CONCLUSION

In the region of West Asia the US has been very actively engaged. This engagement has become more active and penetrative in the post-second World War periods. The relationship with some of them was cordial and friendly. While with some others it was not. The determining factor in relationships was the US-Soviet Cold War. Though the US has a history of relationship with Iran, it actively got itself engaged with it after the beginning of the Cold War.

In West Asia Iran is a country with rich and glorious history. It has been a prominent regional power. A vast land area, rich resources and strategic location impart to it 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. Moreover, Iran’s geo-politics, which links Asia to the West Asia, 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 from extra-regional powers seeking to extend their respective influence in the region.

By studying Iran in historical perspective, it becomes interesting to 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 US and Iran have a history of relationship which goes back to 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Up to the beginning of 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century it was socio-cultural and diplomatic in nature. It was in twentieth century during the concluding periods of World War II that the US engaged in political relations with Iran. Later in the period it built up a strategic relationship with it. The geo-strategic location of Iran and its potential as a regional power led to the United States building it into one of the "strategic pillars" of US strategy in West Asia. Up to Iranian revolution in 1979 Iran sought United States as a protector and friend. During the period Iran became dependent on US protection, support, and aid. This was quite a patron-client relationship, and in partnership relations the U. S. was the senior partner. Iran served as an ally of US in the region. The situation underwent a change after the revolution in Iran. Both the allies became adversary.
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. This hostility largely drew from the events of 1980s, when Iran humiliated the US in the hostage crisis of 1979-1981. The images of the hostage crisis, combined with subsequent confrontational policies such as attacks on Persian Gulf shipping in the mid 1980s and woeful tales of internal repression, solidified the image of Iran as that of ‘a crazy outlaw’ nation whose acts were illegal, unpredictable and irrational. The effects of such characterizations run deep within the US policy, every President from Ronald Reagan to Barrak Obama have vilified Iran.

The post-Islamic Revolution relationship between the United States and Iran stems from decades of complex historical and political events. Many Iranians believe that the US has long dominated their country, removing its elected Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1953, sustaining the Shah in the decades that followed and then imposing sanctions and various forms of containment on the Iranian economy ever since the 1979 revolution besides encouraging Iraq to attack Iran in September 1980. The US is also seen as protecting and subsidizing the state of Israel, in its suppression of Palestinian national rights. The Iran-Iraq War throughout 1980s further strained US-Iran relations. While
the United States supplied both Iraq and Iran with weapons, it tended to favor Iraq and also established diplomatic relations with the nation. It applied the policy of dual containment which was special feature of power-block politics. The United States provided various legal as well as illegal supports to Iraq to counter and weaken Iran. At the same time it also supported Iran by supplying arms to it, the subject of an arms embargo, allegedly to contain the Soviet influence and to secure the release of hostages from Lebanon and to fund the Nicaraguan contras. This became a famous/infamous Iran–Contra affair.

During the 1990s, relations between the United States and Iran remained contentious. Iran not only sought to assert itself as a regional power but also to protect itself from external threats and to spread Islamic revolution in the region. The United States sought to isolate Iran by placing various sanctions on it. Sanctions originally imposed in 1995 are continuing even today hampering their relations. In the late 1990s, relations began to normalize when Iranian president, Mohammed Khatami, in 1998 called for a “dialogue among civilizations” with the United States. Relations were stalled due to opposition from Iranian conservatives and American preconditions for discussions, including changes in Iranian policy on Israel, nuclear energy, and its support for terrorism. Moreover the US apologized in 2000 for its role in 1953 overthrow of Mossadiq, a democratically elected prime minister of Iran. The
same year in September, the US and Iran met as part of the Six-Plus-Two regional talks on Afghanistan. These talks marked the highest diplomatic contact between the United States and Iran since the 1979 hostage crisis. Afghanistan provided to both US and Iran an opportunity to work together and normalize their relations. Hopes for new ties and the cooperation which emerged between them were foreclosed when President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address labeled Iran as part of the ‘Axis of Evil.’ Relations became more tensed as the US became more involved in the region, infringing on state’s security and sovereignty. Cooperation by Iran in Afghanistan could not generate trust. Other events further strained and complicated the relationship.

The US war with Iraq began in 2003 which also complicated and tensed the relationship as both accused one another for their suspicious role relating to continued US presence in Iraq and the present messy situation there. According to US Iran has supported violent organizations to challenge the American presence in Iraq, destabilize progress in there, and maximize its influence in the nation and region. The US also continues to accuse that Iran has supported/supports the radical Palestinian organizations and Hezbollah to attack Israel and disrupt efforts for peace in the West Asia.
The United States has vital interest in the region. To protect them it has to deal with the countries of the region. And Iran is one which cannot be bypassed or overlooked because of position in the region. The US has to face Iran either as a friend or adversary if it wishes to impose a regional order or to establish itself as a strategic, military and economic power both in West and Central Asia. In all of this, US finds itself faced with the power of Iran, a country that has been, on and off, a hegemonic power in the region for three thousand years and which in the post-1979 period has regional goals incompatible with those of the US. This political conflict between Iran and the United States is compounded by the high degree of suspicion and animosity on both sides, the belligerency demonstrated by each in statements about the other.

Moreover the Islamic Republic of Iran has emerged as the de facto leader of the West Asian region, which also includes Syria and prominent non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah that created anti-American camp. The region seems deeply divided between two camps. On one side of this divide are those states willing to work in various forms of strategic partnership with the United States, with an implied acceptance of American hegemony over the region. This camp includes Israel, those Arab states that have made peace with Israel (Egypt and Jordan), and other so-called moderate Arab states (for example, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council). On the...
other side of this divide are those states and non-state actors that are unwilling to legitimize US hegemony over the region. This division creates a Cold War like situation to contain and deter Iran. At the same time the changed strategic scenario due to the collapse of the traditional Arab-Israeli peace process, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, the rise of Hezbollah and Hamas as political actors in national and regional contexts, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and subsequent Israeli military campaigns in Lebanon and Gaza is increasingly perceived in West Asia as a decline in US relative power and influence. The Islamic Republic was able to take advantage of these developments to effect a significant boost in its own regional standing. But notwithstanding these strategic gains, Iran continues to face serious national security and foreign policy challenges, both regionally and internationally. The geographical location of Iran at the heart of the Eurasian continent, its size, economic stature and military muscle give it the potential to play a leading role in a number of regional configurations: the Persian Gulf, Greater Central Asia and the Caspian basin, and in the West Asia. The concerns of the United States are in response to Iran’s foreign policy that seeks to assert itself as a regional power through the use of various means and development of weapons of mass destruction
Iranian Nuclear Program is a contentious issue. The program as such is not a post-revolution issue. Iran has been pursuing this program since 1960s. And the United States was the first country to help Iran gain nuclear technology. The program was, however, halted due to implications of 1979 revolution and Iran’s war with Iraq. It restarted the work on the program this time with the help of Russia and China. And in the post-revolution US-Iran relations, nuclear program became the central issue. Moreover, over the years both have not reached to any promising level for the resolution of the issue. So it remains a serious issue between them and others as well which might blow up into a serious conflict in the region.

Moreover about its nuclear program, Iran has made a consistent public position that its nuclear goals are peaceful in nature. Whatever be the fact, Iran’s struggle for nuclear technology intensified the crisis between the US and some other Western countries. Iran offers its own reasons for accessing nuclear technology and the US has its own perceptions and fears. The US has to play a vital role in this crisis. And in this regard, the United States has chosen to isolate and contain the post-revolutionary Iran. This policy of US has been successful is questionable with respect to the US interest in West Asia: energy security, prevention of terrorism, the spread of WMDs and Israel’s security. On the contrary, an isolated Iran has openly defied the United States on each
of these four issues. The crisis over Iran’s nuclear program, however, reached to an equilibrium that favors Iran. Except for the least likely scenarios — regime change from within and a military strike — all other options favor Iran. On the other hand, except for the regime-change scenario, all other scenarios challenge US interests in West Asia. Therefore, the best option for the United States might be to engage Iran diplomatically to try to prevent the development of a weapons program. And for the success of this option the US has to stop its blind support to Israel which has quite adversarial relations with Iran and most of West-Asian states.