US-Iran relations have become central to the recent discourse of social scientists, practitioners and the public at large. The present-study is a brief effort in the process of identification and analysis of salient trends in US-Iran relations since 1979. In this analytical study we have presented the relations between the two highlighted states in the world political scenario. Hopefully this may add to our knowledge of contemporary political relations of both the countries under study.

The *First Chapter* is an attempt to introduce the West Asia along with its nomenclature, geo strategic importance and brief history in order to make the research conducive to understand. Because, Iran’s geo-strategic and historical importance are the major determinants of its foreign policy and without having a proper picture of its neighbouring states it will be difficult to determine it. Similarly we have also traced on foreign policies of the United States towards these West Asian countries as they have either positive or negative impact on the relations between the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We have found that over the past several decades, history, geography and natural resources have contributed to the rise of Tehran as a prominent regional power. 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. Moreover, Iran’s geo-politic, 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 cannot 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. 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.

Significantly, Iran as the potential regional power of the West Asia is an Islamic Shi’a state in marked contrast to most of its neighbors who are Sunnis. Therefore, Iran's geo-strategic location and its potential as a regional power led to the United States building it into one of the "strategic pillars" of American grand strategy in West Asia. This was during the Shah of Iran's regime in the 1960s and 1970s. However, the ouster of the Shah in 1979 and the military failure of the United States in the Iranian hostage crisis ensued led to Iran figuring significantly as a "strategic threat" to U.S. security interests in the West Asia. From then onwards Iran has been persona non grata with the United States.

The Second Chapter is intended to expose the obvious and intriguing relations between the two countries prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran and its effect upon the political fate of both the nations as in the opinion of this researcher it would be helpful to understand the real content of research. The chapter reveals that the relations between Iran and America have not always been this way and the two countries used to enjoy a positive relationship as far back as the early 1800’s. However, during the earlier periods, socio-cultural and religious co-operations among the citizens of the two nations were dominating. With the advent of twentieth century they involved in political relations which has a trend of constant ups-and-down. In fact, the United States' politically engaged with Iran with the concluding periods of World War II. From 1941-53, Iran sought United States as a protector and friend under the leadership of Shah. During the period from 1953 to the late 1960s (as the prime minister, Dr. Mosaddegh was overthrown with the restoration of the Shah, as the
result of a coup engineered in large part by the CIA and British intelligence), Iran was very dependent on American protection, support, and aid. This was quite a patron-client relationship, and in partnership relations the U. S. was the senior partner.

Between the periods from 1973 to 1979, the relationship was seemed to be much more of partnership. The shah was much more stable at home, wealthier, and more adept at handling his foreign relations. He began to make demands. However, since the year of 1979, as the Islamic Revolution was broke out in Iran that targeted the very psychology as well as physiology of the United States, there has been a constant hostile relation existing between the two important countries. *(See, Chapter Two)*

The *Third Chapter* is instigated by the obvious and intriguing roots and dimensions of their bitter relations by analyzing the records of different crises in Islamic Republic of Iran and its neighborhoods. The study analyses the fact that the past 40 years of Western harsh policy toward Iran has proved to be counterproductive and ineffective. Special attention has been given to different war-time relationship between the two countries such as- the Iran-Iraq War of 1980, Iran Contra Affairs of 1980s, the Gulf War of 1991, the Afghanistan Crisis of 2001, and the Iraq War of 2003. The study also explains the ever-ending Peace Process in the Middle-Eastern states and its surrounding politics played by the United States and Islamic Iran.

The post-Islamic Revolution relationship between the United States and Iran, their foreign policies towards one another stem from decades of complex historical and political events. Many Iranians believe that the U.S. has long dominated their country, in these decades that followed and then imposing sanctions and various forms of containment on the Iranian economy even since the 1979 revolution. To many, the US is seen as protecting and subsidizing the state of Israel, in its suppression of
Palestinian national rights. Furthermore, many Iranians believe that the US was also involved in urging Iraq to attack Iran in September 1980. During the 1970s, a prominent religious leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, was arrested for his criticisms of the Shah and exiled to Turkey from where he eventually moved to Iraq and finally Paris. Social unrest continued to rise in response to the Shah’s increasingly oppressive rule, and Khomeini formed the Islamic Revolutionary Council while in Paris. In 1979, the Shah was finally forced into exile after protests and demonstrations. Khomeini returned to Iran, seized power, and declared himself leader of the new Islamic Republic of Iran.

The hostility largely draws from the events of the early 1980s, where it was Iran which, more than any other third-world power, humiliated the U.S. in the hostage crisis of 1979-1981. In 1979, under President Carter, Iranian Islamists took 66 Americans hostage, shortly after releasing women and African Americans whom they claimed shared their plight. The captors sought to send a message to the U.S. on its support for the Shah and its opposition to the Islamic Republic. Their demands included sending the displaced Shah back to Iran for prosecution and that the U.S. not interferes in Iranian affairs anymore. The hostages were held for almost a year and a half only to be released after extensive negotiations and the inauguration of the next U.S. president, Ronald Reagan. The ordeal likely cost President Carter the reelection and forever tainted American perceptions of Iran.

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 American policy—every President from Ronald Reagan to Barrak
Obama have vilified Iran. The US has found it possible to negotiate with East Asian states that have fought and killed tens of thousands of Americans but it has found it harder to find a minimal negotiating ground with, the country which, while not killing Americans, has inflicted humiliation on it- Iran. *(See, Chapter Three)*

The Iran-Iraq War and events throughout the 1980s further strained U.S.-Iran relations. While the United States supplied both Iraq and Iran with weapons, it tended to favor Iraq and established diplomatic relations with the nation. Thus, during the Iran-Iraq War, the United States applied the policy of dual containment which was special feature of power-block politics.

In the meantime of Iran-Iraq War, under the encouragements of United States the Iran–Contra affair took place in order to contain the communist activity in Iran. During the Reagan administration senior U.S. figures, including President Ronald Reagan, agreed to facilitate the sale of arms to Iran, the subject of an arms embargo. At least some U.S. officials also hoped that the arms sales would secure the release of hostages and allow U.S. intelligence agencies to fund the Nicaraguan contras. However, in November 1986, President Ronald Reagan issued a televised statement that the arms sales did not occur. One week later, Reagan confirmed that weapons had been transferred to Iran. He denied that they were part of an exchange for hostages.

Therefore, during the 1990s, relations between the United States and Iran remained contentious, yet stabilized near the end of the decade. 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 banning trade and placing various sanctions on Iran. In the late 1990s, relations began to normalize with the election of the moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami and victories by
various reformist candidates in municipal and Parliamentarian elections. Khatami promised gradual, peaceful reform and initiated dialogue on civil rights and democracy. Although President Khatami and his government promised reform, like greater free press, their work was stopped by the more conservative Supreme Leader. Iran slowly reformed and changed, but relations between Iran and the U.S. did not greatly improve. US Congress continued sanctions on Iran, citing terrorism and opposition to the peace. (See, Chapter Three)

Following the 9/11, incident on World Trade Centre, U.S. relations with Iran grew more strained. Tensions grew in the West Asia as the U.S. became even more involved in the region, infringing on states’ security and sovereignty. President Bush included Iran in a list of countries he called the “Axis of Evil,” which damaged constructive relations with the country and its people. Internally, the quote was viewed as unilateral and foolhardy. The State of the Union address, which originally contained the saying, upset the accused nations, as well as many U.S. allies.

However, Iran aided Northern Alliance figures that were prominent in the post-Taliban governing coalition, and Iranian companies have been extensively involved in road building and other reconstruction projects in western Afghanistan. Since 2004, Iran’s influence has waned somewhat as its allies, mostly Persian-speaking Afghan minority factions still referred to as the “Northern Alliance,” have been marginalized in Afghan politics. However, a CRS visit to Afghanistan in March 2006 noted Iranian-funded Shiite theological seminars being built in Kabul; perhaps an indication of Iran’s continuing efforts to support Afghanistan’s Shiite minority. However, the West believes that the recent allegations of collusion between al-Qaeda and Iranian hardliners are particularly dubious. However, the allegations of co-operation between al-Qaeda and Iran are
shrouded by the lack of much verifiable public evidence. (*See, Chapter Three*)

Again, in the Iraq War 2003, Tehran and Washington found themselves improbably united by a common enemy, although the problematic history of U.S. policy toward Iraq and the implicit threat of Iran’s affiliation with its Shi’ah majority added considerable layers of complexity and wariness. Moreover, during the Geneva talks on Iraq, it quickly became clear that the two countries had lost the spirit that they had during the Afghanistan war. By this point, both sides had reaffirmed their distrust of each other—through incidents such as Karine A and Bush’s unexpected remarks in the State of the Union address in which he labeled Iran as part of ‘an axis of evil.’

Iran’s support for Palestinian militant groups has long concerned U.S. Administrations, particularly since doing so gives Tehran an opportunity to try to obstruct Israeli-Palestinian peace prospects. In the 1990s, Khamenei called Israel a “cancerous tumor” and made other statements suggesting that he seeks Israel’s destruction. In December 2001, Rafsanjani said that it would take only one Iranian nuclear bomb to destroy Israel, whereas a similar strike against Iran by Israel would have far less impact because Iran’s population is large. Iran has sometimes openly incited anti-Israel violence, including hosting conferences of anti-peace process organizations (April 24, 2001, and June 2-3, 2002).

On the other hand, during his presidency, Khatemi generally refrained from inflammatory statements against Israel and even conversed with Israel’s president at the 2005 funeral of Pope John Paul II. The Iranian Foreign Ministry, considered a bastion of moderates, has repeatedly stated that Iran’s official position is that it would not seek to block any final Israeli-Palestinian settlement but that the peace process is too weighted toward Israel to result in a fair settlement for Palestinians. The State
Department reports on terrorism for 2005 (released on April 28, 2006) accuse Iran of providing “extensive” funding, weapons, and training to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Al Aqsa Martyr’s Brigades, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC).

*Fourth Chapter* endeavours to shed some light on this highly fear-hypothetical discourse on Iran’s nuclear calculus. It is true that at this point, Iranian policy is less ideologically driven than it may at first appear. The characteristics of U.S.-Iranian relations in the last three decades do not seem very promising for a resolution of the issue. Since the Islamic revolution, the United States has chosen to isolate and contain Iran. It is difficult to argue that this policy has worked effectively towards the U.S. security goals in the West Asia: energy security, prevention of terrorism and the spread of WMDs, and Israel’s security. On the contrary, an isolated Iran has defied the United States on each of these four issues. In fact, the effort to develop a nuclear-weapons capability is the result of Iran’s own need for security, its desire for legitimacy at home, and its increasing influence in the region.

No analyst can accurately know what Iran aims to achieve with its nuclear program. Given the limitations on information channels and the regime’s lack of transparency, most researchers try to infer Iran’s specific goals. Is Iran’s ultimate aim to develop nuclear weapons at all costs or is it using the nuclear issue as a bargaining chip to end its international isolation? From our research and interviews with area experts, we conclude that for the time being, Iran’s major aim is to develop its nuclear capacity as soon as possible. Whether Iran will use technological advancements as a base for nuclear weapons is a decision for the future. The following analysis about Iran’s short term goals is illustrative: Iran’s leaders do not yet need to make a decision about whether to produce nuclear weapons. They can
wait until the fissile material is produced to decide if and when to develop the physics package needed for a weapon. What Iran has certainly decided is to acquire the technical capability to produce fissile material. Its nuclear hedging strategy is designed to bring the country right up to the threshold of a break-out capability while remaining within the legal limits of the NPT.

As early as 2009, the crisis over Iran’s nuclear program seems to have reached an equilibrium that favors Iran. Except for the least likely scenarios — regime change from within and a military strike — all other options favor Iran. Acquiring the technical capability to make the bomb, making the bomb or getting assurances from the West and breaking its international isolation are all good results for Iran. On the other hand, except for the regime-change scenario, all other scenarios challenge U.S. interests in the 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. The Obama administration may be able to give assurances to Iran about regime survival, which would enable the more pragmatic Iranian position to prevail. This could lead Iran to cooperate with the international community on the issue. If the Obama administration cannot achieve what the Clinton administration did with North Korea in 1994, time will favor Iran. Regardless of whether or not it is developing a nuclear weapon, this protracted crisis increases the popularity of the Islamic regime in the eyes of people and nongovernmental groups in the West Asia, may spill over into a conflict with Israel, can create a security dilemma for other regional powers like Egypt or Turkey, and would damage the four major American interests in the region. In November 2008, an IAEA report confirmed that Iran had made 630 kilograms of low-grade uranium, which many experts consider adequate to make an atomic bomb. Whether to convert this material and technology into the world’s
deadliest weapon and begin a new era in the West Asia is a decision in the 
hands of the Islamic regime’s elite.

However, it is impossible resolve the nuclear issue and normalize the 
relations between the two countries until US has stopped its various 
supports to Israel which is a severe threat to Iran and the West-Asian 
states. After analyzing the entire study on US-Iran relations since 1979 we 
can safely say that the can only be solved through amicable ways and not 
by threat and warnings.