undermine efforts which have been made for implementation these policies.

Another issue that should be taken into consideration here is that which country is now willing to lead the European Union in this chaotic situation that the anti- EU voices are heard all over it. Germany has already tried to deal with other problems like – the global financial shock, the Greek rescue program, the Ukrainian conflict and the refugee crisis – and if it continues to lead the way, it is possible that it would be charged with the tendency to become the EU hegemon.

This fact cannot be ignored that the UK is one of the EU's big three states, and losing her means being deprived of “a country with deep diplomatic and military experience, and a voice for market-oriented deals” (ibid). Brexit is likely to undermine the EU's ability to become a leading global actor. “The UK is the EU's third most populous member state, comprising 12.76% of the EU's overall population. This makes the UK an influential player in the Council of the European Union and in the European Parliament (EP)” (Patel and Reh, 2016: 12). Another impact would be felt by the European businesses investment or trading in the UK and supply chains involving the UK firms.

Also the absence of the UK in the EU would shift the balance of power in the EU, and particularly in the European Council. “Franco-German relations, often considered the engine of European integration, have often used the UK to balance the other” (Oliver, 2016).

Brexit also affects the EU's political system. Naturally, a change in the UK representatives and nationals in Brussels and the EU's policy agenda would follow after the Brexit. Currently, there are British nationals employed in the European Commission, and 73 British MEPs sit in the Parliament. Not to mention that the UK is to hold the EU's rotating presidency from July to December 2017.

But on the whole, the long-term effects of the Brexit depend on how the negotiations between the European Union and the UK would progress. According to the article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the two sides are given two years to negotiate and reach to an agreement over the the terms of departure from the EU. Looking at the past shows that the reasons for the British applications being vetoed twice by the French President Charles de Gaulle could be seen in what Winston Churchill stated in 1948 that Britain's interests lay behind being the point of intersection of three circles of influence – the relationship with the US, with the Commonwealth countries, and Europe – and this is perhaps what influenced de Gaulle's judgment not to let Britain in, since Britain was always associated with the US. Now with the US ally gone and the decrease in the western influence in the EU, the European Union as well as some states may find it an opportunity to work with each other. The role of the EU is important due to its size and impact on the global politics and economy, as well as its unique combination of supra-national and intergovernmental features.

The state which this paper specifically refers to is Iran which can use this western absence in the EU to develop new relationship with the European Union.

III. Iran- EU Relationship After Brexit

Iran- EU relationship in the post-Islamic Revolution period has experienced numerous ups and downs. The important strategic position of the European Union in the international system, on one hand, and the geostrategic position and vast energy resources of Iran, on the other, have necessitated both sides to develop their relationship for enjoying mutual benefits. However, this relationship has faced various challenges ranging from the issues of human rights and terrorism to the nuclear issue and the Middle East crises which caused fluctuations in their relationship (Khaloozadeh, 2002, 260).

Since 1998 dialog between Iran and the EU is no longer critical, and has found a new form known as the “constructive

dialogs”. In addition to political issues, scientific, economic and trade cooperation are also considered in these new dialogs. However, this situation did not last long, and as the nuclear issue developed, the relationship between the two sides deteriorated again. However, Iran and the European trio (Britain, Germany and France) under the Saadabad Agreement tried to find a solution for resolving nuclear disputes, the United States’ interference and high levels of disagreement between the two sides led to the failure of these efforts. After referring the Iranian nuclear case to the security council in 2006, negotiations on this case were performed by EU3+3, more commonly referred to as the “E3+3” (France, Germany and the United Kingdom as the EU members and China, Russia and the United States as the permanent members of the Security Council) with Iran. Following tightened sanctions against Iran to stop its nuclear activities, the EU members attempted to pass a law for imposing sanctions on Iranian oil industry and on the Islamic Republic’s Central Bank on January 23, 2012. These sanctions severely damaged the economic and trade relationship between the two sides, and the relationship deteriorated to its lowest level at the outset of the 21st century.

When president Hassan Rouhani’s administration came into power, nuclear dialogs entered a new phase, and a new horizon was opened to achieve a full agreement for resolving the Iranian nuclear program. Extensive negotiations in this respect led to achieving the 2013 Geneva agreement, and finally (the JCPOA) the so-called joint comprehensive plan of action on July 2015 which reads as “The agreement, once implemented, marks a conclusion to the long-running diplomatic efforts to reach a comprehensive, long lasting and peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue: one that will provide the necessary assurances on the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program on the one hand, and the lifting of sanctions on the other. As such it represents a significant achievement and a tribute to the merits of patient diplomacy, from all sides” (EU Statement, 2015).

As seen, the European Union as an important international player played a major role in the process of achieving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as three members of this bloc took part in the nuclear negotiations, and since then it has tried to develop relations with Iran in all areas, especially in trade, economy and energy, to create a new chapter in the EU- Iran relationship.

It is interesting to point that the decision of the British people to exit the European Union was made at the time of improved relationship between Iran and the EU. The withdrawal of Britain, as an influential member of the European Union, would affect Iran-EU relationship in one way or another. However, these effects would not be seen immediately, it seems that they can be regarded as important parameters in shaping the way and level of this relationship. In general, the Brexit effects on the EU- Iran relationship can be studied from different aspects including:

Brexit would undermine the Atlantic- oriented and the US- inclined tendency in the EU. The UK has always been a central player in the US- EU relations. British transatlantic policies during the post- world war II created the impression in some European capitals that Britain was the US Trojan horse in Europe. The name which is given to the US- UK relationship as the “special relationship” is itself revealing. From protecting the intellectual property rights and entrepreneurship to collecting information and the use of military force, American values have been always closer to the British than to those of any other European states. A striking example that can be given for the UK- US alliance is the war against Iraq in 2003, while France and Germany openly opposed this war. Another example can be the case of imposing sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, and sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Crimea and aggression in Ukraine. In both cases, it was Britain which directed a wavering EU to the US position.

Given the role of the UK as a bridge between the US and the EU, Brexit would affect the American role as a European power

and Europe's interests in the United States. Now the question is that how this would affect Iran- EU relationship. It can be said that the weakened Atlanticism would decrease the United State's influence in the European Union, and this process would increase the independent decision-making level in the EU. (Dehghani FirouzAbadi, 2016). Based on the high level of conflict and tensions between Iran and the US, a more independent European Union would create the chance to develop a positive interaction and more cooperation with Iran. As the US influence in the EU decreases, Iran and the EU can work with each other under less structural pressures in the trade, economic and scientific fields. In this regard, the European Union would face less pressure for signing various agreements, especially for buying natural gas and developing diversification policy. Also based on the US high sensitivity and its different approach to the complex issues of the Middle East, the EU can focus more independently on the consultation and exchange of views with Iran on the regional tensions including counterterrorism in the Middle East.

Another possible scenario is that Brexit would strengthen the British- US strategic relationship, and this in turn would lead to the strengthened European unity and this development would aggravate the transatlantic disputes. This may seem likely, but that remains to be seen if this scenario would come true, because the Brexit would cause some damages to the US influence and trade in the EU, though some officials have stated their opinions on strengthening the US- UK relationship on trade (Dehghani FirouzAbadi, 2016). For example, U.S. Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said: "That close partnership will endure, and we will continue to work together to strengthen a robust trade relationship and to address our common security interests" (Roberts, 2016). On the whole, the special relationship would remain intact, and in fact, Brexit would practically result in no change in the US- UK special relationship as the US President Barack Obama said: "While the UK's relationship with the EU will change, one thing that will not

change is the special relationship that exists between our two nations. That will endure” (Rampton, 2016). However, Brexit means the US should look for other ways to influence the European policy-making in the absence of Britain.

On the other hand, the political weight and role of the EU would decrease without Britain as a main member of the bloc in international system. This has a paradoxical effect for Iran. If there is the possibility that Europe creates balance with the US, this would harm Iran. But history and experience both show that this is impossible, so the resulting outcome would benefit Iran.

Also due to the fact that Europe would need a stable partner in international system, especially in the Middle East, to compensate for its decreased political power in proportion to its economic one, Iran can prove a suitable partner in this regard.

Iran- EU's shared interests and threats in the Middle East also require both sides' cooperation. The best example is the threat facing the EU in the form of the return of numerous armed terrorists from Iraq and Syria to Europe which most likely made the EU authorities think of containing the crisis from within the Middle East. Given the widespread instability in many countries of the Middle East, the Iranian strategic position and its great influence in the region would best suit to play the role of the EU's partner to resolve Middle Eastern countries disputes. Repeated visits of many European Union officials to Iran including Federica Mogherini, high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, in October 2016 for consultations on the regional issues, particularly Syrian issue, indicate the reinforced Iranian position in the European Union officials' view for the regional crisis management.

Another issue which is worth to mention here is that the presence of the UK on behalf of the United States in the European Union had created some political barriers in the EU not to let the bloc expand its relationship with Iran easily, so Brexit would remove some of these barriers. In addition the relative decline of

European political weight means the necessity of reinforcing its economic role for compensating its decreased political role. This situation can pave the way for the development of Iran- EU economic relationship. In other words, the withdrawal of Britain from the EU would decrease the opposition against the development of relationship with Iran in the EU and would increase the weight of the pro- Iranian side.

On the other hand, the long history of British interference and influence in the Iranian domestic affairs (especially in the 18th century and more particularly its role in overthrowing the democratically elected government of Dr. Muhammad Mossadegh in the 1952 coup d'état in the case of nationalization of Iranian oil) have negatively affected the Iranian public and policy-makers, and the departure of Britain from the Europe Union would increase the tendency of the Iranian decision-makers to strengthen the relationship with the EU. This tendency can act as a catalyst in Iran -EU relationship.

Brexit would also weaken the position and relative role of this country in international system in such a way that it can no longer use its European weight and leverage in its international interactions. There is also the possibility that this departure may lead to the independence of Northern Ireland and Scotland from the UK. If this happens, this will severely damage the UK status and role in international relations, and this, in turn, would weaken the British position and influence in the Middle East.

As history shows, Britain has enjoyed a long-standing presence in the region and from the 18th century to the beginning of world war II, it has always been one of the main actors and major powers forming the relationships and structures in the middle east. After the world war II, this influence decreased, especially after the departure of the British forces from the persian gulf in 1971. However, in the post-Cold War, Britain formed its relationship in the Middle East based on the EU strategies and the UK alliance and coalition with the US. Now with the withdrawal of Britain from the EU, the role of an influential historical power

in the middle east developments would fade and with it the European Union would face a decreased influence in the region in the absence of Britain and this would provide a better chance for the Iranian activism in the region, so the regional balance would shift in favor of Iran.

However, the effects of Brexit on the relationship between Iran and the EU would take some time to reveal itself and the reason lies in the prolonged process of Brexit which seems to last -untill 2020.

In spite of these effects, it seems that some serious challenges in relationship between Iran and the EU, even after the departure of Britain, would persist. Serious disagreements of both sides on the human rights issue is considered one area of contention. Both sides have some fundamental differences regarding the human nature, and this has formed some conflicting perspectives on the issue of human rights. On the other hand, both sides have serious disagreement on some of the Islamic liberation movements in the Middle East.

Conclusion

In spite of the British departure from the European Union as the US major ally, the US might still play an important role in the EU developments by finding another channel to exert her influence in the EU, because the United States still looks for having her interests secured in the EU and in the absence of her influential partner - the UK -, it is likely, as some guess, that the German-US relationship would replace the US-UK relationship. This makes it possible for the US to influence the relationship between Iran and the EU in some areas as well. However, due to the fact that a new President – Donald Trump from the Republican Party – has been recently elected for the US, and the domestic tensions that this election has brought to this country, it remains to be seen how, in general, the US-EU relationship and the UK-US relationship, in particular, would be formed in the future as the result of the new situation.

It should be also stated here that the statement given by the new US elected President Donald Trump on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) reached between Iran and E3+3 that “his Number-One priority would be to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran” (Ladane Nasseri, 2016) triggered the reactions from both Iranian and the EU authorities stressing that the agreement cannot be violated unilaterally. In general, Trump seems to have added to the uncertainty already governing the EU after the Brexit. The EU leaders feel the future of the EU-US relationship is not clear yet.

Generally speaking, though it is possible that Brexit would not much affect Iran’s relations with the EU, it is still likely that the British departure from the EU might make it easier for Iran and the EU to resolve some of their disagreements (Javad Heirannia, 2016). If Iran could use the current vacuum in the political arena in the US and the UK, both struggling with domestic tensions, and develop a more constructive relationship with the EU, both Iran and the European Union would benefit much.

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Iran-US Confrontation in the International System

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Abstract

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

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

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

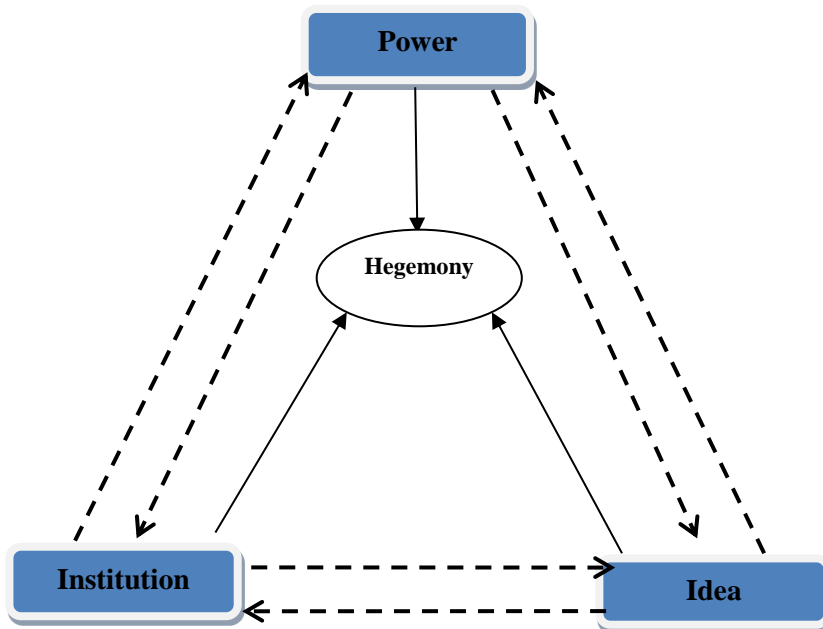
I. Theoretical Framework

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

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

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

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



II. The US hegemony and its components against Iran

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

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

Power:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ideology and Culture

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

De-legitimization of Iran:

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

Sponsor of Terrorism:

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

Accordingly, the centerpiece of the regional challenge

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

Violation of Human Rights:

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

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

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

Legitimizing Pressure Through International Institutions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

III. Iran's anti-hegemony components

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

Self-Reliance:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alliance and Coalition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ideas:

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

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

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

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

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

In fact, what worries the United States is not Iran's military power nor its economic one (at least at the current time) rather, its concern is the soft power that has its roots in Iranian culture and Shiite ideology and presents a new model to manage the society. There is the contrast and negative attitudes between Iran and the United States to each other based on conflicting ideological foundations of the two countries as well as macro strategies and different goals of the two countries foreign policies.. Nye believes, "now there is no powerful bloc in the way of the united states which relies on its military and technologies, but what has been able to challenge the United States is the power of ideology and Islamic revivals (Nye, 1987: 176).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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Neo- Taliban and Religious Nationalism in Afghanistan

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Abstract

The religious nationalism in Neo-Taliban era implies a process of distancing from tribal legitimacy toward a more nationalistic narration. The research aims to understand the Religious nationalism in the approach of Neo- Taliban toward state-building and the peace process. In this regard, the social theory of Ibn Khaldun is employed to measure the process, the logic and the consequences of the birth of its religious nationalism. It becomes clear that the group spiced its religious narration with nationalist changes to win more social support and legitimacy by overcoming ethnonationalism and emphasizing on nationalistic notions that ultimately weakened its traditional legitimacy.

Keywords: *Religious Nationalism, Peace Process, Afghanistan, Neo- Taliban, Ibn Khaldun*

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Introduction

The Taliban transformation into a new phase has raised equally new and important questions. The evidence regarding the performance of the group has implied paradoxical perceptions about the true nature of this new phase and its relation with the society of Afghanistan. For example, one of the paradoxical sectors is the literacy in rural areas. The tribal villages, especially Pashtuns, resist modern education, as by the increase in literacy, the obedience from rituals, tribal code of conduct or any other traditional local law like Pashtunwali decreases (Abbas, 2014: 19). Interestingly, the tendency to receive traditional education remains, even if the Neo- Taliban presents that course. In other words, these people aspire education for their children, but it is not clear that either they don't differentiate critically between the traditional syllabus of schooling and Neo-Taliban narrative or they don't really have any other options; even though, hardly a few perceive the presence of the group in their neighbourhood as positive in education of their children. According to a field survey, people are more afraid of the Islamic State of Khurasan (ISK) than Neo- Taliban as the latter could win the support and sympathy of a fraction of society, mostly villagers. This is despite their higher understanding of the danger that the group imposes to their traditional social structure due to their historical interactions with the militants (Akseer & et al, 2018:104). Accordingly, what is the reason behind this paradoxical output from society and how could the group reinforce this situation to its favour or even caused it?

Nationalism and religion are two social driving force that can mobilise large numbers of people. The relationship between the

two is seemingly opposed to each other because, in theory, nationalism is secular in nature, and secularism (in a common sense) is opposed to religion (Smith, 2001). However, if religion sets its goal to counteract this secular nature of the nation, it will ultimately affect nationalism, which surprisingly behaves like two natural allies and form religious nationalism (Juergensmeyer, 1993:15, 54, 110, 115 & 138). Such nationalism can take various forms that are based entirely on the relationship between religion and nation in one country which reinforce each other. Such a relationship goes back to the nature of nationalism. Contrary to the popular belief that nationalism is a secular phenomenon, it is in fact, an expression of the opinion of a number of people, and if these people are religious, the nation aspirations of nationalism will be religious too. Furthermore, the religiously charismatic political leaders are another reinforcing social drive fusing the nationalism with religion. In other words, assigning them with superhuman qualities with the idea of saving the nation or the religion would attract followers to their policies and status. The core idea of these nationalists is the exaltation of the nation, leading to sanctified history, religion, social and cultural tradition, taken from contemporary or a period in the history of that nation. Furthermore, usually most of the nationalist leaders are steeped in the religious tradition of their forbearers, even if they reject it, to make their political message more comprehensible by using jargons that are most suited for the audience (Smith, 2001). Therefore, even the secular nationalists are equipped with mingles of sacred and worldly elements and rarely seek the destruction of an old, religious identity to erect a new political one, except when faced severe confrontation from the guardians of that old or religious identity.

Nationalism is not a new phenomenon in Afghanistan. In fact, the country witnessed several nationalistic movements in its contemporary history from ethnonationalism like Pashtu nationalism for Pashtunistan (Rutting, 2020) and Tajik Nationalism against the Taliban (Roy, 2003) to Amanollah

nationalism in the early 20th century (Tarzi, 2018:125), but the phenomenon of religious nationalism for Neo- Taliban is a topic that is worth addressing. As a matter of fact, nationalism in the Neo- Taliban era has already been considered by other authors. Some studies have referred to this as Pashtun nationalism, such as the Siagol's (2012) article. In other works, the relationship between Pashtunism and Islamism (Kamel, 2015; Rutting, 2020) and the existence of religious nationalism (Gopal, 2016; Ahmed, 2014) are mentioned. What is missing from all these articles is the lack of adequate attention to the phenomenon of religious nationalism and how it was born in relation to the Pashtun roots of the group, the ambiguity about the dynamicity of the relationship between tribal and national levels of Neo- Taliban and thus limiting the scope of analysis to Pashtun tribe and Pashtunistan. Ultimately, the ambiguity about the difference between the Neo-Taliban's behaviour at different times with the non-Pashtuns, especially before 2001, still remains. All led to the level of analysis remaining at the micro level and the inability to distinguish between the above –mentioned subject and religious nationalism. Moreover, these investigations have failed to explain the Taliban's path to forming a government.

Efforts have been made to address the issues in present study, shedding light on the dynamics of this religious nationalism and consider it beyond a specific ethnicity in order to form a national scope for the study. In this regard, the present paper aims to systematically study the related criteria at macro and micro levels in order to provide an understanding of the characteristics of the religious nationalism in Neo-Taliban. These assigned social topics at the levels consist crucial information, which contributes to an original analysis between the lines to see how religious nationalism is framed in the group, deals with the peace process and aspires for the state-building.

Theoretical Framework

The duly address of the topic is made possible by the employment

of the social theory of Ibn Khaldun Thereupon, two macro and micro levels of analyses are set for the work due to the nature of the theory, in which the dynamics between these two may provide a continuous mixture of an attempt of one to prevail the other. The micro level is to understand the relations between the group and non- Pashtuns, and the macro level is, like, for understanding the mechanism of pursuing the Emirat, the always longed revival of the Country's historical importance during the Khilafah. Not to mention that the joint section of these two levels is the religious nationalism.

Application of Ibn Khaldun social theory requires acquaintance with the core terminologies of his theory, which are very simple but very confusing at the same time. The discussion here is mostly on Barbarism, then only 'Barbarism' would suffice to be elaborated, to the needed extent, by keeping the definition as simple as possible, to prevent further complexity. The Barbarians live in tribal form, believe in simple islamic rituals; this is close to the traditional definition of Salafism; They equalise islamic laws with local customary laws, which in some instances, have shown contradictions (Al- Wardi, 2017: 234). These people have always resided in specific and harsh geography and have rarely emmigrated for Jihadist activities to other countries because most of their Jihads have happened inside their region (Binesh, 2014: 59). Inaddtion, their local customary laws are historically considered as the haven for the time of social unrest and anarchy, as have the potential to be a substitute to governmental laws for making discipline and justice through a form of a primitive social contract (Ibn Khaldun, 2012: 337). Finally, they consider themselves superior to the citizens and blame urban cultures and ethics (Al- Wardi, 2017: 22).

The end of a Civic state in the eyes of Ibn Khaldun is very dependant on the source of degeneration. In that condition, Barbarism, theoretically, if in equal condition with Civilization, prevails over the Civilization to form a new one. At this point, the Barbaric values like contentment and minimalism, ethics,

diligence, unboundedness to state law, resistance, bravery, and militancy will be substituted with civic values and finally form a new civilisation on the ruins of the defeated civilisation; this later becomes undermined or conquered by another barbarian community; this is a process of loosening legitimacy foundation of Barbarism in favour of Civilization (ibid: 79, 80,93, 94,98&141).

Freedom is essential to the tribes for the realisation of primitive social contract through consensus; otherwise, it would only result in a chaotic society; that is called Social Solidarity. This intentionally becomes the subject of corrosion by the newly formed Barbaric state as its gradual advancement to a more state of Civilization, the primitive social contract fades in favour of a new civic social contract, which is fatal to the Barbaric state if not be well managed. Not to mention that the primitive social contract is the source of legitimacy and the essential foundation for the birth of a Barbaric state, even long before prevailing over Civic state (Sadeghi Fasaie, 2000: 97, 98, 100 &134).

Ibn Khaldun discussed the topic of Civilization in depth, which is mostly focussed on economic and management criteria, but the important thing in his theory, which is relevant to our discussion, is the most fundamental shift of the Social Solidarity side effects to the Civic state. According to Ibn Khaldun, by relaxation of Social Solidarity of Barbaric state, the problem of legitimacy arises, which encourages the Civic state to employ Mercenaries for security reasons and being cost-efficient; they lack Social Solidarity (Sadeghi Fasaie, 2000: 153). Ibn Khaldun identifies religion and ideology as the most crucial elements for the formation of Civilization due to its extraordinary capacity to unite and drive the social forces for realisation of a new Social Solidarity amongst different tribes. Not to mention that the religious and ideological Social Solidarities must be inline, otherwise any sharp contradiction would shatter the idea of Civilization (ibid:98-102 &141-144); this is the initial steps for

the transformation of Barbaric state into Civic state.

The theory is applicable to the present social situation of Afghanistan. Pashtuns can be regarded as Barbaric inline with Ibn Khaldun definition of Barbarism. They have already equalised the Islamic law with Pashtunwali (Abbas, 2014: 28) and consider themselves superior to the citizens, mocking or criticising urban lifestyle and ethics (Shams-ur-Rehman, 2015). They have never emigrated for the purpose of 'jihad' as all of their jihadist activities were within their geography since the trilogy jihad began against Britain in the mid-19th to the early 20th centuries and continued to the contemporary Jihad against the coalition force by Neo-Taliban. Finally this Jihadist movements turned to the Pashtunwali in time of anarchy and unrest during the civil war which led to the birth of the Taliban through a primitive social contract (Fasihi-Dolatshahi, 2016: 253). The Neo-Taliban represents itself in the framework of this theory: the group have always advertised itself as contented and devoted Mujahids (Peters, 2010:22) whose tribal identity induced its formation in response to the unIslamic, immoral and unethical culture of urban communities, as they themselves, in contrary, claim to possess the highest and the purest moral and ethics (Clifford, 1989: 84) and other mentioned characteristics, most notably, unboundedness to state law which they regard as Taghut. Thereupon, the theory suits the field.

1. Neo- Taliban and the local ethnicities

The Taliban historically has shown that the group pursues revolutionary social restructure to answer the need of breaking the dominance of some of the Mujahidin warlords and the social structure formed during the Jihad time by the already began crush of tribal structures and its affiliated characteristics. Since then, the Taliban, and then Neo-Taliban school of thought, have worked hard to brand the group as a religious-nationalist cult that welcomes social, political and religious participations beyond tribal borders, with a concentration on the theory of Emirate with

the brand of Amir; this has started as rehabilitation of the religious position of the country under the classical theory of Khilafah in the Arab world and the nationalist wave of previous monarchs, that of course, leaves aside the Taghut (earthly tyrannical power whose laws are not taken from Islam) parts in order to form a functioning structure based on the legacies of Post-Khilafah Islamic world ideology related to Arabic (classical) theory of Khilafah (restructured in India) rather than Ottoman theory of Khilafah (Salimifar, 2019: 88-91).

The Taliban reaffirms Islam, which is traditionally the adhesive, mobilising and reuniting element for different ethnicities and tribes inside Afghanistan. Therefore, the severe confrontations of the group cannot be justified through the lens of ethnic cleansing or other similar narration in religious interpretations, although the tendency was already there at the level of local commander due to the influence of Arab Jihadists, especially Jalalabad school. This is despite their inductive inner conflict with diverse schools within the Taliban (Hamid & Farrall, 2015: 37, 38&49) and the sensational baggage resided in the minds of Afghan people since Abdelrahman monarchy in 19th century with regard to Hazara people (Salimifar, 2019:44).

1-1. The Hazara: Friends or Enemy?

There are unexpected and controversial documentations from sympathy of Uzbek and Hazara to the Taliban since the birth of the group (Giustozzi, 2008: 54) to the support of Hazara by Neo-Taliban in response to Shia targeting by ISK (Tarzi, 2017). Therefore, it seems that the reason for the sharp confrontations of Hazara (in the majority) with the Taliban and then the Neo-Taliban might be something rather than ethnical but ideological, and not based on Sunni- Shia typical competition but rooted in the difference between these two sectors. The main reason, again, resides in the theory of Khilafah and its adversarial doctrine, namely Shia; according to the Sunni Islamic thoughts regarding the Khilafah theory, once a Khalifah (the ruler) takes control of the government, it is an obligation for every muslim (in general)

to pledge allegiance to him and fully obey his orders. In addition, it is strictly religiously prohibited for Sunnis to uprise against their ruler, unless he is Taghut, which is still not commonly accepted by all Sunni schools (Al- Qahtani, 2015: 110), let alone Khalifah himself. These two terms are not endorsed in Shia Islamic thoughts; they believe in Imamah (twelve infallible family members of the Prophet Mohammad) rather than Khilafah (Dabashi, 2011:57-60). By taking the two terms into consideration, Hazara has a rich history of disobedience toward their rulers, notably since the 19th century against Abdelrahman, to the era of Emirate that continued to the present time with Neo-Taliban; this disobedience has resulted in severe difficulties and bloodshed (Green, 2017:137&138; Farhang, 1992: 383) during different Pashtun monarchs, governments, and regimes.

It is worth mentioning that wherever the Hazara has compromised with the presence of the Taliban (and later Neo-Taliban), the group has tolerated Shia practices and ideology. Besides, the freedom for the import of Shia books during Emirate time induces that the confrontation is not a typical Shia- Sunni competition, while the group had banned the import and distribution of many other Sunni books including publications of Muslim Brotherhood. There is very similar approach in the time of Neo- Taliban; the group has shown compromise to the establishment of Shia schools (Safari, 2016:49, 122,123&129). Additionally, the group proved successful in the recruitment of a few Hazara people, which contributes to the discussion (Giustozzi, 2008: 54). Still, this merely represents the compromise for the position of the leadership, and not necessarily represents the embracement of the ideology of the group; this may be due to a different criterion, namely religious nationalism, which will be discussed.

The actions of the Taliban, as discussed before, are very dependant on the ideological roots of the local commanders and may neither represent the policy of the main core in either violent or compromising approaches. Still, there is the possibility of a sort

of subtle intention by Hazara to overgeneralise Neo- Taliban in order to gain political advantages or social support. This is by labelling the conflict as Shia- Sunni or to unintentionally or intentionally cover, or even surprisingly to bold, their sense of disobedience under different types of ideological political systems adversary to Shia, or to advertise, as the truth is, that the disobedience from Khilafah is based on Shia thoughts. Besides, the history of the country has shown to be inconvenient for Hazara, as the suppresses and bloodshed brought them political participation backwardness despite their educated people, except during Marxist government or interestingly nowadays; the Democratic political system is a very exceptional moment in the history of Afghanistan for Hazara, especially when the dominant Pashtuns has been pushed back.

2. The Birth of Religious Nationalism

Neo-Taliban has shown flexibility in terms of its previously imposed social regulations and indoctrinations based on religion, including the ban on music, photography, enmity toward Shiites and the significance of Pashtonwali in legislation. In fact, by the fall of Emirate, many commanders had the opportunity to complete religious studies that brought them more maturity in the interpretation of Islamic laws (Osman & Gopal, 2016). Besides, the social environment has changed since the fall of Emirate and the previous interpretations could not bear social support anymore especially between 2002 to 2005, namely when the group was in the middle of a transformation from the Taliban to Neo- Taliban. For instance, it clearly became evident to the group that the ban on the music had only brought disobedience and loss of support for them. Therefore, Mullah Omar granted, by issuing a Fatwa, the freedom of action to the local commanders to observe the orders that were consistent with the local acceptability and mindset of people, to the time that the situation turned suitable for the enforcement of other Fatwas (Giustozzi, 2010). Moreover, Neo-Taliban published a collection of laws under the name of Layeha

in which the representation of Pashtunwali decreased in favour of Sharia law (Nagamine, 2015: 104); this was a very crucial point. As it was discussed, Sharia, or in a general term Islam, is the uniting element of the fragmented society of Afghanistan, according to which, Neo- Taliban pursue the idea of religious nationalism. It has already been discussed the compromise of Neo- Taliban in terms of accepting different ethnicities under the banner of Islam if they show obedience toward the emir. Now the 'Nationalism' part needs elaboration.

Different audiences perceived the presence and actions of the group and analysed reluctantly according to the traditional customary legal system of the Pashtuns, namely Pashtunwali. The move of diminishing the dominance of Pashtunwali over the code of conduct of the group represents a tendency to shift from a sectarian interpretation toward a unifying element: Islam. Not to mention that Islam here is a widely accepted national concept that accompanies or justifies other actions of the group to show a compromise vividly targeted to other ethnicities under the framework of nationalism and through a national call for Jihad. The group justifies that the country is occupied by foreigners who are 'accidentally' infidels, and is governing by 'Taghut' which due to its 'bad governance', is not eligible of ruling the country and needs to be overthrown by the 'Righteous Jihadists', namely Neo- Taliban. This call for Jihad is evident through the songs that the group releases regularly in Farsi and Pashto. The combination of these two sections has beautifully done by the group as religious nationalism ; whoever believes in either one of these sections, unintentionally show support to the other section as well.

2-1. Religious nationalism and society

The religious nationalism contributes to the legitimacy of the group; it is believed that the traditional pillars of legitimacy during the history of the country were 'tribalism', 'Islam' and 'nationalism'(Roy, 1990: 14), which has been perfectly included in this narration of religious nationalism. The notion is the step by which the group intends to loosen the ties with tribalism

(Barbarism), to foster or introduce ties with Civilization and therefore it is very important. The most crucial characteristics of Civilization is the 'inclusion' of individuals beyond the tribal borders. This notion is a double-edged sword that can defy the traditional legitimising pillar of the group, tribalism, in favour of another legitimising source, nationalism, and yet solidify it with Islam. The step indeed needs a context and some revolutionary, yet very cautious actions because the loosening should avoid collapsing internal legitimization.

It is necessary to remind that these flexibilities are not necessarily depicting any intention and must not be regarded as any sort of justifications that the term 'Neo- Taliban' is a promise of the evolution of 'Taliban' in a form that was never before or we are conceptualising a completely different group. Instead, it represents the notion of transformations that have been undergoing due to the change of time, technics, social environment, adversaries, and more importantly, leadership and his selective manner and purpose of ideological notions in the mindset of the group that subsequently drive the social and political attitudes of the group.

There are two very good examples about the Neo- Taliban that happened simultaneously but brought different results. During the Doha Peace conference in 2019, the group accepted to give permission to girls to begin education until obtaining doctorate degree. This was a follow up to the previous move of the group for allowing girls to attend school in several provinces if the classrooms, universities, and occupations be gender-segregated (Al- Arabiya, 2019; Paton, 2011). This was an indirect response to ISK as well because they announced their permission for girl education soon after their emergence in Afghanistan (Winter, 2015). The move did not bore any serious critiques for the leadership of the Neo- Taliban while the second gesture, namely the promise of membership of a woman in the negotiation board of Neo-Taliban, previously decided and announced before the same conference, proved otherwise. Apparently, the promise for

the participation of women in the Neo-Taliban delegation brought tremendous pressure over the leadership that the group quickly modified the promise of participation, and limited the topic to a meeting between some of the sympathising women with the delegation (Sediqi, 2019).

These examples clearly demonstrate the true nature of the Neo-Taliban as the first gesture was merely a selective action, which its realisation was not completely at odds with the overall connections between values in the mindset of the group, while the latter was not the same. In other words, the idea of public gender segregation is known to be a widely common practice in the Islamic world, even by the Sunnis (Rezk, 2006; Reuters, 2010; Islamweb, 2002; Huda, 2019; Metcalf, 2007:101; Bennoune, 2013:303; Dettmer, 2013); besides it seems to have its supporter even in the west (Ribeiro, 2019). Considering this, the insistence over the ban on the education of girls only bore dissatisfaction and disobedience, which distanced the people from the incentives of the group. Interestingly, this is not a very controversial topic and can be the subject of compromise in favour of more serious agendas to be addressed later.

The reason behind the second example resides on another social characteristic. According to a survey, the extent of social participation of women, alongside other topics like code of dress, obedience, and Hijab, is still limited in the Sunni sector of the Islamic world and the acceptance of an extended participation is justified as 'unIslamic' or 'inappropriate' in this regard (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016). Furthermore, the issue can be explained based on the traditional worldview of one of the social sectors of society of Afghanistan where the majority of Neo-Taliban takes root from, namely Pashtun. It is already discussed here that the Pashtunwali diminishes when nationalism strengthens, but it should be noted that the process is not strong enough yet; not to mention that regardless of whatever efforts of the main core, still the steaming force of the group is the Pashtunwali. Moreover, any sharp deviation that the leadership imposes at the common culture

of the group would only result in disobedience and confrontations, especially considering the autonomy of the local commanders and their ideological roots. Some of these ideological roots are not necessarily and essentially fully compatible with the strategy of the leadership.

The education of girls has not always been controversial for the people of Afghanistan in general. This issue just began to become a distinguishable widely controversial topic during Amanollah and Zahir Shah reforms in the early 20th century and then the Soviet reforms. During these periods, the education reform caught the attention of the religious society because Islamic schools had been integrated into modern schools. The first modern school for girls was introduced in 1922 during the Amanollah reforms, designed the required syllabus in cooperation with Colombia University, and introduced the first mix-gender classroom in 1958 during the reforms of Zahir Shah. Later, the soviet reforms were mainly dedicated to preaching the communist ideology besides continuation of the previous reforms. (Fasihi-Dolatshahi, 2016:160; Clifford, 1989:149). In other words, the general idea of modern education, which was intended to substitute the traditional system of education, was rejected by the muslim society. The rejection was mainly due to the 'unIslamic' content of the syllabuses and the issue of gender segregation. In addition, the reforms were recognised as the reason for the 'disobedience' of girls from the parents, and subsequently, the root cause of feminism in the country (Fasihi-Dolatshahi, 2016: 100-103&160; Clifford, 1989: 114). Accordingly, education of girl does not seem to be an inherently fundamental problem in the society of Afghanistan leading to the rejection of the girls education. Besides, history had witnessed that the education was available to girls by the elders and religious men of villages in the gender-segregated classes before these reforms (Clifford, 1989:114). Understandably, the same issues seem to be persisted in the mindset of the Taliban, and the Neo- Taliban had shown tendencies to overcome it if the issues were addressed in a socially

acceptable solution.

During the modern time especially after the fall of Emirate, the Islamic notions were also included in the syllabus and textbooks (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2013) and a special effort made to propagate the necessity of respect and obedience from the parents, that especially targeted the girl school (see Figure 1). Not to mention that with the defeat of the soviets, the issue of gender segregation was automatically resolved by the Muslim morals of the country. Therefore, insisting the ban on girl education no longer gained major public support for the Neo-Taliban. Although according to a survey, %34.8 of Afghan families still don't send their girls to school due to the lack of infrastructure or impose a ban on schooling of the girls for ideological reasons (Akseer & et al, 2019), that doesn't necessarily mean they are in favour of the sabotages in this regard. Accordingly, this issue shall be distinguished from the social participation of women, which is still confronted as the issue of feminism, albeit the Neo-Taliban announced that they are no longer oppose women's work if the gender-segregations is observed (Saifullah, 2019).



Figure 1. (World Bank, 2018); A gender-segregated classroom with a clear indication of social instruction targeted to girls as a wall inscription of Farsi poem, roughly translated as: Equip

yourself first with chastity and virtue, then attend the schools for the attainment of requirements, pursue the knowledge at school, observe the respect for your parents at home.

3. Neo- Taliban and the peace process

The peace process indirectly encourages the ordinary people of the country to balance between the government and the Neo-Taliban or at least extend their compromise to these two rivals, especially those people who are regularly in touch with both side or resides in contested regions where both the government and the group claim authority (Giustozzi, 2008: 75). The same tendency is available amongst the Neo-Taliban local commanders as well with this contrast that they do not heavily invest in a compromising leader or other fellow local commanders, instead, they form ties with sympathising partners, based on the motivations they have for joining the group. Accordingly, the peacemaking with a local commander would disappoint his low-rank comrades. This eventually or abruptly encourage these desperate crew to show tendency to or join other commanders with whom they have the shared concerns or motivations; this liquidity is devastating for the leadership if the perception of peace process fosters in a way unfavourable for the ties between the low-rank crew, local commanders and the leadership, respectively. This is the weak point of Neo- Taliban. The constant cycle of attaining peace process and separation of layers of organisation of the group ultimately weakens the alliances and strengthens divisions inside the group, and more importantly, reinforcement of the possibility of their recruitment to the rival groups like ISK (Giustozzi, 2018: 45) whose motivations partly overlap with motivations of the Neo- Taliban. This can be explained according to the Ibn-Khaldun social theory.

In line with the theory of Ibn Khaldun, a similar tendency can be seen for Neo-Taliban to honour freedom as the pathway to form Social Solidarity. It is widely presumed that the Taliban is a dominantly Pashtun group, that laid their foundation based on

Pashtunwali. Whatever they used to be, there are reported tendencies of the group, since transformation to Neo-Taliban, for the inclusion of more nationalistic approaches to expand out of tribal recruitment resources and showed a clear tendency to recruit non-Pashtuns even from Hazara people. Besides, they have already put more reliance on Islamic laws than Pashtunwali in their Layeha; these clearly contradict the historical and traditional culture of Pashtuns. In other words, Neo-Taliban pursues Civilization, which requires freedom. The group once formed based on the freedom of will of Pashtuns and stepped up for Civilization, and now seeks the same Civilization through a new form of freedom of will this time based on national consensus. To do so, the group first had to relax its dominant ties with the Social Solidarity of the Pashtuns, in favour of amplifying freedom, religion, geography, ideology and nationalism, which eventually deprive the group of the force of tribal community, which was widely available to the group during the Emirate (Safari, 2016:114). This is exactly the same problem that Neo-Taliban has ever faced since the fall of Emirate.

The tendency of Neo-Taliban for attainment of civic state has encouraged the group to form reliance on mercenaries for security, sustainability and being cost-efficient; not to mention that these forces don't have the Social Solidarity with the group and unlike the tribal tribesmen, don't priorities the survival of tribe over anything else (Ahmed, 1980: 189). This is only the initial obstacle for the group to form a Civic state. As mentioned above, freedom is essential for formation of Civilization. The group had once stepped up for Civilization when the country was free and the freedom was referable at that time. This is a very important element that the group lacks today, which shadowed all other factors; their country is occupied, their religion and their geography are under threat, the community and the occupiers do not tolerate their ideology, and their nationalism is shattered. Thereupon, theoretically, Neo-Taliban is vulnerable during its transformation or at least its tendency of transformation from a

Barbaric state into Civic state due to the possibility of internal degeneration. More importantly, the group required to fulfil the freedom of Afghanistan, which is a great barrier to his agenda.

The peace process negotiation is the promising view for this group to facilitate the transformation, which itself is a great threat to the legitimacy, and subsequently, the destruction of the group. Furthermore, there shall be a sort of rehabilitation of selected Barbaric notions at the same time to prevent the complete degeneration of Barbaric state while still its transformation to Civic state is underway. The group has the rehabilitation history of its political position, accusation of central government, and launching deadly and organised insurgencies in short period before, after or during the negotiations. For instance, the group intensified its insurgencies during Zalmay Khalilzad visit to Afghanistan for brokering peace in April 2019 (Abed, 2019), they reiterated the same positions and accusations two days after Doha Peace Conference in July 2019 (Ahmad, 2019), launched a deadly attack in Kabul on September 6th, 2019 just two days before the already announced U.S. event in Camp David for brokering a peace deal between the Neo-Taliban leaders and the president of Afghanistan (BBC, 2019), and conducting suicide attack in Bagram Air Base during peace negotiation in December 2019 (Abed & Mashal, 2019).

The peace intended by this peace process literally means a shattered, inconsistent and in-cohesive Neo- Taliban, and not necessarily, any forms of political inclusions of the group in the government envisioned through the idea of peace building at all. In this regard, there seems to be unnecessary even to reach any peace deal because the idea itself is fatal enough to conclude the fate of Neo- Taliban. According to Nagamine (2015: 110, 111 & 119), whenever the leadership accepts the attainment for peace negotiations, there is a possibility of losing internal legitimacy of the leadership. To prevent this, Nagamine identifies the media barrier introduced by the Neo- Taliban that present the news in a way that differs from the exact detail of the actual news. This is

the instrument of Neo- Taliban to manage surviving this uncertainty, pursuing its goals through attaining the peace process.

Some experts consider these insurgencies as indications of dishonesty, the continuation of hostilities and the final blow to the idea of Neo- Taliban, justifying that the Taliban remained unchanged as before. This trend is, in fact, a representation of legitimacy making action. In other words, the trend functions as an answer to the internal legitimacy crisis of the group exactly after the initiation of de-legitimisation process, namely the peace negotiation, otherwise, the leadership would be accused of compromising with 'infidels' and 'Taghut', or he finds himself denying any weakness as the reason for joining negotiations. Interestingly in some cases, these insurgencies have exceptionally are performed through suicide bombing while the Layeha is already strictly limited the probability of suicide bombing and conditioned the action to only highly prioritised and worthy targets (Stenersen, 2010: 27&28); what else can be more important than saving the legitimacy of the group for pursuing more crucial purpose.

The main reasons behind the tendency of the group toward this process and accepting the risk of internal de-legitimisation are anything rather than making peace, otherwise, the process will turn into a political suicide for the group. Maybe it was one of the reasons that convinced the United States to finally accept the idea of negotiation with the group; it strongly opposed the first negotiation in 2008-2009 with Taliban (Safari, 2016: 199) until some years later, without any preconditions (Ruttig & Ali, 2018). To overcome the imbalance, the group had shown that the news it provides to the staff is not essentially the same exact common knowledge of the affairs. In other words, the world knowledge of the local commanders and their crew from the peace process is not substantially at parity with the general understanding of the affairs by the negotiators, leaders, or anybody involved at the high council in Quetta. The group has always provided the local commanders with its own generated news or propaganda, which

are very trusted amongst the local commanders and the low-rank crew. Accordingly, there are sorts of censorship or at least news manipulations to biasedly restructure the news, facts or decisions in local and religious jargon, to be more pleasant, more convincible or less provocative for the cohesion and the face of the group, or to reword, to prevent the collapse of the whole system.

A very good and tangible example in this regard is the discrepancies, in length and content, between the Urdu version of a joint statement of Doha Peace Conference, unexpectedly provided by Neo-Taliban after the conference, with the three official versions of the same document in Pashto, Farsi, and English. In the Urdu version, they had portrayed the group as the winning party who gained the ‘respect’ of international, regional and national communities for their sacrifices to the nation, gained the promise of the enemy to ‘end’ the war, as known as the freedom and finally subordinating the women's rights with ‘Islamic principles’. These terms have not been included in other three versions of the joint statement (Ahmad, 2019). Not to mention that these terms are clearly in line with the always-declared goals of their Jihad, namely respect for their Jihad, international and domestic recognition, freedom of the country and enforcement of Islamic law.

Conclusion

Taliban is changing and the idea of Neo- Taliban is not complete yet. This change is not inherent, but at the same time substantial. Amongst these changes, the the birth of religious nationalism should be mentioned. The religious nationalism should not be perceived as the inherent change of the mindset, yet it is suggested to be considered as the sign of more intelligent moves to win social support through amplifying nationalistic notions, and at the same time, reaffirming on their theological foundation. This, instead of reaffirmation on the element of religion as the basis of nationalism, embraces both religious and nationalistic notions at

the same time through an emphasis on common concepts and commonalities between the two topics, in a way that none of them offends the other and therefore reinforces each other.

The introduction of religious nationalism is in line with the long shot of the group for state building, yet risks the legitimacy of the group. To erect a state, the group must fulfil the freedom, which is only achievable through Jihad or negotiation; more tendencies to one side may imbalance the foundation of the religious nationalism of Neo-Taliban. To avoid this imbalance, the group considers a coherent social policy to keep different social communities and theologies united under one flag, especially by the emergence of serious rivals like ISK. Besides, religious nationalism means the voluntary distancing of the group from the traditional legitimacy sources, especially when the idea of negotiation overrides the idea of Jihad. This, more than ever, urges Neo- Taliban to fulfil the freedom in order to prevent the internal collapse of the group. Therefore, the idea of negotiation, existentially, and the problem of prolonging the negotiation process are fatal enough that requires the active intervention to balance the wings of religious nationalism.

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Militarization of Cyberspace, Changing Aspects of War in the 21st Century: The Case of Stuxnet against Iran

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Abstract

Militarization is perceived as the intentions of the military to intervene and overcome civilian procedures. The tendency for militarism generates from the military's ambition to be dominant over procedures not commonly perceived as military. It is described as an effort "to make people accept and love war, and see it as 'normal'" (Lutz, 2009a, in Bickford, 2015) and is usually associated with high military expenditures. On the other hand, the emergence of cyberspace has opened new capacities and paradigmatic frameworks for conceptualization of sociopolitical phenomena. The present article is concerned with the US use of Stuxnet against Iran's nuclear facilities in 2010. While being a cyber-tool in the US hostile foreign policy against Iran, the attack is discussed in the related literature as an act of cyber-war. This article argues that besides marking a cyber-tool in the US foreign policy against Iran, the attack was part of a long term militarization process in the US cyber strategy. Relying

on dual-spacization's assumptions of physical-virtual reality and using theory-testing process-tracing as the research method, this article concludes that the militarization process whereby Stuxnet was used as an alternative to kinetic attack on Iran, dual-spacized the nature of war.

Keywords: *dual-spacization, Stuxnet, militarization of cyberspace, process-tracing*

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Introduction

The US use of Stuxnet against Iran's nuclear facilities is discussed in literature from different aspects. Debates vary on how Stuxnet marked the beginning of an era of changing the nature of war. They range from Liff's statement that Stuxnet was the "harbinger of what is to come" to Finkelstein and Govern's statements that cyberwar, as practiced by the Olympic Games¹, coined "a new label for the notion of war" which entails "not only a new kind of weapon, but an entirely new *genre* of war" [emphasis mine] (Govern, 2015: XIII).

According to Ben-Israel and Tabansky, in order for a cyber-attack to be identified as an act of war, several aspects of the action must be examined:

- a. The organizational and geographical sources: whether a state is behind the action
- b. Motive: whether it is possible to identify an ideological, political, economic, or religious motive for the attack.
- c. Level of complexity: whether the attack required complex planning and coordinated resources that are available primarily to state agencies.
- d. Results: whether the attack caused damage and casualties, and whether it would have caused damage without defensive actions were taken (Ben-Israel and Tabansky, 2014: 59-60).

The strategic definition of cyberwar by the US Department of Defense as "[t]he employment of cyber capabilities where the primary purpose is to achieve objectives through cyberspace ...

1. the original name of the cyber-attack against Iran

[including] computer network operations and activities to operate and defend the Global Information Grid” (Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010, in Finkelstein and Govern, 2015: IX), is regarded by Finkelstein and Govern as bearing an implicit recognition in the concept of cyberwar being that “the US has a security interest” in electronic operations that eliminates the immediate impact of military operations on human life. “Protecting the Grid is comparable to protecting our physical borders” (Finkelstein and Govern, 2015: X). Given that Stuxnet was used as an alternative to physical attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, the military nature of the operation sounds the beginning of an era in which international conflicts extend to cyberspace as a strategic domain. The current article perceives the attack within the broader perspective of a longitudinal process within the US national security apparatus known as militarization of cyberspace, and argues that while reflecting the cyber dimension of the relationships, the attack can be regarded as having dual-spacized the nature of war in line with the US national security objectives.

I. Theoretical Framework

Dual-speciation is a new paradigm of understanding the capacity of new world order which looks at physical as well as virtual capacity of the world. Introduced in Saied Reza Ameli’s [2003] article titled “Dual Globalizations and Global Risk Society”, and later developed in his [2012] book, *Globalization Studies: Dual-Speciation’s and Dual Globalizations*, Dual-Speciation refers to the existence of *virtual reality* beside *actual (physical) reality*, as a result of the emergence of cyberspace and globalization of communication. It stands upon the idea that as cyberspace has opened new capacities for conceptualization of social phenomena, a new paradigmatic framework has emerged for analysis in social sciences. The new framework is a dual-spatial one in which certain concepts bear a physical-virtual reality. Ameli (2012) distinguishes between the modern world and the globalized world, the former referring to the scientific developments achieved

during 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries and the latter referring to the period starting with globalization in different areas of communication, economy, society and politics. Then he explains how the *virtual world*, in parallel with the *real world*, has transactions and a geometrical reflection with it in all the globalized areas. He argues that the creation of the cyber world and its interconnection with the real world leads to a shift in our approaches and analysis trends of *the* new paradigm.

Ameli [2008] in Ameli, (2011) numerates the following characteristics for the physical world:

1. It world is defined and described geographically. We live within this geography and define *nearness* and *farness* based on it. Distances are measured by physical standards which determine concepts and definitions of political geography.

2. It is bounded to the *nation-state* system in the international structure. So, individuals are identified as citizens of nation-states, possessing specific civic rights under the jurisdiction of specific legal systems.

3. In the physical world, culture works as a social factor which enables the observer to distinguish between societies that are located in specific geographies and share common beliefs and lifestyles.

4. It is objective and can be felt by four senses. Things can be seen, smelled, heard and touched.

5. Communication takes place face to face and between present actors in the physical world, meaning that both sides have to be physically present for communication to be possible.

6. *Time* has a linear nature in the real world, meaning that the *past*, *present* and *future* appear in sequence and so things and events related to or happened in the past are further than things related to the present. So one can attribute *oldness* to certain things and *newness* to others.

The virtual world, on the other hand, depends upon the specific meta-factors explained below (Ameli, 2011):

1. Digitalization, the material of the second world is

numerical and it is indeed programmable based on algorithmic potential.

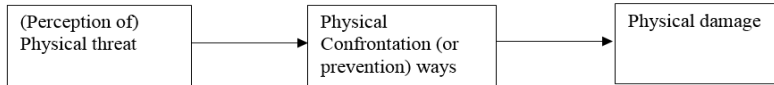
2. Dispersality, the distinction between center and periphery, near and far, disappears both in terms of geography and time. Based on such a potential, crowd-sourcing parallel to centralization of data and activation of data according to social algorithms would take place.

3. Borderlessness, cyberspace has no geography and its borders are not measurable by the physical world milestones, because 'place' has been replaced by 'space'. Users' presence, activities and sense of belonging, therefore, are not limited to borders of nation-states and their sovereignty.

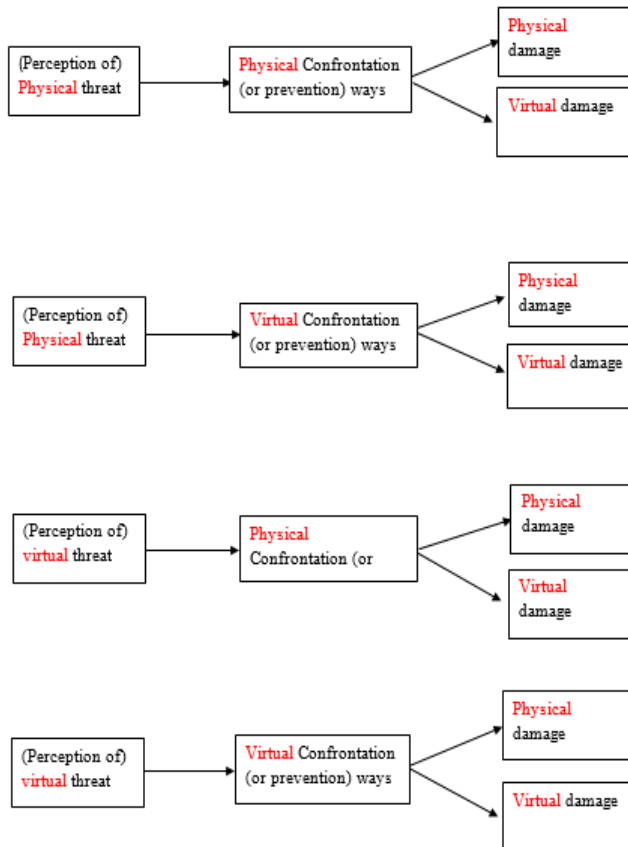
4. Timelessness, virtual time is not a linear concept as it is in the physical world. The past, present and the future are present together. The 'cyber narration' flows in all these three times parallel to each other.

5. Comprehensive multiplicity, the network structure of cyberspace creates an unlimited communication complex in which effects, trends and phenomena are multiplied, aggravated and intensified with high speed and intensified with a network logic.

As a result of the existence of the virtual world parallel with the real world, the two spaces interact and affect one another. Thus, the analysis of many concepts in social sciences needs to be done within a new paradigmatic framework, a dual-spatial framework in which concepts bear a physical-virtual reality instead of their former physical reality. The idea of Dual-Specization of concepts and communications creates a basis for re-conceptualization and analysis of formerly defined notions in a physical/virtual framework. In this research, war is claimed to have gained a dual-spatial nature in Iran-US relations as part of the process of the US militarization of cyberspace. The idea is framed in conceptual terms as below:

Figure 1. War possibility in traditional wars

While in traditional wars, the threats perceived at any strategic moment, the confrontation ways adopted by strategy makers and the damages these confrontations left were all physical, in dual-spacized war either of the three can be physical-virtual, making a matrix of eight scenarios of how physical and cyber warfare can be used jointly and/or separately to attack or defend in a war.

Figure 1. Matrix of war possibilities in dual-spatial war

The research method used in this article to scrutinize the militarization process in which the nature of war is transformed into a dual-spatial one by the use of Stuxnet, is process-tracing. As a qualitative research method, process-tracing is “the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case” (Bennett & Checkel, 2012: 10). George and Bennett (2005: 206, in Bennett & Checkel, 2012: 8) define process-tracing as the use of “histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case”. In this method, the researcher starts from an outcome (Y) to trace the causal mechanism resulting in that outcome.

Figure 2. Causal mechanism in process tracing



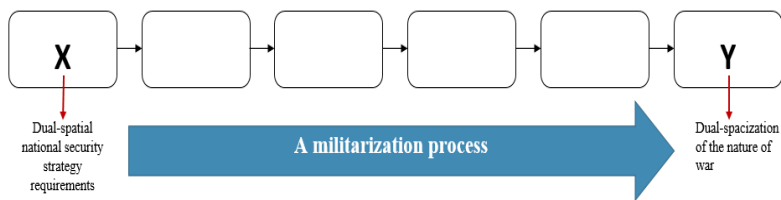
The key point for process-tracing is *causality*. Glennan (1992: 52, in Beach & Pederson, 2013, p. 1) defines a causal mechanism as “a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts”.

In *theory-testing* process tracing, used in this research, the researcher hypothesizes that there is a causal relationship within a case (X contributes to producing Y). The causal mechanism between X and Y is *theoretically* supported. The objective of the researcher is to “opening up the black box of causality” to directly touch the details of the causal mechanism.

The hypothesis in this research assumes that there has been a military and strategic thinking in the US policy toward cyberspace, in that cyber-inclusive perceptions of threats, vulnerabilities, sources of power and the US role in the

international system shaped a vision of the US strategic environment in which the concept of security was extended to include cyber both as a source of threat and a capacity for national power enhancement. With the emergence of cyber as a domain with military, communicative and security functions, the United States had to found long-term military establishments in the new domain to use cyber power along with other instruments of power to exert influence worldwide. The expression of the perception is the institutionalization and development of cyber *offensive* operations to be used in line with other instruments of power. Development of cyber weapons to combat both physical and cyber targets indicates that first, militarization of cyberspace took place in line with national security requisites, and second, strategy making has been done dual-spatially. While defensive cyber operations had been part of the cyber strategy from a long time ago, offensive operations were tried to maintain national security in the *physical* world. The dual-spatial nature of war was marked by the launch of Stuxnet, i.e. the use of a malware (a *cyber*-weapon) to incur damage to *physical* infrastructures of an adversary. So Stuxnet contributed to dual-spacization of the nature of war as part of the longitudinal process of militarization of cyberspace.

Figure 4. Hypothetical process resulting in dual-speciation of the nature of war



II. Militarization of cyberspace

Schofield defines militarism as “the measure of the extent of use of military structures and procedures in a state’s decision-making

process ... the militarization of a state's decision-making process occurs when the military, or those possessing a military perspective, obtain relatively greater influence and the civilian policy-formulation institutions obtain relatively less influence" (Schofield, 2007: 11). According to Trauschweizer, militarism is associated both with "the military's predominance in foreign policy" and with "the employment of military force, rhetoric, and symbols in order to ensure elite control of the populace" (Trauschweizer, 2018). A more comprehensive definition is provided by Klare as "the tendency of a nation's *military apparatus* (which includes the armed forces and associated paramilitary, intelligence and bureaucratic agencies) to assume *ever-increasing control* over the lives and behavior of its citizens; and for *military goals* (preparation for war, acquisition of weaponry, development of military industries) and *military values* (centralization of authority, hierarchization, discipline and conformity, combativeness and xenophobia) increasingly to dominate national culture, education, the media, religion, politics and the economy at the expense of civilian institutions" (Klare, 1978: 121).

Olszewski believes that militarization of cyberspace results from "increasing saturation of the state structure with ICT technologies and the growing importance of these components in the process of ensuring security" (Olszewski, 2016: 104). According to Deibert, militarization of cyberspace refers to "the growing pressures on governments and their armed forces to develop the capacity to fight and win wars in this domain" (Deibert, 2011: 2). Gomez refers to three sets of criteria in literature to identify the militarization of cyberspace by states:

- A military doctrine or policy regarding cyberspace,
- A national cyber security strategy that recognizes state or state-sponsored cyber threats, and,
- A military and/or civilian unit(s) involved in to cyber defense and/or offense (Gomez, 2016: 48).

Using Klare's definition stated above, the trend observed as

militarization of cyberspace in this research covers the US cyber strategy to trace any policy decisions or practical initiatives that: *conveys the tendency or intention of the US military to have increasing control over procedures and mechanisms in cyberspace for military goals such as cyberwar or development of cyber warfare technologies and industries and military values such as centralization and hierarchization of US military authority in cyberspace*; It may include the engagement or the preparation of the state for a cyberwar and all its prerequisites: cyber warfare (weapons), cyber army (soldiers), etc.

Process tracing of the US militarization of cyberspace

The following sections scrutinize the US cyber strategy to indicate how the militarization process with the above definition is traced to prove the hypothesis.

Dual-spatial national security requirements

The emergence of cyberspace and its increasing role in international relations had implications for national security strategy making. The US has been the home country both to the cyber technology itself and the first discussions on cybersecurity as related to national security. But the inclusion of cybersecurity into the US national security agenda did not take place overnight. In fact, the link between *information technology* and *national security* was formed along with and as part of technological achievements in the military domain more than half century ago, when information infrastructures were regarded as military technological advancements. Hinsley and Stripp discuss the contribution and influence of Ultra¹ in the Second World War as a means for intelligence (Hinsley and Stripp, 2001). During the Cold War, information technology was regarded by the American military as a “force enabler” (Cavelty, 2007: 41) for emergency management, but the idea that it may be a serious source of vulnerability was first considered as late as 1980s when Ronald

1. the code-name used in the WWII for the decryption of enemy ciphers

Reagan was specifically concerned about the necessity of protecting ‘classified information’ (Cavelty, 2007: 44). Ever since, the issue of information threats to national security has appeared in the US national security documents.

At the outset of the new century, 9/11 attacks shocked America. The deadly bombings which happened on American soil and killed dozens of people, created uncertainties about the future security of the United States. The implication of the attacks for the US national security and foreign policy machinery was a change in perceptions of threats and security vulnerabilities of the country. The primary perception of vulnerability in the physical world after the attacks was so high that the prefix ‘cyber’ did not appear even once in the 2002 NSS document. Poulsen cites Marcus Sachs, the then white house office of cyberspace security saying:

We were shocked in the federal government that the attack didn't come from cyberspace [...]. Based on what we knew at the time, the most likely scenario was an attack from cyberspace, not airliners slamming into buildings [...]. We had spent a lot of time preparing for a cyber-attack, not a physical attack (Poulsen, 2003, in Cavelty, 2007: 103).

The US cyber strategy in the early years following the attacks focused on enhancing federal computers’ and IT infrastructures’ security. In October 2001, George Bush issued an executive order 13231, “authorizing a protection program that consists of continuous efforts to secure information systems for critical infrastructure, including emergency preparedness communications and the physical assets that support such systems” (The National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace, 2003: 14) and in 2002, he requested that Congress increase funds to secure federal computers by 64 percent for the fiscal year 2003 (The National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace, 2003).

The first overarching document describing the US military’s approach to cyberspace operations, was *The National Military*

Strategy for Cyberspace Operations, released by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2006. The document identified the role of the US armed forces as to ensure US superiority in cyberspace by conducting military operations. According to the strategy, the US would begin “integrating cyberspace operations with DOD’s national defense role in the areas of military, intelligence, and business operations in the areas of military, intelligence, and business operations” (The National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations, 2006: 1).

The document recognized cyberspace as a foundation for Command and Control (C2) of military operations in other domains in need of unified action vertically and horizontally among all levels of war (The National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations, 2006: 11). It also asserted DOD’s deterrence strategy to influence adversaries’ decision making processes in collaboration with the intelligence community, law enforcement, counterintelligence, and other USG partners and allies (The National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations, 2006: 13).

This was followed by the 2007 Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative (CNCI) which took a different approach. Linking the formerly separated cyber defensive missions with “law enforcement, intelligence, counterintelligence, and military capabilities to address the full spectrum of cyber threats from remote network intrusions and insider operations to supply chain vulnerabilities” (CNCI, 2007) was at the center of the strategy.

In Obama administrations, with relative success in the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the physical threat from non-state groups and weak states to the US national security seemed to diminish though not disappeared. The first and the most important element of national interest, ‘protecting the physical territory and the lives of Americans’, which was endangered in 9/11, had been preserved. Therefore, when Obama took office in 2009, America faced a more diverse set of threats to national security. It was still suffering from economic crisis and fighting in the War on

Terrorism. The crisis had left the US economy with an increase in unemployment from about 4% in February 2007 to more than 7% in December 2008 (Escudreo, 2009: 28) and a decline in GDP at an annual rate of 6.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008 (Baily & Elliott, 2009: 4). Also, the US had spent \$ 964.4 on the War on Terror between 2001 and 2008. While terrorism, violence and weak states constituted the main source of threat to the US national security in the two NSS documents published in 2002 and 2006, the NSS 2010 referred to terrorism as only one of the threats to the US national security: “terrorism is one of many threats that are more consequential in a global age” (NSS, 2010: 8). Extension of the sources of threat to national security made cyberspace appear in the list. The NSS 2010 recognized, for the first time, cyberspace as a source of threat to national security:

Cybersecurity threats represent one of the most serious national security, public safety, and economic challenges we face as a nation. The very technologies that empower us to lead and create also empower those who would disrupt and destroy.

The perceived threat in cyberspace was not solely coming from hackers and individuals but also from nation-states. Indeed, a substantial change in NSS 2010 to the 2002 and 2006 documents was that it extended characterization of the origin of *cyber* threats to the US national security from non-state actors and terrorists to state-sponsored activities: “The threats we face range from individual criminal hackers to organized criminal groups, from terrorist networks to advanced nation states” (NSS, 2010: 27). As other nation-states were developing their cyber military capabilities, they were perceived as sources of threat to the US national security via cyberspace. China and Russia were regarded as serious threats. “I can tell you that the Chinese have an aggressive goal to infiltrate all levels of U.S. government and private sector networks” said Dmitri Alperovitch, former McAfee cyber threat researcher, when asked about the consequences of a recent cyber-attack on the White House Military Office for

nuclear commands in 2012. Perception of threat to the US national security in cyberspace from China rose along with the observation of the Chinese “cyber jedis” (Hopkins, 2012) parallel to US engineers specializing in cyber intelligence. A report by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission concluded in 2012 that “the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has long considered the ability to seize information dominance as prerequisite for achieving victory in future high tech conflicts, but only recently has it begun to develop the capability to convert this strategic requirement into an operational possibility” (Krekel et al, 2012: 14). The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Reported to the Congress in 2012 that China was taking “a multipronged approach to the cyber domain” with “numerous stakeholders [who] influence cyber-related activities and priorities and a broad, national-level enterprise of government and military” (US-China Economic & Security Review Commission, 2012: 147) and that Chinese hackers, including state-sponsored actors, continue to “exploit U.S. information systems across government, industry, and civil society” (US-China Economic & Security Review Commission, 2012: 153). The report categorized Chinese harmful actors in cyberspace into four categories of military groups, intelligence and security services, independent actors and corporate actors. In another report prepared by Northrop Grumman Corp in 2012, Krekel et al stated that:

Earlier in the past decade, the PLA adopted a multi-layered approach to offensive information warfare that it calls Integrated Network Electronic Warfare or INEW strategy. Now, the PLA is moving toward information confrontation as a broader conceptualization that seeks to unite the various components of IW under a single warfare commander. The need to coordinate offensive and defensive missions more closely and ensure these missions are mutually supporting is driven by the recognition that

IW must be closely integrated with PLA campaign objectives (Krekel et al, 2012: 8).

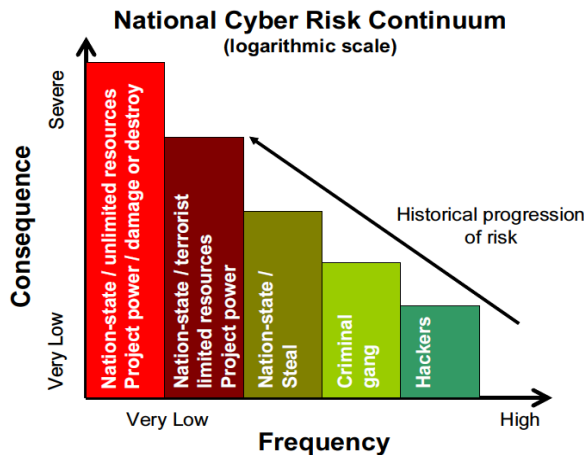
It was perceived that China was trying to integrate CNO1 with other types of information warfare such as electronic warfare, psychological operations, kinetic strike, and deception, and utilize them in a unified framework known as “information confrontation” (Krekel et al, 2012: 8). The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission warned that enjoying “538 million Internet users”, China was developing “a pool of [cyber] soldiers” (US-China Economic & Security Review Commission, 2012: 149-152).

Beside China, Russia was also perceived as developing sophisticated advancements in the cyber domain. Moreover, Russia had a background of resorting to cyber-attacks in line with foreign policy objectives. It had attacked Georgia’s communications network in 2008 due to a conflict between the two countries. Also, the 2007 DDoS attack to Estonia which disrupted the country from the net had been attributed to Russia. The Denial of Service attack to Estonia took place when Russia and Estonia were in dispute about the Estonian government’s removal of a Soviet war memorial from Tallinn (Thomas, 2009). Though the Russian state denied any involvement in the attack, it was believed to have operated behind the event. As a result of the attack, “the country was literally wiped-out from the Internet” (Tofen et al, 2012: 103). It was assumed that a group of “patriotic hackers” in Russia, offended by Estonia’s government decision, had committed the attack while receiving abet from the Russian state (Nye, 2010: 6). Also, the attack to Georgia happened in 2008 before Russian troops invaded the country. The impact of the attack was that it hindered Georgian elites from timely communication with each other and with the outside world (Sheldon, 2011: 104). The US ambassador to Russia, David Smith, noted that “Russia has integrated cyber operations into its military doctrine”; though “not fully successful ... Russia’s 2008 combined cyber and kinetic attack on Georgia was the first

practical test of this doctrine ... [and] we must assume that the Russian military has studied the lessons learned (Smith, 2012, in Cillofu et al, 2014: 12).

The emergence of other state actors with possible military power in cyberspace could threaten the US military superiority in cyberspace in that **first**, depending on the intension of the attacker, state-sponsored attacks are more probable to cause severe damage to critical infrastructures or steal sensitive information. As figure 5, published by the US Department of Homeland Security in 2009 shows, though the *frequency* of cyber-attacks to the US by nation states was lower than those committed by other actors, the *consequences* of such attacks, in case of happening, would be more severe.

Figure 5. The US National Cyber Risk Continuum (logarithmic scale).



Source: Cuts, 2009: 68

Second, longitudinal digitalization of basic infrastructures had made the US “a digital nation” (Cyberspace Policy Review, 2009: 13). The US critical infrastructure dependence on the cyber made it vulnerable to cyber threats. The dependence was expressed previously by Bush describing cyberspace as “the nervous system” of critical infrastructures and the “control system” (The

National Strategy to Secure cyberspace, 2003: vii) of the United States. Nearly all infrastructures in different sections of economy like agriculture, food, public health, government, information and telecommunications, energy, transportation, banking and finance depended on the Internet. Many military infrastructures of the US were also dependent on cyber. As Liff states, dependence on computers and networks and superiority can be paradoxically challenging for the US in that dependence on networks in both the military and civilian sectors, and the country's conventional military dominance, "paradoxically make it an inviting and vulnerable target for cyberattack" According to Liff, "The US military's growing dependence on commercial off-the-shelf products, many of which are made overseas, and the growing number of operational control systems (e.g., SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition systems) and ICS (Industrial Control Systems)) that are connected to an IP (Internet Provider) network have made both military and civilian infrastructure increasingly vulnerable to cyberattack" (Liff, 2012: 409-410).

Third, the idea that the US power and influence should dominate in all areas including cyber, has persistently prevailed in the US strategic thought since the emergence of cyberspace. The preamble to the US constitution refers to "provid[ing] for the common defense, promot[ing] the general welfare, and secur[ing] the blessings of liberty" (US Constitution, 1788) as the three responsibilities for the American government. The Obama administration in both 2010 and 2015 strategies added a fourth objective: "[a]n *international order advanced by U.S. leadership* that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges" [emphasis mine] (NSS, 2010: 7). America's global leadership was a common issue mentioned in Obama administrations' NSS documents:

Our national security strategy is, therefore, focused on renewing American leadership so that we can more effectively advance our interests in the 21st century. We will do so by

building upon the sources of our strength at home, while shaping an international order that can meet the challenges of our time ... Our approach begins with a commitment to build a stronger foundation for American leadership, because what takes place within our borders will determine our strength and influence beyond them. (NSS, 2010: 1-2)

The leading role for the US was explicitly mentioned in Hillary Clinton's remarks on the 2010 NSS, expressed on 27 May 2010: "Our approach is to build the diverse sources of American power at home and to shape the global system so that it is more conducive to meeting our overriding objectives: security, prosperity, the explanation and spread of our values, and a just and sustainable international order". The NSS 2015, too, insists that: "a strong consensus endures across our political spectrum that the question is not *whether* America will lead, but *how* we will lead into the future" (NSS, 2015: 2).

The assumption of the 'leading role for the world' was not void of a cyber-variable. Playing a leading role was compatible with the basic presupposition of the US position as the world's only superpower. Indeed, 'leading' the world would be impossible without comprehensive access to tools to exert power and influence. The new emerging domain for the exertion of power and influence is cyberspace. Maintaining 'a favorable order' in cyberspace, as an anarchic system with no stable governance and international ruling hierarchy, requires strong military presence and dominance. The new order may enjoy several characteristics but all in all it has to be in the US benefit, as the US International Strategy for Cyberspace read:

In the latter half of the 20th century, the United States helped forge a new post-war architecture of international economic and security cooperation. In the 21st century, we will work to realize this vision of a peaceful and reliable cyberspace in that same spirit of cooperation and collective responsibility (the US International Strategy for Cyberspace, 2011: 11).

III. Cyberspace as a strategic domain for military dominance

The US strategic vision of the security environment included a military perception of 'cyberspace'. To combat threats in cyberspace and expand US power in the cyber world, cyber was regarded as a 'strategic domain' and a 'war fighting' front. As the first NSS document published under Obama, the 2010 National Security Strategy devoted special attention to cyber threats and mentioned cyberspace both as a source of vulnerability and military superiority for the United States:

Cybersecurity threats represent one of the most serious national security, public safety, and economic challenges we face as a nation. The very technologies that empower us to lead and create also empower those who would disrupt and destroy. (NSS, 2010:27).

In 2010, the Quadrennial Defense Review called cyberspace "as relevant a domain for DoD activities as the naturally occurring domains of land, sea, air, and space", adopting a *strategic* view on cyberspace just as on the other four domains in which military operations are conducted (the Quadrennial Defense Review, 2010: 37). The approach was clearly reflected in defense strategy documents. The *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* stated that cyberspace has emerged as a war-fighting domain in its own right and that the US "will enhance deterrence in air, space, and cyberspace by possessing the capability to fight through a degraded environment and improving the US's ability to attribute and defeat attacks on systems or supporting infrastructure" (The National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 2011: 8). Also, DoD's *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* focused on the military goals in cyberspace such as defending networks and enhancing resiliency. The *Information Operations* (JP 3-13) of 2012 provided joint doctrine for the integration and coordination of information operations including planning, execution, and assessment programs across the range of military operations. The

Pentagon also provided the *Department of Defense Law of War Manual* (June 2015) including a chapter which clarifies DOD's interpretation of applicable law for conflicts in cyberspace. The *Cyber Electromagnetic Activities* (FM 3-38) of the US Army, published in 2014, included directions for conducting cyber electromagnetic activities and tactics and procedures for planning, integrating, and synchronizing them. The doctrine blends Army operations in cyberspace with electronic warfare and manipulating the electromagnetic spectrum.

The perception on the military nature of cyberspace for warfare operations was mixed with the intention to be the dominant military power in cyber. The assumption that strengthening cyber military capabilities for offensive operations could work as a means of *deterrence* in cyberspace, was the premise of Cold War strategic thought which prevailed in strategy making for cyberspace. The same logic seemed to be on stage regarding cyber threats. The US International Strategy for Cyberspace read:

The United States will, along with other nations, encourage responsible behavior and oppose those who would seek to disrupt networks and systems, dissuading and deterring malicious actors, and reserving the right to defend these vital national assets as necessary and appropriate (The US International Strategy for Cyberspace, 2011: 12).

Development of cyber warfare was believed within the US security apparatus to be able to work as a tool for deterrence against both physical and cyber threats. The way for deterrence was to augment the costs of cyber-attack against the US:

We ensure that the risks associated with attacking or exploiting our networks vastly outweigh the potential benefits. We fully recognize that cyberspace activities can have effects extending beyond networks; such events may require responses in self-defense. (The US International Strategy for Cyberspace, 2011: 13).

Based on the logic that “the best defense is a good offense” (Cilluffo et al, 2014: 20), the US was developing rules of engagement regarding cyber-attacks and cyber weapons. The efforts were designed to “recalibrate the defense to offense ratio” (Cartwright, 2012 in Cilluffo et al, 2014: 20) in favor of offense. Naming deterrence as “a subset of coercion” (Cilluffo et al, 2014: 18), a question for US policymakers to define a path forward was whether the US should engage in “the digital equivalent of an above-ground nuclear-test” as a deterring tool: “The ironic possibility that if conducted with care (commensurate to the enormity of the exercise) the cyber equivalent of such a test may be instrumental to deterring hostile actors and thereby preclude a fight is not to be dismissed out of hand” (Cilluffo et al, 2014: 19-20). What mattered in the deterrence discussion was that cyber operations were regarded as deterrent not only to cyber-attacks but to physical threats:

We will seek to encourage good actors and dissuade and deter those who threaten peace and stability through actions in cyberspace. We will do so with overlapping policies that combine national and international network resilience with vigilance and a range of credible response options (The US International Strategy for Cyberspace, 2011: 12).

In line with this doctrine, the *Joint Cyberspace Operations* (JP 3-12) document, signed in February 2013, “addressed the uniqueness of military operations in cyberspace, clarified cyberspace operations-related command and operational interrelationships, and incorporated operational lessons learned” (Pernik et al, 2016: 14). The aggravation of attention to deterrence through offensive operations was intensified and more clearly expressed in the coming years. The *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* of 2014 identified safeguarding and securing cyberspace as one of its five missions and called for “a secure and resilient cyberspace” (Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, 2014: 40). It assumed the responsibility of developing new and

expanded full-spectrum cyberspace capabilities and supporting military missions worldwide for DoD. According to DoD's Quadrennial Defense Review of 2014 the major roles of DoD in cyber include: "to defend the integrity of [DoD] networks, protect our key systems and networks, conduct effective cyber operations overseas when directed, and defend the Nation from an imminent, destructive cyber-attack on vital U.S. interests". While the 2015 *National Security Strategy* referred to the growing danger of disruptive and even destructive cyber-attacks, and called for increased investment in cyber capabilities, and "impose costs" (NSS, 2015: 13) on malicious cyber actors, DoD's *Cyber Strategy* of 2015 assumed the responsibility to be ready to conduct cyber operations to disrupt an adversary's military related networks or infrastructure so that the U.S. military can protect U.S. interests in an area of operations", referring to DoD's offensive and operational capabilities.

While the DoD budget witnessed a decrease of \$34.2 in 2013 and a decline in the overall funding for DoD budget and for federal government IT in 2015, funding for cyberspace operations increased by 8.5%. The increase was meant for the prioritization of R&D for cyberspace operations including defensive and offensive cyberspace operations and the development of USCYBERCOM's Cyber Mission Forces. In line with this change is an increase in national cyber security division budget from 346.5 million dollars in 2009 to 810 million dollars in 2014.

Institutionalization of cyber-military structures

A major trend identified as a step to militarization of cyberspace was stabilizing structural developments and establishments within the US state institution. Practical militarizing efforts took place in the department of defense (DOD) as the major government branch responsible for military activities. In less than a year after Obama took office, the US cyber command, known as USCYBERCOM, was added to the ten unified commands of the US department of defense on June 23, 2009. Defense secretary, Robert M. Gates nominated Lt. Gen. Keith Alexander, then director of the National

Security Agency, for a fourth star and to take on the top job at the CYBERCOM. While his nomination raised concerns among the Senate members about whether the new position could violate laws which prevent the military from operating in domestic issues, Alexander said to the Senate in his confirmation hearing:

This is not about efforts to militarize cyberspace; rather, it's about safeguarding the integrity of our military system. My goal if confirmed will be to significantly improve the way we defend ourselves in this domain. (Alexander, in Mount, 2010)

The command is in charge of defending the US military's computer networks. The three headlines of the CYBERCOM mission include:

- Operate and aggressively defend the Department of Defense Information Network,
- Deliver cyberspace effects – both defensive and offensive – against global adversaries,
- Rapidly develop and deploy cyberspace capabilities to equip our force for the future fight against a resilient, adaptive adversary (US Army Cyber Command, 2020)

The operational roles and responsibilities of DOD in cyber security are conducted through USCYBERCOM Joint Operations Center, the National Security Agency/Central Security Service Center, the Defense Cyber Crime Center, and the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) (Pernik et al, 2016: 20). According to Deibert, the clearest example of militarization of cyberspace is the US Cyber Command “which unifies all of the existing military cyber activities under a single command”. After the establishment of the CYBERCOM, the cyber components of all military services are to report to it. Its service elements include three-star commands representing each military service: Army Cyber Command (ARCYBER), US Fleet Cyber Command 10th Fleet (FCC/C10F), US Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace (MARFORCYBER), 24th Air Force (AFCYBER), and Coast Guard Cyber Command (CGCYBER) (USCYBERCOM Fact

Sheet, 2010) (Deibert, 2011: 2).

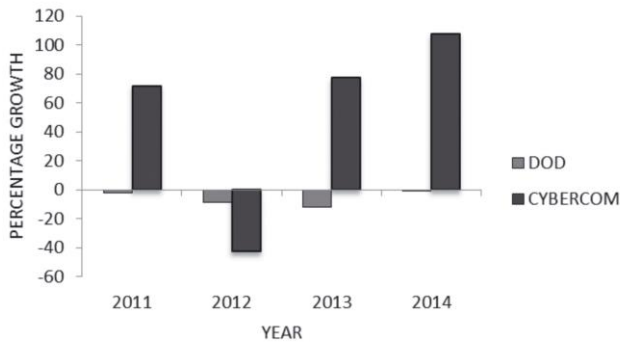
The establishment of the Command was highly controversial. There were concerns that “respect for privacy, diplomatic rules and sovereignty may be harmed as the administration accelerates its efforts to detect and attack adversaries on global computer networks that disregard borders” (Shanker, 2009). Also the “sheer size and importance of DOD’s military operations” made some observers “wonder about how big an effect the Cyber Command might have outside its own domain” (Monroe, 2009). Controversies about the nomination made Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, in discussing Gates’s order say: “I can’t reiterate enough that this is not about the militarization of cyber; this is an internal Department of Defense reorganization. It is focused only on military networks to better consolidate and streamline the department of defense capabilities into a single command” (Whitman, 2009, in Shanker, 2009).

While being responsible for centralized command and control of cyber operations, USCYBERCOM “leads day-to-day defense and protection of DOD information networks; coordinates DoD operations, provides support to military missions; directs the operations and defense of specified DoD information networks; and prepares to conduct full spectrum military cyberspace operations (USCYBERCOM Fact Sheet, 2009). According to Pomerleau (2017), an objective behind the construction of Cyber Command was for it to “act as an integrator and coordinator of cyber activities, namely offensive cyber activities, as to properly deconflict operations and prevent individual services from tripping over each other in cyberspace”. While each service branch of the army has its own cybersecurity mission ranging from conducting electronic warfare to signal intelligence and information operations, USCYBERCOM ensures consistency among them (Pernik et al, 2016: 20).

Along with its establishment, budget allocation for the Cyber Command started and increased relatively as a share of the whole DOD budget. As figure 6 indicates, the percentage growth in the

CYBERCOM budget on an annual basis was much higher than the growth in the DOD budget itself.

Figure 6. Annual Growth in DoD and Cyber Command Budgets, 2011-2014



(Fung, 2014 & SIPRI, 2015 in Craig & Valeriano, 2016: 8)

The DoD also developed a Cyber Mission Force (CMF) in Obama second term to make up the Command focused on strategic and joint force commander problem sets. According to Pomerleau (2017), the CMF consists of 133 teams and 6,200 personnel including “13 National Mission Teams that defend the nation; 68 cyber protection teams that work to defend DoD networks; 27 combat mission teams that provide support to combatant commanders and generate effects in support of operational plans and contingencies, and; 25 support teams that provide analytic and planning support to the national mission teams”. out of the 133 CMF teams, the Army provides 41, the Navy provides 40, the Air Force provides 39 and the Marine Corps provides 13 (Pomerleau, 2017). The 27 Combat Missions Teams support the combatant commands, such as the US Central Command, Pacific Command, and European Command. In November 2009, the Air Force announced that 27,000 communications officers were being transferred to provide support for cyber warfare operations from general computer communications, according to the *Air Force Times*. In April of this year, 3,000 more officers were moved,

bringing the total to 30,000.

Another program was the development of the National Cyber Range (NCR) as a DoD project originally established by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and then under the supervision of the Test Resource Management Center (TRMC) to simulate cyberspace operations and test new technologies and capabilities. The objective is to test “throughout the program development life cycle using unique methods to assess resiliency to advanced cyberspace security threats” (Ferguson, et al, 2014). The NCR provides a “large-scale Global Information Grid (GIG) infrastructure, where technologies and systems can be analyzed and tested under real world conditions in current and future environments” (DARPA, 2008: 2).

Inauguration of the first cyber weapons for physical destruction

Whereas the US Air Force defines weapons as “devices designed to kill, injure, or disable people or to damage or destroy property” (US Department of the Air Force, 1993: 51-54 in Farwell & Rohozinski, 2011: 30), Liff states that cyber warfare are Computer Network Operations (CNO) whose means are non-kinetic and are committed with direct political/military objectives. CNOs fall in two categories of Computer Network Attacks (CNA) and Computer Network Defense (CND).

In practice, a serious and controversial example of the realization of the use of cyber warfare took place in 2010 under Obama namely operation ‘Olympic Games’ or malware Stuxnet as covered by media. Operation ‘Olympic Games’ was operated as an alternative to a kinetic attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities. As the first “instance of a weaponized malware” (Gomez, 2016: 42), it is likened to the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by many security observers and practitioners including a former CIA Chief, Michael Hayden (Hayden, in Kaplan, 2016).

Stuxnet¹ harmed components of the Natanz uranium

1. “The name Stuxnet comes from a combination of file names found in the Stuxnet source code:..stub and MrxNet.sys” (Kosina, 2012: 76).

enrichment facility and destroyed over 1,000 centrifuges, marking “one of the first known uses of offensive cyber operations as a coercive measure between states” (Anderson & Sadjadpour, 2018: 9). The damage that Stuxnet brought about was comparable to a physical attack to Natanz. It infected over 60,000 computers, more than half of them in Iran; and the rest in other countries. It used four ‘zero-day vulnerabilities’¹, manipulated Siemens’ default passwords and accessed windows operating systems that run the WinCC and PCS7 programs. Stuxnet infected Windows computers and looked for the Siemens SIMATIC WinC/Step7 controller software. If it did not find the Step7 software, it did nothing and incurred no harm. If it found the Step7 software, it infected the software in order to manipulate the PLC. The worm looked for high-frequency converter drives made by two manufacturers: Vacon (based in Finland) and Farao Paya (based in Iran). Zetter (2011, in Kosisna, 2012: 59) explains how it operated next: “after an initial period where it is dormant for two weeks, Stuxnet increases the frequency of the motors to 1,410Hz for 15 minutes. Then it restores the frequency back to normal (1,064Hz) and leaves it at this level for 27 days. After 27 days, it changes the frequency down to 2Hz for 50 minutes, then restores it again to 1,064Hz and waits for another 27 days before repeating the sequence. By interfering with the speed of the motors, Stuxnet thus sabotages the normal operation of the industrial control process”. Besides incurring damage to the centrifuges, Stuxnet sent false data to the controller to assure them the systems were working properly and by disabling automated alarms misled scientists about what was actually happening in the site. The changes were highly specific, which indicates that Stuxnet targeted a specific system and was planned to do its specific

1. “Vulnerabilities previously unknown, so that there has been no time to develop and distribute patches” (Farwell & Rohozinski, 2011: 24). Zero-days are “the hacking world’s most potent weapons” (Kosina, 2012: 60) because the vulnerabilities they exploit are neither known to the software maker not to the antivirus developers.

damage to the target.

IV. Dual-Spacization of the nature of war

Apart from the technical explanations about Stuxnet and other US-developed malware for offensive purposes, the use of the *weapon* marked a “revolution” in the history of military strategy. Farwell and Rohozinski believe that the attack marks a new era which has strategic “implications” and “lessons”, being that “cyber-attack is not a distant theoretical probability” and that “cyber weapons may offer non-kinetic ways to disrupt an operational capability of an adversary”. As mentioned before, the development of CNOs was perceived to contribute to cyber deterrence against both physical and cyber threats. Beside the actual damage it brought to the nuclear facilities in Natanz, the strategic implication “*Olympic Games* exemplified an operation intended to reduce the resistance of a rival system and to inflict attrition upon its resources. Destruction of an asset is one of many potential objectives that cyber weapons can achieve. Future cyber weapons may disrupt communications systems or the ability of adversaries to cohesively operate air, naval or ground forces. They could slow the speed at which an adversary is able to mass forces or deploy assets, destroying precious momentum vital for an adversary’s offense” (Farwell & Rohozinski, 2012).

Stuxnet had all the features to be regarded as an act of war and realized the change formerly perceived in words not actions in the nature of war: *incurring actual physical damage by a computer virus developed by a nation-state to be used against an adversary*. The use of malware parallel with or instead of or an alternative to kinetic action. Within the framework used in this article, this is dual-spacization of the nature of war. The possibility of the replacement of a cyberwar for kinetic war has created an opportunity for a new generation of wars to come. According to Finkelstein and Govern, the change in the nature of war has occurred for three reasons: changes in offensive capabilities, defense strategy and geopolitical change. They argue

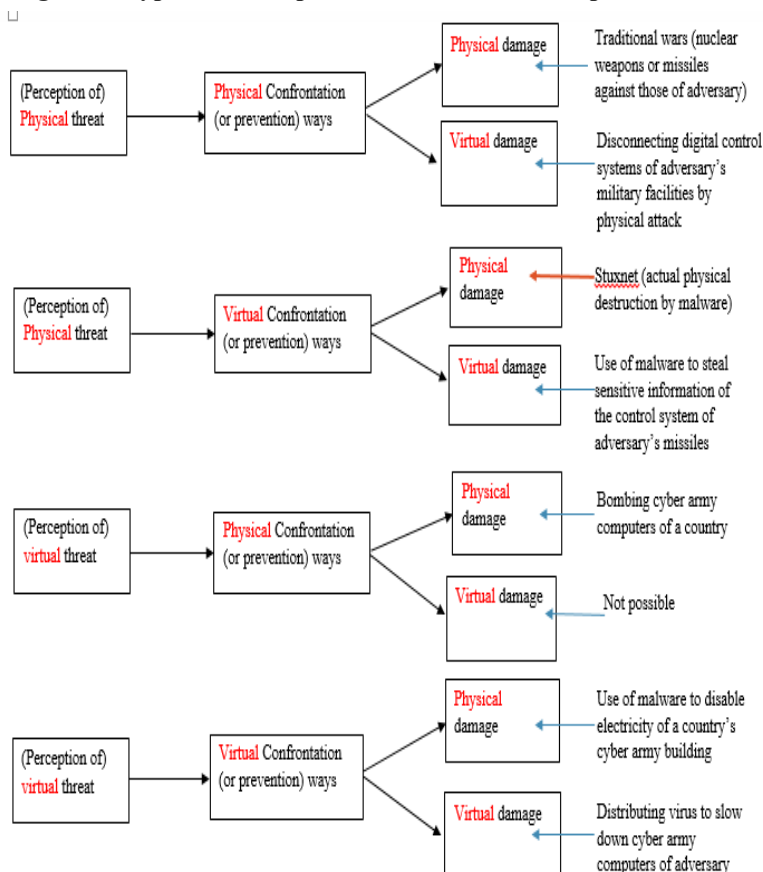
that:

The possibility that we might be able to destroy a target like the Iranian nuclear reactor from the "inside out," avoiding detection for significant periods of time while an electronic virus works its way through the system's infrastructure, opens up the possibility of just such a dramatic change in our offensive capabilities. In addition, cyber technology creates the opportunity for a new kind of defense strategy, one designed both to counter cyber offensives and to pre-empt kinetic attacks, under scenarios that do not fit neatly within the traditional paradigm of war. When technological evolution is combined with geopolitical change, such as the demise of state sovereignty and the entrance of civilians or non-governmental actors into the arena of war, the transformative nature of cyber technology is enhanced (Finkelstein and Govern, 2015: XIII).

Strategically, there are reasons for which cyberwar can be regarded as an alternative to kinetic war. The first one is that due to the nature of cyberspace, access to the infrastructures of the other side is possible without physical presence of the attacker. Ben-Israel and Tabansky state that this is a development happening for the first time in history. Besides is the issue of attribution (Ben-Israel and Tabansky, 2014: 61). Attribution after being attacked is a challenge in any war and the nature of cyberspace creates degrees of ambiguity on who has been behind the attack. Libicki states that ambiguity is the "unwillingness of states to say what they have done (or would do) coupled with the lack of proof that they have done it (or would do it)" and this is achieved in cyber: "The working hypothesis is that a cyber-attack used in lieu of kinetic methods creates more ambiguity in terms of effects sources, and motives" Libicki (Libicki, 2014: 43-46). One function of the attribution problem is that due to the specific features of cyberspace, attacks could be launched by proxies (Liff,

2012: 413) making the attribution for the victim yet more complicated. From the legal perspective, the traditional Law of Armed Conflict requires that the victim identify the attacker to be able to launch a legal case; what can be difficultly achieved in the cyber world (Farwell & Rohozinski, 2011: 31). Stuxnet was a revealing example of the argument as for the substitution of Stuxnet, for military attack against Iran's nuclear program and how the United States preferred a cyber-attack over a military one to weaken or slow down some part of Iran's nuclear technologies. One asset, for instance, was that it did not cause the loss of life of Iranians; what was inevitable in case of a kinetic war. 'The costs' of cyberwar, in general, are less than those of a physical war.

Based on our conceptual framework, Stuxnet is to lie on the third line of our matrix: perception of *physical* threat from Iran's nuclear facilities provoked a *cyber* confrontational way with *physical* damage. Other types of dual-spatial war are also possible as figure 7 shows:

Figure 7. Types of dual-spatial war based on conceptual framework

The final process

Based on our hypothesis and experimental evidence, the final militarization process part of which was reflected in the form of Stuxnet looks as follows: dual-spatial national security requirements led to perception of cyberspace as a strategic domain for military dominance. Since military dominance needed long-term institutions responsible for its preservation, cyber military establishments were formed and the first cyber weapons were developed in them. The actual use of these weapons dual-spacized the nature of war. Figure 8 summarizes the whole process as below:

Figure 8. The process of the US militarization of cyberspace

Conclusion

The current article is focused on the US cyber-attack on Iran's nuclear facilities known as Stuxnet and argued that while giving a cyber dimension to the relations, the attack was part of a long-term militarization process in the US cyber strategy to dominate cyberspace a strategic domain. The central argument was developed as a hypothesis and tested through the means of the research method. Using dual-spacization as theoretical framework, the concept of cyberwar was conceptualized and the process of the US militarization of cyberspace was traced by process tracing as the research method. Findings prove the hypothesis in that dual-spatial national security priorities as to have military dominance in cyberspace contributed to the militarization of cyberspace through a chain of events starting from the necessity for a cyber-inclusive perception of national security requirements. Once cyberspace became a component of national security decision making, it was regarded as a domain for military dominance leading to development of *offensive* cyber operations with *physical* destructive impacts which in turn dual-spacized the nature of war. Stuxnet exemplified the use of a malware (a *cyber-weapon*) to incur damage to *physical* infrastructures of an adversary.

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Security Threats to Regional Powers Investment in Iraq After the Defeat of ISIS

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Abstract

Iraq, as Iran's western neighbor, has the appropriate and potential capacity for regional interaction and cooperation. Accordingly, intelligent and planned interaction with this country can be important for the production of wealth, power and national security of Iran. Being aware of this, regional powers are also investing in Iraq ostensibly to rebuild the country, but in practice with political motives, and this could pose a threat to Iran. The present study seeks to answer the main question: What effect does the investment of regional powers in the reconstruction of post-ISIS Iraq, which is done in the shadow of the passivity of Iran's economic presence in this country, have on Iran's national security? The study claims that the investment of regional powers in Iraq, which leads to an increase in the influence of these powers and a change in Iraqi policies and orientations in the shadow of Iran's economic passivity in this country, increases Iran's national security threats in economic, political, social, military and environmental fields. The present study tries to investigate the subject with a descriptive-analytical method.

Keywords: *Iran, Iraq, foreign investment, regional powers, security challenges*

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Introduction

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran became a serious threat to the west and the countries of the region, and for this reason, western powers, with the help of some countries in the region, tried to confront Iran through military means. After the Iraqi imposed war against Iran, the strategy of the western powers entered a new phase. Because changing a country's behavior and its political regime through military power comes at a high price to the "invader", imposing sanctions can be an appropriate measure to make the target country more normal and even change its political system. In this way, dealing with countries, instead of using hard power, ie using force, is to target the economic capacities of the "sanctioned" country (Merom, 1990: 76-77). Therefore, at this time, western powers are trying to change Iran's political through economic sanctions and putting the country in a difficult economic and financial situation. As Mark Dubowitz and his colleagues at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy put it: "The goal should be to change the Iranian regime, not to stop its expansion" (Aljazeera, 2018).

In addition, foreign investment and gaining access to the target countries' markets, pursued by political and security motives, could have consequences for Iran, such as military action and economic sanctions. Due to its geopolitical weight and economic potential, Iraq is one of the most important players in western Asia, and after the fall of Saddam Hussein, new opportunities have been provided for Iran to develop its relations with Iraq. The political developments in Iraq, which have led to an increase in the role and power of the Shiites, have greatly

increased the power and influence of Iran. In this regard, Iraq can play a key role for Iran in the areas of security, territorial integrity, counterterrorism, and easing the pressure of US economic sanctions.

For this reason, the new developments in Iraq and the importance that Iraq has for Iran, caused the regional and supra-regional powers, in different ways and with different tools, to turn the trend in their favor. In fact, these countries are trying to change the policies of Iraq with their economic behaviors through terrorist groups and economic tools, and consequently weaken the resistance front. Therefore, examining the effect of "active presence of companies and investment of regional powers to rebuild post-ISIS Iraq in the shadow of Iran's economic passivity in this country" on "Iran's national security" is one of the main concerns of this study. The present study seeks to answer this main question: What effect does the investment of regional powers in the reconstruction of post-ISIS Iraq, which is done in the shadow of the passivity of Iran's economic presence in this country, have on Iran's national security? The study claims that the investment of regional powers in Iraq, which leads to an increase in the influence of these powers and a change in Iraqi policies and orientations in the shadow of Iran's economic passivity in this country, increases Iran's national security threats in economic, political, social, military and environmental fields.

This descriptive-analytical study tries to examine the investment of regional powers in the reconstruction of post-ISIL Iraq in light of Iran's economic passivity in this country as a threat to Iran's national security. In fact, the study of the effect of an independent variable "investment of regional powers for the reconstruction of post-ISIS Iraq in the shadow of Iran's economic passivity in this country" on the dependent variable "Iran's national security" is considered in this study. This study seeks to explain the new dimensions of economic, political, social, military, and environmental threats posed to Iran through the investment of regional powers in the reconstruction of Iraq. The

data collection method of the research is based on the documentary method based on library resources, websites and the author's analysis. The first section deals with the current state of Iran's economic relations and regional powers with Iraq. The second part will try to examine the investment of regional powers in the reconstruction of post-ISIS Iraq and its consequences for Iran, which does not have an active presence in Iraq. Finally, in the final section, we will discuss the conclusion.

I. Iran's Relations with Iraq

The overthrow of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq was a turning point in Iran-Iraq relations. The importance of the new Iraq in the field of Iranian diplomacy and the presence of the Shiites in the construction Iraq, turned the country from a strategic enemy to a friend and ally of Iran in the region. This provided a good opportunity for Iran to strengthen its relations with Iraq. Compared to other neighbors, Iraq has the most to do with Iran's national security. First, any developments in Iraq play a key role in Iran's political-security issues, such as terrorism, territorial integrity and national security. Secondly, there are good historical, cultural and religious ties between the two countries. Third, Iraq is one of Iran's non-oil export markets that plays an important role in stability, security and prosperity of the two countries' economies (Sadeghi and Asgarkhani, 2011: 935). Fourth, a strong Iraq that is far from the influence of regional and supra-regional powers can be effective for Iran's security and bilateral cooperations (Tavakoli, et al, 2013: 167-168). Thus, since 2003, Iraq has found a special place in Iran's foreign policy and trade relations between the two countries have expanded in recent years.

Table 1. Iran-Iraq trade relations

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Iran's exports to Iraq	4439	5149	6249	5949	6131	6237	5959	6425	8960
Iraq's exports to iran	43	121	83	68	60	50	55	77	58

Source: ITC; In million dollars

but it should be noted that these trade relations are more in Iran's interest, and this could be a serious challenge for the the two countries cooperations in various fields in the long run. Iran, in a traditional perspective, views Iraq merely as a consumer market for its products and does not pay attention to its economic empowerment, it has prompted Iraq to raise tariffs to counter goods imported from Iran. In 2017, Iranian juice and dairy products were exported to Iraq with a tariff ranging between 30 to 40 percent, while Turkey exported its goods to Iraq with a preferential tariff of two to three percent (Bazetab, 2017). In fact, poor performance of Iranian diplomacy has enabled its competitors with more active economic diplomacy to reduce tariffs and facilitate the export of their products to this country.

It can be said with certainty that the defense of Iraq is now more complicated than before, because with the defeat of ISIS, Iraq has entered into the phase of reconstruction of war-torn areas, which requires attracting \$ 100 billion in foreign investment (Hamshahri Online, 2018). As a result, the country's financial crisis and lack of sufficient resources to rebuild its infrastructure have prompted Baghdad to seek foreign aid. "Iran is always trying to gain more influence and solidify its base, both in the region and elsewhere," said state department spokeswoman Heather Navarre. The United States does not intend to focus on large projects and instead will force Iraq's neighbors to play a role in this process"(Tabnak, 2017).

As Saudi Arabia is trying to invest in Iraqi livestock and poultry industry by investing in an area of one million hectares

(Anadolu News Agency, 2019). Turkey is also expected to invest about \$5 billion in Iraq (ISNA News Agency, 2019). Even some European countries are trying to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq. For example, German Foreign Minister Haiko Maas stressed the readiness of German companies to invest in various sectors of Iraq economy (Anadolu News Agency, 2019).

The countries that once tried to weaken the Iraqi government by supporting ISIS, today have opened a new front in the form of participation in the reconstruction of Iraq by blocking Iranian presence in this scene. Therefore, these countries entered into negotiations with Iraq to participate in reconstruction projects. In fact, with their active presence in Iraq, these countries are trying to establish good connections between regional projects and their domestic economic clusters, and to strengthen their non-oil exports (Siddiqui, 2010: 20-21). On the other hand, with foreign investment, they try to improve their image in front of the Iraqi people (Tai and Soong, 2014: 32) in order to solidify their stance by participating in Iraqi reconstruction projects. As can be seen, the investment of regional powers in Iraq for the reconstruction of this war-ravaged country is not pursued solely for economic gains, and its political and security considerations must be taken into account; so any negligence can negatively affect Iran's influence in this country and the region.

Not only Iran rivals economically and politically are trying to expand their presence in Iraq to the detriment of Iran and the region, but even those Iraqi political elites who do not oppose Iran's influence in their country are taking steps to invite foreign investments. Haidar al-Abadi, the then Iraqi Prime Minister, said last summer: "We consider them (sanctions against Iran) a strategic and incorrect mistake, but we will implement them to defend the interests of our people" (Aftab, 2018).

Also, in early April 2019, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the then Prime Minister of Iraq welcomed Saudi investment in Iraq during a meeting with King Salman, during which 13 cooperation documents, especially in the economic field, were signed between

the two sides (Pars Today, 2019). The Iraqi authorities' inclinations to attracting foreign investment and asking for help from countries such as Saudi Arabia is mainly due to Iran's one-sided and instrumental view of Iraq. With reimposition of US sanctions and Europe's cooperation in this regard conditions has led to the closure of the European and other countries' markets to Iranian goods and has made Iran more inclined to export goods to Iraq.

Table 2. Iran's exports to three European countries and Iraq in 2017 and 2018

Target countries	Germany	England	France	iraq
2017	359	48	42	6554
2018	254	29	27	8990

Source: Iran 6Customs and ITC; in million dollars

The economic dependence of Iraqi companies to foreign investments, public approval of Iraqi people towards countries which invest in Iraq as well as influence of these countries in Iraq and the impact of their policies on the future of Iraqi developments, are among the consequences of Iran's misguided economic diplomacy towards Iraq. Therefore, the share of Iran's low economic investment in Iraq will affect Iran's influence in this country and the whole region. Thus, it seems that the presence of companies and investments of regional powers in Iraq, which is pursued in the shadow of Iran's economic passivity, poses economic, social, political, military and environmental threats to Iran, which in the following, its various dimensions will be examined.

II. Iran's Passivity and Investment of Regional Powers in Iraq

Economic Threat:

The idea of economic security is at the heart of highly political and unresolved issues that lies in the framework of international

political economy. Economic threats can be considered in the form of agent threats like sanctions (Sadeghi and Naderi, 2016: 182). The first type of threat targets the economic security of the sanctioned country, and the second type of threat, in turn, will have serious effects on the economy of the targeted country. A country that is in its early stages of growth and development, structural threats and the imposition of liberal ideas have a negative impact on the resilience of that country's economy.

In addition to these threats, there is a third type of threat that is considered in the form of access to targeted countries markets. This threat can be pursued for political and security motives and has consequences for the targeted country and other countries associated with it. Since Iraq is one of the countries which Iran has good trade relations with, Iran's regional rivals are aware of this and try to direct Iraq's policies with their economic behavior in line with the US policy of maximum pressure campaign. In recent years, the development of political and economic relations between Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries along with the Persian Gulf states has increased, and in this way they are trying to improve their engagement with Baghdad to use its power to intensify the US pressure against Iran.

According to Yahya Al-Ishaq, President of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, today Saudi Arabia spends a lot of money in the Iraqi market, especially in the field of dairy, and has established almost 300 offices in this country (Donya-e-Eqtasad Newspaper, 2019). According to Mehdi Nejatnia, a former Iranian trade adviser to Iraq, customs tariff between the two countries has not yet been zero, but countries such as Saudi Arabia sell their goods without customs tariffs under the brand of countries such as Jordan in the Iraqi market (Tasnim News Agency, 2019). On the other hand, Iraq has taken countermeasures against Iran and will continue to do so in the future. For example, "black cement", "lightweight concrete block", "juices, syrups and beverages" and "ice creams" are among goods that according to recent decisions, Iran will not be able to export to Iraq (Donya-e-Eqtasad

Newspaper, 2019).

The ban on imports of Iranian goods happens while Iraq is importing them from countries such as Turkey. This is more indicative of Turkey's active economic presence in Iraq. Sayyed Hamid Hosseini, Secretary General of the Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce, says: "Today, Turkey has more than 10 registered companies in southern Iraq and it shows their high desire to participate in this market" (ILNA News Agency, 2018). In addition to Iran's regional rivals, European investment in Iraq is to the detriment of Iranian exports. The French company Lafarge, which has invested in the production of cement in Iraq, was critical of the import of cement from Iran, and this led to the imposition of a 100% tariff and ultimately a ban on the export of cement from Iran to Iraq (Taadol Newspaper, 2019).

The Iraq government recent move to ban import of some goods from Iran, is related to the government's policy to support domestic production. Yahya Al-Ishaq, President of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, says: "The Iraqis say about some goods, such as cement or food stuff, that they are not always going to import these goods and are looking for self-sufficiency" (Donya-e-Eqtasad Newspaper, 2019). But this issue is causing concern when Iran's regional rivals and countries connected with the US policies are trying to seize Iraqi markets and invest in this country to materialize the US maximum pressure campaign on Iran.

Social Threat:

Today, national security is not limited to military might but lack of social security and reduced life expectancy is more important than military security (Tabatabaei and Fathi, 2014: 32). Social security is an issue that both individuals and governments are contributed to it. Given the declining control of governments over their communities, the increasing trend of migration, and transnational separatist movements, it is inevitable to study government-people relations. For this reason, social threats cannot be easily separated from political threats (Navidnia, 2003: 61). Since social security is primarily related to traditional patterns of

language, culture, religious and ethnic identity and customs, these values are often threatened from inside the country (Esmailzadeh and Ahmadi, 2016: 135). In general, a social threat relates to identity and respected values.

The presence of Shiites in Iraqi power structure changed the situation in the region in favor of Iran. Therefore, on the one hand, regional and supra-regional powerstry to show the government and the Shiites ineffectiveness in managing the country's affairs, especially in economic field, as well as linking it to Iran, and on the other by investing in Iraq and supporting certain ethnic and religious movements. So, they are trying to polarize and weaken the Iraqi government and its national identity. Lack of necessary infrastructures and Iran's lack of attention to Iraqi production sectors and inability to strengthen Shiite groups and the government of Abdel Mahdi, led to the main recent protests of the Iraqi people and some religious movements against corruption, lack of necessary services and unemployment.

Regarding the recent protests in Iraq, Mehdi Hamid Jassim, a member of the Baghdad City Council, believes that the recent protests are not subject to any internal or external elemnts, but to the uprising of the hungry and brave youth of the homeland (Javan Online, 2019). But the Saudi, Emirati and Israeli media tried to divert the Iraqi protests during this period. Emphasizing the role of the Zionist regime, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the recent unrest in Iraq, Basra police chief General Rashid Fallij said that some people had taken money from these countries to destroy Iraq (Young Journalists Club, 2019).

The American newspaper Washington Post also writes in a report that the massive demonstrations in Iraq are a serious threat to Iran and its affiliates in Baghdad (Al-Arabiya, 2019). Therefore, these countries blamed Iran for the unsettled situation in Iraq by its cyber forces and infiltration among the protesters. Since many Iraqi officials have cordial relations with Iran, for this reason, slogans were chanted against Iran and some of these protesters attacked Iranian consulate in Karbala (Al-Alam, 2019).

Also, due to the absence of Iranian companies and investments in this country, the Iraqi government has taken trade measures against import of Iranian goods. Considering extensive investments of regional powers in Iraq, this step is aimed at further splitting Shiite identity and resistance may also increase.

Iraq's trade confrontation and the protests of some infiltrators against Iran could also lead to divisions within Iran. Therefore, foreign countries, especially Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and even Turkey, cause divisions and insecurity in Iraqi society by investing in Iraq and supporting ethnic and religious groups in the face of national identity and portraying Shiites ineffective. Consequently, by imposing their policies in Iraq, which mainly lead Baghdad pursuing policies inconsistent with Iran, they destroy the identity, collective cohesion, and unity of view in Iran about Iraq and the axis of resistance. Thus, Iraq's inconsistent policies with Iran could pose a threat to Iran's collective identity in support of the resistance front.

Political Threat:

Political threats, like military ones, can be so dangerous. In this type of threat, there is the issue of pressuring the government to act or leave the act until the political regime changes and also disrupts the political context of the government. On the one hand, the presence of Shiites in Iraq's power structure has strengthened Iran's influence in the region, and on the other it has increased cooperation between two countries. The type of political and ideological issues that the two countries have accepted, will play an important role in these relations. For this reason, regional powers are trying to oust Iraq from the Iranian front by increasing their economic influence in Iraq. For example, Turkey seeks to achieve its goals due to Iraq's communication routes to Europe, energy transmission pipelines, control over the Tigris and Euphrates water resources, and the use of ethnicities (Karimipour, et al, 2018: 29-30).

Saudi Arabia also seeks to weaken Iran and Iraq. In the current situation, Saudi Arabia is trying to prevent cooperation

and strategic ties between Iran and Iraq. Since Iran and Iraq have a single-product economy, their incomes are affected by changes in the oil market. For this reason, oil can provide the basis for cooperation between the two countries, so in the field of oil, they can pursue a common policy. Of course, the issue of oil always does not lead to cooperation between Iran and Iraq. In order to run the country and develop their infrastructures, the two sides need to pursue policies in OPEC (Organization of oil exporting countries) that could maximize their revenues.

Therefore, Saudi Arabia, with its economic presence in Iraq, which has been somewhat neglected by Iran, seeks to direct Iraq's oil policies with its own. This means that Riyadh is trying to persuade Iraq to work together in this regard in order to implement US dictates against Iran and intensify US sanctions against Tehran, especially in the oil field. In this regard, the two countries agreed on Saturday, November 10, to work together to stabilize the global oil market and prevent price increases caused by the Iranian oil embargo (Tabnak, 2018).

The Kurdish issue is also one of the subjects that has paved the way for cooperation between Iran and Iraq, and the two countries want to preserve Iraq's territorial integrity. This will happen when there is a strong government in Iraq and it does not follow the policies imposed outside powers. Given the views of the United States and Israel on the greater middle east plan and the partition of Iraq, which are pursued through means such as supporting terrorist groups, it poses threats to Iraq and Iran. During the Iraqi crisis, the Kurds showed more manoeuvres and the PKK also carried out such movements with the help of groups such as PJAK (Aghazadeh khoei, 2015: 3). This could hinder Iran-Iraq cooperation in securing their borders and territorial integrity.

It should be noted that Iran's unilateral economic policies towards Iraq and the lack of attention to the Iraqi economy will reduce Iran's influence and, consequently, increase the presence of regional powers in this country, and this will make Iraq's political

future and orientations under the influence of regional and trans-regional powers. So Saudi Arabia can increase its influence in the region to the detriment of Iran by joining Iraq and forming a coalition against Iran. Therefore, Iran's inattention to the Iraqi market and its economic opportunities, which is pursued in the shadow of Saudi-Turkish economic cooperation, will drastically reduce political cooperation between the two countries.

Military Threat:

In addition to the threats, the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 also created opportunities for Iran, and the new conditions doubled the balance of regional power, military security, and deterrence of Iran outside its borders (Amiri, 2018: 104-105). But the issue that threatens these strategic relations is the existence of a dysfunctional, bankrupt government in Iraq. Bankrupt government characteristics such as inability to provide services to the people, economic decline, increasing public dissatisfaction, lawlessness and delegitimization of the government, violent and armed conflicts as well as intervention of foreign political actors in Iraq are abundant (Carlsen and Bruggemann, 2012: 2). Thus, weak and unbalanced economic development of Iraq in recent years has led to the spread of ethnic-religious violence in Iraq. Therefore, the existence of a fragile government incapable of advancing balanced economic development, reducing poverty and unemployment in society, along with the intervention of regional powers has been one of the main factors in attracting the country's youth to the ISIS terrorist group (Haji Yousefi and Hosseinzadeh, 2018: 51-52).

Since the degree of Iran's influence and its role in the region depends on the degree of strategic connection and direction of relations with allied and friendly political groups in Iraq (Barzegar, 2007: 86) Iran's rivals are also trying to destabilize Iraq and form their own government by abusing the failed Iraqi government and supporting insurgents and opposition groups. Therefore when Iraq was involved in ISIS in recent years, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan tried every means to defeat the central

government of Baghdad and bring a government to power which was in line with their policies (Navaki and Ahmadian, 2015: 62-63) Turkey also supported ISIS terrorist group because of its rivalry with Iran.

Even in the post-ISIS era, regional powers ostensibly try to invest in Iraq in order to expand their influence in the country. In this period, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, along with investment projects in the country and with the support of domestic protesters, also sought to make the government of Abdul Al-Mahdi look ineffective and bring their desired government to power. Therefore, if a government comes to power whose policy is not in line with Iran's goals and interests, security and military cooperation between the two will not be possible and will increase the presence of regional and trans-regional powers and even will cause insecurity in this country. With the fall of Saddam Hossein, due to the US military presence in the region especially its close proximity to Iran the American security threats and Israel's military threats have increased against Iran and Israel has been able to get closer to Iran geographically (Sohrabi, 2017: 60-61).

Although Iran has been able to help Iraq counter-terrorism militarily and act as an advisor, the country does not pose a military threat to Iraq. The presence of foreign companies and the investment of regional powers in Iraq's infrastructure, are due to Iran's economic absence in this country and it is a warning to Iran in the field of military security. Because the post-ISIS reconstruction period in Iraq has provided opportunities for the presence of countries such as the United States and Israel in Iraq, and they can better advance their goals against Iran through a weaker Iraqi government. Turkey and Saudi Arabia can also pursue a policy of increasing their influence in the region to the detriment of Iran. This will lead to the severance of Iran's ties with Hezbollah and the regional resistance movements. Therefore, this can create threats and challenges for the Islamic republic of Iran and by upsetting the balance of power, will greatly reduce Iran's ability to deter enemies military threats.

Environmental Threat:

In the past, with the prevailing perception that environmental threats are part of natural and accidental conditions, this threat was not much on the agenda of security issues. But today, due to the fact that environmental issues have a great impact on human societies, more attention has been paid to the past. The development of new weapons with high technology, looming water and energy shortages, health risks and climate change are the main indicators shaping this dimension of security (Tabatabaei and Fathi, 2014: 33). If the environmental issues of the countries are not resolved, these conflicts can lead to the formation of conflicts between countries (Pourahmad and Heidari, 2016: 155). Even due to the influence of regional powers in some countries with weak governments, the lack of cooperation between countries and the consequent increase in insecurity will intensify.

This can also be mentioned on the issue of environmental relations between Iran and Iraq. Between 1968 and 2003, due to the wrong policies of the Iraqi Ba'ath party regarding the country's wetlands, the phenomenon of fine dust appeared in three countries: Iraq, Iran and Turkey (Maleki, 2018: 354). Also, water control projects in Turkey, Iraq and Iran have caused the drying up of wetlands and lakes located in Iraq (Araghchi, 2014: 109). This caused environmental problems in Iraq and the drying up huge part of the Hoor al-Azim wetland. In the summer of 2018, a large fire broke out in the western part of Hoor al-Azim located in Iraq and caused environmental and respiratory problems for the people of the southern Iran (Young Journalists Club, 2018). However, according to Kiomars Hajizadeh, Director General of Khuzestan Crisis Management, the Iraqi side didn't cooperate to extinguish the fire. Even according to Ali Sari, a member of parliament from Ahwaz, it took about 20 days to get permission to bring the plane into Iraq to put out the fire (Khane Mellat News Agency, 2018).

Although the main cause of dust and fire in the Hoor al-Azim wetland goes back to Turkish policies, Iran cannot pressure on

Turkey because basically these rivers do not lead to Iran and only Iraq can put pressure on Turkey. Here we can clearly see the presence of companies and investments of foreign countries, especially Turkey, and its impact on the environment of Iraq and Iran. However, the construction of dams upstream by Turkey has led to drying up of agricultural lands and environmental problems for Iraq and, consequently, for Iran, but because of its effective economic presence in Iraq, Turkey has been able to prevent Iraqis from protesting and reacting to its construction activities especially dam building which it has built on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Another part of the problem goes back to the Iraqis themselves because the Iraqis are not fulfilling their obligations to comply with the rights of rivers. As Kiomars Hajizadeh, Director General of Crisis Management in Khuzestan, believes that the Iraqi side is not committed to providing water to the wetland in accordance with international obligations and conventions (Khane Mellat News Agency, 2018).

However, when the wetlands of Hoor al-Azim, Shadegan, Mesopotamia, etc. dry up, all of these will become the center of fine dust and air pollution and will have the greatest impact on the people of Khuzestan and Ilam provinces (Kaviani Rad, 2017) The result will be abandonment of Agricultural lands and loss of employment for the people of the region and finally will lead to protests and insecurity in Iran border areas. Therefore, with its economic presence and investment in Iraq, Iran could put pressure on Turkey through Iraq and oblige Iraq to fulfill its obligations in the field of water. Iran's failure to pursue such policies toward Iraq could pave the way for regional powers to influence the government and direct its policies, even in the environmental sphere. Thus, the issue of Iraq's environment and Iran's vulnerability in this regard could be exploited by regional powers to put pressure on Iran to advance its goals.

Conclusion

This research has tried to take the concept of security out of the

tight military approach and consider the issue of security in various dimensions. Although in the international anarchic structure and the turbulent region of West Asia, military threats have an important place in security thinking and should not be ignored, but security has taken various dimensions and the neglect to these new components can threaten national security of a country as military threats do. In this study, considering the threat of foreign investment for the reconstruction of Iraq in the shadow of Iran's passive economic presence, the security dimensions of this threat to Iran in the economic, political, social, military and environmental fields were examined.

The current and future state of politics and power in the West Asian region shows that regional and supra-regional powers are trying to enter the arena of competition through various dimensions and snatch the field of influence from their rival. Since Iraq is important for Iran's security and presence in the region, and the regional powers are aware of this and are trying to get Iraq out of the Iranian front, it is necessary for Iran to take the lead in the game in Iraq. Iraq needs to be rebuilt in the post-ISIL era and its economic and development needs have provided an opportunity for Iran's rivals to push Iraq toward their own policies through their active presence in the country. The occurrence of such policies can directly and indirectly threaten Iran in the economic, political, social, military and environmental fields.

In this regard, Iran must pay attention to the movements of regional and supra-regional actors, as well as the demands of Iraq and not allow the country to be surrendered to its rivals. For this reason, the government must take important steps to strengthen and stabilize the Iraqi Shiite government in order to reduce the threats to the country's national security. Therefore, through investment, export of technical and engineering services and active economic presence in Iraq, Iran can manage the security threats to the national security of the country and bring these existential and security threats under its control.

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