

The Prospect for Crisis Management and Non- Violent Sustainable Cooperation

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This paper argues that Iran's struggle for obtaining nuclear technology may lead to a new crisis in the Persian Gulf. As Iran offers its own reasons to have access to this technology, the West has its own perceptions and fears. With a US major role, the emerging crisis may lead to devastating impacts on the Persian Gulf region, the Middle- East the Islamic World and the whole international system. To understand the situation and to manage a workable and comprehensive plan for (negative) peace and stability, the paper explains the main considerations in crisis management, describing the records of crises and relations between Islamic Iran and the West. It suggests that the past 26 years of Western harsh policy toward Iran has proved to be counterproductive and ineffective. It recommends that the combination of security guarantee, economic benefits, support for the right to peaceful nuclear technology and diplomatic negotiation can pave the way for non- violent, sustainable cooperation.

The Islamic Revolution in 1979, has been considered as a turning point in Iran-West relations. The US has played a central role in shaping the West orientation toward Tehran. Iran with its oil and gas resources, its geopolitical location and its special place in the region and the Islamic world has been viewed as an important regional and international player. Meanwhile Iran's domestic process is a vital and integrated part of social and political change in the Middle-East , the whole Islamic world and developing countries.

The election consolidated control of all branches of the Iranian state – legislative, executive, and judicial in conservative hands. It also brought to the presidency for the first time in the Islamic Republic's history a non-cleric who ran a populist- style campaign attacking corruption and non-Islamic practices that had crept into government since the death of the Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, in 1989. President Ahmadinejad claimed a return to the principles of the Islamic Revolution, called for radical economic reforms and social justice, and vowed to build Iran into "an Islamic, exemplary, advanced and powerful nation". On nuclear power issues, he indicated

disappointment with Iran's relatively weak stance in its negotiations with the European Union (EU) but said as well that nuclear technology for military purposes was "against our Islamic values".⁽¹⁾

Discussion in Iran on the country's acquisition of nuclear weapons has tended to focus on Iran's right to acquire the technology needed to develop an independent nuclear energy program. US efforts to impede the flow of requisite technology have been cast by the Iranian as an attempt to keep Iran backward and dependent. Washington's policy has been viewed as a hostile action toward an independent Iran. The principle of independence, of course, was one of the touchstones of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and few Iranians of whatever political persuasion- nationalists, secularists, or advocates of a strict religious government would dissent from its importance.⁽²⁾

Iran's struggle for nuclear technology intensifies the crisis between the US and some other Western countries with Iran. Iran offers its own reasons for accessing nuclear technology, as the West has its own perceptions and fears. The US play a vital role in this crisis. The growing crisis may have terrible impacts on the region, the Islamic world and the whole international arena. So, Iran and the Western countries, and the international society should plan a workable strategy to manage the crisis based on peaceful means and non-violent sustainable cooperation.

IRAN : The Main Considerations and Fears

Iran is located at the center of the world's largest pool of energy; it straddles prominently the global oil and natural gas checkpoints at the Strait of Hormuz. It provides the cheapest and the shortest transit route at the heart of the ancient Silk Road for the transport of energy resources from the Caspian Sea basin to the world markets through the Persian Gulf; and it is the most populated country with one of the largest industrial bases in the vast region stretching from the Caspian Sea to Eastern Mediterranean.

Over the past several decades, history, geography and natural resources have contributed to the rise of Tehran as a prominent regional power. With a population approaching 70 million people, the Islamic Republic is by far the most populous country in the Persian Gulf. This has provided the country with a large pool of labor, a sizeable middle-class, and equally important, a big army. Furthermore, Iran has been blessed with tremendous natural resources. It holds 8.7 per cent of world oil proven reserves and 15 percent of world natural gas proven reserves. Finally, Iran is considered an important gate to the energy rich Central Asia region. Given all these facts, it can be argued that the stability of Iran has been crucial to many countries all over the world.

Iran is a country with a rich culture, historical record and a stable government. These elements will respectively lead to national identity, social stability and a well placed political culture. A vast land area, rich resources and strategic location impart to Iran a special standing in political calculations and greater scope to attain a genuine position as a regional power as compared with other countries, like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Iran's geo-politic, which links Asia to the Middle- East, Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and serves as a connecting point of four sub-regions, is a strong point that can-not be denied by any regional and global power. This situation has long invited the interference and competition of foreigners seeking to put government they desire in power. It means that Iran should manage seriously its strategic location, otherwise the significant geographic size of Iran turns to a weak point rather than a strong one.

Since nineteenth century, when Iran arrived fully into the world of politics, to the eruption of the Iranian Revolution, Iran played either the role of a weak and backward buffer state between imperial Russia and Britain or the role of a surrogate state of Britain and the United States. This historical experience can help us imagine Iran's future role in the world. The Islamic Revolution of Iran created an unprecedented opportunity for its leaders to utilize Iran's strategic significance in such a way as to enable the people eventually to control their own destiny freely and play a major role on the world stage.

The Iranian struggle for independence and freedom strikes deep roots in the collective memory of the Iranian people. Two historic opportunities to fulfill these principles were destroyed by foreign powers. Russia and Britain divided Iran into spheres of influence in 1907 and destroyed any chance for a constitutional government that could realize both independence and freedom. Ironically, the American government, used the CIA to destroy the nationalist government of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq.⁽³⁾

By studying Iran's history over the last two centuries, we can see how Iranians have usually felt deeply affiliated to their national, social, ethnic and religious heritage. Iran's political and social movements in its contemporary history have been concentrated on keeping national sovereignty and independency. So, on one hand Iran's geopolitical and geo-economic position move it toward the great powers, but on the other hand, the Iranian orientation is to avoid their influence. Iran's contemporary history fairly demonstrates, how its intellectual and religious movements shaped around this kind of resistance. The most challengeable problem for Iranian policymakers has been to balance among national wealth and security, religious identity and independency, national sovereignty and political stability. Based on this, settling tensions of relations with the West present the most paradoxical challenge for the Iranian government. Tehran neither would be able to manage the politics in pre-revolutionary style and nor can ignore the great international changes, the economic reason, and its geopolitical situation. (4)

After the Islamic Revolution, the new government declared that Iran would pursue a policy based on the principle of non-alignment. This was a strategy initiated by prominent leaders of the developing world in order to pursue a foreign policy independent of the great powers at the start of the Cold War. In pursuit of this policy, Iran soon abandoned the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), joined the Non- Alignment Movement (NAM), and cancelled many weapons orders from the West. The assumption of revolutionary leaders was that non-alignment would meet the foreign policy goals of the Islamic Republic as a third world state, whereas an alliance with either the East or the West would not fit the Iranian religious, cultural or historical context. Moreover, an alliance with one bloc would restrict policy options in establishing and maintaining beneficial ties with states from opposing blocs or with certain developing countries.⁽⁵⁾

Keeping national sovereignty has been considered very important issue for Iranians. Based on this, the Iranian revolution could be interpreted as a struggle for restoring Iran's sovereignty. In the commencing of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian society viewed external players basically forming Iranian politics and its related crises. But now, Iranian people, with their national independency, want to solve their problems domestically. As Iran has not been dominated by the United States, Britain or any other powers over the last two decades, Iranians, both the state and the society, want to manage Iran by themselves.

The declaration of non-alignment was the result of Tehran's major policy goals including to achieve autonomy in foreign policy making, to avoid direct involvement in the American- Soviet rivalry, to end Iran's dependence on one ideological camp and to improve its ties with all nations except Israel and the former South African regime. The revolutionary leaders claimed that their decision to follow a non-alignment strategy was taken mainly because dependency the trademark of the Shah's regime was culturally an anti-Islamic and anti Iranian notion.

In the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini captured in his best known motto the principles of independence and freedom side by side Islam. The constitution of the Republic also embraced these principles. The goal of independence, as perceived at the time, was achieved at least in part.⁽⁶⁾ A quarter of American domination was terminated. For the first time in modern history, Iranian leaders achieved an unprecedented degree of control over their country's destiny at home and in world affairs. Even the brutal invasion by Iraq did not make a dent in Iran's determination to preserve its independence. On the contrary, the eight-year war, presented to Iranians the overriding importance of preserving the nation's independence.

The Iranian revolution could be interpreted as a struggle for restoring Iran's sovereignty. In the commencing of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian society viewed external players basically forming Iranian politics and its related crises. But now after 26 years, Iranian people, with their national independency, want to solve their problems domestically, without foreign involvement. As Iran has not been dominated by the United States, Britain or any other power over the last two decades, Iranians, both the state and the society, want to manage Iran by themselves. This trend shows that domestic agenda prefers over foreign ideological objectives. Therefore Iran's foreign policy is increasingly domesticated, and can not be independent from political consciousness. In the political dimension, Iran during the Shah, relied on American power claiming leadership of the Persian Gulf. After the Islamic Revolution, Iran had an impact on the events of the region. Because of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's regional influence has a cultural character. The instruments for this influence in Iran were firstly national culture, which stretched beyond the east and northeast borders of the country, i.e. Central Asia and secondly religious that encompassed the entire world of Islam.⁽⁷⁾

Almost all states in the Middle- East, including Iran, manage a major proportion of their trade with the Western countries. So Iran's economic development has been connected to relations with the industrialized states. It should be mentioned that some %85 of Iranian's trade is conducted with Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Both

Iran and these group of states never can ignore the importance of their relations in implementing their national interests, especially bi-lateral economic and financial benefits. If the Western countries are interested to develop the economic relations with Iran, It would be problematic to detach their political, security and diplomatic relations from their economic relations. On the other hand, Iran's policy of non-linkage strategy can not be accepted by the Western countries. These problems emerge the necessity for increasing interactions and negotiations to find accepted solutions.⁽⁸⁾

Islamic Iran and the West : The Record of Crisis and Relations

The US never recognize the failures of its past policies in Iran, which can partially be interpreted as the roots of anti-American feeling in Iran, such as the 1953 CIA engineered coup against prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq and its long support for the unpopular regime of the Shah.⁽⁹⁾ The US after the revolution adopted the same policies, leading to more extremism in Iran.

After the revolution Iran and the West relations were underlined by Iran- US relations and confrontations. The US policy-makers wanted to maintain relations with Iran , because of their economic, political and military interests, but after the Shah's fall, US relations with Iran were never normalized, and on the contrary changed to increased anti-Americanism.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Carter administration relied only on the moderates in the Bazargan government, isolating itself from the revolution by ignoring its main leader. Meanwhile there were some events which could be interpreted as clear US hostility toward Iran, such as non-recognition of the new regime, the Elghanian case, CIA intervention in Iranian internal affairs, and finally the admission of Mohammad Reza Shah to the US. All of these together with the policy failures mentioned before, led the revolutionaries to react, most notably by the embassy takeover. With the US and Western condemnation and blockade against Iran, the revolution remained in political international isolation, contributing effectively to the outbreak of Iraqi invasion in 1980.⁽¹¹⁾

With Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980, because of revolutionary Iran, the US and Iraq avoided their real differences and began to have better relations. US policymakers adopted a dual policy toward the Iran-Iraq War, firstly, concealing satisfaction with the Iraqi invasion; because of many opportunities that the invasion created for the Carter administration, secondly, maintaining Iran's strategic position and integrity in the region as a buffer to the Soviet Union, as the Islamic government in Tehran while anti-American was also anti-Soviet.⁽¹²⁾

Because of the hostage crisis in Tehran and the US-Iran failure to construct diplomatic relations, the US and many Western countries never condemned Iraq's clear invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980. With such a policy, The west discounted the aggressive nature of the Ba'th government in Baghdad and consequently opened the way for Saddam's increased ambition in the region and in the Arab world, as a whole in the future. The critical mistake of both the West and Iraq was their inability to make a proper distinction between attacking a state and attacking a revolution.⁽¹³⁾

Two years after Iraq's invasion of Iran, in 1982, the situation had completely changed. By the end of 1982, the Iranians had successfully driven the Iraqis out of virtually all Iranian territory. The west developed a series of policies designed to halt an Iranian victory. Main Western countries supported Iraq diplomatically, militarily and economically.⁽¹⁴⁾

After Iran-Contra scandal, the US decided to become directly involved in the war as way out of the administration's humiliation over this scandal. Anti-Iran policy acquired broad support within the Reagan administration as a victory for the radical group in the State Department and the Pentagon, which pursued the more pro-Iraqi side in the Iran-Iraq war, including reflagging the Kuwaiti tankers, direct military confrontation with Iran including a missile attack to Iran's civilian flight killing all its passengers and finally initiating a resolution in the Security Council favorable to Iraq.⁽¹⁵⁾ The West policies fueled to an already explosive situation in the Persian Gulf, contributing greatly to the militarization of region in the 1980s and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The war ended with both Iran and Iraq territorially and politically unsatisfied with the status quo. Iraq greeted the 20 August 1988 cease-fire as a victory, but although Iraq gained political advantage from the war, the post-war situation did not enhance Iraq's security to the degree desired. Iraq was still confronting demographically and geographically superior neighbor, and the territorial status quo ante was not a real victory in terms of enhanced security. Western states policy helped to shape an unstable polarization in the Persian Gulf in the 1980s in that the war confirmed the function of the GCC (The Gulf Cooperation Council) as a coalition against Iran, and defacto ally of Iraq. This alliance continued after the August 1988 ceasefire until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

With strong US support for the unpopular regime of the Shah and its different governments including the military one, who were responsible for killing thousands of Iranian people during the Islamic Revolution, the US lost its credibility for many Iranians, US behavior was a sign of hostility to popular rule in their country. After the victory of the revolution, the US was not prepared to accept this fact, and instead of initiating policy of accommodation and avoiding Iranian distrust the US government behaved in a way that actually aggravated the estrangement and contributed to the ascendancy of radical forces in the revolution condition.⁽¹⁶⁾

This contributed greatly to the militarization of the region in the 1980s. Saddam Hussein could never have invaded Kuwait in 1990 if his aggression had not been preceded by many years of unnecessary militarization of the region. These policies were justified by the idea that providing friendly government in the region with modern weaponry would help with the task of containing revolutionary Iran and help offset trade deficits through export earnings derived from arms sales. In 1990s, Iraq changed into a complicated enemy and Saudi Arabia's vulnerability during the Persian Gulf crisis demonstrated that billions spent on modern weapons system do not necessarily guarantee security against external threats.⁽¹⁷⁾

During 1990s until now, the US has continued hard-line policies regarding Iran, making the improvement in US- Iran's bilateral relation far more difficult. The first US sanctions against Iran were formalized in November of 1979, and during the hostage crisis, many sanctions were leveled against the Iranian government. By 1987 the import of Iranian goods into the United States had been banned. In 1995, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12957, banning US investment in Iran's energy sector, followed a few weeks later by Executive Order 12957 of May 6, 2000, eliminating all trade and investment and virtually all interaction between the United States and Iran.⁽¹⁸⁾ The US links an end to its unilateral sanctions to Iran's compliance with a number of demands, including: ending support for radical organizations such as Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas; ceasing active opposition to an Israeli- Palestinian peace process; and suspending its alleged WMD programs. (18)

From Iran's perspective, dialogue should emphasize: An end to Washington's efforts to overthrow the regime in Tehran, as exemplified by the \$ 20 million given to the CIA for that end, an end to support for anti-regime activities abroad, an end to hostile propaganda over the airwaves against Iran, particularly as perceived to encourage the secession of Iranian Azerbaijan. Tehran, wants the American to abandon their sanctions and drop objection to the transfer to Iran of advanced technology "for peaceful nuclear purposes". It also wants to resolve outstanding financial claims, as well as be included in regional oil and gas projects involving the other Caspian Sea riparian states.⁽¹⁹⁾

The rapture in relations between the United States and Iran has exacted a certain cost upon overall US interests. The handicaps on Iran as a player in the Persian Gulf suspend the evolution of "normal geopolitics" in the region and distort the development of future security arrangements. US allies in the Persian Gulf, while concerned about Iran's intentions in the region, also are uncomfortable with the level of confrontation which keeps tensions high and restrict their diplomatic options vis-à-vis Iran. The US hostility largely has benefited the hard liners in Iran who prefer confrontation as a way of the crisis.

On the other hand US relations with European allies are significantly strained by US unilateral sanctions against European firms that do business with Iran. Some Europeans have refused to comply and are considering retaliatory measures against the US. European states, moreover, do not share US analysis of the nature of the Iranian problem and do not support most US tactical measures to deal with Iran. Meanwhile US economic sanctions upon Iran are costly to American firms, US policies tend to push Iran into much closer relations with Russia. But normal commercial energy planning in the region can not take place while Iran is excluded.⁽²⁰⁾

By blocking Iranian transit routes, the United States encourages alternative routes through Russia, giving Russia leverage over this flow-much to the dismay of the newly independent Caspian states. Thus, while Iran remains the preferred pipeline transit option for most oil companies in developing Caspian energy, some of them feel they must exclude that option. Consequently, US political hostility to Iran impedes development of the vast East-West transport corridors along the new Silk Route, affecting the interests of Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and China.

From the Iranian point of view, US policies unfairly hinder the development of an Iranian economy already hurt severely by the punishing eight-year Iran – Iraq war. Iran’s ability to develop and modernize its own energy sector has been sharply handicapped, even though Iran remains the second largest oil producer in the Persian Gulf today, still being isolated from much of the rest of the world, partly as a result of US pressure.

Initially, both Iran and the US had hoped that Afghanistan could serve as a catalyst for renewed cooperation on the basis of mutual national interests. When the US decided to act militarily against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, Iran adopted a stance of positive neutrality, expressed readiness to rescue US troops or pilots in distress on its own territory, and approved the use of its territory to transport large US humanitarian shipments of wheat to Afghanistan. Iran also pledged US\$567 million over five years towards the reconstruction of the country and encouraged its erstwhile client, Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Northern Alliance, to abandon his effort to be recognized as president, thus paving the way for the appointment of the US-backed Hamid-Karzai.⁽²¹⁾

Iran has largely supported international efforts to manage the transition to a constitutional government but in order to avoid appearing to side with a US operation against a fellow Moslem country and to prevent a permanent US military presence in Afghanistan, Iran urged the UN to take a more prominent role in shaping the country’s political system. But the US has accused Iran of shepherding fleeing members of the defeated Taliban and al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan via Iran. These accusations have never been confirmed.

So when the Taliban regime’s demise eliminated one threat, the huge presence of US in the region presents another threat. The Taliban regime, considered a clear and present danger to Iran and its Central Asian neighbors, has been replaced with an American client state that constitutes a realignment affecting Central Asia and the Caspian basin to the detriment of Iran’s long term interests. Iran’s feeling of insecurity has been fueled by the Bush Administration’s anti-Iran policy under the rubric of the “axis of evil,” which surfaced in tandem with Washington’s open-ended post-11 September war on international terrorism.⁽²²⁾

Iran worries about the spillover of the Iraqi conflict over borders. To the east, Afghanistan remains a hotbed of narcotic trafficking. Pakistan is an unstable pivot. To the North, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Armenia suffering from some levels of instability; to the west, Turkey faces Kurdish irredentism fueled by the neighboring Iraq. In the Persian Gulf, an endemic Sunni militancy led by al-Qaeda threatens Saudi Arabia Sheikdoms. But it is the Bush administration’s advocacy of regime change in Iran intensifies Iran’s current security disquiet.⁽²³⁾

The European governments differ with Washington on how to handle Iran. Instead of trying to isolate and punish Tehran, the European are trying to change Iran’s behavior through economic and diplomatic engagement. This strategy has been reinforced by the mutual need of Europe and the Islamic regime for each other. Iranian oil, the large market it offers, and its strategic location in the Persian Gulf and as a gateway for natural

resources from Central Asian countries are all important concerns for Europe. ⁽²⁴⁾In addition, the well-being of the Iranian economy would guarantee the country's ability to pay back its debt to Europe. On the other side the American sanctions have left few options for Tehran to satisfy its growing demand for technological know-how, investment and trade partner. In short, the two sides, Europe and Iran need each other, mainly for economic and financial reasons. Over the last several years, these mutual interests have proved their ability to overcome diplomatic setbacks, the most important of which are the Salman Rushdie affairs and the Mykonos verdict.

The US continuously attempted to achieve the goal of changing Iran's regime and strengthening the opposition groups. In Washington's view, this could best be achieved through the imposition of strict economic sanctions coupled with discrete overtures to the regime and the incentive of further engagement. The US is increasingly placing its hopes in the popular movement of Iranians who support Western liberal democracy. ⁽²⁵⁾

With the study of political process in Iran since 1979 Islamic Revolution suggests some important characteristics. After more than two decades of its establishment, the Iranian regime is not under any serious threat of being overthrown by opposition groups from inside or outside the country. In the first half of 2000s, the Islamic Republic does not confront any well-organized mass movements opposing its rule. The opponents of the Islamic government lack both good organization and strong leadership.

The second feature of the political system in Tehran, is the unity of different political faction in the principles. It means that while the differences between these factions are real, they should not be exaggerated. The differences between them is emphasis, not in principles, as within the ruling elites there are different factions representing a variety of interests and many analysts refer to conservative, radical and pragmatic factions within the political spectrum. There are real disagreements and competition between them, but none would advocate a policy which might undermine the foundation of the Islamic Republic.

It is difficult to persuade that a popular uprising against the Islamic Republic of Iran lies around the corner. Analogies with the situation that existed in the 1970s are misleading. Unlike the Pahlavi period, the current regime enjoys genuine support from important sectors of the population, including some who strongly oppose its policies. They are insisting on doing reforms, but never asked for collapsing the whole system. What they are looking for is some change in Iranian system of power and the mechanism in which the resources are allocated.

Tehran has taken many steps to counter Washington's containment strategy, An important achievement has been maintaining, and even consolidating, financial and economic ties with the European Union. Although Washington's economic sanctions against Iran have complicated Iran's efforts towards economic development, huge oil and natural resources can survive the American sanctions. Meanwhile, the persistence of the containment strategy makes it harder for the Iranian economy to prosper. Any hope for economic prosperity under the Ahmadinejad administration will require genuine efforts towards domestic political and economic reform, regional cooperation and more integration in the international system.

Nuclear Iran, and the West

Based on Western perception, a nuclear – armed Iran would raise the stakes for American engagement in the Middle-East and Persian Gulf region. The distinction between US foreign policy goals, regional interests, and homeland security would be obliterated, the Persian Gulf region would become more dangerous, and US relations with Russia, China and perhaps Europe would be at risk.

The West believes that Iran needs advanced nuclear technology that could be used in weapons production for numerous reasons: weapons of mass destruction were used by Iraq against Iran in their 8-year long war; Israel, India, Pakistan, and the United States have them; Iran is strategically isolated and needs self-sufficiency to defend itself in the event of attack, and the possession of such weapons would give the regime legitimacy, respectability, and protection. All these reasons give the regime a substantial interest in pursuing the nuclear option.⁽²⁶⁾

The West claims that a nuclear armed Iran and dominated by ‘conservative clerics’ and politicians following a hard line on foreign policy and security issues might become less risk-averse and act more aggressively toward its neighbors and foes. It might demand that its Muslim and Arab neighbors adopt its political and security visions. It might shelter its extremist surrogate and groups using terror tactics under its nuclear umbrella and encourage them to try to destabilize Israel, spoil peace talks, make influence on Iraq, cripple down anti-Syrian efforts in Lebanon or shape the oil market. It would be difficult for the US, the EU, Russia, China, or other Asian governments, with their heavy dependence on the Persian Gulf energy resources, to ignore Iran in a spoiler mode.⁽²⁷⁾

On the other hand, most Iranians are angry that the Western countries want to deny them nuclear technology for energy and research capabilities, which they see as Iran’s natural right. So, there is a widespread view that a military strike by the US or Israel aimed at preempting Iran’s plans and programs would likely lead to a strong solidarity among Iranian different political factions around a nationalist demand.

There appears to be some debate in Iran on whether the pursuit of nuclear weapons is the proper course to take. Those in favor of nuclear weapons capability use the argument that Iran is surrounded by hostile forces, led by the US, and the only way to counter the power of the US and its allies is asymmetrically with nuclear weapons. The opposing camp argues that Iran’s possession of a nuclear weapon only further isolates Iran and drives its neighbors even further into the arms of the US.⁽²⁸⁾

As its quest for nuclear capability has advanced, Iranian officials and national media have offered a wide range of reasons for developing nuclear technology. Iran claims a need to develop nuclear power as an alternative energy source because domestic demand is rising, supply is stable, and oil at today’s market prices is too expensive a commodity to be sold domestically, especially since fuel is subsidized.

As Iran lives in a dangerous and unpredictable neighborhood, its officials are careful to reassure their immediate neighbors that Iran poses no threat to regional stability and would never use its special capabilities to intimidate or influence them. Rather, Iranian officials complain that Iran has the same right as those already in possession of these special weapons and that it would use its new capabilities to benefit the region and the world.⁽²⁹⁾ It seems that Iranian believe that the only way they can maintain their territorial integrity, restore their prestige, and preserve their political survival is through reliance on its nuclear capabilities and its ability to be totally self-sufficient in nuclear research and production.

Officials in Tehran in many occasions stressed that Iran never wants nuclear weapons because it has been a victim of mass destruction. They favor negotiations with the West, especially the EU, and claim the negotiations may effectively prevent the emergence of an international consensus against the Iranian nuclear program. They say nuclear weapons are contrary to Islamic principle, but the country has a right and a need to acquire nuclear technology and must be treated fairly. The presidential election campaign sharpened what little public discourse there was on the issue of nuclear power for energy purposes. The Iranian Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, former President Chatom and President Ahmadinejad have said publicly that nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's national security doctrine because of Islamic principles.⁽³⁰⁾

Meanwhile, the Arabs in the region do not see nuclear armed- Iran as a greater threat than Iran without nuclear arms. After all, they have lived with India and Pakistan, both non-signers of the NPT whose nuclear weapons have been aimed at each other. They reject the argument that Iran with nuclear weapons is a threat, while Israel with its undeclared nuclear weapons is not a threat. The GCC states do not seem to grasp the argument of the EU and the IAEA that if Iran were allowed to pursue nuclear weapons technology, then other government would also resume efforts to acquire nuclear capability international agreements on arms control would become meaningless, and arms control agreements such as NPT would lose relevance. Similarly, the issue of risk to Israel is immaterial to them.⁽³¹⁾

The countries in the region, particularly, Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf states, Syria, Egypt and other Arab Muslim states, claim not to worry about a nuclear armed Iran. Some in the region including Egypt, Syria, and Libya abandoned their nuclear efforts because of lack of resources.

It seems that Iran's attempt to have nuclear energy would not be necessarily change their calculations. The Persian Gulf states profess to be more worried that an American government, intend on war with Iran, would drag them into another regional war.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that Russia, China, and Pakistan see no danger in providing technology, training, and other forms of support to Iran. It seems that China and Russia, at least in the absence of a nuclear test, would not support the UN Security Council taking punitive action against Iran.

The EU countries, in particular, Britain, France and Germany consider that the threat of UNSC sanctions would harden Iranian positions and could ultimately collapse as a result of Russian and Chinese opposition. Even more disturbing to European is the possibility of Israeli military preemption, something the Europeans feel would be less restrained and less predictable than a US solution. European are pessimistic about the chances of success of a military option, which, they believe, would only serve to destabilize the region and, more importantly, cut off flow of oil, particularly in the event of a shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz. Therefore a primary driver of the EU position has been to forestall military escalation. In this direction, even the UK would find it very difficult to join the US in a military action against Iran. It seems that the European reaction to a nuclear armed Iran would likely be similar to its reaction to the India- Pakistan crisis in 1998: stern condemnations followed by some type of economic sanctions. In the long run, Europe is likely to acquiesce to a nuclear armed Iran as long as it thinks any greater ambitions can be contained.⁽³²⁾

Indeed, until now the Europeans are committed to a diplomatic solution to avert a nuclear armed Iran. However, if at the end of the process the European fail to achieve that goal, they are unlikely to pursue aggressive approaches to deter Iranian capability and may have little appetite to sustain economic sanctions over the long run.⁽³³⁾

If we suppose that Iran seeks nuclear technology to produce nuclear weapons, two scenario could be imagined. Some claims that a nuclear armed Iran will become aggressive in pursuit of its interests in the Persian Gulf region and intimidating its demands for regional cooperation. An assertive Iran could demand that US bases in the region be closed and become more assertive in its oil policy, more anti-Israel, or more meddlesome in Iraqi or Israeli- Palestinian affairs. On the other hand, some argue that a nuclear – secure Iran will be more moderate in its foreign and security relationship and the a more powerful Iran is more cooperative and less dangerous Iran.

They stress that Iran has an inferiority complex, wants nuclear weapons for psychological comfort and to ensure the Islamic Republic's survival, and therefore would base its nuclear strategy on defensive deterrence. Iranians, they emphasize, know that the use of nuclear weapons against Israeli or US targets would be suicidal. They also point out that such use would be historically uncharacteristic; after all, Iran has not invaded or attacked another country over 150 years. These observers predict that a nuclear armed Iran would not be aggressive and would have better relations with the US.⁽³⁴⁾

With Iran's standing in the Islamic world, The US and Israel would be held responsible for any preemptive attack, regardless of deniability. This only would increase the risk of violent retaliations. Iranian friends, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and some Palestinian factions, could retaliate, and some other organizations such as al-Qaeda would certainly use this evidence of Christian- Zionist collusion against Muslims to win more recruits, rally anti-American demonstration, and encourage violent operations. Meanwhile, the balance of power within the Iranian regime would shift further to the right. The hard-liners would claim vindication for their anti- American views, and their role as the Ultimate guarantors of Iranian national security would be confirmed. So, the role of civil security and related groups would be downgraded.

As one of the primary motivations for Tehran would be to keep the regime stable the western countries may design a series of diplomatic and economic measure to engage with Iran. They would have to renounce regime change as a policy goal and follow through with recognition of the Iranian regime, mutual respect, normalization of relations, supporting different initiatives such as international loan guarantees and unrestricted sales of highly desired civilian technology and accelerating Iran's joining to WTO.

For its part Iran would need to take credible steps to demonstrate that it has no aggressive or subversive designs toward its neighbors. Iran should struggle to understand the reasons of fears of different players, and to find some solutions to resolve them. The international community should understand that normalization would not mean that all contentions issues between Tehran and Washington suddenly disappear. It would require that normal diplomatic channels be reestablished through which all issues could be addressed. They US would also need to promote a larger dialogue with Iran's neighbors to develop a regional security framework that addresses their own and Iran's security concerns.

US efforts to force compliance from Iran through sanctions have failed. Similarly, efforts to gain international support for an economic boycott have failed, and there is no reason to assume that an effort pegged to Iran crossing the nuclear weapons threshold would gain widespread support. If it did, the effort would be costly to the United States in terms of incentives to other boycotters. And, if consensus is achieved, it is likely to be short-lived. Economic sanctions hurt people and not governments, for the most part, making it difficult to sell this policy at home or abroad.⁽³⁵⁾

An Iranian state that thought its survival was threatened might adopt a 'use them or lose them' mentality. All forces in the region, including American, Arabs and Israeli, would then be vulnerable to Iranian attack. Meanwhile, as long as the US is involved in major counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is implausible that the US could assemble the military capabilities require to conduct a successful conventional invasion of country three times the size of Iraq. Efforts to support anti-revolutionary elements to overthrow the Iranian government never be successful; the exile opponents of the Iranian government are unpopular in Iran, some because of their past willingness to work for Saddam Hussein against Iran and some because of their monarchist ambitions.

Iran's nuclear program is a source of national pride; in fact, the US encouraged the development of nuclear power plants during the Shah's regime and offered educational programs and incentives for students in that area of study.⁽³⁶⁾

The Prospect for Crisis Management

Currently Iran suffers from an economic crisis Iran should meet the needs of near 700000 Iranian looking for work annually and should generate the 25 billion dollars needed to make much needed improvements to its oil industry infrastructures. Iran's inflation rate is between 10 to 20 percent, as is the unemployment rate.⁽³⁷⁾ The hard task

of improving the nation's economy has served to reinforce in the minds of Iran's leaders that a pragmatic approach in its foreign policy is more practical and beneficial in the end.

Some permanent characteristics affects Iran's foreign policy, including its gas and oil reserves. In the following decades, Iran will depend on oil income which its consumers and investors would be mainly Western countries. Iran's resources are contributing forces for forming foreign policy. Iran's dependency on oil revenues has led to weak point in its foreign policy as its economy depends mainly on a single product. This issue has been demonstrated during Iran's heavy sanctions by the US after the Islamic Revolution quickly transformed into a tragic and complicated situation.

Contrary to popular thought, Iran's foreign policy is not limited to ideology. Iran similar to other states in the global politics wants to keep its national interests based on the nationalism, applying a pragmatic approach to issues related to its security and interests. The evolution in Iran's relations with its neighbors and with international powers shows a significant change, with few exceptions, from a confrontational to an accommodating attitude. The relations with the surrounding countries clearly illustrate this development.

During Khatami presidency the relations with Saudi Arabia improved which began from the period of Hashemi Rafsanjani. Improved relations with the Saudis removed many of inconveniences, and reduced military, particularly border security costs. Khatami tried to improve relations with Egypt and the North African states.⁽³⁸⁾

Iran's foreign policy should be prepared to consolidate a strategy based on national interests, setting priorities and playing an effective and positive role in the region. These are the problems Iranian statesmen must tackle. We can claim that Khatami has not brought about any structural change in foreign policy and that his work has only consisted in preparing the way for change that is important but insufficient. Iran's foreign policy is not yet liberated from factionalism and personal tastes, which have and will continue to inflict enormous damage to the country's future.⁽³⁹⁾

Two general attitudes are open for Iran one is to go along with global policy, which means giving and taking concessions, as Turkey is doing at the present time. In such a case, the foreign policy and economy of Iran will undergo fundamental transformations. The other formula is establishing a balance between the big powers in assisting Iran, which demands a policy of détente and cooperation.

Alliance with some other powers, like China, Russia, Japan and Europe proved limited. In the area of nuclear and missile cooperation, China proved that it is not prepared to take the risks arising there from. When it is confronted with the threat of the US, it will easily sacrifice Iran. On the other hand Russia is Iran's rival in Central Asia and Japan is too fragile to act freely regarding to the US. Europe and America have common and important strategic interests. When challenged with the US, Europe could not play the role of Iran's economic partner or political friend. Disintegration of the Soviet Union led to superiority of the West, increase of the West's power in taking unilateral action and

decreased the strategic importance of many countries, including Iran and Turkey for the Western block.

In Iran, as in many other countries, foreign policy can be seen as an extension of domestic policy. But, given the active participation of different factions in the policy-making process, sometimes with opposing opinions, Tehran's relations with the rest of the world have shown a high level of inconsistency and a lack of coherence. But recently Iran has acting more as a state and less as a revolution.

Iran's geopolitical relations with regional and global powers make it an important player with international standing. It seems Iran's national security less connects to regional relations, and more depends to forming relations with the great powers. For Iran, providing national security, avoiding security threats and keeping national identity and political system could not be achieved without a working relations with the great powers. Establishing constructive relations with the influential Western powers can be seen as the most important task in its foreign policy, because of too many problems and challenges which are arising from disorder in its relations with the Western countries.

Hostility in both countries, Iran and the US has become somewhat institutionalized, complicating a rapprochement. In the United States, growing recognition that US policies toward Iran have not been successful and indeed are increasingly costly helps create an openness to change. Meanwhile, economic development is urgently required in Iran to support the necessary and difficult process of political change.⁽⁴¹⁾

The US should reconsider its blocking of Iran's application to join the World Trade Organization, a posture that is not required by US legislation and that hampers the reform movement by slowing internal change as well as Iran's integration in to the world community. WTO membership would require a major revision of Iran's economic and political structure, and thereby promote the kinds of reforms, such as transparency and the rule of law.⁽⁴²⁾

As many argue, sanctions, particularly unilateral sanctions such as those targeted at Iran, are less and less effective in a global economy, where governments have the opportunity to produce their strategic needs from other countries.⁽⁴³⁾ Instead sanctions are likely to impose further hardship on the poor, while seldom adversely affecting the regime and government officials.⁽⁴⁴⁾

If the intent of the sanctions was to limit the Iranian government's military or nuclear procurements, or limit investment in oil and gas exploration, the sanctions have been a total failure. European companies have taken the lead in investing in Iranian oil and gas fields in the Persian Gulf. Iran's cooperation with Russia, Pakistan and other countries on procuring equipment for its nuclear power plants have also not been affected by the sanctions.⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, if the objective of the sanctions was to punish the Iranian people, sanctions can be deemed quite effective. Iranian state-owned airlines are flying dilapidated planes that put passengers at risk, and the consumers purchase US products at double or triple their original price. Iranian students intending to study at US academic institutions

cannot take standardized test such as TOEFL and GRE, and Iranian academic are barred from publishing papers in US based scientific journals, since the US Treasury considers editing an article a financial service. With trade channels limited, only those with control over assets and networks can dominate economic activity. In summary, it could be argued that the sanctions are undermining the growth of a civil society that could serve as a vehicle for democratization in the country.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Many advocates the US sanctions against Iran have argued that sanctions can serve to increase dissatisfaction with the Iranian government and increase the likelihood of an internal regime change. But we can say that did not work in the case of Iraq, where far harsher, multilateral sanctions were in effect, and it is far less likely to happen in Iran. In fact at any time the Iranian government has felt less isolated, it has been more responsive to the international community. The fact that European pressure on Iran are far more effective than pressure applied by the US may be explained by the large investment of European firms in the Iranian oil and gas industries, as well as extensive trade. So it seems that a historic move towards opening up trade and strengthening the Iranian private sector and civil society could prove more fruitful than isolationist policies of the past 26 years, which have not had any significant effect on social and political changes in Iran .

A combination of security guarantees, economic benefits, support for the right to peaceful nuclear technology and diplomatic negotiations create better chance of putting Iran back on the path of nonproliferation than any other mechanisms. US views of Iran will be difficult to transform because of the anti-American rhetoric of Iranian government and the strong pro-Israeli voice in the United States.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Furthermore, any Iranian steps to meet US concern will be difficult to measure. A great deal of baggage and a wealth of accumulated misperceptions and misunderstanding on both sides have built up over the past 26 years. So both countries confront a hard way to open new relations. Continued people to people dialogue should be encouraged and expanded to overcome several decades of suspicion. In addition, academic, sports and religious exchanges should take place.

Iran is convinced that the United States deliberately shot down the Iranian civil aircraft in 1986. Iran is embittered over American support for Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war. It is convinced the US military presence in the Persian Gulf is directed primarily against Iran. Iran also believes the US is determined to establish its permanent hegemony in the Persian Gulf at all costs and to exclude Iran from an appropriate regional role. The US and its allies should do what they can to diminish Iran's feeling of insecurity and encourage a viable security arrangement in the Persian Gulf in tandem with the United Nations programs. Confidence-building measures, such as guaranteeing Iran's integrity or acknowledgement of constructive conflict management role in the region , would achieve a lot more than years or even decades of sanctions. To achieve this the US should recognize Iran's important role in providing regional stability, as demonstrated by its cordial relations with the government of Kabul and its endorsement of the interim government in Baghdad.

Iran's policy makers have failed till now to recognize international conditions and the country's place in the hierarchy of world power. The regional power of Iran will be retained if it can solve its problems at the national level and has a stable position as a government and nation. Domestic political stability is a pre-condition for consensus making in the area of foreign policy. Iran's government should plan to promote human right programs, and public living standards with better situation in domestic policy Iran would be able to bargain strongly in international arena.

Conclusion:

After the Islamic Revolution, Iran has experienced different crises. These include the eight year war with Iraq, the assassination of prominent revolutionary leaders, the death of Imam Khomeini, and the international embargo led by the United States. But the Iranian state has proved its ability to survive all these storms. Thus, many analysts argue that after being in power for almost two decades, it is highly unlikely that the Islamic regime will be overthrown by an opposition group from outside or inside Iran.

For the past 26 years, the majority of action taken by the United States and its Western allies with respect to Iran has been sanctions, harsh and inflammatory rhetoric, and political isolation, all of which have proven ineffective in making Iran a contributing member of the international community. With removing of Saddam Hussein and establishing new situation in the Persian Gulf, it is time for shaping innovative actions by the West toward Iran. The West should leave on a status quo strategy that could be categorized as coercive containment, planning a strategy of constructive and cooperative engagement.

The West should eliminate of rhetoric that appears threaten Iran. The US should engage Iran in multilateral talks on Afghanistan, Iraq and future Persian Gulf security issues. It will provide some transparency as to US intentions in all these areas thereby easing Iranian concerns of "strategic encirclement"; it will provide a forum that enables Iran's interests to be considered; and it will acknowledge Iran's desire to be recognized as a major player in its region.

Iran, with planning a "strategy of constructive cooperation with the great powers" can shape a limited coalition in political and economic affairs. With no doubt political and economic cooperation would not be successful without preparing a security framework. In other words Iran needs to demonstrate a predictable and confident foreign policy behavior, based on a common consensus among domestic policy makers. The consensus leads managing a kind of behavior in international arena that have a specific framework and stable rules. Domestic political stability is a pre-condition for consensus making in the area of foreign policy. The geopolitical and geo-economics characteristic of Iran have a special condition that it can not form regional coalition without organizing its relations and communication with the global power centers. If Iran's relation with the great powers be organized, the condition for the following coalition would be prepared:

- 1- Security coalition in the Persian Gulf .

2- Security coalition with India in the formwork of the eastern and the northern security of the country

3- Coordination and vast cooperation with Japan and the Western European states.

4- Political coalition with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq in order to resist the increasing Israeli regional power.

5- Strong economic cooperation and limited military coalition with China.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has attempted to make a distinction between terrorist actions and freedom movements in declaring its foreign policy, criticizing the whole Western countries, especially the US for their double-faced policies regarding human rights, terrorism and violence. Similar to many Islamic and developing countries, Iran has demanded a clear condemnation of all violent policies in global arena, specifically Israel's policies in the occupied territories. Iran demands US to refrain from providing arms, military training, and blind diplomatic assistance to Israel the resort to violence, including terrorism to advance its cause in the Middle East, and to denounce violence and those acts of terrorism when they occur.

Iran demands Washington's full cooperation with many Islamic countries to leave the Jewish lobby and to confirm establishing an independent Palestinian state. Iranian leaders criticize the peace process in the Middle East as unjust and unfair. In their viewpoint, the first step is to recognize Palestinian right for having their own country and without it all attempts to achieve peace in the Middle East would be counterproductive. It seems that Iran is not alone in international society. Iran's independent policies enjoy many supportive voices in criticizing American unilateral and interventionist behavior in the global politics. In their view, US military intervention, not only can not solve the problem of international terrorism, but also add new dimensions to this entity. In combating terrorism, the international community needs to investigate, its roots and background. In response to American accusation regarding Iran's violation of peace process in the Middle East, Tehran emphasizes Israel's aggressive and violent actions in occupied territories and believes US unilateral support of Israel's policies presents more risk to the peace process in the region.

As 26 years passed, policy of confrontation has been failed. It seems that establishing a cooperative framework on issues of mutual interests, especially on non-political ones will be productive. The two countries may intensify people-to-people exchange, including cultural academic, athletic and political ones. The US may encourage Iran to make practical contributions to peacemaking efforts along the lines of its activity in UN non-proliferation committees, Iraq and Afghanistan crises. They may develop and fund joint programs to promote small and medium-size private enterprises, strengthen democratic structures and civil society at communal level, particularly in areas deemed less politically sensitive such as urban development, traffic and deforestation. The US should lift such opposition as continues to Iran's entering negotiations aimed at joining the World Trade Organization so as to encourage the kinds of economic reforms. The US

should leave all offensive behaviors regarding Iranians such as finger- printing in its airports.

The Iranian image of the West can not be separate from West policy towards the Islamic World and its global politics. The West needs a better understanding of Islamic societies and it should separate Islam from terrorism, abandon double standard policies regarding issues such as human rights. As the US follows a unilateral support of Israel, it can not expect improvement of its image in Iran and in the whole Islamic countries.

Iran's policy makers have failed till now to recognize international conditions and the country's place in the hierarchy of world power. The regional power of Iran will be retained if it can solve its problems at the national level and has a stable position as a government and nation. Domestic political stability is a pre-condition for consensus making in the area of foreign policy. Iran's government should plan to promote human right programs, and public living standards with better situation in domestic policy Iran would be able to bargain strongly in international arena.

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Notes:

- 1) Keyhan (Iranian Daily Newspaper), 17 November, 2005, P.2.
- 2) The long and painful history of foreign intervention in Iran (of Russia and Great Britain in Persian and, more recently, of US influence in Iran) makes the issue of independence a critical for Iranians.
- 3) *Mark J. Gasiorowski*, US Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran, (Ithaca : *Cornell University Press* 1991) , PP. 28-32.
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- 5) Rouhollah K., Ramazani 1990, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientation," In R.K. Ramazani ed., *Iran's Revolution: The Search for Consensus*, (IN: Bloomington, Indiana University Press,) PP. 52-64 .
- 6) Rouhollah Khomeini "Islamic Government," In *Islam and Revolution: Writing and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, Translated and Annotated by Hamid Algar, (Berkeley, 1981) PP. 59-61.
- 7) It seems the religious influence of Iran is dualistic in character and still the way is unimpeded for the influence of national culture in Central Asia. The behavior of secular governments posed fundamental obstacles to Iran's influence.
- 8) Daniel Bayman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushirvan Ehteshami and Jarold Green, "Iran's Security Policy in the Post – Revolutionary Era. *Rand* (2001), PP. 86-87.

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- 19) International Crisis Group, *Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution's Soul*, ICG Middle East Report No.5. (2002) PP. 12-19
- 20) Kenneth, Katzman, *US-Iranian Relations: An Analytic Compendium of US Policies: Lows and Regulations*, (Washington D.C: The Atlantic Council of the United States 1999) PP.18-32.
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- 23) Ibid. PP. 122-123.
- 24) Ibid. P.125
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- 28) Judith S. Yaphe, Charles D. Lutes, Reassessing the Implication of a Nuclear-
- 29) Armed Iran, (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2005), PP.1-10
- 30) Ibid. PP. 10-15
- 31) Ibid. PP. 15-33.
- 32) For example See, Keyhan, April, 12, 2005. P.2
- 33) Yaphe. Op. Cit., PP.12-13
- 34) Bayman, Op. Cit, PP.71-73.
- 35) Simply accepting to co-exist with Iranian nuclear capabilities will
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- 37) Yaphe, Op. Cit, P.9.
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