Born in an oil-rich land of the ‘eternal flames’, I have not been excluded from its direct impact. Still my memory is fresh with Iraqi aircrafts’ bombarding attempt on the huge oil storage-tanks close to my home, or standing in the long queues under the snowstorms of Ardabil to get few subsidized gallons of fuel to warm our homes. Later, I learned that 1953 coup d'état by Britain's SIS and CIA had changed the course of Iran’s domestic and international fates by overthrowing its first ever democratic government. And thereby, a chain of events was caused, with their impacts profoundly visible in Iran’s post-2009 Presidential unrests. And, since the time of my childhood, I kept hearing the revolutionaries promising to benefit the nation from the nation’s own wealth - oil & gas, a potential which, until the present time, has gone astray. Yet, being the second and third richest nation on earth in terms of natural gas and oil reserves, Iran’s economy is not in shape. All the above, always because of ‘power politics’ and, most of the time, because of the oil. It seems to me that in the absence of a universal ‘moral politics’ - a concept to which I have been mucked upon by my friends - states will continue their endless conflicts.

Hydrocarbon resources’ strategic instrumentality and scarcity intensifies conflicts. Attempts to acquire and control energy resources and transit routes, and influence the energy-rich countries have been the chronicle of the big powers’ competitions, as well as the interferences in the fates of the other states. On the other hand, energy has been the causes of several wars in our last and present centuries. This is a trend which apparently at the best won’t reduce, until the beginning of the next millennium, the approximate time when the hydrocarbon reserves will run out.

The story of Iran’s Northern neighboring republics has not been much different than that of Iran. Both the Caspian republics and Iran have been parts to the Great Games since the 19th century onward. More recently, a new wave of the competition has engulfed the Caspian Sea region, which is blessed or rather cursed by the oil. As in the Middle East, oil - if not solely - but surely is one of the main reasons for the involvement of the big powers in ongoing conflicts in an area stretched from Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. I’m afraid to say that the conflicts around the hydrocarbon fields of the Middle East (Iran and Arab states) or Caucasus (Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia) will intensify in our time. However, I do hope by introducing renewable energy sources and applying a degree of morality to our politics we – so-called the most superior race on earth - will not only protect our globe but also will learn to co-exist peacefully!

The quest for this humble research-work began almost a decade ago when I joined JNU for MA program in 2000. It was the time that my socialization with Hindustan began in
Ganga Dhaba’s stone-tables, and I’m content to write the draft of this final page in another Dhaba in Delhi’s 40 C heat.

Like any human being everywhere, my decade-old residence in India witnessed gains and losses. Elnaz was the most precious of all, and shall always know she will not be ever out of my mind and heart. But, in India I learned losses are inseparable part of the life, and it is a must that ‘life shall move on’ as the ‘chariot of time’ stops for no one. Beside academic courses, India taught me how to appreciate the life with all its ups and downs, happiness and miseries and oddities and beauties. Probably, nowhere else I could have been valued ‘life’ more than in India. Thank you Meri Bharat Maa for your hospitality, for your Banaras, Rishikesh, Daramsala, Manali-Leh road, Tamil Nadu...and for your people.

Doing successive MA, M.Phil and Ph.D courses were nerve, time and finance consuming. I never could have been able to go through it all, alone. Many people are the co-owners of these degrees; I, only in executing their kind supports, wills, and loves into printed research works.

I must thank my teachers right from the primary school for teaching me the alphabets, to high school where my teachers changed the path of a notorious student by masterly channeling him toward higher education: my literature teacher Mr. Qaemiyan, Botanic teacher Mr. Kalami and late Mr. Yosri. Soon they were happy to see their student in Ardabil Radio & TV where Mr. Sharifinia supported and planted the seed of India in my mind. Also, I must thank Mr. Davoudi in BA, who taught me how to speak English. My sincere gratitude to all of them.

The big final task was to Prof. Patnaik, my M.Phil & Ph.D supervisor, who put extra time and efforts in final days to enable me to submit on-time and catch up with my first international conferences. I am thankful to him and I do hope I was a good student for him. My other teachers, Prof. Pushpesh Pant, Profs. Kamal & Anuradha Chenoy, Prof. Murthy and Prof. Nafey helped me in one way or other. Thank to all of them.

Many friendships did shape, grow, stay, or fade away by time. A few friends’ contribution must not be overlooked: Alexandre Zurcher who cared and shared, Mandana Tisheyar’s who gifted books, Khush-Hal Singh Lagdyan who offered materials and Mr. ManMohan Handa, Mr. Vijay Kumar and Mr. Gurpreat Singh from my center, whose friendships eased my stay. Also I must not forget the JNU and IDSA Libraries as well as JNU’s SIS Photostat, hostels, all Dhabas and Canteens guys who provided me with Xeroxes, books, materials, accommodations and Chapatis.

My ‘Oriental’ parents showed great patience by sometimes not seeing me for years. It doesn’t matter however big the problems and hardships were, they just had one aim; to gift me and my brother and sisters ‘the education’. My sisters were my great source of moral
boost. For a decade they called, helped and supported me by all means. My sincere thanks to my beloved Faraz, Parvaz, Behnaz, Maryam and Shahnaz, who no more is with us.

Alone, and in the final year and days with my tight schedule to complete Ph.D, I would not have been able to come up with my thesis had not Marion Dunoyer appeared out of heaven. By her arrival in hopeless days, she brought light and gifted me more than ‘hopes’. She came for me, revitalized my dead dreams and stood by me unlike any other. Her double checking of my work and applying my supervisor’s grammatical corrections to the final draft saved me a lot of time. I’m indebted for all her organizational skills, supports, affections and love.

However, no one else’s contribution has been more influential, supportive, generous and kind than my NiNi’s, who turned to be my most caring friend, mother and teacher for more than a decade. At a time when all seemed gone, I was sure my soulmate was always there for me, though thousands of miles away. Not for a single moment did she leave me on my own. To me she was like Shams and I wonder if I had been a disciple worthy of her devotions and visions. All my visions for the world, expansion of horizon for understanding the ‘others’, peace and prosperity for all nations, and affection for humanity did shape and grow with her and by her. Without that name in my life neither this work would have been able to come to its final printed form nor could I have been the person I am today. Thus, this work belongs to her.

Masoud Imani
JNU/Delhi