CHAPTER-1

FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: AN OVERVIEW

Given the fast expansion of international communications, the growing importance of the relations among the countries and the increasing significance of foreign policy, a clear and comprehensive definition of the foreign policy is necessary to determine its limits.

Since the foreign policy of countries, as the strategy of governments, keep on changing due to different reasons depending on the developments in the international scenario, the foreign policy of Iran has also changed from time to time to achieve its objectives.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, the country witnessed fundamental changes in the social, economic, military and certainly in the political fields. In accordance with its political system, the foreign policy of Iran also changed drastically, due to which the relations of Iran with the US and the Western countries as well as the Arab Governments witnessed a fundamental change.

In this chapter, apart from analysing the concept of the foreign policy and its crucial determinants, the objectives, principles and priorities of Iran's foreign policy and the decision making procedure as well as the developments in the foreign policy of Iran till the presidency of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 would be discussed.

I. Foreign Policy Analysis

1. The Concept of Foreign Policy

The theories of international relations are divided, into interaction theories and action theories. The interaction theories are concerned with the relations among the actors in the international scene, while the action theories deal with just a single actor (player) within the international system. International relations include the study of
interactions among the actors in the international scene, whereas foreign policy involves the study of the actions by the actors in the international scene. Thus, the theory of interaction refers to the sphere of study of international relations (politics), economy and culture, while the theory of action is an arena for the study of foreign policy (Hajeeyosoufi 2004:288).

The study of interaction or international relations dates back to the creation of the nation-state themselves. But the theories of the foreign policy as a distinct field of study gained popularity since World War II. These theories of foreign policy study the ways in which actors and decision makers assess their own status, choose their objectives, take decisions and ultimately implement them. In such a study, issues like foreign policy goals, its instruments, quality of decision-making, the potentialities, and the impact of the international political setting on foreign policy are examined (Hajeeyosoufi 2004:287).

In general parlance, the foreign policy of a state is the sum total of the principles, interests and objectives, which it seeks to promote through its relations with other states. It is not merely the result of the decision made by men sitting in the foreign policy office, rather a much complex and dynamic process influenced by the domestic concerns as well as the international environment. Foreign policy is an important key to the rational explanation of international politics. It is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment (Modelski 1962:6-7).

Accordingly, the foreign policy is the key element in the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into concrete actions to attain these objectives and preserve its interests. Rodee defines foreign policy as a group of principles, which are adopted by the states to protect the national interests and to change the behaviour of others. It involves the formulation and implementation of a group of principles, which shape the behaviour pattern of a state while negotiating with other states to protect or further its vital interests (Rodee 1957:501).
Thus, this definition makes it clear that foreign policy is a set of principles, which influences the action of states in relation to others to promote them. However, it is to be noted that only those matters, which originate from the government constitute the foreign policy. Besides, the foreign policy dynamic and broad phenomenon it embraces political strategy and a series of routine actions, like trade exchanges, cultural encounters, exchange of diplomatic notes, etc (Brecher 1972: 1-7).

2. The Determinants of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy of a state is the product of a complex interplay of history, geography, present requirements, the values and perceptions of policy makers, domestic conditions, regional and global environment. The factors determining the foreign policy are both: domestic and external.

2.1. The Domestic Determinants:

a. Geography

The geographical location of a state has long been considered an important determinant since it shapes crucial elements of climate, landmasses, waterways and fertility and these in turn create the national capabilities.

The geographic location not only determines the development of national identity in its immediate neighbourhood but also the potentials of development through its size, topography, climate and natural resources. The accesses of natural resources within its boundaries affect its ability to enforce its own foreign policy determinants and to resist pressures by other states (Dessouki and Korany 1982: 73-74).

b. The Internal Trends and Development

Some times, the political, cultural and economic developments and trends may pave the way for a rethink over the pattern of the foreign policy. In this regard, the internal potential threats to the regime and even to the integration of the society are of considerable importance (Holsti 1994: 588-589).
c. The Internal Requirements

The fulfilment of the internal economic, technological and security requirements are among the crucial factors in shaping the patterns of the foreign policy.

Most of the governments choose the “unity” and “alliance” from the five important strategies of “neutral”, “isolation”, “unity”, and “alliance” and “non-alliance” as they realise that these strategies are the only way to fulfill their internal requirements (Qawam 1993:141).

d. Culture and Tradition

The culture and tradition also wield considerable weight on foreign policy-making. Cultural unity and common historical experience make pursuance of an effective foreign policy possible in sharp contrast to countries that are culturally and historically fragmented. The influence of cultural factors is not limited to the impact of creating societal unity upon the formulation and implementation of foreign policy; equally important is the process through which the contents of shared norms and practices of society, as distinguished from the degree of unity that supports them, share the plans that are made and the activities that are undertaken with respect to the external world” (Rosenau 1976:21).

e. National Capacity

The capabilities of a state are, like those of an individual, determined by wealth, status and power, and can similarly trade off any one of these resources against the others (Calvert 1986:99).

None of these variables is a simple one. For instance, power is neither simple military force, nor is it necessarily the use or threat of force at all. Power is in fact simply the ability to get other states to act in accordance with the policy makers’ goal. In this way, these variables have diverse meanings depending on the attributes of the state concerned. Besides, population, territory, location, economic development, military preparedness and its technological advancement constitute the basis of
national capability. The economic capability refers to the natural resources of a
country (availability) and to its ability to mobilise them at the service of its foreign
policy (control). Economic capability affects both a state’s objectives and its means
of implementing them (Dessouki and Korany 1982:14).

The political structure also carries profound impact on the foreign policy of a
state. It determines the extent of opportunities or restraints. The extent of influence
of the political structure depends on its stability, legitimacy, degree of
institutionalisation and level of public support. Conversely, political fractionalisation
and domestic instability may constrain the conduct of a purposeful foreign policy
(Dessouki and Korany 1982:14). The political structure determines such important
aspects as the influence of public opinion and efficiency of the decision making
process. Above all, it is responsible for what is called “political accountability” and
“role of leadership” in the shaping of foreign policy.

f. Role of Leadership

A leader’s perceptions about the nature of the international environment and
the goals that ought to be pursued, his or her peculiar intellectual strengths and
weaknesses for analysing information and making decisions, his or her past
background and the extent of its relevance to the requirements of the role, his or her
emotional needs and a host of other personality traits, are a few of the idiosyncratic
factors that can influence the planning and execution of foreign policy (Rosenau

Leaders define international and domestic constraints on the states. Based on
their perceptions and interpretations, they build expectation, plan strategies, and urge
actions on their governments that conform with their judgments about the course of
action which are likely to maintain them in their positions. Such perceptions help
frame government’s orientations to international affairs (Hermann and Hagan

In addition to interpreting potential constraints in the international arena,
leaders must also respond effectively to domestic pressures. Leaders can also seek to
consolidate their domestic position by pushing a foreign policy that mobilises new support, logrolls with complementary interests, or undercuts the opposition (Hermann and Hagan 1998:129).

Nevertheless, the leadership impact on foreign policy is greatly constrained by the governmental and social structure. In less developed countries their role is greater as compared to industrial societies. Rosenau’s scientific study of foreign policy attempts at pre-theory is based on five sets of explanatory variables. The idiosyncratic variable is already explained; the role variable relates to the position the leader holds regardless of his personal background and the pre-dispositions government variables, the aspect of government system affecting foreign policy process; the social variable, the non-governmental aspect of a society, which influence its external behavior. Finally, the societal variables are those relating to the external environment or any actions occurring abroad that conditions the choice made by its officials. He then argues that the relative importance of each of these groups of independent variables will vary according to standard criteria of classification of the state and its political and social system (Calvert 1966:9).

g. **Change in the Priorities of the National Objectives and the National Interests**

On the relations between the national objectives and the national interests, one can say that, in most of the cases, the national objectives are decided within the framework of the national interests. However, all of the political experts involved in the foreign policy making do not look at the national interests in same way. It is often seen that the national objectives of the governments are replaced with new priorities depending on the changes in the international situation (Qawam 1993:14). As a result, the governments review the pattern of their foreign policy.

h. **Structure of Government**

The kinds of regimes such as the democratic, the parliamentary, the military and the religious ones have different impact on the foreign policy of a country. The distinction between cabinet and presidential system and between two-party and
multiparty system are especially noteworthy in this regard. In the cabinet system the executive is elected and removed by the legislature, whereas in the presidential system the executive and legislative branches have different constituencies and are elected separately. Consequently, the legislative executive relationship in the latter is likely to be much more strained and uncertain than in the former and these differences can affect the degree to which ambiguity or continuity marks foreign policy plans (Rosenau 1976:25-26).

2.2. The External Determinants

In addition to above discussed internal factors, certain external factors also exercise considerable influence on the foreign policy. The contemporary world has become highly inter-linked that isolation from the rest of the world is impossible. Therefore, with passage of time the foreign policy of each and every country experiences the repercussion of incidents happening in any other part of the world. Following are some of the important external factors that shape the foreign policy of a country.

a. Power Structure

The structure of world politics is largely determined by the influence of great powers and the relations among them. The great power structure, therefore, influences the policy of a country.

Besides, in the contemporary advanced world, the influences of international organisations have come to play in foreign policy of any country. In the formulation of foreign policy, considerations must be given to international norms, laws and treaties. Any ignorance of these including regional and sub regional structure can jeopardise its national interest.

Related to the reaction of other states, international organisations and the international public opinion as well as the alliances of states also exercise profound influence on foreign policy of a country. Presently, they hardly play any significant role where the Great Powers are involved as the structure of the world is in
conformity with their interests. Still it plays qualitative restraining role in conflict resolution process and the foreign policy orientation towards them.

To conclude, the foreign policy involves the interplay of a wide variety of basic determinants, political institutions and the personality of decision makers. Finally, the personality of the ultimate decision makers, their ideological predilections, psychological propensities invariably condition the final choice of ends and means (Bandyopadhyaya 1980:2).

b. Role of Ideology

The distinguished feature of the contemporary world politics is that mass beliefs and popular ideas have been assuming the central role. Because the moral and religious aspirations of men have always influenced the political behaviour of the society. This is a fact, which hardly can be ignored by the statesmen. Ideology can be defined as a system of abstract ideas held by an individual, which purports to explain reality, express value goods and contains programmes of action for the retention and attainment of the kind of social order in which its proponent believes the goal can be realised. Again, in other words, it can be used as an instrument to justify the behaviour of a state while concealing the real motives for it. The foreign policy of a nation is expressed in the minds of men who subscribe to contain fundamental belief. Hence, policy is expressed in terms of these beliefs and behaviour. “The true nature of the policy is always concealed by ideological justifications and rationalisation” (Rodee 1957:510).

Sometimes, the ideology becomes very ambiguous as it may stretch from an individual to transnational communities. For example the communist and Islamic ideologies concern transnational communities. The understanding of ideology and interests, their differences and relation would be crucial to measure the implications in the foreign policy. While ideology is regarded as some thing abstract, which loosely holds individuals interest, it is the perception of feeling which grows out of the attachment to the object considered to be important. Beyond this little difference, ideology and interests are inter-connected and influence each other. Both shape each
other and history is dotted with such instances where the national interests were served by shaping ideology according to the goals.\(^1\) In this regard, it can be said that they tend to converge since they are entirely compatible. The relative influence of each, where they are not mutually reinforcing seems to depend on the weightage they carry in the minds of the foreign policy makers.

The international system in the post-World War II period witnessed the emergence of many new states with several new ideologies like Communism, Zionism, Democracy, Islamism and Colonialism. So a new phenomenon in international relations can be observed. This is the impact of the common people on the formulation of foreign policy. Here, the ideology starts playing significant role. In the authoritarian political system, public reactions are ignored. Yet it is considerable in foreign policy in particular. The realist view on this matter is that ideology alone is not a policy goal.

Influence of ideology is manifest in the intervening period (World War I and World War II) as well as in Zionist Israel, etc. ideology provides justification and rationale to the policy by providing goals for political actions and concealing all manifestations of power. In the words of Morgenthau, all politics, domestic or international is nothing but struggle for power and the true nature of the policy is concealed by ideological justification and rationalisations. However, its importance should not be exaggerated because foreign policy despite ideological moorings cannot be explained except in terms of national interests. It is safer to maintain that values and ideologies do not fully determine foreign policy objectives although they influence their directions. While long range objectives can be deduced from an ideology, the shorter the time-scale, lesser the necessary correlation between the aspirations and the actual policies (Frankel 1969:111).

\(^1\) The propagation of civilizing mission by the imperialist powers was used to rationalise their interest of colonisation. Similarly, ideology also influences the national interests which is manifest in their involvement in Europe was essentially coached by ideological concern of "Communist containment in order to save democracy".
c. The International Position of a Country

The position of a political unit in the international field has a huge impact on its foreign policy aspirations. Vulnerability, capability in responding to the international developments plays a crucial role in shaping the formulation of the foreign policy. The trend or the pattern of the foreign policy tends to different directions according to the damaging or facilitating international developments (Holsti 1994:588-590).

Generally, any change in the international role or position of a country would bring a change in the foreign policy of the country.

d. The Threats and the Behaviour of the Foreign Countries

Every country is always under the threat and the pressure of other countries. These threats are not always military but they also include the economic, political and cultural ones. Of course, the intensity of these threats vary depending upon certain elements such as the international position, the qualitative and quantitative power equation and the geographic location of a country. Therefore, the threat perception originating from of the situation makes a suitable change in the foreign policy (Political Organisation of Islamic Republic of Iran’s Disciplinary Forces 2001:35).

e. The Developments in the International Order

In the international policy, the behaviours and the foreign policies of the governments are considerably influenced by international situation. The nature of the world order, such as the bipolar one, leaves considerable impact on the direction of the foreign policy of the governments (Holsti 1994:585-590).

The world order has changed in course of time and it will keep on changing in the future. Some times, these developments have been rational and simple but fundamental in other times. Impact of the structure of the world order on the pattern of the foreign policy and its players are better understood when these structures are fundamentally changed. The new composition of a power bloc, emergence of the new powerful governments after collapse of the Great Power and so on creates new
opportunities and threats. The former limitations are put aside and new opportunities are created for arranging the national objectives (Holsti 1994:590-595).

II. The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Foreign Policy

1. Geo-Historical and Political Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is bounded in the north by the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, in the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the south by the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman and on the west by Iraq and Turkey. It covers an area of 636,300 square miles (1648000 square kilometers) in south western Asia (Fisher 2004:361).

Iran has played an important role in West Asia as an imperial power and as a factor in the rivalries between the East and West. Its strategic position and its vast resource, including petroleum and natural gas, made it a nation to be reckoned with in the modern world (Britannica 2006:6).

Iran is OPEC’s (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) second largest oil producer as it exports between four and five million barrels of oil per day; moreover, its holds 10 percent of the world confirmed oil reserves which is second largest after Saudi Arabia. It also has the world’s second largest natural gas reserves (after Russia).

The vast majority of Iranians are Muslim and mostly Shia. Shia Islam is totally dominating the Iranian society. About 88 percent of all Iranians are Shia, about 8 percent are Sunni Muslims, 2 percent Baha’i and more than 1 percent are Christians. There are also small communities (around 50,000 each) of Jews and Parsians (followers of the lore of Zarathustra). Shia Islam is the official state religion and Persian the official language. Iran has a population of over 70 million people (Wikipedia 2007:1).

After a successful Islamic Revolution, the Shah was forced to leave Iran in January 1979. A referendum was held on 30 March 1979, and the Iranian public
voted overwhelmingly in favour of establishing an “Islamic Republic”. On 17 April, following an overwhelming supports in a national referendum, Ayatollah Khomeini declared Iran an “Islamic Republic” (Britannica 2007:1).

The two terms “Republic” and “Islamic” refer to a type of government and its ideological content respectively. The term “Republic” is used for a type of government in which people have the right to elect their ruler. It does not involve any discrimination on grounds of one’s beliefs, race, sex, etc. There is only one general requirement that voters should be adults. The term “Islamic” signifies the nature and the content of a government. It suggests that the government should be one based on Islamic principles and regulations (Mutahhari 1982:11-12).

Now the state adopted Islam as an ideology for bringing about socio-political changes and planned their course of action on modern lines (Abidi 1989:8). All the wings of the state power were subject to the authority of the velayat-e-Faghih, the religious leader. Thus, religion became an overriding factor affecting the whole socio-political life (Abidi 1989:54).

2. The Political Power Structure in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The general nature of the power structure in the Islamic republic of Iran is clear, but the intricacies are difficult to comprehend. On one hand, a part of the Iran’s philosophy of governance has much in common with that of other nations, like legislative, judicial and executive branches of government, on the other the political processes in Iran have a different hierarchical structure.

In Iran’s parliamentary democracy, 290 representatives of parliament are elected for four year terms. The president is elected by the people every four years, and is restricted to no more than two terms in office. As chief executive, the president is responsible for the day-to-day running of the country. The president also nominates 22 ministers, who need to be confirmed by the parliament, and who are directly responsible to the parliament (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran 2005:17).
What is unique about Iran’s system of governance is the theocratic overlay. Eighty-six Clerics are elected by the people as members of the Expert Assembly for eight years. In turn, this body selects the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, and also monitors the Leader’s performance. The Supreme Leader appoints the Head of the Judiciary, who oversees ordinary (for the citizenry), revolutionary, and military courts. Finally, the Supreme Leader also commands the armed forces (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran 2005:18).

Apart from the Supreme Leader and Expert Assembly, there is also the Guardian Council, which evaluates the compatibility of Legislative acts of parliament with the laws of Islam. It also interprets the constitution and monitors the presidential, parliamentary and the Expert Assembly elections (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran 2005:19).

The Expediency Council was created under a new amended constitution that was ratified in 1988. All 38 members of this body, from different Iranian political factions and parties, are appointed by the Supreme Leader. The responsibility of the Council includes (1) breaking stalemates between parliament and the Guardian Council, (2) advising the Supreme Leader, and (3) proposing guidelines for the overall policy of the Islamic Republic (Maleki 2002:39-50).

The Supreme Council of National Security (SCNS) was also created under the 1988 constitution. The Iranian President heads the SCNS, which integrates the institutions of power. The SCNS brings together (1) two representatives from the Supreme Leadership, (2) the head of the three branches of government (the Speaker of Parliament, the Head of the Judiciary and the President) and (3) The Ministers of Foreign affairs, Interior, Intelligence, Defence and the Commanders of the Regular and Revolutionary Military sections. The SCNS formulates the foreign military and security policies of Iran. All actions of the SCNS that are confirmed by the Iranian leader will be carried into effect (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran 2005:18).
3. **Historical Background of Iran’s Foreign Policy**

The monarchy in Iran was replaced by the “Islamic Republic” through a successful Revolution led by religious leaders and mainly supported by the poor and middle strata of the society. Thus, with the change of the government, a major shift was obvious in the foreign policy.

Iran’s foreign policy during Mohammed Reza Shah was based mainly on preservation of sovereignty and integrity of the country followed by economic interests. During this time, Shah was heavily indebted to the United States of America and certain European countries. During the oil crisis in 1953, the Shah had to go in exile for some time in view of demonstrations, strikes and heavy criticism. Majority of population had turned against him on the oil issue. Despite repeated requests, he did not give his consent for the nationalisation of the oil industry as he believed that the oil industry was totally dependent on foreign engineers and technicians. He felt that it was not possible to run the oil industry without foreign skilled personnel. This antagonized the majority of the population, which created the circumstances in which he was forced to go in to exile. Immediately after the nationalisation of the oil industry, the European countries boycotted the import of oil. Iran had to suffer when America, with the help of CIA, got the Shah reinstalled. The reinstallation of the Shah opened a new chapter in the history of Iran’s relations with the US. Shah, being European educated, was influenced by the western education, scientific and technological advancement of Europe. He pledged to modernise Iran on the lines of industrialised nations of the world. Accordingly, he sought the cooperation of United States of America and other powerful European countries to carry out his plan. A large number of scientists, engineers and planners were invited to build up a modern industrial power. They were accorded special treatment, extra benefits and all other facilities. The indigenous work force and others of the same fields were either deprived of these facilities and immunities or they were less paid. In order to appease the United States of America, Iran granted many concessions to America and supplied oil not only to America but also its allies specially Israel.
Petrodollars earned as a result of oil export were recycled to America in the shape of payment for large number of weapons imported by Iran. Gradually, people realised how Iranian wealth was being exploited by the Americans and they launched massive demonstrations. As the public resentment and demonstration against the Shah stepped up in Iran, the Shah’s military police and intelligence machinery tightened and stronger measures were used to suppress them. As the opposition increased, the repressive measures also increased and this resulted into the ouster of the Shah and installation of a new system of government. The Shah during this period shrewdly devised the foreign policy. Though the foreign policy was heavily inclined towards America and strong European nations it was directed to maintain good relations with the countries of eastern bloc. There was, no doubt, a heavy tilt towards America and other powerful European countries but he was shrewd enough to maintain good relations with Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and other countries (Ramazani 1989:79).

After the establishment of Islamic Republic of Iran on 1st April 1979, a clear change is discernible in the foreign policy of Iran.

4. The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Foreign Policy

Iran, which was a very close ally to the West, after the Revolution cut off all of its ties with the United States and subsequently, turned deeply hostile towards the US allies in the region notably Israel (Ahovie 2004:1).

The Revolution, which was laden with anti-imperialist rhetoric, brought new leaders to power, who disapproved of Iran’s relationship with the United State and to a lesser extent, with the Soviet Union. The new leaders were convinced that the US had tried to maintain the Shah in power, despite the mass demonstrations calling for his downfall, and were deeply suspicious of the American intentions towards their Revolution. These leaders believed that the United States was plotting to restore the Shah to power and were unresponsive to persistent efforts by the American diplomats to persuade them that the United States had no ill intentions towards the new regime (Ahovie 2004:2).
Long before Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers came to power in Iran, they had already set in motion their Islamic ideology and a powerful propaganda campaign against the spread of Zionist influence in the region and in the world. Thus, during his exile Ayatollah Khomeini supported all the struggles against Israel throughout the world and forged relationship with Palestinian groups. The Ayatollah accused the Shah of allowing Israel an open hand in Islamic Iran, having military and security ties with Israel, buying arms from the Zionists and selling them oil. The relationship between Iran and Israel was an important issue during Ayatollah Khomeini’s struggle against the Shah (Ahovie 2004:2-4). Following the success of the Islamic Revolution, strong emphasis was placed on transforming Iran into a fully Islamic society cutting off ties with Israel including economic, political and social exchanges. One of the very first acts of the revolutionary government was to denounce the relations with Tel Aviv and to turn over the former Israeli mission in Tehran to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). All trade with Israel was banned, especially the sale of oil. Iranian leaders contended that Israel’s existence was illegitimate, because it came about as a result of the destruction of Palestine (Ahovie 2004:5).

Earlier, the revolutionary government also declared that Iran would pursue policy based on the principle of non-alignment. In pursuit of this policy, Iran soon abandoned the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), joined the Non-Aligment Movement (NAM), and cancelled many weapons orders from the West (Sadri 1998:2).

Ayatollah Khomeini also declared that the new foreign policy would be based on the preservation of freedom, independence and interest of Islam and Muslims, opposition to all kinds and forms of foreign interventions in decisions of other nations, opposition to be aligned with Eastern or Western blocs, support to all the liberation movements of the world and maintaining good and friendly relations with all the countries of the world (Selected Message of Imam Khomeini 1982:81-82). This ideology and these goals had apparent implications for Iranian foreign policy (Sepehr 1982:168).
III. Principles of Iranian Foreign Policy

With the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the establishment of Islamic Republic democratic system, deep and widespread changes took place in all the internal spheres. Similarly, as referred to earlier, changes also took place in foreign policy. A complete overhaul was made. The principles and goals of Iranian foreign policy also witnessed the same overhauling. In the following pages, the most important principles of the Iranian foreign policy are being described:

1. Denial of Seeking and Accepting Domination and Peaceful Relations with Non-Belligerent States:

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defence of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with respect to the hegemonist superpowers and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States. (Article 152).

2. Amity and Enmity

Any form of agreement resulting in foreign control over the natural resources, economy, army or culture of the country, as well as other aspects of the national life is forbidden. (Article 153).

3. Non-Interference in the Internal Affairs of the Countries and Support to the Mustadafun (poor and oppressed people) and Liberation Movements:

The Islamic Republic of Iran has its ideal human felicity throughout human society and considers the attainment of independence, freedom and rule of justice and truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the mustadafun against the mustakbirun in every (corner) of the globe (Article 154) (Islamic Republic of Iran’s Constitution 2007:10).
4. **Formulation of One *Umma* (nation)**

In accordance with the sacred verse of the Quran “(This your Community is a Single Community and I am your lord, so worship me “[21:92]”), all Muslims form a single nation and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the duty of formulating its general policies with a view to cultivating the friendship and unity of all Muslims, and it must constantly strive to bring about the political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world (Article 11) (Mohammadi 1998:36). Endeavours of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this direction are put to practice in various forms and in the framework the views of “exporting of revolution” and support to the liberation movements and their desires and holding various cultural conferences (Shaban 1994:250).

5. **Non-Alignment against the Domination Seeking Powers:**

With the success of the Islamic Revolution and adoption of the policy of neither East nor West, and membership of Non-Aligned Movement, the Islamic Republic of Iran formally declared the non-alignment with all superpowers to safeguard independence. This non-alignment did not mean discontinuation of relations with the Eastern and Western world. But it meant non-alignment with the superpowers of the East and the West which were trying to dominate Iran. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in Articles 152, 153, 146, 145 and 80, rejected the others domination and alignment against the powers, which seeking domination either with taking advantage of the use of foreign power or handing over the military base to foreign powers (Political Organisation of Islamic Republic of Iran’s Disciplinary Forces 2001:115).

6. **Dignity, Wisdom, Expedience**

Apart from the aforesaid principle, three basic features of the Iranian foreign policy i.e. dignity, wisdom and expediency have also been announced by the spiritual leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. These are the guiding principles in executing the foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran in the sphere of foreign relations (Political Organisation of Islamic Republic of Iran’s Disciplinary Forces 2001:45).
IV. The Goals of the Iranian Foreign Policy:

A good number of writers expressed themselves on the goals of Iranian foreign policy. They have reviewed it from various angles keeping in view the functioning of the policy. Mahmood Sariolghalam,\(^2\) in his book, *The Foreign Policy of Iran: a Theoretical Assessment and Paradigm of Coalition*, expresses his belief that the big goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran are rooted in the cultural heritage of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. According to him the culture which, led to the success of the Revolution, has evolved into principles and frameworks, which in turn have shaped the goals of the Iranian foreign policy. Therefore, on this basis and according to the functioning of the Iranian government, the Iranian foreign policy goals can be summed up under that following three heads:

- Economic development and expansion, protection of the territorial integrity and national authority.
- Defence of the Muslims and liberation movements and opposition to Israel and the West specially America.
- Establishment of an Islamic Society based on Shia tenets (Sariolghalam 2002:49).

Mohammed Javed Larijani is a specialist on the issues in Iranian foreign policy.\(^3\) He reviewed this issue from another angle. He summed up the goals of the Iranian foreign policy as under:

- Maintaining of territorial integrity and security.
- Safeguarding of evolving political system.

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Providing people with basic welfare, and pursuing a foreign policy that acknowledges Iran’s Muslim identity as a nation and operates within the context of values generated by Islam (Larijani 1996:747).

But the most important source to recognise the goals of Iranian foreign policy is the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The following are the major goals as inferred by the Constitution:

1. The happiness of human society (Principle 154).
2. Independence of the Country (Principle 2, article 1).
3. Struggle against tyranny, seek justice and condemn the system of domination in the world and support the just struggle of the oppressed (Principles 2).
5. Coalition and unity of Muslim nations and unity of the Islamic world (Principle 3).
7. Negation of all forms of oppression, both the infliction of and the submission to it (Principle 2, article-9).
8. Negation all of dominance, both its imposition and its acceptance (Principle 2, article-9).
9. Complete opposition and rejection of colonialism (Principle 3, article 5).
10. Prevention of the influence of the foreigners (Principle 3, article 5).
11. Protection of territorial integrity (Principle 3, article 11).
12. Rejection and avoidance from the agreements which lead to the dominance of the foreigners on natural resources and the country’s economy (Principle 43, Article 8), culture and army (principle 153) (Islamic Republic of Iran’s Constitution 2007:10).
V. Priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Foreign Policy

The constitution of the Islamic Republic, make clear Iran’s preferences in foreign policy (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran 2005:18). Four groups of countries are ranked in preference:

1. Iran’s Neighbours: Iran has land or sea borders with 15 countries. The most important goals in this region is concentrate on keeping borders out of conflict, and at the same time establishment of reliable and firm relations with neighbours, and to seek confidence-building measures (Larijani 1996:749).

2. Muslim countries: the second priority goes to establishment of relations between Iran and Muslim nations and creation of suitable grounds for integration of Islamic society (Ummate) is considered as a part of government of Iran’s duties.

3. Third world countries: the third preferred group of states are developing countries or in the words of the Constitution “Non-Aligned State”. Inclination for closer relations with these countries is derived from commitment to support the oppressed people in the world according to the Iranian Constitution.

4. The last group is of the countries, with which the establishment and expansion of relations can help to meet the economic social, political and defensive need of Iran (Maleki 2005:20-25).

Geographically, Iran straddles the countries in energy rich West Asia and countries of the Central Asia-Caucuses region. In the post- Cold War milieu, Iran has emerged as an important power broker, and while external geo-strategic considerations matter, Iran determines its own strategies in both regions.

On a general level, Iran’s policies have stressed economic and security needs in both West Asia and Central Asia. In this regard, there have been parallel and overlapping bilateral and multilateral initiatives to secure Iran’s interests in both
regions. To illustrate, Iran's interactions with the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states have been of a bilateral nature (e.g., with Qatar and Saudi Arabia).

In Central Asia its ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) policy remains economically driven (Afrasiabi 1994:34-36).

VI. Decision Making Structure in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are a number of political, social, religious and economic groups, which influence the policies framed by the official bodies.

The Grand Ayatollahs, Imams of the Friday Prayers, political groups such as the Society of the Militant Clerics (*Jame'eh-ye Ruhaniyyat-e Mobarez*), Forum of the Militant Clerics (*Majma-e Ruhaniyyun-e Mobarez*), Society of the Teachers of Qom Seminary (*Jame'eh-ye Modarssin-e Hozey-e Almiyeye Qom*), the revolutionary bodies such as the Islamic Revolution Corps and the also the press are among these groups. But the decision making in foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has a well defined procedure.

According to the Article 57 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country has a governing system based on the separation of bodies (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1981:39).

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, framing and implementation of the foreign policy is mainly in the domain of the Supreme Leader, Legislature and Executive, each of which, enjoys limited power in this regard.
1. **The Supreme Leader:**

A major part of the decisions on the foreign policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran is taken, directly or indirectly, by the Supreme Leader.

According to the Article 110 of the Constitution, deciding the general policies of the regime and announcement of war and peace are entrusted with the Supreme Leader (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1981:40). On the other hand, all the decisions taken by the Supreme Council of National Security (SCNS), major part of which is related to the foreign policy, have to be endorsed by the Supreme Leader and he is empowered to appoint two members of the Council.

The Supreme Leader as the first person in the Islamic Republic of Iran is empowered to either approve or reject the decision taken on the foreign policy of the country and issue the final verdict on the important matters pertaining to the foreign policy. The neutral position taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran during the US attack on Iraq in 1991, not attacking Afghanistan after killing of Iranian diplomats by the Taliban regime in the country and supporting the Palestinian people in the Arab-Israeli dispute, are few examples of the Supreme Leader’s influence in the foreign policy of the country (The Research Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly 2000:5).

2. **The President:**

According to the Article 113 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President is head of the Executive and also responsible for implementing the laws and coordinating the relations between the three services (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1981:58).

In the foreign policy decision making structure, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran plays a role by appointing the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the ambassadors and the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, receiving the ambassadors of foreign countries, inking the agreements of Government of Iran with other countries and also with the international bodies (Maleki 2003:102).
3. **Council of Ministers:**

The general policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is implemented by the Council of Ministers through the laws enacted by the Legislature under the direction of the Supreme Leader. In the beginning of every year, the Government presents its annual programme to the Islamic Consultation Assembly and the Assembly plays an important role in implementing the foreign policy of the country by approving the programme and allotting a budget to the same. Making or breaking of the diplomatic relations with other countries and also increasing or reducing the level of relations are among the powers of the Executive (Maleki 2003:102-103).

4. **The Islamic Consultative Assembly:**

The Islamic Consultative Assembly is the highest law making body in the Islamic Republic of Iran and it can make laws on any issue keeping in mind the contents of the Constitution and the Islamic laws. The Islamic Consultative Assembly plays a role in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran by approving or disapproving the governments’ agreements with the other countries. Any minor change in the border lines of the country, borrowing or disbursement of loans and employment of the foreign experts are parts of the responsibilities of the Assembly (Maleki 2003:103).

5. **The Supreme Council of National Security (SCNS):**

According to Article 176 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, framing of the defence and security policies of the country, coordinating the political, intelligence, social, cultural and economic activities as well as utilising the country’s material and spiritual capabilities to face the internal and external threats are parts of the responsibilities of the Supreme Council of National Security headed by the President (Islamic Republic of Iran’s Constitution 2007:10). The Supreme Council of National Security was a result of the review of the Constitution during the first half of 1989. The members of the Supreme Council of National Security believe that creation of the Council was a must for coordinating the internal and external defence policies of the country (The Research Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
The decisions taken by the Supreme Council of National Security becomes part of the agenda of the executive bodies on the foreign policy after they are approved by the Supreme Leader.

In fact, the decisions taken by the Supreme Council of National Security on the important issues define the priorities the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

6. **The Guardian Council:**

The Articles 95 and 96 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran authorise the Guardian Council to put the final seal on the laws approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly after comparing them with the contents of the Constitution and Islam and this makes the Council play a role on the issues related to the foreign policy of the country (Izadi 1992:107-130).

7. **The Expediency Council:**

Though it is regarded as the consultative arm of the Supreme Leader, the Expediency Council plays a role in framing the foreign policy and resolving disputes between the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Guardian Council (Maleki 2005:18).

While designing the grand strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Expediency Council suggests certain points to the Supreme Leader to be considered in the foreign policy of the country.

In case of disputes between the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council says the final word on the issues pertained to the foreign policy (The Research Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly 2000:5).

8. **The Judiciary:**

Though it is not directly involved in framing of the foreign policy, the Judiciary plays a role in two areas related to the foreign policy. First, on the judicial
developments of the country and the commitments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the international human rights bodies such as the Geneva-based Human Rights Commission of the United Nation Organisation. Second, on overseeing the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its two observatory arms, the "Court of Administration Justice" and the "National Inspection Organisation" (Nayeerabadi 1996:174).

9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs as authorised by the Constitution and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Act-1985 is responsible for implementing the foreign policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1990:153). But it also plays a policy making role in this regard for two reasons (The Research Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly 2000:7). One, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a party in most of the policy making bodies such as the Supreme Council of National Security and the Council of Ministers and in the other bodies such as the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Expediency Council. The issues related to the foreign policy are discussed in presence of a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Second, some times a development occurs so fast and unexpectedly that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the missions can not wait for the normal decision making procedures and, in such a case, the Minister of Foreign Affairs takes the decision and, later on, reports to the concerned authorities.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for overseeing the missions and coordinating their activities and also gathering information for the decision makers.

The duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this regard are as the followings:

1. Constantly overseeing the international developments and internal situation and preparing reports

2. Establishing, maintaining and improving the relations of the government of Iran with other governments and international organisations.
3. Negotiation and communication with the governments of the other countries and international organisations.

4. Handling the political and consular missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and overseeing the missions of the governments abroad.

5. Establishing communication between the different bodies of the government of Iran with that of the governments of other countries (Mohammadi 1998:95-98).

VII. Iran’s Foreign Policy Decision Making Process

Foreign policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran results from complex, multifaceted interactions among numerous governmental and non-governmental participants. These actors pursue different and often conflicting goals. Yet, foreign policy decision making process is sufficiently transparent to delineate. These governmental and non-governmental actors promote a bundle of aims relating to the Islamic identity of the government and its harmony with Iranian identity (Maleki 1989:348).

The governmental actor discusses the main identity of the Islamic Revolution and the return to Islamic values. At the dawn of the Iranian Revolution, social layers were not pressed by poverty, malnutrition, insecurity and ethnic conflict. The people were forced to move to the streets to protest against the ignorance of Islamic culture and traditions of inequality among the social class and the injustice in international relations (Maleki 1989:348-350).

They propose that the most viable ways to establish permanence for the Islamic republic are (1) to retain the Muslim masses as faithful allies; (2) to create close relations with Islamic countries, and (3) to refrain from rapprochement with the United States, perceived to be most responsible for the humiliations of the Islamic Ummah. The position of the non-governmental actor is that Iran is a nation-state and must play a key role in international events. It is better for Iran to play in the “international court”, like other nation-states and blocs. They emphasised that
international trade and political ties are major tools in safeguarding Iranian national interests (Maleki 1989:351-360).

Some would see no conflict between Islamic values and Iranian national interests. They believed that Islamic identity is also part of Iran's national interests. However it must be recognised that in the arena of foreign policy decision-making, goal conflicts can create undecided votes and ambiguous positions by the individual administrative units. The potential lack of sufficient coherence could impair the effectiveness of Iran's foreign policy (Maleki 1989:360-378).

Some complexes though overriding issues remain unresolved. For example the nuances of what should be an appropriate foreign policy towards the United States. For this issue in particular, goals promoted by anonymous units in the decision-making chain-of-command might simultaneously oppose one another. As a case in point of the multifaceted dimensions of decision making, consider resistance to US policy as related to President Bush's "Axis of Evil" viewpoint, which might be contrasted with president Khatami's "Dialogue of Civilization". Despite a convergence of views among Iranian officials, substantive differences remain on several critical issues. More currently, Ayatollah Khamenei, who has the final say on foreign policy, stated that "America is basically opposed to the Islamic Republic and if it makes a move, it is tactical and deceitful... so do negotiations have any meaning" (Maleki 2002:30-50). It is to be noted however, that reformists allied to President Mohammad Khatami have sought to mend ties with Washington, although it is also true that the more conservative members of Supreme Council of National Security (SCNS) and Expediency Council argued that relations with the U.S. would betray tenets of the twenty-three year old Islamic Revolution.

As another example, suppose that there is an opportunity to be seized or a threat outside of Iran to be thwarted, Iran's decision makers would consider the manner in which information from abroad is processed for Iran's foreign policy. Before that is done, however, it is helpful to first consider the various sources of such information (Maleki 2002:50-55).
One extremely important source is from diplomatic channels via Iranian embassies. Ambassadorsial analysis comes via Iran’s Foreign Ministry. The Director Generals of various departments also send reports to the Deputies and Minister for Foreign Affairs. Input is also obtained through security agents from miscellaneous media sources, from libraries abroad, from individual citizens of one country or another, and from think tanks and scholarly authorities in germane subject areas. Regarding the last, cultural attaches are part of the organisation for Islamic culture and communications (OICC), which is an independent body, within the government (Maleki 2002:55-59).

Different elements in decision making may be identified as stepping-stones in the decision-making process. The sequence of the steps to arrive at the most appropriate decision involves:

1. Defining the problem;
2. Classifying the problem;
3. Specifying answers to the problem;
4. Deciding what is right under Islam, rather than what is acceptable, in order to ascertain the appropriate decision;
5. Delineating a course of action to resolve the problem; and
6. Testing the effectiveness of the decision, against the probable course of events (Drucker 2001:1-21).

The Council of Deputies, which is under the Law of Establishment and Duties of Iran’s Foreign Ministry, is chaired by the Foreign Minister; it is empowered to act on some cases within the broad parameters of Iranian national policy and interests. However, for major events, the Foreign Minister reports directly to the President, who decides whether the case warrants action by the Cabinet of Ministers or by the Supreme Council of National Security. When a case has different economic, cultural, political and social dimensions, the President sends the report to the cabinet to
ascertain the views of different ministers, with the exception that the purely diplomatic, security and defence cases are sent to the SCNS Secretariat. For the latter types of cases, the Secretary of SCNS would present them in the main session after preparing the background of the cases. After the Council decides on a course of action, then the Iranian President, who is also the head of the SCNS, would send the report to the Iranian Supreme Leader. If the Leader confirms the action, than it would be operationalised and sent to military section, and to the Foreign Ministry (Maleki 2002:59).

VIII. Trends in Iranian Foreign Policy

Given the trend of the policy that the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented in practice, the foreign policy of the country can be divided into the following four periods. The foreign policy of Iran during each of these periods is clarified.

1. The Period of 1979-1981:

During this period, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran was under the control of a provisional government led by Mahdi Bazargan and a liberal group. This period is known as a conversationalist, (the one blended with liberalism), and "non-aligned nationalism" (Ramazani 2002:59).

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and on a proposal put up by the Revolution Council, Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution and the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, appointed Bazargan on 5 Feb 1979 to form the provisional government (Movasaghi 1993:315).

The provisional government and the Prime Minister himself received the order from Ayatollah Khomeini. Though the leader of the Islamic Revolution termed Bazargan as an Islamic one, the Prime Minister concentrated on the national values and standards (Azghandi 2002:10). Though the Islamic Revolution of Iran was founded on the Islamic ideas and its aim was to establish Islamic rule all over the world, the provisional government, particularly the Prime Minister, concentrated on
development of Iran within a nationalistic framework, looking at Islam as a tool to
serve Iran (Mohammadi 1998:104). Though the Islamic Revolution of Iran was anti-
Western in nature and the religious leaders and also the people were gunning for the
Shah and his main supporter the US, the provisional government adopted a foreign
policy aimed at making friendship with all of the countries particularly the US
(Azghandi 2002:11).

When Ayatollah Khomeini appointed Mehdi Bazargan as the provisional
Prime Minister on 5 Feb 1979, the first priority of the Bazargan government was to
terminate the sub-servant de facto alliance of the Shah’s regime with the United State
and place the relations of the two countries on a plane of “equality”. He plotted his
foreign policy on the basis of “equilibrium” (Tavazon), (Ramazani 1989:204) a
principle in earnest into Iranian foreign-policy thinking and practice by Mirza Taqi
Khan, better known as Amir Kabir, during his short-lived premiership. This principle
was the inverse of the European “balance-of-power” Principle (Ramazani 1966:63-65).

Bazargan adopted a nonalignment policy. He believed that Iran’s policy
towards the Great Powers “should be the same as the policy of (Mossadeq)”. Better
known as the policy of “negative equilibrium” (Mavazeneh-ye-Manfi). According to
revolutionary Iran’s first foreign minister, Karim Sanjabi, Iran’s nonalignment policy
was based on four pillars: history, the country’s geographic position, the spiritual, the
humanist ideals of Islam and the principle of complete reciprocity in relation with
other countries (Ramazani 1989:205).

The reference to Islamic ideals did not mean that either Sanjabi or Bazargan
believed, as Ayatollah Imam Khomeini did, that the prime unit of loyalty in the
Iranian policy should be towards Islam. Sanjabi’s National Front and Bazargan’s Iran
Liberation Front were secular, nationalist and democratic in nature, drawing their
social support largely from the middle class and the modern educated intellectuals.
For both of them, the prime unit of the people’s loyalty to polity was considered to be
the Iranian nation-state (Ramazani 1989:205). Bazargan claimed that his government
was a bridge between the secular National Front and the religious movement led by
Ayatollah Imam Khomeini. Yet, he knew that he was called an “Iran Firster” while
Ayatollah Imam Khomeini was an “Islam Firster”. In Bazargan’s own words, “I believe in the service of Iran by means of Islam” while Ayatollah Khomeini “believed in the service of Islam by means of Iran (Bazargan 1983:110-111).

Despite his deep-felt resentment of the Carter administration’s continuing support of the Shah’s regime, Bazargan tried to pursue a non-hostile, non-alignment policy towards the United States. To end the Shah’s de facto alliance with the United States, on 12 March 1979 Sanjabi withdrew Iran’s membership from the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Subsequently, on 3 November foreign minister Ibrahim Yazdi canceled the Iranian-US defence agreement on 5 March 1959.

The overturn of the Shah’s de facto alliance required the overhauling of a complex web of military relationships with the United States build up over the years by the Shah. This overhauling involved such issues as the disposition of the $12 billion worth of arms on order, the security of some 80 American-built F-14s, and the disbanding of two secret US listening bases near the Soviet border. On the same day, when the Bazargan government cancelled Iran’s defence agreement with the United States, it also abrogated Articles V and VI of the Iran’s 1921 treaty with the Soviet Union (Ramazani 1989:205).

Meanwhile, with the passage of time, a number of differences on the objectives of the foreign policy of the Islamic Regime emerged between the authorities of the provisional government on the one hand and the leadership of the Islamic Revolution, the members of the Revolutionary Council, and the radical Revolutionary forces on the other. These differences included the principle of “neither the West nor the East”, the principle of “exporting of the revolution” and the ways of “engaging the US”.

From Bazargan’s point of view, the slogan “neither the West nor the East” is purely nationalistic and defensive to obtain all-out independence from the alien countries and super powers, and not to depend on any Western or Eastern bloc (Bazargan 1983:104).
On the pretext of following the international norms, the provisional government tried to avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other nations and to improve Iran’s ties with the countries whose relations with Iran had been disrupted due to the Islamic Revolution and therefore, was willing to explain the policy “neither the West nor the East” in the direction of a “negative equilibrium” (Azghandi 2002:11). Within the same framework and as part of its policy to establish contact with the surrounding world, the provisional government always tried to establish mutual contact with the United States though it was against the anti-US policy of Ayatollah Khomeini. In fact, the provisional government believed that the US has nothing to do with Iran and Iran should not do any thing to provoke the US and if possible, the slogan “death to the US” has to be erased from the memories of the people. But the Leader of the revolution had a quite different stance in this regard (Movasaghi 1993:318).

In an interview, with the Newsweek, Bazargan said: “The revolutionary government in Iran is eager to resume its relations with the US” (Ettelaat 1979:2).

Ibrahim Yazdi, the then deputy Prime Minister said, “forget the past, Iranians are practical people, the political grounds for cooperation exist, Iran in future would need American technology” (Azghandi 2002:11).

The differences among the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran left a significant impact on the trend of the foreign policy of the country.

On one hand, Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters were engaged in a campaign against the US imperialism, extending support to the freedom-seeking movements and trying to export the Islamic Revolution and, on the other hand, the officials of the provisional government had placed a liberal, impartial and non-hostile foreign policy at the top of their agenda. At this junction, a meeting of the authorities of the provisional government with the National Security Advisor of the Carter administration in Algeria raised a storm in the Iranian society and, as a result of which, the students following the line of Imam Khomeini captured the US Embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini approved the action of the
students in capturing the US Embassy but the provisional government came under intens pressure and finally resigned on 6 November 1979 following its failure to ensure the evacuation of the US embassy (Ramazani 2002:59).

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the kind of the nationalist and realist non-alignment policy that Bazargan had been pursuing did not disappear with his resignation. Iran’s foreign policy split in the middle between the two major orientations. Both Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, first as acting Foreign Minister and then as the first President of revolutionary Iran, and Sadeq Qotbzadeh, Iran’s Foreign Minister hewed to a foreign policy line that was close to the nationalist non-alignment policy of Mossadegh and Bazargan. Bani Sadr rationalised his “equidistance” policy in the Islamic terms, he would rely on Western Europe or France as a counterbalance to the superpowers.

Qotbzadeh, no less than his archrival Bani-Sadr, believed in a non-alignment policy. He used Mossadegh’s own term “negative equilibrium” with what he called “honesty in word and in deed”. They, therefore, like their predecessors- Mossadegh, Bazargan, Sanjabi and Yazdi, who preferred the term positive neutralism-were all Iran firsters. And as such, they were all opposed by the revolutionary idealists who claimed to follow the “Imam Khomeini’s Line” (Khat-e-Imam) rather than the “Mossadegh path” (Rah-e-Mossadegh). These idealists were the architects of other major foreign policy orientations (Ramazani 1989:207).

Therefore, the foreign policy of Iran after the provisional government had been the continuation of Bazargan’s policy with some changes. But during this era too, the emphasis on the principle of “neither the West not the East” caused the foreign policy of Bani Sadr’s government to face international isolation. Unlike his predecessors, who were looking towards the US, Bani Sadr shifted his policy towards Western Europe to create a counterbalance against the US. Qotbzadeh, who had replaced Yazdi as the Foreign Minister, could not resolve the issues such the US hostages and the internal differences and, therefore, was forced to resign. With the resignation of Qotbzadeh from the foreign ministry, the differences emerged between Bani Sadr and the ideologist government of Mohammad-Ali Rajaee, who had been
appointed as the Prime Minister with support of the fundamentalists, over the appointment of the next foreign minister surfaced. During the Iran-Iraq war, Bani Sadr refused to endorse the ministers proposed by the Rajaee government (Movasaghi 1993:333).

The unpopularity of Bani Sadr, his failure to resolve the hostages' issue, the differences with the forces following Imam Khomeini's line and, more importantly, Iraq's imposed war on Iran paved the way for sacking of Bani Sadr and his flight from Iran. Therefore, the non-aligned nationalist policy of Iran during this period failed and a period known as the "entrenchment" began (Bakhshayeshi 1996:82). The characteristics of the foreign policy of Iran during this period can be summarised as the followings:

- Tilting towards the West and anxiety from the East
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and trying to improve Iran's ties with the US
- Expansion of relations with all nations except Israel and South Africa (Tajik 2004:70-71).

2. The Period of 1981-1989

In the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this period almost coincided with Iraq's imposed war on Iran and, therefore, it is also termed as the "fundamentalism" period. In fact, during this period, following the failure of the foreign policy of Iran during the rule of the liberals, Iran witnessed short-lived and unstable governments due to assassination of a number of the personalities in the country. The internal issues and differences in opinions were at their peak and, finally, Mir-Hosein Mosavi formed the first stable government since the Islamic Revolution. At the beginning of this period too, the foreign policy of Iran was unstable and the issues related to Iraq's imposed war on Iran dominated Iran's foreign policy, though the Policy "neither the West nor the East" was one of its main pillars. This period witnessed a rivalry between the idealists and realists, each of which
dominated the foreign policy of Iran for a time. May be it was because of the victory of the idealists over the realist that for some people, the period was close to the "entrenchment" and the rule of the radicals. During this period, the ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini were not only considered as a solid pillar of the foreign policy but also played a decisive role in this regard (Bakhshayeshi 1996:84).

During this period, the understanding of the decision makers and the executives of the foreign policy of Iran were wholly ideological and, for them, the moral values were far more important than the national interests. Therefore, Iran's foreign policy, faced problems in the international environment. The weakness of this policy was visible not only in the realistic world but also in the policy of establishing contact with the people rather than the governments (Azghandi 2002:12).

Though emphasis on idealism provides an opportunity for achieving transnationalism in the political influence, ideological unity and establishing a sphere of influence in the regional and international levels, it creates a number of limitations for meeting the national objectives, industrial and technological development, economic well-being and particularly obtaining international reputation (Dawisha 1983:4-20).

In this aspect, the fresh foreign policy of Iran was to concentrate on the nations expecting that establishment of relations with the people would help in achieving the objectives of the Islamic Revolution. However, the Islamic Revolution, explains Jihad in both cultural and military terms and calls for awakening the suppressed nations all over the world, particularly the Muslims in the Persian Gulf region. Due to the cultural and religious commonalities with the Persian Gulf nations, the foreign policy of Iran was more active in this area. The decision makers in the foreign policy of Iran were expecting that the awakening of the nations in the Persian Gulf area would lead to a revolution similar to the Islamic Revolution of Iran and this would bring down the ruling establishments in these countries. Iran's interfering in the internal affairs of the other countries, made them to look upon Iran as a country trying to destabilise the world order. A number of the Persian Gulf countries also suspected Iran as a potential threat to their national security as a result of which,
many countries, particularly those in the Persian Gulf conducted their ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran in a cautious manner (Azghandi 2002:12).

This negative aspect of the Islamic Republic of Iran was also seen in its relations with the international organisations, particularly the United Nations. The Islamic Republic of Iran was a member of the United Nations just to ensure its recognition by the other nations. The Islamic Republic of Iran was considering the veto right of the big powers against its "neither the West nor the East" policy. Also, considering the United Nations as a tool to legalise the decisions taken by the veto right holding powers, the Islamic Republic of Iran developed some political suspicions towards the organisation. The unrealistic behavior of the United Nations on the Iraq-Iran from Iran's point of view further deepened this suspicion, therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran avoided any commitment towards the decisions taken by the UN (Azghandi 2002:150.

Given the stronger position of the Idealists, the "neither the West nor the East" policy of Iran was concentrated on the "export of the revolution" (Haliday 1999:94-132). During this period, there were two different ideas on the export of the revolution. One group was considering this as a way to create a security sphere for the Islamic Revolution and, therefore, advocated establishment of direct and open relations with the freedom-seeking movements to achieve the goal. The other group believed in consolidating the Islamic regime with Iran and exporting only the cultural aspects of the revolution to safeguard the interests of the regime (Bakhshayeshi 1996:87). In pursuing this strategy, the Islamic Republic of Iran tried to provide cultural, political, economic, financial and some times military aid to the freedom-seeking movements, particularly to the Shia ones. The tendency to adopt this mechanism was based on the ideological principles of Iran such as supporting the suppressed and the Muslims (Bakhshayeshi 1996:88-89).

In fact, the direction of the foreign policy of Iran and its decision making structure was based on the principle of commitment keeping in mind the Islamic values. Therefore, the target countries, particularly those in the region, were not having good relations with Iran for different reasons, as they considered Iran's
foreign policy as a doctrine of “influence”. During this period, Iran’s relations with almost all the countries in the world (Europe, US, Soviet Union, Arab countries) were practically cut off and this policy in West Asia left only on alliance for Iran with Syria (Ramazani 1988:176-178).

Since the middle of 1981, during the ongoing Iraq-Iran war, the idealists faced internal problems on one hand and international pressures on the other, forcing them to be more realistic and concentrate on Iran’s territorial integrity. Of course, the Islamic ideology was still considered as the most dominant priority of Iran’s foreign policy during this period (Azghandi 2002:13).

Just as Iran has had its revolutionary ideologists since the beginning of the revolution, it has also had revolutionary realists. They both believed that Islam is, and should be, the prime unit of people’s loyalty in the Iranian policy, but they sharply differ on the relative weight of “Iranianness” and “Islaminess” in the Iranian identity. They also differ in their attitudes towards the existing international system. The idealists are world revolutionaries who wanted to establish an Islamic world order (Ramazani 1989:211), despite the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini has said, “we hope this will gradually come about” (Sahifeh-e-Noor 1982:66). The realists, on the other hand, who also hope for an Islamic world order, are willing to come to term with the realities of the existing international system. Hence, unlike the idealists, they are conciliatory in their foreign policy orientation (Sahifeh-e-Noor 1982:242).

The public displeasure over the trend of the economy, the government’s inability in the war with Iraq, its failure due to the international isolation of Iran and, particularly, Ayatollah Khomeini’s speech at a gathering of a group of diplomats on 29 October 1984 can be regarded as the reasons for the emergence of realism in the foreign policy of Iran during this period (Dehshiri 2001:376).

Ayatollah Khomeini himself considered it: “inadmissible to common sense and humanity” not to have relations with other governments “since it would mean defeat, annihilation and being buried right to the end…”(Sahifeh-e-Noor 1982:73).
Going further, he even said on 2 November 1985, “We do not want to live in a country which is isolated from the rest of the world. Today’s Iran cannot be that way. Other countries cannot close their borders to others either. It would be irrational. Today the world is like one family, one city. In the present world circumstances, we should not be isolated” (Sahifeh-e-Noor 1982:242).

From now onward, Iran started talking about improving its relations with almost all of the countries in the world on mutual respect to sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of each other. Most of the Iranian officials, including its Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayaty, started referring to the UN Charter in their speeches on different occasions though they occasionally criticised the veto right of the Permanent Members of the Security Council of the UN. Instead of speaking about the people to people diplomacy, they emphasised the importance of the South-South relations (Hunter 2001:228-230). They focused on economic policy of the government and the necessity to review the same through reduction in the expenses of the government and the need for maintaining the Islamic identity through obtaining advanced weaponry systems. The developments in the Soviet Union and with the coming into power of Gorbachev forced the Iranian leadership to review their ties with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc and adopt a cautious policy towards the West (Hunter 2001:231).

An invitation to the Foreign Minister of Germany to visit Iran in 1984 and arrival of Robert Macfarlane in Tehran in 1986 from the American side, which led to the “Iran-Contra” controversy, can be regarded as the clear signs of a shift in Iran’s foreign policy at this stage (Dehshiri 2001:378).

The futile meeting of the American with the Iranian delegation in Tehran was disclosed by the Lebanese magazine “Al-Shera” and this caused a bitter confrontation between the idealists and the realists within Iran, following which, the foreign policy of Iran once again came under the control of the hardliner idealists (Dehshiri 2001:377).
At this stage, the idealists, who also occupied most of the seats in the third parliament, tried to impose a kind of idealism on the foreign policy of Iran through intensifying propaganda against America’s domination-seeking policies, dividing the countries into two groups of “friends and enemies” and creating problems for the international system. By emphasising the need for ideology to boost the public unity and to ensure the sovereignty of the country, they tried to provoke the public sentiment to mobilise them for a massive attack against Iraq and, thereby, to highlight the importance of the public mobilisation in facing the foreign threats (Dehshiri 2001:378).

Anti-West policies of the idealists and their support to the freedom-seeking movements made the international community to consolidate further its stance against Iran and this paved the way for the US to increase the international pressure on Iran to revive its image among its allies after the “Iran-Contra” controversy. But the slow pace of the Iraq-Iran War and the shortage of weapons and also the US shooting down of an Iranian passenger aircraft over the Persian Gulf provided an opportunity for the realists to reemerge. They convinced the security and decision making establishment of Iran about the degree of US seriousness to support Iraq against Iran. They, finally, succeeded in convincing the Iranian officials to accept on 20 August 1988 the Resolution 598 of the UN Security Council, which was prepared with the support of the US in June 1987 (Dehshiri 2001:380).

Hereby, the realists consolidated their position in the foreign policy of Iran. But this was not the end of the road and, in the wake of the release of the “Satanic Verses”, the idealists once again gained power. The “Satanic Verses” by Salman Rushdie was published and released in early 1989 with the support of the US. The book put a question mark on the fundamental objectives of the Islamic Revolution provoking Imam Khomeini to issue a blasphemy Fatwa against the writer. This provided an opportunity for the idealists to project themselves as the custodians of the “pure Mohammedan Islam” and, therefore, to call for opposing the American brand of Islam through highlighting the trans-national aspect of security and emphasising
the need for unity among the Islamic states. Till the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, the idealists dominated the foreign policy of Iran.

3. **The Period of 1989-1997:**

The third period in the foreign policy of Iran began after the victory of the realists and Hashemi Rafsanjani in the 1989 presidential elections of the country and it continued till the end of Rafsanjani’s presidency in 1997. This period, described by Anoushiravan Ehteshami as “the second Republic” marked Iran’s efforts to normalise its relations with the world (Ehteshami 1995:143).

Accepting the Resolution 598 of the UN Security Council, bringing an end of Iraq’s war against Iran, reviewing the constitution, demise of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989, emergence of Ayatollah Khamenei as the new leader and appointment of Rafsanjani as the President on one hand and the collapse of the Soviet Union and its impact on the international relations on the other, influenced the thinking of the policy makers in Iran on the major issues. Destruction and the financial and psychological problems caused by the war, the problems related to the prisoners of war and the displacement of people due to the war, reduction of the national assets, the economic sanctions and, in general, the economic and political instability threatened seriously the very existence of the Islamic Republic. Under the pressure of these factors, the government, unwillingly, accepted the realities of the world order and realised the critical domestic conditions. As a result, they put the economic reforms at the top of its agenda. In fact, the national interests, the regional arrangements and not provoking the others were the main elements of Iran’s foreign policy during the second decade of the Islamic Revolution (Azghandi 2002:15).

In fact, during the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the executives of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran tried to replace the idealism followed during the Mir Hussein Mosavi’s tenure in office as the Prime Minister with a more efficient one to achieve their goals and, also, to meet the economic and the political requirements of the county. In the other words, the economic, security and national
interests and, also, the desire to obtain political power and reputation made Iran to adopt a reconciliatory policy towards the other nations (Azghandi 2002:16).

Acceptance of the ceasefire with Iraq and the reconstruction of the country after the war with Iraq opened a hot discussion among the political forces on the foreign investments in Iran and, in view of the importance of this issue, the foreign policy of Iran was based on the principles of dignity, wisdom and expediency (Dehshiri 2001:382-383).

Ensuring the stability at the borders, controlling the separatist tendencies, maintaining its status as the regional power and moving away from its traditional rivals were among the other issues which made Iran to put the national interests at the top of its foreign policy (Bakhshayeshi 1996:115).

At this stage, the decision makers in the foreign policy of Iran realised that the other governments must also protect the national interests of their people and, therefore, tried to improve Iran’s relations with all countries irrespective of their political setups (Bakhshayeshi 1996:116). Efforts towards absorbing foreign investments, obtaining loans from the World Bank, liberalising trade and promoting the economic cooperation with the developed countries marked a new era in the foreign policy of Iran during this period (Dehshiri 2001:382).

The realistic and practical policies of Hashemi Rafsanjani brought about a political and social stability in Iran and pushed the economy of the country towards an open market. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of the Central Asian Republics, Iran tried to extract certain gains from these newly independent states and, at the same time, in order to curb the US influence in Central Asia and Caucasus, cooperated with Moscow. All these made Iran to dilute, to some extent the issue of the export of the revolution and concentrate on the economic cooperation with the world countries by accepting the guidelines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Dehshiri 2001:383). The Iranian leadership partially tried to improve their relations with Europe, prompted by the US agreement to release some $ 567 million of Iran’s frozen assets on one hand and the its willingness to pay
compensation to the family member of the victims of the Iranian Airbus shot down by the US forces in the Persian Gulf, on the other. Besides, Iran’s impartial stance on the second Persian Gulf War and Iran’s acceptance of the visit UN inspectors to verify the human rights situation in the country were the highlights of Iran’s pragmatic foreign policy during this period (Dehshiri 2001:383-384).

At this stage, issue of Salman Rushdie was followed at the bilateral and multilateral levels within the framework of the resolutions issued by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Relations with the freedom-seeking movements became selective and the political revival of the Silk Road was emphasised.

As a friendly country, the Islamic Republic of Iran tried to help resolve the internal issues of Tajikistan and the Qarabagh dispute between the Azerbaijan and the Armenian Republics and, while keeping a distance with the US, tried to adopt a conciliatory policy towards Japan, Europe and Russia, established friendly ties with Germany, France and Italy, and urged Canada to oppose the US trade policy on Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also adopted a constructive economic relationship with Japan and a conciliatory approach towards its neighbours such as Turkey and Pakistan within and outside of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) (Dehshiri 2001:381).

In pursuing its realistic and practical policies, Iran tried to improve its relations with the Arab word and, to this effect, opened negotiations with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, with whom Iran had no political relations till then. Hashemi Rafsanjani’s words indicated his efforts towards improving Iran’s friendly ties with the Arab world and the Persian Gulf states. According to Hashemi Rafsanjani, “respect to the territorial integrity and the social and religious values of other nations forms the basis of the foreign policy of Iran.” He also said, “This principle within the Persian Gulf means, we do not want to become a “gendarme” (influencer) in the region. Iran should not insult or threaten its neighbours or make them feel insecure. All of us must cooperate in improving the situation in the region” (Ramazani 1992:393-400).
Due to the bloody demonstration in Mecca in 1988, Iran’s relation with Saudi Arabia was cut off and two countries resumed their ties on 26 March 1991 only after the lengthy negotiations between their foreign ministers. These negotiations started on 1 October 1990 in New York and ended on 20 March 1991 in Muscat (Ramazani 1992:400-412).

Iran’s interest in active participation in the Summit meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Senegal in December 1991 was a significant development in this regard. For the first time since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran participated in the gathering of the Organisation at the highest level and President Rafsanjani headed the country’s delegation and his Foreign Minister took part in the foreign ministerial talks. Keeping the pace, Iran actively participated in the Jamiaat Conference in Cairo in 1994 (Eteshami 1999:134).

Therefore, the shift of the foreign policy of Iran from mere idealism to a pragmatic idealism made the leadership of this country to adopt policies to establish balance between the big powers, benefit from the political and economic rivalry between the European and Asian powers and the US and to increase the number of Iran’s trade partners, while keeping in mind their old strategies despite the fundamental international developments. Diversifying the sources of the foreign investments, multilateral cooperation in the United Nations, adopting a moderate approach towards the international system and promoting the bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation were among the top most priorities of the foreign policy of Iran during this period.

The pragmatic foreign policy of Hashemi Rafsanjani faced certain problems during his last years of tenure in office. The hostile policy of the US towards Iran and it’s definition of Iran as a militant player against the world order and a supporter of the international terrorism paved the ground for the idealists to criticise Rafsanjani’s reconciliatory and pragmatic policy and termed it as a reason for the “Damato Act” and the continuation of the US economic sanctions on Iran. The position of the group was boosted when the relations between Iran and the European Union, following an event called “Mykonos” (Ehteshami 1999:384-390), reached a nadir, following
which, the Pistachio Crisis surfaced in the relations between Iran and Europe and the West imposed a sanction on import of the Iranian pistachio on the pretext that the Iranian product contained a kind of poisonous fungi. The crisis made the idealists blame the US for adopting a hostile policy towards Iran and term any conciliatory approach toward the US and the Europe as a sort of compromise on the objectives of the Islamic regime (Ehteshami 1999:391-397).

Thereby, another chapter in the foreign policy of Iran was closed paving the way for a fresh one to open.

4. The Period of 1997-2005:

This period began with the victory of Mohammad Khatami in the 1997 Presidential Elections and lasted till the end of his tenure in office. The period witnessed a number of fundamental changes in the foreign policy of Iran, which would be discussed in detail in the chapters to follow.

Conclusion:

Foreign policy is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other States and for adjusting their own activities with the international environment. While the international relations include the relations among the governments, groups and individuals, the foreign policy is confined to the relations initiated and implemented by governments.

Preparing a foreign policy, in fact, is one of the responsibilities of a government which can be regarded as a kind of search for the external behaviour of a political unit based on the internal and external variables. Basically, every country has a number of fixed as well as variable principles in its foreign policy. The fixed principles are historically constant while the variable ones keep on changing with a change in the political system or the replacement of the authorities of the country.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 brought about a massive change within Iran influencing deeply the foreign policy of the country. Following the Revolution and establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran, the foreign policy of
Iran shifted from a pro-Western Policy to a “neither the West nor the East” one and the regime, from the very beginning, projected itself as an independent and quiet different one from those in both the West and the East.

The Islamic Revolution, in fact, converted Iran from a conservative system to an ideological and religious one bringing about major changes in its ties with the US, the Western countries and also the Arab nations in West Asia.

The foreign policy of Iran is based on rejection of any kind of suppression and oppression, establishment of peaceful relations with the non-hostile governments, non-interference in the internal affairs of the other countries, not giving any kind of commitment to any suppressing power, maintaining its full independence and territorial integrity and defending the rights of the Muslims. The policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to this end is implemented in different forms such as “exporting the revolution”, extending support to the “liberation movements” and promoting the “neither the West nor the East” tendencies.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, these slogans have been analysed in a number of ways and this has made the foreign policy of Iran subject to debate. Therefore, one can say that the foreign policy of Iran has been a stage for a confrontation between the realists and the idealists, gradually becoming more rational and closer to the theories of international relations.

Also, the foreign policy of Iran is a result of the complicated and multi-layer deliberations among the government and the non-government players. But, the Supreme Leader, the Legislature and the Executive are the main bodies in framing and implementing the same.

Finally, it can be observed that the Islamic Republic of Iran prefers, on a priority basis, to establish relations with four groups of countries i.e. 1- the neighbouring states, 2- the Muslim countries, 3- the Third World nations and 4- the countries which can meet Iran’s political, economic, social and military requirements.