CHAPTER SIX

POST-REVOLUTION FOREIGN POLICY
**Introduction:**

The task of this chapter is threefold: first, to describe the main foreign policy approaches in Post-Revolution Iran; second, to present an empirical analysis of trends in Iranian foreign relations with the Great Powers in the first crucial decade of the Revolution; and third, to discuss which trend best explains and last a brief history of president Khatami’s foreign policy.

One of the themes of the chapter is the interaction between internal/domestic and foreign/external variables in foreign policy analysis. In this regard, the theoretical framework utilized is based on "linkage politics," which is a concept coined by James Rosenau. He examined "linkages" between national and international structures and studied "penetrated" political systems whose domestic policies are affected by events outside their borders.¹ In the 1980s, however, Rosenau himself questioned the adequacy of such

---

concepts in an international system described by its "cascading interdependence." 2

Another theme of the chapter deals with the influence of the "leadership factor" on the policy process. This analysis is theoretically based on the topic of "domestic sources of foreign policy," which is a common perspective among many current foreign policy analysts. 3 In this regard; the assumption is that domestic/national factors or variables take precedent over foreign/international ones in influencing foreign policy. Two types of leaders are identified based on their beliefs, characteristics, leadership style, and world view. The impact of each type on Iranian foreign relations is explained in detail. Such theoretical and empirical considerations should provide us with a more clear understanding of Tehran's contemporary and future behavior. Iran's foreign policy has entered into a new phase; moving from confrontation to conciliation.

The May 1997 Presidential election broke much more ice than expected. Khatami's landslide victory over the conservative rival, Nateq-Nuri, in the election ushered in both internal and external policy changes. The massive mandate of the people to Khatami meant a verdict for change from the political and social stagnation that Iran had been facing. The results of the February-May 2000 Majlis elections in which the reformists got victory over the conservatives were a continuation and confirmation of the May 1997


presidential election victory and strengthened the hands of the reformists to transform both domestic and foreign policies.

Iran's reformist President Mohammad Khatami's worldview and his notion of foreign policy are different from his predecessors'. In Khatami's notion of foreign policy, there is no "clash of civilizations", he favors a "dialogue of civilizations". The detente policy of Khatami has created a congenial atmosphere for expanding relations with the world, and their relation with the major powers (Iran’s) is improving. Relations with the US alone are still marred by mutual suspicion and distrust. Tehran is increasingly making efforts to play a greater role in the Gulf region and beyond. In many ways the new foreign policy resembles that of the pre-1979 Pahlavi regime's policy, barring the alliance with the US.

A) The Essence of the Post-Revolution Foreign Policy:

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy was reversed following the Revolution Ideology and principles. After World War II, the Pahlavi’s Regime (Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah) both considered their country to be part of the Western alliance system. Particularly, Mohammad Reza Shah actively cultivated relations with the United States, both as a means of protecting his country from perceived political pressures emanating from the Soviet Union and as a matter of genuine ideological conviction.

The Revolution, which was laden with anti-American rhetoric, because of America’s dominations of Shah’s internal and external policies brought new leaders to power who disapproved of Iran's relationship with the United
States. The new leaders were convinced that Washington had tried to maintain the Shah in power, despite the mass demonstrations calling for his downfall, and were deeply suspicious of American intentions toward their Revolution. These leaders believed that the United States was plotting to restore the Shah to power.

The more radical revolutionaries were determined to eradicate all traces of American influence from Iran. Fearing that the provisional government was seeking an accommodation with the United States tense the tension between these radical groups like the Students of the Line of Imam and the United States. These events come to the conclusion of seize the American embassy in Tehran in November 1979 by the Students of the Line of Imam. Subsequently, they exploited the protracted hostage crisis between Tehran and Washington to achieve their objective of terminating normal relations with the United States. The severing of ties with the United States was regarded not only as essential for expunging American influence from the country but also was considered a prerequisite for implementing their revolutionary foreign policy ideology. Some analysts believe that This new ideology consisted of two concepts: export of revolution and independence from both the East and the West. By the time the hostage crisis was finally resolved in January 1981, these ideas were embraced by the entire political elite.

Early on, the revolutionary government declared that Iran would pursue 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.

Iranian non-alignment strategy, enhanced by its independent stance, is a new chapter in the history of an ancient country which gained a new spirit as a result of the 1979 Revolution. Some experts discounted the effects of the Revolution on Iranian foreign relations by emphasizing the impact of certain geopolitical, historical, or economic factors which show signs of continuity in the pre- and post-revolution policies. In this fashion, one scholar concluded that Revolutionary Iran's strategy was not a radical departure from the past.\(^5\) Despite some similarities between Tehran's strategies pre- and post-revolution eras, the two were fundamentally different. This was mainly due to the structural differences between the old and the new regimes-Imperial Iran and the Islamic Republic. Thus, Tehran's declaration of non-alignment was a radical policy move that challenged the regional status.


\(^5\) -For example, See Shirin T. Hunter, (1990), “Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade” (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press).
The declaration of non-alignment was the result of Tehran's four major policy goals: (1) to achieve autonomy in foreign policymaking, (2) to avoid direct involvement in the American-Soviet rivalry, (3) to end Iran's dependence on one ideological camp, and (4) to improve its ties with all nations (except Israel and the former South African regime). These policy goals were rooted in Iranian history, politics, and economy. Among these factors, however, the foreign policy choices of the Shah were the main factor in shaping the foreign relations of Revolutionary Iran.

Regime stability dominated the Shah's policies from 1953-6, and its pursuit created a vicious cycle: it required an alliance with the United States, fostering a public image of military and economic dependence on America. Emphasizing such images, Ayatollah Khomeini characterized the Shah as a weak, illegitimate, and dependent leader. This ultimately resulted in weakening the regime both psychologically and politically. In sum, 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. The foreign policy of Revolutionary Iran was not only a reaction to the Shah's regime, but was also influenced by revolutionary leaders. Thus, the next section illustrates how different types of leaders influenced the policy process.

B) Concept of Neither East nor West:

Independence, Freedom and Islamic Republic were the major outcomes of the Islamic Revolution. In the foreign policy case, neither East nor West,

---

the Islamic Republic was the most famous slogan of the Revolutionaries. When someone studies about Post-Revolution Iran foreign policy it is necessary to know the concept of “neither East nor West, the Islamic Republic” because, this concept is one the major principle of Iran’s foreign policy. At the same time this slogan of the Revolution is the main and non-changed slogan that is on the top of the main gate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran.

At the beginning years of the victory of the Revolution, there was a worldview that perceives Islamic revolution as the means whereby Muslims and non-Muslims can liberate themselves from the oppression of tyrants who serve the interests of international imperialism. Both the United States and the Soviet Union are perceived as the two principal imperialist powers that exploit Third World countries. A renewed commitment to Islam, as the experience of Iran in overthrowing the shah demonstrated, permits oppressed nations to defeat imperialism. According to this perspective, by following Iran's example any country can free itself from imperialist domination.

Although the political elite agree upon the desirability of exporting revolution, no unanimity exists on the means of achieving this goal. At one end of the spectrum is the view that propaganda efforts to teach Muslims about the Iranian example are the way to export revolution. Material assistance of any form is not necessary because oppressed people demonstrate their readiness for Islamic revolution by rising against dictatorial governments. Those who subscribe to this line of reasoning argue that Iranians received no external assistance in their Revolution but were successful as a result of their commitment to Islam. Furthermore, they cite Khomeini's often stated dictum that Iran has no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of
other countries. This view is compatible with the maintenance of normal diplomatic relations between Iran and other countries.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the view of Iran as the vanguard of a world revolutionary movement to liberate Muslim countries specifically, and other Third World countries generally, from imperialist subjugation. This activist perspective contends that the effective export of revolution must not be limited to propaganda efforts but must also include both financial and military assistance. Advocates of this view also cite Khomeini to justify their position and frequently quote his statements on the inevitability of the spread of Islamic revolution throughout the world.

C) Types of Leaders:

Foreign policy making is done mostly by institutions in developed countries but mainly by the leaders in developing nations, especially revolutionary regimes.\(^7\) Thus, foreign policy analysis of the developing world always involves a close examination of the leadership.\(^8\) While not all revolutionary leaders participate in the decision-making process to the same degree, they all exhibit agreement about the need for change in foreign ties, signifying a break with the past. It is not clear what makes an individual,


especially a leader, become revolutionary.\textsuperscript{9} We are not sure why such individuals prefer to overthrow the government rather than work to reform it from within the system.\textsuperscript{10} Based on their approach to foreign policy, however, we can divide revolutionary leaders into two general categories: the idealists and the realists.\textsuperscript{11}

**D) Revolutionary Idealists:**

Revolutionary idealists are those who see the success of the revolution as a stepping stone in a series of upheavals against enemies, both inside and outside the country. With their outward looking perspective, many revolutionary idealists challenge their international environments. Their anti-status quo rhetoric often poses a threat to the national security of other states, especially in the first decade of the revolution. Idealists include revolutionary leaders like Ali Akbar Mohtashami, who does not believe in an interdependent world. For idealists, the revolution must persist in its convictions and in using its values in its foreign relations. They believe that time is working to their advantage and that sooner or later their revolution will spread elsewhere. Generally, leaders of this type tend to romanticize the nature and effects of their revolutions. They are also optimistic about their ability to orchestrate similar revolutions elsewhere, especially since they have gained experience in executing a successful revolution. Idealists tend to be impatient when their

ideas take more time than anticipated or when the ideas in practice stray from their original goals.

This romanticism and optimism can, however, blind the idealist to essential facts. One can also argue that revolutionary idealists, an ingredient of any revolutionary leadership group, are rather simplistic and gullible in assuming that their revolution is exportable. They consider the export of the revolution the goal of any true revolutionary. They forget that a revolution which is to be legitimate, decisive, and successful must also be deeply rooted in the society.

One sub-category of idealists is radical revolutionary idealists, who have an extreme sense of mission for exporting their revolution by any means. In fact, what separates this group from the rest of the idealists is that they do not confine themselves to employing rhetoric and spiritual support as do most idealists. Rather, their goal is to send material, particularly military, support to groups abroad with similar ideologies. An example of such an individual was Mehdi Hashemi, whose militia activities abroad eventually led to his execution.\(^\text{12}\)

\textbf{Revolutionary Realists:}

Revolutionary realists are those leaders who understand realpolitik and the limits to the power of their revolutionary states. This group is more familiar and concerned with the reaction of the international environment to their revolution and its consequences. Like idealists, realists also aim to export

the revolution, albeit with a different strategy. Instead of channeling resources
to support national liberation movements abroad, their priority is building
their own country as a model revolutionary state. They also realize that their
country needs outside assistance for modernization. Consequently, they
understand the importance of maintaining healthy diplomatic and economic
relations with other countries, particularly with Great Powers for their
technology. They are also more inclined to deal with problems of national
rather than international concern.

Moreover, Realists are pragmatic enough to realize that internationally
isolating the country does not pay off. Hojatolislam Ali Akbar Rafsanjani is an
e example of a revolutionary realist who worked against the isolationist
tendencies within the new leadership. Concerned with mounting pressures of
economic development and war reconstruction efforts, Rafsanjani even
advocated hiring foreign experts and contractors-a controversial issue-when
similar services are not available domestically.\(^{13}\)

Regardless of their differences, both revolutionary realists and idealists
agree on the need for a fresh approach to the foreign relations of the new
regime. Considering the pervasive image of the Shah's regime as dependent on
American power, Iranian revolutionary leaders found a non-alignment strategy
to be a suitable alternative not only for their domestic image but also for their
international reputation. Thus, non-alignment serves the national and
international needs of Iran.

\(^{13}\) - Richard Cottam, "Inside Revolutionary Iran", in Ramazani, Iran's Revolution: The
Search for Consensus, p. 21.
While all Iranian leaders have endorsed non-alignment, they interpreted it differently based on domestic and international circumstances. This led to three major trends of foreign relations in the first decade of the Revolution: a two-track policy (1979-mid-1982), a conflictual policy (mid-1982-mid-1985), and a conciliatory policy (mid-1985-1989).
E) Two-Track Policy:

This began when Mehdi Bazargan's government took charge in February 1979 and ended when Iranian forces moved the War into Iraqi territory in July 1982. Moving from a defensive to an offensive position in the Iran-Iraq War led some observers to argue that Tehran was exporting its revolution. Although some Iranian leaders have insisted that exporting the revolution would be by word and not by sword, there is evidence indicating that the nature of Iranian policy became less cooperative and more conflictual after Tehran gained the military initiative in the War. Thus, this action signified the start of a less accommodating and a more conflictual policy period.

The two-track non-aligned strategy consisted of one track oriented towards distancing Tehran from Washington and the other toward establishing more cooperative relations with Moscow. To distance itself from the United States, Iran took three major political measures including withdrawing from CENTO, cancelling the 1959 U.S.-Iran Defense Agreement, and declaring it a non-aligned country. Although Tehran also revoked Articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 Iran-USSR treaty, some claimed that Moscow achieved its historic goal of neutralizing Iran when Tehran joined NAM. The Soviet Union also saw the regional balance moving more to its advantage as Iran severed ties with some Western allies such as Israel, while it established closer relations with some Soviet allies like Syria, and cancelled many Western military contracts. In

---

general, non-alignment during this period was interpreted by many Iranian leaders as primarily a policy to reduce foreign, particularly Western, influence in Iranian affairs-a policy similar to Mossadegh's "Negative Equilibrium."\(^{15}\) Since the Soviets did not have a presence in pre-revolution Iran, they hoped to expand ties with the new regime.

Who was in charge of this interpretation of non-alignment? Although the new regime experienced several changes in official heads-of-government during this stage of the revolution, the actual source of power was Ayatollah Khomeini, who enjoyed the luxury of legitimizing their bids for leadership as they courted him for approval. In summarizing the issue of leadership during this period, one may argue that Ayatollah Khomeini headed a coalition of secular and clergy leaders. The clergy soon consolidated its power base and began to eliminate its rivals, starting with the moderates in November of 1979 and ending with members of the Tudeh in 1982.

Tehran began media campaigns against regional pro-Western states although pro-Eastern ones were also not immune. Iran was soon blamed for a number of regional incidents which varied from demonstrations and acts of sabotage to hijacking and even an attempted coup. Considering the freedom that radical idealists enjoyed at the beginning of the revolution, such as establishing and operating centers like the Liberation Movement Office,\(^ {16}\) it is

---


conceivable that some incidents received more than just a blessing from Tehran, despite the denial of top officials.\(^\text{17}\)

How genuine was the non-alignment in this period? The behavior of the regime initially seemed to be anti-Western and pro-Eastern. In fact, some suggested that Iranian non-alignment meant an American loss and a Soviet gain, but history showed that this conclusion was too simplistic.

Thus, for Tehran, non-alignment did not serve as a cover to hide an alliance with Moscow. The latter had a questionable image in Iran because of the negative connotation of Marxism in socio-political values of revolutionary Islam, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, its ties to the Tudeh Party, and its military assistance to Iraq. In practice, Iran's non-alignment strategy used an equidistance approach by keeping the Soviet Union at bay while distancing its ties with the United States.

However, the anti-American slogans of Iranian demonstrators did not necessarily signal an end to relations with the United States although their actions should have served as a signal to allow a cooling off period. Evidence indicates that secular leaders did not wish to cut off diplomatic ties with the United States since they knew that Tehran needed the West to balance the influence of the East. In fact, on occasion these leaders showed their positive intentions toward America.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^\text{17}\) Hojatolislam Rafsanjani has denied Iranian intervention in such affairs. For example, see his 18 December 1981 speech in Dar Makaab-e Jome'h, Vol. 4, and Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, summer 1988, p. 152.

In contrast, the clerics were suspicious of American intentions and feared a 1953-style coup, especially after the admission of the Shah to the United States on 22 October 1979. For the clergy, the takeover of the American Embassy was an opportunity to consolidate its power by eliminating secular leaders as well as deterring a U.S. intervention by keeping Americans captive. The clergy ended the hostage crisis after it gained an American pledge not to interfere in Iranian affairs through the Algiers Agreement. The fact that the crisis ended four months after the Iraqi invasion began also indicates that international concerns were secondary to the leadership.

On the second anniversary of the revolution, the clergy was pleased with its overall performance and confident that, unlike the Shah, it could lead the country without dependence on America. When it seemed that the West was united against Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini began emphasizing self-reliance in his views of non-alignment.\(^{19}\) Self-reliance was the main reason behind the significant growth in the Iranian domestic arms industry.\(^{20}\)

**F) More Confrontation Policy:**

Some analysts believe that in the second phase of its non-alignment strategy (July 1982 to June 1985), Iran's policy toward the superpowers was more confrontational and uncompromising, particularly regarding the settlement of the War. Tehran's demand for the removal of President Hussein added to earlier suspicions about Iran's intervention in the domestic affairs of others and its attempts to export the Islamic revolution. This rigid position put Iran...

under a spotlight and isolated the country while it was already under a great deal of domestic pressure.\textsuperscript{21} To remedy this pressure, the leadership emphasized self-reliance and interpreted nonalignment as being similar to isolationism.\textsuperscript{22}

Contrary to the earlier period, the clergy was in full control of all policymaking institutions after Khamenei became president. With the approval of Ayatollah Khomeini, the clergy put a rigid tone on the non-alignment policy. The reason for a more confliction posture was a combination of some domestic and foreign successes which led the leadership to become more adamant in pursuing its foreign policy goal towards the Great Powers.

Three issues negatively affected Tehran-Moscow relations: the dissolution of the Tudeh Party, Soviet troops in Afghanistan, and Soviet support for Iraq. During 1982 and 1983, the coalition between the ruling clergy and the Tudeh Party ended when Tehran outlawed the Tudeh Party and arrested its leading members. The latter confessed to being agents of the Soviet Union during a highly publicized trial. Soon Tehran purged the military,\textsuperscript{23} and Moscow severely criticized Tehran.\textsuperscript{24} Iran then expelled 18 Soviets in a diplomatic showdown. On the Afghan Crisis, both states advocated an end to foreign intervention in Afghanistan, but they were certainly in opposite camps. More than 100,000 Soviet troops remained in

\textsuperscript{21} - “Iran: A Country Study”, \textit{Metz}, pp. 271-278.
\textsuperscript{22} - Sahife-iNur, Vol. 17, pp. 151-155.
Afghanistan, while Iran assisted certain Mujahedin organizations\textsuperscript{25} and housed more than two million Afghan refugees.\textsuperscript{26}

Finally, close military ties between Moscow and Baghdad were another source of irritation in Iran-Soviet relations. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, President Hussein was an atheist equipped with Soviet and Western arms.\textsuperscript{27} In 1983, the Soviets alienated Iran even more by resuming arms shipments to Iraq. Soon Iran-Eastern Bloc trade declined to its lowest level since the revolution. In addition, natural gas negotiations between Tehran and Moscow broke down.

Tehran-Washington relations hinged on three issues: the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, support of the Afghan Resistance, and the Iran-Iraq War. These issues had adverse affects in the relations between the two countries. For example, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon contributed to a more confliction relationship between Tehran and Washington. The invasion convinced some leaders that it was not enough merely to create a distance between Tehran and Washington and that it was time to confront America in the region. The Ayatollah resented the United States not only for its support of the Shah, but also for the traditional American support of Israel.\textsuperscript{28}

Soon after the Israeli invasion, Tehran sent a contingent of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to Lebanon. The IRGC began the indoctrination and training of Lebanese Shias in the Bekka Valley. Thus, the

\textsuperscript{26} -\textit{MEED}, Vol. 30, No. 4, 25 January 1985, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{27} - \textit{Sahife-i Nur}, Vol 14, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{28} -Shirin Hunter, \textit{“Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade”}, p. 59.
Israeli invasion of Lebanon, like the Iraqi invasion of Iran, provided the Islamic Republic with the opportunity to project its power, export its revolutionary message, and challenge the regional status quo which favored America.

The bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, and the 1984 Kuwaiti hijacking should all be seen as part of this new confrontational policy of the leadership toward America. On 23 January 1984, the United States put Iran on the list of terrorist states and soon began to control its exports to Tehran.

Revolutionary idealists applauded this confrontational non-alignment strategy. Ayatollah Khomeini acknowledged its success by noting that the Lebanese Shia had forced America to withdraw its Marines from Lebanon (February of 1984), although he did not mention who had inspired and trained the Lebanese Shia. The tone and words of the revolutionary idealists confirmed their confidence in the success of this strategy and their determination that they would not be intimidated by America.²⁹

Afghanistan, Washington and Tehran were, in effect, strategic allies because they were pursuing similar goals including the withdrawal of the Soviets and the destabilization of the communist regime in Kabul. Nevertheless, the idealists distinguished between American and Iranian support for Mujahedin by claiming that Washington only aimed at promoting a pro-American Islamic movement; On the Iran-Iraq War, Tehran saw Washington and Baghdad as allies whose goal was to destroy the Islamic

Republic. For Iran, the proof of such allegations was the support of Iraq by pro-American Arab Gulf states. Moreover, certain American actions convinced Iran that the United States was actively siding with Iraq, despite its declaration of neutrality in the war. The 1992 revelations about the Bush administration's indiscriminate support of the regime of Saddam Hussein showed that Iranian leaders were justified in this stance on the alliance between Washington and Baghdad against Iran before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

As international initiatives to bring about a cease-fire failed, Tehran became more isolated from the superpowers despite its improved position to negotiate a settlement with Baghdad. Thus, Iranian confrontational non-aligned foreign relations antagonized the superpowers and lined them up against Iran, as radical leaders had prophesied.

G) More Conciliatory Policy:

The need for a more conciliatory approach in Iranian non-alignment strategy was rooted in Tehran's failure to capture Basrah-Iraq's second largest city and major port. Despite inflicting heavy losses on the Iraqis, Iran lacked the hardware to break through the Iraqi defenses. The leadership realized that the conflictual non-alignment position had limited Iran's ability to end the war on its terms. From late 1984, the realists began to emphasize that non-alignment did not mean isolation from the rest of the world and aimed at changing the international image of the Islamic Republic. Iranian foreign

---

30 - Some also argue that Iran alienated others by its non-discriminatory, harsh, and rigid diplomatic posture (see A. H. H. Abidi, "Iran & Non-Alignment" International Studies, Vol. 20, Nos. 1-2, January-June 1981, p. 357).
policy began showing conciliatory signs, including Tehran's efforts to resolve the TWA hijacking and end the radio propaganda war with the Soviets.\textsuperscript{32}

A survey of Iranian diplomatic actions during this period shows that the emphasis was more on dialogue and less on defiance, although the rhetoric may have suggested otherwise. From 1985, Iran-Eastern bloc ties began to expand again. A year later, Iran's diplomatic relations with Western nations significantly improved despite the short-term downturn which occurred during the Salman Rushdie affair. The improvement of ties with the East and the West was an indicator of the realists' growing influence in policymaking following signs of moderation in Ayatollah Khomeini. Furthermore, the Ayatollah's death and the emergence of Rafsanjani smoothed some of the rough edges of the Iranian non-alignment strategy.

H) New Paradigms in Iran Foreign Policy:

President Khatami's détente policy is a process of normalizing relations with all countries. Khatami said on March 5, 2000, that “Iran's détente policy is not at all tactical but a strategy and that Iran believes that the interest of the country, region and the world is linked with stabilization and expansion of the policy”\textsuperscript{33}

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister in Asia-Pacific Affairs, Mohsen Aminzadeh, stated that "the détente policy and confidence-building guidelines as well as developing regional and international peace and stability in line with Iran's political and economic development are the main foundations of

\textsuperscript{32} For a discussion on the shift toward an accommodating gesture, see \textit{Sahife-i Nur}, Vol. 19, p. 73.

Iran's foreign policy”. The Khatami administration has adopted détente policy in order to fulfill its much required national interests. Khatami said, "We have taken some positive steps in relation to the policy of detente - steps which must be sustained. We must progress from the stage of detente to that of building trust and subsequently to the establishment of lasting regional cooperation". He further stated that "Iran pursues a policy of detente not out of need but out of wisdom and a concern for us and the world". However, on the issue of foreign policy, conservatives usually support Khatami's objective of normalizing relations with all countries except the United States and Israel. The conservative faction always opposed having any relations with these two countries.

Khatami visited Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Qatar in 1999. His visit to the Arab countries was the first by an Iranian head of State to the Arab World in the last twenty years. Khatami's visit to the Arab countries reflects that Iran's relations with the Arab states are improving. Iran's relations with the Central Asian countries and Caucasus region were also developing.

Iran's desire to improve its relations with the West is reflected in the Iranian President's visit to the West. Khatami visited the European countries, Italy and Vatican City in March 1999, France in October 1999, and Germany in June 2000. In an address to Foreign Ministry officials in Tehran, Khatami explicitly stated that Iran wants to have “foreign relations with all countries,

---
36 - The Times of India, New Delhi, February 27, 2000.
including the industrial developed world, on the basis of mutual respect and interests” 37

Iran's ideological abandonment of the export of Islamic Revolution has created some type of mutual trust between Iran and the Arab states. Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia have improved. But the issue of the islands between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is complex and still unresolved. The world's increasing interest in the region's energy reserves including those of the Caspian Sea has a deep and far-reaching impact on the security of the Persian Gulf region.

I) No Clash of Civilizations:

With the emergence of "civil society" as a dominant discourse in domestic politics, Khatami's "Dialogue of civilisations” 38 extended this discourse to foreign policy-debate. The thrust of his foreign policy was "dialogue in place of conflict". His novel idea, "dialogue of civilizations" and "dialogue in place of conflict" is a turning-point in Iran's foreign policy. Thus, the foreign policy of Iran has moved from confrontation to conciliation with the large efforts of Khatami, and the phase of dialogue with the West and other states has been started. 39

Thus, a new opportunity has been created by Khatami for other nations to have a rethink towards Iran. This approach had been adopted after the 1997 Presidential election that strengthened the hands of the liberals by installing liberals into power, like Khatami. The May 1997 Presidential election had prepared the ground for a turning-point in Iran's foreign policy. From the very beginning, Khatami sought rapprochement with the US by telling the world on December 14, 1997, that "I first of all pay my respect to the great people and nation of America".\(^40\) Khatami's interview on Cable News Network (CNN) on January 7, 1998, had explicitly manifested his tone of friendship with the US. He said that Iran has an "intellectual affinity with the essence of the American civilization".\(^41\) He called for "dialogue of civilizations".

The conservatives have had different ideas on foreign policy issues. They argued that relations with the other countries should be maintained except the US and Israel. Ayatollah Khamenei in his address to the Assembly of Experts upheld the validity of the anti-US revolutionary slogans and referring to Ayatollah Khomeini ruled out having any relations with the US. In response to Khatami, Khamenei stated that "dialogue with America was even more harmful than establishing ties with that country."\(^42\) The conservative faction accused Khatami of being "too lenient" towards the US in his landmark interview with CNN on January 7, 1998. The newspaper, Jamhuri Eslami which voices radicalism of all factions argued on January 26, 1998, that "struggle with America constitutes an important component of the culture

\(^41\) - Steven Barraclough, "Khatami and Consensual Politics of The Islamic Republic," *Journal of South Asia and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.22, no.2, winter 1999, p.7
\(^42\) - Ibid, p.12.
of the Revolution and that the phrase 'death to America' is not a mere slogan".\(^{43}\)

The conservatives who represent the old guard of Iranian people have kept in their memory the CIA-engineered 1953 coup against the popularly elected government of Mohammad Musaddeq, the humiliating effects of the US policy of containment of Iran, especially President Bill Clinton's imposition of trade ban on Iran in March 1995,\(^{44}\) and again the economic sanctions imposed in 1996 by a bill sponsored by Alphonse D' Amato, a New York Senator of US in 1996.\(^{45}\)

All these events have made the policy-makers of Iran cautious about maintaining relations with the US. The motive behind the US sanctions against Iran was to isolate Iran and cripple its economy so that it could not emerge as a formidable challenging power in the region and challenge the US interests in the region and elsewhere.

The credibility of unilateral sanctions imposed by the US on Iran's petroleum industry was seriously undermined on March 1, 1999, when the Iranian government signed a deal with the French company Elf Aquitaine and the Italian company ENI to develop Dorond oil field near Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. The total value of the 10-years deal, intended to boost the field's recoverable reserves from "600 million barrels to 1.5 billion barrels was estimated to be US $ 998 million."\(^{46}\)

\(^{44}\) - Executive Order 12959.
\(^{46}\) - *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol.45, no.3, 1999.
Again French oil company Elf Aquitaine had struck its second deal with Iran in successive months. Together with Bow Valley Energy of Canada, Elf had signed a contract to develop "the Balal offshore oil field which had recoverable reserves of 100 million barrels." 47 The force of the US Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, designed to deter energy investments by threatening penalties against companies operations had been weakened when no action had been taken against any company.

Khatami's coming to power and reformists faction's victory in February-May 2000 Majlis elections have changed the US attitudes towards Iran, and the Clinton administration has moved to soften economic and trade sanctions against Iran. In April 1999, the White House announced, "an exemption of commercial sales of food, medicines, and medical equipment, enabling bulk sales of US grain to Iranian buyers."48

The Clinton administration has pursued a policy of exchange of scholars and artists in what it calls people-to-people initiatives, including visits of Iranian wrestling teams, scholars, and artists to the US. Clinton stated at a White House dinner in April 1999 that it is important to recognise "Iran, because of its enormous geopolitical importance over time, has been the subject of quite a lot of abuse from various Western nations".49 These steps and statements show that the US is interested to engage Iran despite many odds. But Iran is cautious about improving its relations with the US due to its past experiences. While addressing a meeting of students at Tehran University, President Khatami said, "When we say there is a wall of distrust

47 - *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol.45, no.4, 1999.
between Iran and the US, it is not just a simple slogan". But at the same time he stated that Iran was not an enemy of the US people and added that "they should know that the Iranian people do not accept any domination and believe that the basis for all relations should be mutual respect, and the destruction of the wall of distrust."  

Khatami stressed that Iran will have relations only after getting their clearly defined demands. "As long as these demands are not met and as long as the high wall of mistrust between Iran and America has not collapsed, we will not witness a substantive change in the relations - between the two countries." Mutual suspicion continues there, so, will take time in building a confidential and trustworthy relationship.

In spite of mutual suspicion and mistrust, Khatami has created a congenial atmosphere and talked of better relations with the US and the West. President Khatami's brother, Mohammad Reza Khatami said about the relations between Iran and the US that "even if we do not resume diplomatic relations we can reduce animosity." Khatami's brother promoted many of the US-Iran cultural exchanges that have slightly warmed relations between the two countries.

The US had considered Iran a hostile state since Ayatollah Khomeini's followers toppled Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1979, seized the US embassy in Tehran, and preached the export of Islamic Revolution. But now Iran has adopted a moderate path and become a place where basic principles

---

are debated in a way not seen in the US allied countries in West Asia such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The May 1997 Presidential election and February-May 2000 Majlis elections have changed the mind of the US and West towards Iran. The result of the Sixth Majlis elections held in February-May 2000, was welcomed by the US and the West. The Clinton administration welcomed the election result and interpreted it as an unequivocal demand for greater freedom within the country and for improved relations abroad. The US Department spokesman, James Rubin, stated that "we hope the desires of the Iranian people can be translated by their elected representatives, and we hope this trend will be reflected in a new approach to Iran's relationship with the outside world." 54

On the issue of having relations with the US, even reformists are taking very cautious steps to be too close to the US and stated in a news conference that "our movement was a domestic phenomenon and should not be seen as evidence that Iran had set aside revolutionary or Islamic principles to please the West, particularly the United States." 55

Khatami emphatically stated that the significance of the impressive election win by his reformist allies should not be misread and insisted that Iran would go its own way. Iran's state television quoted Khatami as saying "the Iranian nation will not lose sight of its goals on the basis of others' wishes and delusions. What our nation wants is important, not what others say or want." 56

56 - The Times of India, New Delhi, February 27, 2000.
Mohammad Reza Khatami, Leader of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, and the brother of President Khatami stated, "In the past the United States supported one of the most repressive regimes in history, which was the Shah's regime." He was referring to Mohammad Reza Shah, toppled in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The President in his meeting with foreign ministry officials said "the Polls are part of the dynamic evolution of our 1979 Islamic Revolution, and its constant effort to reform itself. Reforms do not imply abandoning our principles." The West expressed hope on the victory of the reformists in the sixth Majlis elections, that Iran will change its earlier policies, Khatami said, "if world powers have goodwill they must adapt themselves to the wishes of our nation." As has been reflected from Khatami's earlier statements that he is ready to have cooperation with the world but at the same time he has threatened that "Iran will have a fitting reaction to those who acknowledge our independence." Khatami's worldview of peace, stability, security, progress and prosperity, has led him towards the adoption of policy of "dialogue of civilizations".

J) Iran Nuclear Policy, Past, present and Future:

Nuclear issue is one of the crucial issues in Iran foreign policy. As a matter of fact Iran like the other countries in the world wants to use nuclear reactors in order to produce clean energy. On the other hand, Iran is one of the permanent members of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). According to the Iranian responsibilities, all the Iranian atomic activities are

58 - The Times of India, New Delhi, February 27, 2000.
59 - Ibid., February 27, 2000.
60 - Ibid., February 27, 2000.
peaceful and according to the International Atomic Energy Agency’s protocols. Iranians nuclear authorities declared that the nuclear fuel cycles are our right and we can not withdraw form this stand. In this part of chapter 6 it is necessary to look at Iran nuclear policy before and after Revolution.

1-Shah’s Nuclear Policy:

The quest for an Iranian nuclear policy for peaceful purposes began as early as 1967 under Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. In that year Iran purchased a five-megawatt research reactor from the United States for the Amirabad Technical College in Tehran. Although this research reactor was important in terms of basic infrastructure, the Iranian program did not really begin to take off for several more years. In 1974, the Shah established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and as part of his long-term development program announced a plan to build 23 nuclear power plants throughout Iran by 1994. By the time he fell from power in 1979, the Shah had concluded contracts for four of these reactors.  

In these early years the Iranian nuclear program was supported by several Western powers. Reactors were purchased from the United States, France, and West Germany. Iranian nuclear scientists were trained in those countries as well as in Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, and Canada. Argentina, an aspiring nuclear power at the time, also provided advisers. Although each of these countries sought to help Iran develop nuclear energy rather than nuclear weapons, the Shah clearly had nuclear weapons in mind. Speaking in September 1974, the Shah remarked, “[T]he present world is confronted with

---

a problem of some countries possessing nuclear weapons and some not. We are among those who do not possess nuclear weapons, so the friendship of a country such as the United States with its arsenal of nuclear weapons…is absolutely vital.” 62

India was another important early supporter of the Iranian program and provided training to Iranian scientists. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is even rumored to have told the Shah about India’s planned “peaceful nuclear experiment” in May 1974. 63

India’s success both technically and diplomatically with its nuclear program may have inspired the Shah to pursue nuclear weapons more avidly and could have influenced his creation of the AEOI that year. Despite this support from India, Iran still regarded India—even with its nuclear weapons—as a potential adversary. Iran repeatedly stressed its support for the stability of Pakistan especially after the loss of Bangladesh, even going so far as to define any attack on Pakistan as an attack on Iran itself. 64

2-Iran Nuclear Policy after the Revolution:

After the Shah fled Iran in January 1979, the new ruling ayatollahs inherited his nuclear program. Considerable dispute surrounds the Islamic regime’s early support for nuclear weapons. Many argue that Ayatollah

64 - The Shah made such a pledge in 1972 after East Pakistan/Bangladesh gained its independence and Pakistan was proved incapable of defeating India in war. Cottrell and Dougherty, “Iran’s Quest for Security: U.S. Arms Transfers and the Nuclear Option,” p. 33.
Ruhollah Khomeini considered nuclear weapons (as well as chemical and biological weapons) as immoral and he did not seek them. Others, however, insist his government sought to continue the nuclear program, but on a less grandiose scale. 65

Clearly, the Shah’s grand plan was significantly reduced. Virtually all projects associated with the Shah were deemed inappropriate and scrapped including most of the contracts for nuclear reactors, though a small research reactor at Amirabad under international inspection was retained. All arms deals with the United States and other foreign powers were cancelled as well as at least $34 billion worth of major civilian development projects—including four nuclear power stations. 66

Although the nuclear reactor complex at Bushehr was about 77 percent complete, the project suffered from significant technical difficulties and major cost overruns. The revolutionary regime could not afford the financial investment to complete the work at Bushehr and was unwilling to request--and unlikely to receive--the necessary foreign assistance. In any event, this situation would not last long.

By 1983, the Iranian regime was beginning to see the need for long-term economic planning. In March of that year Tehran announced the first of its five-year development plans including a restarting of Iran’s nuclear program with the help of India. 67 Indian assistance was most beneficial

because it permitted Tehran to stay apart from either side in the Cold War and India offered the kind of mid-level technology Iran sought. As the program progressed, however, other nations including West Germany, China, and Russia also apparently provided some assistance.

The most stressing reason for restarting the nuclear program, however, was military, not economic. The new Iranian regime ended the Shah’s alliance with the United States and actively sought to define itself as an enemy of America. To make matters worse, Iran did not trade one Cold War superpower ally for another. Even though Tehran turned away from the United States it did not turn toward the USSR. As a result, the possibility of superpower intervention in Iran—most likely to secure access to its oil supply—increased significantly as both sides in the Cold War now viewed Tehran as a hostile regime. Fear of such an invasion provided ammunition to the supporters of an Iranian nuclear deterrent. No matter how great that threat became, however, it was unlikely to match the more immediate threat from other regional powers that either possessed or sought nuclear weapons. During the 1980s a nuclear arms race—as well as a devastating war—began between Iran and Iraq that was watched intensely by the Middle East’s only acknowledged nuclear power, Israel.

The fear that each nation possessed of the others’ nuclear capabilities is clearly demonstrated by a series of counter proliferation strikes conducted by all three sides. At the very beginning of their war, in September 1980, Iran struck Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor with the goal of preventing an Iraqi...

---

nuclear bomb. The Israelis had publicly advocated such an Iranian move, but the attack apparently had little effect. The following year, in June 1981, Israel took matters into its own hands and succeeded in destroying the Osirak reactor, striking a devastating blow against the Iraqi nuclear program. Iraq, for its part, struck the Iranian nuclear reactor at Bushehr seven times between 1984 and 1988, eventually succeeding in destroying most of Iran’s ability to produce nuclear materials. None of these attacks, however, actually halted Iran’s or Iraq’s attempts to develop nuclear weapons, only delaying them. In 1983, Iran publicly restarted its nuclear program leading Jane’s Defense Weekly to report that Iran was moving “very quickly” towards a nuclear weapon and could have one as early as 1986.

In March 1984 Baghdad and the Soviet Union signed a contract to study the feasibility of constructing a nuclear reactor in Iraq to replace the one destroyed by the Israelis. Both sides were also developing chemical and, to a lesser extent, biological weapons. As early as August 1983 Tehran had complained repeatedly and apparently accurately to the United Nations that Iraq had attacked Iran with chemical weapons.

When the international community reacted with skepticism and nonchalance, Iran apparently felt the need to embark on its own programs to be able to respond in kind. After the Iran-Iraq War ended in 1988, Tehran

69 - “Radical Responses to Radical Regimes,” Schneider, p. 15.
began a massive military rebuilding program to replace its lost forces and prepare for the next war. The eight-year-long war had made it clear to the ayatollahs that in any future conflict Iran would stand alone without support from other nations and needed to be self-sufficient in both conventional forces and “weapons of mass destruction.” Continuing fears of the Israeli and Iraqi nuclear programs pushed Iran to seek nuclear-related technology from China, India, Argentina, Pakistan, and Germany. 73

Even the death of Khomeini himself in June 1989 did not slow down Iran’s efforts. Some reports suggest it may have even accelerated them. In the early 1990s two significant international events affected Iranian national security in major ways. The first was the fall of the Soviet Union that pushed the former superpower back from Iran’s border and lessened the chances of an invasion. Obviously, this was welcome news in Tehran especially following the earlier Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, the threat Iran faced from the Soviet arsenal remained intact and arguably even increased as security around former Soviet weapons weakened. Ironically, the end of the Soviet threat increased the perceived threat from the United States since Washington would not be as likely to be deterred from intervening in Iran by its superpower rival’s presence in the region.

The second event was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent Gulf War in 1991. While the Iraqi invasion demonstrated the continued belligerence and military strength of the Baghdad regime, the U.S. response to the invasion at least temporarily devastated the latter, if not the former. The defeat of Iraq was no doubt welcome news in Tehran, but the UN

inspections that followed uncovered a nuclear program more widespread and advanced than anyone—including Iran—had imagined. Thus, although Iraq had been defeated in war, the threat that Iran faced from Baghdad did not actually decrease. The Allied defeat of Iraq also demonstrated beyond a doubt the U.S. ability to intervene with massive military force anywhere in the Persian Gulf region and reinforced fears of U.S. intervention against Iran.

3-Post-Khatami’s Nuclear Policy:

The landslide election victory of Mohammed Khatami as President of Iran in May 1997 has been billed as tremendously significant. Khatami was viewed as being more moderate, more liberal, and more open to the West. His landslide re-election victory in June 2001 reinforced his international, if not domestic, stature. Khatami’s foreign policy differs considerably from that of his predecessors and is one of the key reasons he was twice elected president. He is alleged to be attempting to move Iran “from confrontation to conciliation” and to be trading in the “clash of civilizations” for a “dialogue of civilizations.” The extent to which this change is actually occurring is a matter of considerable debate. Arguably, national security—the military, intelligence agencies, and especially nuclear weapons—remain in the hands of his factional opponents. Regardless of the president’s proposals for change, Iran continues to pursue completion of the Bushehr nuclear reactor complex. Although some assistance for the program is forthcoming from such nations as China and Pakistan, the main source of foreign assistance is now the Russian

---

74 - “Young people voted for Khatami significantly because they aspired to greater freedom at home and more cooperation with the rest of the world.” R.K. Ramazani, “The Shifting Premise of Iran’s Foreign Policy: Towards a Democratic Peace?,” The Middle East Journal, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1998).
Federation. This is ironic, since Moscow was one of the principal threats against which Iran began its nuclear weapons program.

In January 1995, Iran and Russia signed a contract to construct the first unit at Bushehr to be delivered by the end of 2002. The reactor should become operational in 2004. 76 What effect, if any, might the tensions between the two factions have on Iranian nuclear policy just as Iran is about to cross the nuclear threshold? It is easy to speculate at length on what Iran would do with nuclear weapons without reaching any firm conclusions, 77 but given the potential importance of the subject it is nevertheless worthwhile to make educated guesses about future intentions.

First and foremost, Iranian opening to the West has little, if any, effect on relations with Baghdad except perhaps to strengthen Iran’s hand in the next war. Iraq presents such a fundamental security challenge to Iran that, as Geoffrey Kemp suggests:“[E]ven if the moderate forces in Tehran led by President Khatami were to eventually succeed in achieving control over all key instruments of power, including the armed forces, the police, the judiciary, and the intelligence agencies, it is unlikely their attitudes to Iraq would be any different than their more conservative brethren.” 78 Put another way by Peter Jones, “Iraq is Iran’s only real regional military rival and the only state that could launch a war against it.” 79

---

Thus, no matter who is in charge—president or ayatollah—little will change in Iran-Iraq relations. As for the Middle East’s other nuclear power, Iran’s relationship with Israel also remains hostile. Iran has been increasing support to terrorist groups opposing Israel (which Iran argues are “resistance movements”). Israel, for its part, continues to fear an Iranian nuclear breakthrough and periodically and credibly threatens a counter proliferation strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities.  

Iran apparently fears that Israeli-Turkish military cooperation in recent years may provide Israeli fighters an avenue of attack for such a strike. Iran continues to be very critical of U.S. policy in the Gulf, Afghanistan, and the Middle East generally. Inclusion of Iran in President George W. Bush’s “axis of evil” speech has increased talk within Iran of a possible American attack. Yet given Iran’s regional threat perceptions, it would be likely to continue with a nuclear strategy even if U.S.-Iran tensions decline. Kemp suggests that even “a successor government, however friendly toward the United States and better disposed toward Israel, might still want to pursue many of the same programs that the current regime has initiated.” Finally, Iran’s desire for regional leadership is only likely to expand as Tehran ends its diplomatic isolation. Iran is the largest, most populous, most unified nation in the Gulf area. The addition of nuclear weapons to its capabilities will enhance its status and give it greater clout as it speaks out with an “Islamic voice” on regional and global issues. This is especially true after the general international acquiescence now being displayed regarding the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests of May 1998.

---

As a conclusion there were two main points of view in times of Khatami in the nuclear issue as follows: The ideologues, who view a conflict with the United States as inevitable, believe that the only way to ensure the survival of the Islamic Republic--and its ideals--is to equip it with an independent nuclear capability. Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, a conservative presidential candidate in 1997 and now an influential adviser to Khamenei, dismissed Tehran's recent negotiations with the Europeans, noting, "Fortunately, the opinion polls show that 75 to 80 percent of Iranians want to resist and [to] continue our program and reject humiliation." In the cosmology of such hard-liners, nuclear arms have not only strategic value, but also currency in domestic politics. Iranian conservatives see their defiance of the Great Satan as a means of mobilizing nationalistic opinion behind a revolution that has gradually lost popular legitimacy. 82

In contrast, the clerical realists warn that, with Iran under intense international scrutiny, any act of provocation by Tehran would lead other states to embrace Washington's punitive approach and further isolate the Iran regime. In an interview in 2002, the pragmatic minister of defense, Ali Shamkhani, minister of defense in Khatam’s cabinet, warned that the "existence of nuclear weapons will turn us into a threat to others that could be exploited in a dangerous way to harm our relations with the countries of the region." The economic dimension of nuclear diplomacy is also pushing the pragmatists toward restraint, as Iran's feeble economy can ill afford the imposition of multilateral sanctions. "If there [are] domestic and foreign conflicts, foreign capital will not flow into the country," Rafsanjani has

82 -Kenneth Polack and Ray Takeyh, “taking on Tehran”, Foreign Affairs, March and April 2005
warned. "In fact, such conflicts will lead to the flight of capital from this country." 83

83 -Ibid.