

# UK and EU- Iran Relations

Mohammad Javad Bakhtiari\*  
Fariba Hossein Nia Salimi\*\*

## Abstract

The article tries to examine Britain's place in EU's policymaking towards Iran. Having in mind the importance of the EU in international stages and also in economic and political matters, the following article has shed light on the ups and downs of Iran's relations with the UK as one of the important EU-nation states and has concluded that an effective but careful and logical relationship with EU member states could expand the space of more collaborations and in this regard Iran can utilize EU's capacities. Britain in contrary to the US has avoided military tools and has chosen a negotiating policy toward Iran and has assured other member states of these negotiations. Iran should choose a definite strategy towards EU based on having a complete knowledge of each member – state and their capabilities and special potentials in cooperation with Iran.

Keywords: Britain, European Union, Foreign Policy, Islamic Republic of Iran, Neoclassical Realism (NCR), Sanction

---

\* MA in British Studies, University of Tehran, (bakhtiari.m.j@ut.ac.ir)

\*\* MA student in British Studies, University of Tehran  
(Received: 2 May 2013 - Accepted: 30 September 2013)

### **Introduction**

British foreign policy towards Iran has always been along with lots of ups and downs. Britain's interventions in Iran's domestic affairs throughout history and the persistence of these intrusions after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 have caused Iranian distrust towards British policies. After the 2009 Iranian presidential election events, the relation of two countries saw harsh tensions and even some of the British embassy clerks were arrested in Tehran. Finally, these tensions caused Iran's Parliament to decrease the country's ties with Britain to its lowest point. Undoubtedly, in the meantime, the European Union is one of the chief international actors, which has the richest and the most influential countries of international system and hence has a powerful collective potentiality; moreover the European Union is one of the largest international actors in economical and commercial spheres.

The constructive relationship and political development between the Islamic Republic of Iran and EU has always been existed in foreign policy debates along with ups and downs since the commencement of the Islamic Revolution in Iran up to the present day, so that political developments have faced various problems in different periods of time. Meanwhile, détente policies within the expansionism negotiations have played a crucial role in the revival of Iranian relations with other European countries and in some periods of time, inspired those countries to begin constructive dialogues with Iran instead of a critical discourse. At that time, which was mainly during the presidency of reformist, Mohammad Khatami, Iran



enjoyed the highest level of ties with Britain. Recently, along with justice-concerned debates, a whole attention to nations, establishing anti-imperialistic fronts, and also on the side facing EU in areas such as; nuclear power and terrorism problems, Iranian relationships with the EU and especially with Britain became unfriendly.

Iran-EU interactions have always been one of the critical issues in Iran's foreign policy, as these relations influence not only on foreign policy and economics but also on military and security strategies of both sides. In the meantime, the development of commercial relationships with the EU could pave the way for Iran's membership in World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition, Iran can extend its international cooperation under the financial, economic and political protection of Europe (Dadandish, 2012: 71). In this regard, Iran's correlation with EU member states and powerful actors of the Union and their role in EU policy making towards Iran is of utmost importance. Considering Britain's bilateral position towards the EU, the question raised here is that, whether Britain, which at some critical junctures chose a pro-European position and in other times remained in a Euro-skepticism stand, could have an effect on EU's policymaking towards Iran or not? The present research seeks to find the outcomes of influential factors on EU's policymaking after the decrease in Iran-Britain ties and to realize whether Iran has benefited or incurred a loss in interaction with other European countries. As mentioned above, the main hypothesis is that the tensions and oppositions between Iran and Britain have influenced EU's policymaking towards Iran and the enforcement of sanctions against Iran. However, since Britain has encountered assorted disintegrations with the EU in different periods, she cannot find a significant place in Iran-EU dealings; furthermore, following the British obstructionism in her relations with Iran, the lowering of ties with that country brought some advantages for the Islamic Republic of Iran.



## I- Theoretical Framework

Erasto believes that, the European Union's guideline in international areas is affected by its member states façade, particularly by its strong members, Britain, France and Germany. Currently, the main focus of EU's foreign policy is based on the received signals from its members. He also mentions that the US has taken considerable advantages of Britain's membership in the EU as a bargaining chip to wield its policies in the Middle East, remarkably against Iran (Erasto, 2011: 405). Joshi states that, the member states' foreign policies in forming the EU's framework and the recruitment of these policies in international level are undeniable. He also calls America a decisive forerunner in enforcing sanctions against Iran, and Britain as the only aimless pilot of US goals. Among these arguments, William Hague's words, Britain's Foreign Secretary, in addressing the current situation between Iran and the EU as a period of "cold war" confirms the above proposition (Joshi, 2012: 76). Erasto describes the present relationship between Iran and the EU as an "Energy Security Dilemma" which has led to instability and distrust in both sides' affairs. Meanwhile, the US, by means of its super-powerful Media and also with Britain as its influential agent, can indirectly challenge the conciliatory essence of Iran's nuclear program and propelled the relationship between Islamic Republic and EU towards its lowest status (Erasto, 2011:405).

The present article is based on the concepts of Neoclassical Realism (NCR) which were first submitted by Rose Gideon and then, developed by Kenneth Waltz (Walt, 1999, W. Legro & Moravcsik; 1998). Hereupon, Estephan Walt, the distinguished American realist, has stated two points in regards to the function of each theory; it should; have the power to explain the various events around its own sphere; and, Have the ability of developing and adjusting itself with the events of the real world (Nuruzzaman, 2005). Walt exclaims that realism is divided in to two parts in foreign policy and international



relation areas: Classical Realism and Neoclassical Realism (NCR). Classical Realism is founded on the states' struggle in protecting their own power and security; whereas NCR is based on the influences of the international system and its actors in achieving political goals and their own priorities in the world arena (Walt, 1998:1).

In reality, the majority of the researchers have acknowledged that the existing complications in foreign policy (Waltz, 2003), hinders a general and comprehensive model and theory. But particularly, the foreign policy theories in Realism can be divided in to four groups (Rose, 1998): Innenpolitik Realism or domestic policy: according to this category, each country's foreign policy is influenced by its domestic policy; Aggressive Realism or dominant theory: foreign policy of countries is along with the expansion of their security; Defensive Realism or defensive theory: it claims that the countries not only seek to enhance their security in foreign policy but also want to keep the balance of power in the international arena; and, neoclassical Realism: it states in contrary with the previous theories, the countries guideline in their foreign policy is illustrated in their achievements in political goals, so that they could direct the international system according to their intentions and priorities.

In this regards, the present article tries to examine the relations between Iran, Britain and the EU to analyze how the policies and foreign relationships of the member states could challenge and influence the decisions and the procedures of the union.

## **II- Britain-EU Relationship**

The British government which joined the European Union in 1973 has always behaved cautiously with member states' integration issues to the union and also deduction in power and authorities of nation states and ever so has participated reluctantly in most of EU organizations. It seems that no countries policy like that of Britain clashes with EU's unity, since there are two reasons for Britain's opposition which are being too Atlanticism (having too much



tendency towards America rather than European countries) and the matter of being unique. In the last few years of the twentieth century that coincided with the British Labor Party under the premiership of Tony Blair, a basic amendment – almost after three decades- occurred in most of the principles of constitution including the issues of Britain-EU, but even in this pro-European government, a number of obstructionism and oppositions were carried out against EU decisions. Joining Eurozone remained unsuccessful during Blair's premiership since his interventionist policy in Iraq and Afghanistan war did not provide an opportunity for him to take a considerable decision about Eurozone. Although Blair promised to go ahead with a referendum in Britain in 2004 in regards to the European constitution, it never happened. A common foreign and security policy with NATO was Blair's main concern which could have led to tarnish Britain-US ties and in other words could have settled British forces under the supremacy of EU. It seems that issues of sovereignty, a long history of being an empire, and Britain's special geo-political position, special relationship with the US and common wealth countries, fear from the Franco-Germany axis, late entry to European integration trend, having a commercial view to European integration, different economic system and cultural variations with Europeans are among the effective variables in incompatible relations between Britain and other European countries.

In view of the fact that Britain, in the form of NATO, is more inclined to American policies in military and security areas and moreover is aware of EU's military weakness and also is worried of a strong Europe under the dominance of her old rivals France and Germany, her twofold policies against the union are obvious. Such twofold policies have always caused protest by experts in other European countries. Martin Schulz, who is the chairman of the European Parliament, states that Britain has separated herself from the union in most cases as in; Eurozone, Schengen Agreement and some of legal and police cooperation and meanwhile suffers from low



economic growth and unemployment. Although the membership has made a number of challenges and problems for Britain, but on the other hand she could find a strong coalition with the EU to spread her influence in international areas. These powerful and penetrative implements act as coercive policies to control and lead international actors towards a legal process which finally has encouraged Britain to remain in the EU. Coercive policies of the EU have shifted this organization from a supranational organization to a world superpower which not being one of its members or withdrawing it, regardless of security matters, economic and political upheavals, would dissolve them in international areas (Sauer, 2007, 614). In this regard, Lux and Shour argue that the use of sanctions against Iran since 2007 up to now, are considered as coercive policies towards the Islamic Republic of Iran which were based on mutual cooperation between Britain and the US with EU sanction policies against Iran. Among these sanctions are boycotting oil exports, which because of Iran's reliance on oil income, have caused a paralysis in its economy, inflation and a high rate of unemployment (Harmer, 2012:1-6 & Lux & Shour, 2011: 192).

The present government of Britain, which is a coalition of Euro-skeptic conservatives and pro-European liberal-democrats, experiences one of its highest tension terms with the EU. Most of these tensions are related to financial crisis in the Eurozone, in which Britain is opposed to economic policies of influential member states – France and Germany. European Union held a session in Brussels in 2011, to save the Euro by establishing a stronger financial union named the "New Financial Treaty", but they encountered with David Cameron's veto. Even though at the beginning, Czech, Hungary and Sweden withheld to sign it, but after that by signing it, they isolated Britain in Europe. But after the veto, David Cameron denied Britain's isolation and added: "we always support Britain's membership in the EU", and he considered the membership as a national interest (Sky News, 2011). Among the tensions of Britain with the EU, there are different ideas among British people about the union. The present



British coalition government is influenced by other coalition parties; as Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and also Liberal Democrat leader, believes that, in the case of Britain leaves the EU, she will be of no value for Washington and a Pygmy in the world. And he also criticized Cameron of Britain's isolation in the EU. Meanwhile Ed Miliband, the leader of Labor party argues that Cameron' policies demonstrate the lack of Britain's penetration in the EU (Kemp, 2011). Despite those arguments, David Cameron and his other conservative partners are against Britain's more integration in EU's mechanism. British conservatives excuse people's discontent with more British integration in to the union, and hence do not welcome a more powerful EU, so that Cameron has promised to bring forward a referendum on the UK's EU membership in the case of being successful in the next general election. As a result of the conservatives' "One Nation" ideology, they do not recommend any other cooperation more than free trade and economic relationships (Tivey, 1989: 237). Therefore, recently the other side of Britain's intentions have become obvious for Europe and she has become one of the chief critics of EU's policies in the midst of the financial crisis of the continent and also negotiations for a referendum is ongoing for Britain to remain or leave the European Union. Unlike the Conservatives, the Labor party has a pro-European attitude and its leaders entered the 2010 election with such motto but could not win the election. In the meantime, the Liberal Democrats who are also strongly pro-European, with their motto "commitment for holding a referendum about the membership in Eurozone, supporting the budget reform of EU and defending UK's continuing cooperation in EU's policy making and justice" entered the election but lost (Liberal Democrats, 2010: 66-7).

As mentioned above, it is evident that Britain has been an incompatible partner for the EU and she will be in the future. Following the dualism of Britain, the President of European Council has warned of Britain's stand and proclaimed that it would cause the





disintegration of EU. Van Rompuy, the President of European Council warned that "if each country tries to follow those EU policies which are desired for that country, and on the other hand withdraws from those which are not desirable, the present union in general and the European market in particular will break up". The distinct stance of Van Rompuy and the description of Britain's action for leaving the EU as "a partner who goes towards mirage", happened in a situation that the Prime Minister David Cameron in an important speech declared the strategy of the Conservatives about the EU. Also, 2012 was a tense year in British government relationship with the EU and at the end of the year it was heard of a possible change in Britain's status of being a second class member in the most important economical-political formation of Europe. Meanwhile it seems that the subject of EU and the British cooperation with it will be one of the significant and challenging issues in political arenas of this country in 2013, particularly while the two main parties of the current coalition government have completely different approaches towards the EU.

### **III- European Union Foreign Policy**

Undoubtedly, three notable countries of the Europe, Britain, Germany and France and also the Foreign Secretaries of these three countries play the main role in EU's policy making. In Britain Robin Cook who was the Foreign Secretary of Tony Blair's government tried to introduce a foreign policy based on "ideal dimensions" and had an important role in EU's foreign policy during Blair's premiership. After him, Jack Straw who did not have much experience in foreign policy sought to hold a close position with America. His successor, Margaret Beckett was the first woman who held the Head of FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) in Britain. Among other influential British men in the EU was Peter Mandelson who was a close ally of Tony Blair. Generally speaking the most influential people in EU who play more important roles than



their foreign ministers are indeed the Head of the states. In the meantime, the role of Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister in assigning EU's foreign policy is not covert to anyone (Cameron, 2007: 233-4). According to Smith, the intergovernmental system of European Union in determining foreign policies is based on several features: In such a system, power, preferences and strategic cooperations of each member state is considered. Indeed the power of each member is based on its physical position and in addition, economic and military power is very important in determination of the country's strength. Therefore countries such as Britain and Germany have the most influence; Being intergovernmental underlines the role of administrative leaders and their representatives in making decisions; The member states have the power of "bargaining". If there is not such a mechanism in the EU, dominant members will have the most influence over micro member states during the cooperation process; Actors play fewer roles in the organizational level; and, the signed agreements, as an outcome, are not considered in political and historical assessment (Smith, 2004: 40-42).

#### **IV- The Significance of Iran for Europe**

Iran's large oil and gas sources and also its geopolitical position in Middle East have made Iran, significant in Europeans' eyes. After the Islamic Republic of Iran, Britain recognized Iran as an influential factor in political and revolutionary movements in other Islamic countries and they identified Iran as an ally of international terrorists. Their actions have caused a serious global opposition against Iran, since from their view point; Iran has been a pattern in revolutionary movements among Islamic countries and even the Muslims in Western countries. Mercille and Jones referring to the Harvey theory (Harvey, 2003), which is about the logic behind geo-politics and geo-economics, introduce Iran as an influential character in Middle-East policies that has always possessed a constructive role not only in



foreign policy of Middle-Eastern countries, but also in the political and economic orientation of other countries in the region and on an international level (Mercille & Jones, 2009: 857,858). However, due to the political conflicts between Iran and the US, in spite of high significance of Islamic Republic of Iran for the European countries, it has turned to one of political forerunners in the region which can challenge US and at present time has become a rigid threat for USA (Mercille & Jones, 2009: 860).

An urgent need for the energy supply and preventing multilateral reliance on the Russian sources of energy, are declared as reasons that put European politicians in a political dilemma in which they cannot hold a clear political trend towards Iran's nuclear activities (Noi, 2012: 83; Shelala, Fite & Kasting, 2013: 15). To lay stress upon the importance of Iran's energy for EU, Bahgat brings an example of sudden ascent in oil price in 2000 that caused a fall in stock markets and put the world economy in big trouble (Bahgat, 2010: 333). Generally speaking, after the first Gulf War, the view of main EU member states, Britain, Germany and France, changed and they looked positively to the significance of Iran in the region. This changeover toward Iran, brought about changes in the European Community, so that in 1992 Edinburgh declaration "critical dialogs" were adopted as an official method in relationship with Iran. At this critical juncture, European countries such as Britain resisted the sanctions against Iran and meanwhile Europe became one of the main trading partners of Iran. In north of Iran, Britain started to transfer gas from Turkmenistan to Turkey and Western Europe (Noi, 2005: 85-87). ). After 1997 Iran's presidential election, a new section began in Iran's foreign policy and Iran-EU relations improved. Rundle believes that, the European Union finally opened a new round of dialogues which were acceptable for both sides after long periods of ups and downs, in 1998 (Rundle, 2008: 97). Following this, at that time a stronger EU was another factor in divergent policies of Iran. European Union with its large political and economic strength has



been one of the most important actors in the global system in the past twenty years. Due to détente policy and Islamic democracy dialogues during Khatami's presidency, Iran-Europe relationships enhanced. Khatami's travels to European countries led to the promotion of mutual cooperation and in the last year of his first presidency, the cooperation were at their highest point. The significance of Iran for Europe can be summarized in the following instances: Iran's geopolitical position; the promotion of the regional role of Iran in recent years; the privilege of having energy sources; and, an appropriate market for European commodity, technology and services.

#### **V- The Significance of Europe for Iran**

The European Union as an important part of western culture and values, in spite of some commercial competitions and different political tactics, is in accord with the US in principle, although is different in exercising of these principles. Up to 2011, while supporting the exercise of sanctions against Iran, EU was the biggest trade partner with Iran. In 2010 and before the complete implementation of sanctions, Iran was the twenty-fifth biggest commercial partner of the EU and meanwhile European countries were considerable trade partners of Iran (Bassiri Tabrizi & Santini, 2012: 4). Consequently, Iran's relationship with each member state is of high importance. From an European point of view, a stable relation with Iran could develop the extent of EU's diplomacy, thus such a relationship with Iran encourages EU to have their desirable relation with other regional countries and participate the EU among other East bloc competitors (Dadandish, 2012: 68). Bilateral economic interests are the most important elements which can analyze the European policies in Iran after the cold war, since the EU is the main trade partner of Iran. In other words, despite the US, the European Union is dependent on Iran's energy products. At present, considering recent movements in Arab countries of the region (Arab Spring), EU has taken a new positive policy in communication with



Arab countries to reach its own economic benefits. Hence, EU's particular relationship with Iran which has had an exclusive role in birth and dispersion of this ideology in Arab countries is in a high level of importance. The significance of Europe for Iran is summarized as the following instances: EU influences considerable decision-making organizations in international arenas; EU is the biggest world trading center; it has the main sources of economy, finance, and investment in the world; it has the most advanced technology; and, it can create a forum for Iran in connection with other major powers

Following the above mentioned descriptions, a positive mutual relationship between Iran and the EU is very important for both sides while US interferences have caused European procedures towards Iran occasionally. Overall, since 2005 the most serious concern for European Union has been Iran's nuclear problem which has fulfilled the main part of tensions between Iran and the EU. It should be mentioned that the EU implements other sanctions against Iran beside those enacted by United Nations (The European Union and Iran; Factsheet, 2013).

## **VI- Iran, Britain and European Union**

Britain's first contention with Iran which has had a comprehensive influence in Europe was the issue of Salman Rushdi; Britain supported him and tried to urge Iran to change its stance while relating this issue to all other European countries, so that the European parliament ratified a resolution and asked twelve countries to declare to Tehran they would adopt a rigid policy against Iran if it continued its threats. By the use of these actions and transferring the responsibility of defending Rushdi, Britain tried to focus on restricting Iran by the European Union and also expel her from this trouble. However, during Khatami's presidency a moderate atmosphere was established between Iran and the EU. Khatami's foreign policy was tending to an adaptable policy towards Europe,



and he tried to show the Fatwa against Salman Rushdi as a religious dictum not a political one (Clawson, 2003), although Hashemi Rafsanjani had already declared that matter in one of his interviews. By a verdict issued by Mikonos court against Iran and the following EU's stance, Britain was the first country which supported the EU's declaration and summoned Iran's charge d'affaires to Britain. But after that, with a long process of negotiations, through the return of European ambassadors to Iran, a new round of ties began between Iran and the EU. Therefore, Iran began to accelerate the moderate situation between both sides. The meeting between Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi and Robin Cook in the fifty third session of the UN General Assembly shaped a milestone in relationships between Iran, Britain and EU. In other words, this meeting laid the grounds for Khatami's future trips to European countries. Kharazi told Robin Cook, Iran is not making attempting on Salman Rushdi's life that wrote the satanic verses book and does not encourage and support anyone to execute the Fatwa. At that time, Britain which was the head of EU, tried to establish a bridge between Iran and EU. The Anglo-Iranian meeting propelled the cooperations between Iran and EU to three directions: 1) It shaped the framework of Iran-EU cooperation in trade and investment, energy, fighting against drugs and refugees problems; 2) Mutual international concerns such as terrorism, human rights and weapons of mass destruction were discussed; 3) Regional matters like as Iraq and Persian Gulf, Middle Asia and the peace process in Middle-East were discussed (Dadandish, 2012: 66).

Indeed, Cook was following the policy of maintaining Britain's national interest superior to all other things (which was Tony Blair's dogma) for the reason that British were concerned about the presence of their European rivals – France, Italy and Germany- in developing relationships with Iran; furthermore, the process of resolving issues such as peace in the Middle-East, fighting drugs and Iran's nuclear subject needed direct negotiations with the Islamic Republic.

However, following Cook's criticism of Iranian policies in the



Brussels gathering, he declared that any decision for Iran's case concerning diminution of sanctions and EU policies should be taken with US partnership. These remarks show that British authorities agree with the US, although they advocate more developments in relation to Iran. Although Khatami's European travels had caused US and Europeans to decrease their harsh policies toward Iran, but British policies were nettlesome toward Iran's foreign policy, for instance, a declaration by the House of Commons in which they claimed that Iran has violated human rights and has changed its style in foreign policy but has not put aside its basic principles, is an example (Cunavan, 1997: 4).

After the 9/11 events, Europe believed that Iran has had an appropriate and defensible performance, beside Britain's Deputy Prime Minister, declared in response to Bush's charges against Iran: "We are American partners in their troubles, but we believe that the best option in solving the problem with Iran is through dialogue". At the same time, European states did not defend the US-claim that Iran has given refuge to Al-Qaeda members and despite harsh publicity of Americans against Iran, EU put Mojahedin-e Khalgh organization in the list of terrorist groups. In an action, which was followed by Iranian protests in 2008, British omitted the group from the terrorist organization list and hence EU removed them from its black list too.

During Blair's premiership Iran's opposition with the British ambassador and also the disapproval of the successor, entailed British obstruction and threat to decrease the relationship, and these tensions caused the isolation of Iran from interference in the issue of Afghanistan. It shows that Britain does not possess a permanent friend in her foreign policy and solely considers her own national interest in establishing a relationship. The other reason in isolating Iran from the Afghanistan issue is Iran's persistence in defending Palestinian rights and in contrary the considerable attention of Britain to Israel; so that Britain calls Iran a terrorist and prevents Iran's role-playing in reconstruction of Afghanistan, in this case again the



European Union accompanied Britain. Another critical issue regarding Iran-Britain ties which has influenced the position of European countries towards Iran is Britain's stance and interventions about the Tonbs and Abu Musa islands, islands that belong to Iran located in the Persian Gulf; British interference besides accusing Iran of cooperating with the terrorists, cast away Britain from a considerable framework.

In the matter of Britain's bilateral stance towards Iran's nuclear energy, we can refer to Robin Cook's severely assertion of British and European concerns against a nuclear Iran and his request from EU to exercise more coercion on Russia to stop the supply of ballistic missiles to Iran. In his letter to US representatives in 1998, he declared that this has been a common purpose of the EU and the US to stop a nuclear Iran. Britain-besides France and Germany- was among the three countries which persuaded Iranian diplomats to accept the adjunct protocol substances in Saad-Abad declaration in Tehran. Three European countries, Britain, Germany and France, asked Iran to stop the enrichment process, while Iran was longing for a conclusion to its nuclear file in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), however not only the file did not end, but also it caused Iran-Washington relationships to become more complicated (Sabet-Saeidi, 2008: 67-8). As mentioned above, after the revelation of Iran's nuclear activities, Britain together with France and Germany were the first countries that came to negotiate with Iran. While they faced Iran's negative answer to their proposed package, led to enact four resolutions toward Iran's nuclear activities in Security Council. In February 2009, Britain accompanied Germany and France, to increase sanctions against Iran which were opposed by some European countries. Santini states a new identity for European Union in international areas regarding Iran's nuclear issue and questions the operation of EU and the function of its policies adopted through the influence of other member states' foreign policies and evaluates it a failure (Santini, 2010: 468). Hobbs and Moran, point to Iran's explicit





approach to nuclear activities as it is in Ayatollah Khamenei's fatwa (2004) in which he denied the usage of nuclear weapons and declared its restriction to conciliatory activities (Hobbes & Moran, 2012: 129). But despite the European way of thinking, Britain followed US considerations against Iran's nuclear activities.

After Khatami's presidency, British pursued the line in opposing Iran. As their first step in Ahmadinejad's presidency, they asked Iran to clarify its nuclear activities (Rundle, 2008: 100-101). Subsequent to the renewal of Natanz nuclear power plant activities, they referred Iran's nuclear file to UN Security Council (Krow, 2011: 17). After a long challenge over Iran's nuclear activities, in April 2006, a report in *Sunday Telegraph* announced of a session between British authorities and their military to attack Iran, this report which was said by a high authority in FCO confirmed British solidarity in attacking Iran's nuclear sites (Rayment, 2006). According to Krow, with the expansion of the tensions between EU triple powers over the extension of depressions on Iran and decreasing their relationship with this country, other European countries' disagreement with Britain, Germany and France became more intense (Krow, 2011: 17).

In 2008 Chatham house report; Britain considered striking Iran, as one of those cases in which British interest should be unified with her of other European partners. In that report, Iran was considered as an obvious threat that while trying to build nuclear weapon has not only caused Israel's discontent, but also has made dissatisfaction in regional Arab countries. The report which was obviously designed to stimulate other EU member states, formally invited the European Union to take considerable decisions against Iran. In the final part of the anti-Iranian section, the report introduced a process of joining the US and the EU as the best solution against Iran (Wall, 2008: 25-26). Despite British claim on their future program for having more inclination towards Europeans and taking decisions based on European and not American interest, but they could not deny their American political tendencies in this report. Following their US



tendencies, in November 2011 Britain was the only country which accompanied US policies and boycotted Iran's oil. After that, the relationship between Iran and Britain was disintegrated and decreased to its lowest point and was followed by an attack on the British embassy in Tehran. The process led to a new report of the IAEA about Iran by which other European countries sanctioned Iran's oil (Bassiri Tabrizi & Santini, 2012: 2). William Hague the British Foreign Secretary believes that the implemented sanctions against Iran are the last step in stopping Iran's access to dominant military force and nuclear weapon. In this regard, British politicians would do anything to prevent a nuclear Iran, they do not even refrain from the options on the table, which are military, and they do whatever they can to convince other European countries like Germany and France to follow suit (Bassiri Tabrizi & Santini, 2012: 3). In 2009, following the EU and UN sanctions against Iran, the frozen assets of Iran in Britain amounted to more than 1.5 billion dollars (Press TV, 2009). Also previously, in July 2009 Britain asked their European partners to summon their embassy clerks from Iran. This action was followed by the arrest of a few British embassy clerks in Iran after their interventions in the 2009 Iran's presidential election aftermath. Although other EU member states did not care about the British will at the beginning, but after a while following Iran's threats to punish the arrested people, they reacted against Iran (Meier, 2013:14). In November 2011, Britain also sanctioned Iranian banks and they even prohibited to approve a visa to Iranian politicians and nuclear activists (FCO, 2011). It should be mentioned that Britain considers her European-based policies towards Iran as a tool to end her conflicts with EU over her US inclinations; as mentioned above, in recent years Britain is worried about her disagreements with France and Germany and other EU member states and the risen tensions over British Atlanticism, so their interference in Iran's nuclear activities could be a mediatory way to stay close in two sides of Atlantic (Krow, 2011: 20). British were of the first EU countries that reacted against



Ahmadinejad, the Iranian former president when he denied the Holocaust and called for the natural collapse of the Zionist regime. Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister, in a speech in July 2008 in Israeli Parliament called Ahmadinejad's speech abominable; "I should tell those who think their threatening remarks will not meet others reactions, that Iran president's speech about the removal of Israel from the world map was hateful". Jack Straw, the British foreign minister at that time, stated "I severely and outspokenly denounce these words". He also added "these remarks do not have any place in today's political debates" (BBC News, 2009). Britain also asked Nicolas Sarkozy, the then French president, to take a serious and determined action against Iran in the EU which Sarkozy accepted and following that in March 2010, the union's ministers decided to stop the export of citizen espionage equipment and also the devices for censorship of Internet to Iran. It should be mentioned that before Ahmadinejad's speech about the Holocaust, the EU had emphasized on a moderate orientation and foreign policy towards sanctioning Iran. In that request Christophe Bertram, the ex-manager of London Center for Strategic Researches, called European countries to leave the sanctions and have a wide range of negotiations with Iran (Bertram, 2008).

Economically speaking, for the case of Iran and Britain relationships in contrast with Iran and other EU member states relations, we can say that despite the interest of other European countries- particularly Germany- in exporting to Iran, Britain's amount of export to Iran was less than other EU member states. For instance, while in 2009, Germany exported 5.825 billion dollars, Britain exported 636 million dollars to Iran (Dadandish, 2012: 80). From 1992 up to 2003, EU has always tried to have cooperation with Iran in different levels, while the US has taken isolation and rejected this policy towards Iran. European reaction to America's sanctioning Iran-Libya is an example in this case, in which EU's opposing to its substances, called it as a violating law in international trading rules.



Britain also declared her objection to the US in accommodating America and giving her military bases in the region to attack Iran, following her undesirable experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, Britain does not advise striking Iran.

At the end of the discussion, based on what has been mentioned we can say that the 9/11 events caused more integration between the US and Europe, but after that the US attack on Iraq and Afghanistan and the occupation of Iraq by the US brought disintegration between the EU and the US. Today Europe is weaker to be an ally and stronger to be a victim for the United States, furthermore, Europe has lost the main influence on America. Therefore Europeans are worried about the unbounded power of the US and they want to know how they can gain their gone control over the US. US imperialism is an annoying issue for the Europeans, since they cannot do much about it. According to these matters, it is natural for the EU to stay away from the factors which lean the union towards US policies or those that bring the policies in to the grounds. In this regard, Britain has always taken American policies after the world wars, while British uncertainty in joining the EU and also excluding Britain by other member states in her entrance, is an example which affirms this claim. The EU rejects Britain since her policies are towards America and for that Britain has joined the union to gain her own economic and commercial interests. Hence, following the veto of the new fiscal treaty by Cameron, the heads of France and Germany, showed their discontent towards British policies and Angela Merkel the German Chancellor, stated in oblique remarks: "I do not think if David Cameron has sat at the same table with us". So the question is whether Britain who is now a cast away and isolated of Europe can influence EU policymaking towards the Islamic Republic of Iran or not? The British are struggling helplessly in the union, and furthermore as previously mentioned, they know that if they leave the EU, they will be irrelevant to Washington and a "pigmy" in the world and even their anti-Iranian policies are for American content



provision. However, it does not seem that the astray Britain in North Atlantic which has more inclination towards the US can have a particular and noticeable place- at least during her present coalition government- in the EU's policy making towards the Islamic Republic. But we should not neglect the fact that, there is a direct relationship between diplomacy and the attraction of foreign investment. Therefore in the case that the Islamic Republic seeks to attract more foreign investment, purge the sanctions and improve the welfare of its people, it should try to take a détente policy towards other EU member states, -as its own big commercial partners, because in today's world none of the states whether important powers or less important powers such as Britain and also other countries will not be able to provide their interests alone (Wall, 2008: 16). However, Britain's role in organizing national and international non-governmental systems is of high importance –as they have veto powers in the UNSC. Following this, we should say that the European Union should follow the path separated from British Atlanticism, because if the EU does not control the international negotiations concerning Iran's nuclear issue, it will lose her position as one of the influential actors in foreign policy area. For the case of Iran, EU should not act as what it did in Iraq in which the union lost its authority. In this case, we can say that, after the Iraq war, it became obvious for the EU that the break between the member states and its blur Atlantic relationships, can be translated and interpreted as EU's indifference in the foreign policy arena; hence if the EU fails in Iran's issue, it might never play a crucial role in international community.

It is clear that the split which Britain has made in the union and her continuous Atlanticism can cause the union's failure and weaken its power in the international arena. Therefore, based on what was mentioned above, Britain hasn't not abandoned her US follow-up and despite her European allies, has emphasized on the main role of NATO in Europe and the world. However it is necessary to mention that Britain does not interfere solely through the US channels but has



direct intervention in the world policy, too. Therefore, we should consider Britain as an actor besides America which has her own influence and independent game.

### **Conclusion**

In the world of foreign policy, the place of each global actor is determined through their goals. In such foreign policy games in which European actors, play intentionally or in regards of US content, the Islamic Republic of Iran should not forget the uproar racket of this game, its foreign policy tools and principles. As the relationship between Iran and other European countries was discussed in the present article, British and in general European countries did not make a change in their relationships with the US for having ties with Iran. Even at the time of the reformist president, Khatami, in Iran that tried to have improved relations with Europe, they did not accept to put away Iran's nuclear file and believed it should be examined in UN Security Council. Thus any hasty ties with them would compromise Iran's stance, but on the other hand the complete dissociation with them will not be in favor of Iran either. In fact, the international structure of the EU and its global influence, keeping an effective relationship with the EU, considering internal, economic and political interests should be a priority task in Iran's foreign policy. Except it is important to know how to face diplomatically and correctly in regards to intervention of some of EU's actors such as Britain who is America's influential USE partner in advancing political and economic tensions of Washington in the region and has an undeniable role in EU's foreign policy.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that since the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy in different periods has been fluctuating between two trends of realism and idealism. One of the reasons which were mentioned in detail in this paper was the way in which diplomacy is run and statesmen's attitude to international developments. Following that, Iran's foreign policy towards Britain



should be a moderate collaborating policy and away from tensions. Although in the hypothesis of this paper the decrease of ties between Iran and Britain has been considered positively, but we cannot disregard that Britain in contrary to the US has avoided military tools and has chosen a negotiating policy towards Iran and has assured other member states of these negotiations. Iran's government should choose a definite strategy towards EU based on having a complete knowledge of each member-state and their capabilities and special potentials in cooperation with Iran. Consequently, an effective correlation with the EU could extend the space of more collaborations and Iran can utilize the EU's capacities.

## References

- Bahgat, Gawdat. 2010. Iran's Role in Europe's Energy Security: An Assessment. *Iranian Studies*, 333-347.
- Bassiri Tabrizi, Aniseh, and Ruth Hanau Santini. March 2012. "EU Sanctions against Iran: New Wine in Old Bottles?" *ISPI - Analysis*, No. 97: 1-7.
- BBC. 2009. *Iran's President Says Move Israel*.  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4510922.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4510922.stm).
- Bertram, Christophe. April/May 2008. "For a new Iran Policy." *Center for European Reform*.
- Cameron, Fraser. 2007. *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Clawson, Patrick. 2003. *Iran- EU Nuclear Deal: An Achievement with a Potential Position*.  
[http://www.66.34.243.131/Iran/html/article\\_1248.html](http://www.66.34.243.131/Iran/html/article_1248.html).
- Cunavan, Hugh. 1997. House of Common; Satatement on Iran Press Conference. *Gulf Report*: 4.
- Dadandish, Parvin. Spring 2012. "Iran-Europe Relations: A Diagnostic Analysis." *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 1: 57-88.
- Dinmore, Guy, Njmeh Bozorgmehr, and Alex Barker. 2009. *EU Trio Targets Tougher Iran*, Vol. 3, No. 15.
- Erasto, Tytti. 2011. Transatlantic Diplomacy in the Iranian Nuclear Issue - Helping to build trust? *European Security*, 405-430.
- FCO. 2011. *UK, US and Canada Intensify Travel Restrictions on Iranian Regime*.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-us-and-canada-intensify-travel-restrictions-on-iranian-regime>.
- Harmer, Christopher. 2012. Iranian Efforts to Bypass Oil Sanctions. *Institute for the Study of War*, 1-6.
- Hobbs, C. & Moran, M. 2012. Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran: Is Regional Proliferation Inevitable? *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 127-148.
- Jones, Alistair. 2007. *Britain and the European Union*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Joshi, Shashank. 2012. The Implications of a Nuclear IRAN. *Whitehall Papers*, 75-129.
- Kemp, Danny. 2011. *Clegg warns of Isolation from EU*. 12 9, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jCODkpUGwbZK08AwPMeElRWoCK2A?docId=>





- CNG.8370545915774350fcc4eb78c8fa6628.371.
- Krow, Matilka. 2011. "The National, the Supra-National and the Hegemon: European Approaches to Iran." *The EU and Transatlantic Relations: Security and Political Economy Issues*. Halifax: Dalhousie University: 1-37.
- Liberal Democrats. 2010. "Liberal Democrats Manifesto 2010: Change that Works for You, Building a Fairer Britain".
- Lux, Jonathan S. & Shour, Reema. 2011. Economic Sanctions against IRAN and Their Impact on the Maritime Industry: A UK Perspective. *Journal of Transportation Law, Logistics & Policy*, 191-198.
- Meier, Oliver. 2013. *European Efforts to Solve the Conflict over Iran's Nuclear Programme*. Brussels: EU Non-Proliferation Consortium.
- Mercille, Julien. & Jones, Alun. 2009. Practicing Radical Geopolitics: Logics of Power and the Iranian Nuclear "Crisis". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 856-862.
- Noi, Aylin Ünver. Spring 2005. "Iran's Nuclear Programme: The EU Approach to Iran in Comparison to the US' Approach." *Perceptions*: 79-102.
- . 2012. *Sam*. Retrieved June 2, 2013, from <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/AylinunverNoi.pdf>.
- Nuruzzaman, Mohammed. 2005. Beyond the Realist Theories: 'Neo-conservative Realism' and the American Invasion of Iraq. *Annual conference held in London* pp. 1-25. Ontario: Canadian Political Science Association CPSA.
- Press TV. 2009. *Over \$1.6 bn of Iranian assets frozen in Britain*. <http://www.presstv.com/detail/98465.htm?sectionid=351020101>.
- Rayment, Sean. 2006. *Government in Secret Talks about Strike against Iran*. Vol. 4, No. 2, 2006. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/04/02/wiran02.xml>.
- Rose, Gideon. 1998. Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 144-172.
- Rundle, Christopher. 2008. "Iran–United Kingdom Relations since the Revolution: Opening Doors" In *Iran's Foreign Policy From Khatami to Ahmadinejad*, edited by Anoush Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, 89-104. Berkshire: Ithaca Press.
- Sabet-Saeidi, Shahriar. 2008. "Iranian–European Relations: A Strategic Partnership?" In *Iran's Foreign Policy from Khatami to Ahmadinejad*, edited by Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, 55-72. Berkshire: Ithaca Press.
- Sauer, T. 2007. Coercive diplomacy by the EU: the Iranian Nuclear Weapons Crisis. *Third World Quarterly*, 613-633.
- Santini, Ruth Hanau. 2010. European Union Discourses and Practices on the Iranian Nuclear Programme. *European Security*, 467-489.
- Shelala, R.; Fite, B. & Kasting, N. 2013. US and Iranian Strategic Competition: The Impact of the EU, EU3, and non-EU European States. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 1-40.
- Sky News. 2011. *Osborne: PM Has Defended National Interest*.



<http://news.sky.com/story/908118/osborne-pm-has-defended-national-interest>.

Smith, Michael E. 2004. *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The European Union and Iran; Factsheet. February 25, 2013. Brussels.

Tivey, Leonard. 1989. *Party Ideology in Britain*. London: Routledge.

W. Legro, J. & Moravcsik, A. 1999. Is Anybody Still a Realist? *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 5–55.

Wall, Stephen. 2008. *A British Agenda for Europe Designing our Own Future a Chatham House Commission Report*. London: Chatham House.

Walt, Stephen M. 1998. International Relations: One World, Many Theories. *Foreign Policy*, 29-35.

Waltz, Kenneth N. 2003. Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory. *Journal of International Affairs*, 21-37.

Weber, Cynthia. 2010. *International Relations Theory a critical Introduction*. Oxon: Routledge