

**FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICAL FACTIONS IN  
IRAN**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**

**BY  
GÜNEŞ MUHİP ÖZYURT**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
THE PROGRAM OF  
MIDDLE EAST STUDIES**

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Dr. Meliha Benli Altunışık  
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doç. Dr. Recep Boztemur  
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Dr. Meliha Benli Altunışık  
Supervisor

**Examining Committee Members**

Prof. Dr. Meliha Benli Altunışık (METU, IR) \_\_\_\_\_

Doç. Dr. Özlem Tür (METU, IR) \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Bayram Sinkaya (Atatürk Üniversitesi, IR) \_\_\_\_\_

**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

**Name, Last name: Güneş Muhip Özyurt**

**Signature :**

## ABSTRACT

### FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICAL FACTIONS IN IRAN

Özyurt, Güneş Muhip

MS, Department of Middle East Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık

September 2011, 122 Pages

The purpose of this study is to depict and analyze the foreign policy perspectives of political factions in Iran. The focus will be on the goals of the factions while the mechanics of the factional contention will be discussed only to the extent that it is related to this issue. The argument will be that the views of the factions with regards to foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) are determined by the needs of the domestic agenda of each faction namely its economic and cultural policies.

To develop the thesis, firstly the concept of factionalism will be reviewed within the context of Iranian politics. Secondly, the foreign policy perspectives of the factions in the first two and a half decades of the Islamic Republic will be outlined. Next, an account of the most recent factional positions regarding the foreign policy will be provided. To conclude, an analysis will be made to demonstrate the main arguments of the thesis.

**Keywords:** Iran, factionalism, foreign policy.

## ÖZ

### İRAN'DA SİYASİ HİZİPLERİN DIŞ POLİTİKA GÖRÜŞLERİ

Özyurt, Güneş Muhip

Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı

Tez yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık

Eylül 2011, 122 Sayfa

Bu çalışmanın amacı İran'daki siyasi hiziplerin dış politika görüşlerini betimlemek ve açıklamaktır. Çalışma, hiziplerin ereklere üzerinde odaklanacak; hizipler arası çekişmenin işleyişi ancak bu konuyla ilgili olduğu ölçüde tartışılacaktır. Hiziplerin, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti'nin dış politikasına yönelik görüşlerinin her hizipin içindeki amaçlarının, bir başka deyişle ekonomik ve kültürel politikalarının gerekleriyle ilişkili olduğu savunulacaktır.

Tez şu şekilde geliştirilecektir: İlk önce hizip kavramı İran'ın siyasi yapısı bağlamında ele alınacaktır. İkinci olarak, İslam Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk yirmi beş yılında hiziplerin dış politika görüşleri incelenecektir. Ardından hiziplerin dış politikaya yönelik en yakın dönemdeki tutumları işlenecektir. Sonuç olarak tezin ana savlarını göstermek için çözümleme yapılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İran, hizipler, dış politika.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I must thank Prof. Dr. Mustafa ecekler, Dean of Faculty of Literature at İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi, who accepted to become the guarantor for the scholarship I received during my graduate study. Having put himself under this burden, he is distinguished as the person who most contributed not only to the production of this humble master's thesis but also all other services I should do in the future.

I am thankful to my thesis supervisor Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık, thesis examination committee members Do.Dr. Özlem Tür and Dr. Bayram Sinkaya and Head of Department of Middle East Studies Do.Dr. Recep Boztemur for their advice and guidance.

I also thank faculty and friends who supported and helped me during my studies.

I thank TÜBİTAK for the scholarship I received during the first two years of my graduate study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ÖZ .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. AN OVERVIEW OF IRANIAN POLITICS .....	7
2.1 Factionalism .....	7
2.1.1 Which Factions? .....	9
2.2 Decision Making in Iran's Foreign Policy .....	13
2.2.1 The State System .....	15
2.2.2 The Supreme National Security Council .....	16
2.2.3 The Majlis .....	17
2.2.4 The President and the Foreign Minister .....	18
2.2.5 The Supreme Leader .....	19
2.2.6 Security Agencies .....	22
2.2.7 Parastatal Foundations .....	26
2.2.8 Pressure Groups .....	27
2.3 Conclusion: Contention but not Chaos .....	28
3. FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF FACTIONS UNTIL 2004 ..	30
3.1 Khomeini Era .....	30
3.1.1 Conservatives .....	32
3.1.2 The Left .....	34
3.1.3 Pragmatists .....	35
3.1.4 Khomeini's Ambiguity and Resolve .....	36
3.1.5 Khomeini's Legacy .....	41
3.2 Era of Reconstruction .....	42

3.2.1	The Left .....	44
3.2.2	Conservatives .....	46
3.2.3	Pragmatists .....	47
3.2.4	The Radical Faction .....	49
3.3	The Reform Era .....	51
3.3.1	Reformist Foreign Policy .....	53
3.3.2	Conservative Resistance .....	55
3.4	Conclusion .....	57
4.	FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF FACTIONS FROM 2004 TO 2010 .....	59
4.1	Introduction .....	59
4.1.1	Domestic Politics: Resurgence of the Principlists .....	59
4.1.2	9/11 and the coming of USA .....	63
4.1.3	The Nuclear Issue .....	67
4.1.4	Turn to East .....	70
4.2	Radicals' Foreign Policy .....	75
4.2.1	Radicals on USA .....	75
4.2.2	Radicals on Nuclear Issue .....	78
4.2.3	Radicals on Turn-to-East .....	81
4.3	Conservative Foreign Policy .....	83
4.3.1	Conservatives on USA .....	85
4.3.2	Conservatives on Nuclear Issue .....	88
4.3.3	Conservatives on Turn-to-East .....	90
4.4	Pragmatists' Foreign Policy .....	90
4.4.1	Pragmatists on USA .....	92
4.4.2	Pragmatists on Nuclear Issue .....	94
4.4.3	Pragmatists on Turn-to-East .....	97
4.5	Reformists' Foreign Policy .....	99
4.5.1	Reformists on USA .....	100
4.5.2	Reformists on Nuclear Issue .....	104
4.5.3	Reformists on Turn to East .....	106



5. CONCLUSION .....	109
5.1 Demystifying the Factions .....	109
5.2 Between East and West .....	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	116

## INTRODUCTION

Iran's conduct of foreign affairs since the Islamic revolution of 1979 can be called radical. Before the first anniversary of the revolution, the US embassy in the country was stormed and the embassy staff including high level diplomats were kept hostage for more than a year. Iran and USA have since had no official diplomatic relation, a state of affairs persisting despite the rise of the latter to the status of the only remaining superpower. The Islamic Republic under its founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini relentlessly extended a punitive war against Iraq for years after Saddam's invasion forces were repelled from Iranian soil and set out to export its revolutionary ideals to the neighboring Muslim countries by stirring up local insurgency movements. In 1989, Khomeini issued a religious edict commanding the execution of Salman Rushdie, a British author who had included offensive remarks about the Prophet in one of his novels. While Khomeini's fatwa would haunt the relations with the West for the next decade, Iran overlooked Islamic solidarity during the Gulf War and choose to condone the US led operation against Iraq. Iran seemingly hindered its own endeavor to mend ties with European states in early 1990's by assassinating Iranian political dissidents in Europe. When the reformist president Khatami took office, Europeans responded positively to the purported moderation by starting the "constructive dialogue" with Iran. Yet, USA ignored Khatami's openings and reckoned Iran with the axis of evil in the wake of 9/11 attacks. Finally, under the president Ahmadinejad, Iran took up an uncompromising attitude as demonstrated in the nuclear issue.

On the whole, the post-revolutionary Iran has been watched with wary eyes both by regional actors and by Western states interested in the Middle East. This was caused by Iran's recalcitrant and sometimes obscure manner as well as its location next to the Persian Gulf, the security of which is vital for the industrialized nations concerning the indispensable oil reserves it contains. Hence, the question of what the motives of the Islamic Republic might be in the foreign policy sphere has intrigued the minds of outside observers and sparked much discussion.

Notwithstanding the notion that the Iranian clergy was driven by a confrontational and monolithic Islamist ideology, a recurring theme in the range of ideas voiced about Iranian foreign policy since the revolution of 1979 has been the existence of a group of moderates or pragmatists within the ruling elite who were ready to normalize Iran's international ties. In the wake of the secret arms deals between USA and Iran in mid-1980's, which was publicized as Iran-Contra Affair, the incongruity between those who wanted to ease the friction with USA and those who wanted to export the revolution first received attention.<sup>1</sup> Hashemi Rafsanjani, one of Khomeini's favorite clerics and the speaker of parliament was believed to be the leading pragmatist behind the deals with USA. However, once the affair was exposed he was quick to humiliate the Americans by ridiculing their attempts to contact Iranian officials. Rafsanjani proved to be an advocate of détente in foreign policy during his two terms of presidency from 1989 to 1997 but his international reputation came under question when he was indicted by a German court in relation to the Mykonos Incident<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, he remained to be seen by western observers as "Iran's Pragmatic Face" to the extent that prior to the 2005 presidential elections, leading Iran expert Gary Sick suggested Rafsanjani would certainly start secret talks with USA should he take office again.<sup>3</sup> The expectation that Iran would moderate its hard-line standing in the international realm was at its peak during Khatami presidency, who initiated the discourse of dialogue of civilizations. Although Khatami's reform movement was frustrated by the conservative establishment, moderates were also discerned among the ranks of the conservatives. For example, Ali Larijani who worked with Ahmadinejad until 2007, quit his post of chief nuclear negotiator and came to be one of the critics of the president's foreign policy. Despite all the discussion about the presence of

---

<sup>1</sup>See for example Eric Hooglund "The Search for Iran's "Moderates" *MERIP Middle East Report*, No. 144, (Jan. - Feb., 1987), pp. 4-6

<sup>2</sup>In September 17, 1992, three prominent members of Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran and their translator were assassinated in Mykonos Restaurant in Berlin by operatives of the Iranian Intelligence Ministry. A number of Iranian officials including the president were indicted on April 10, 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Joe Klein, Iran's Pragmatic Face, *Time*, May 22, 2005

moderate elements within the elite, three decades after the revolution Iran remains to be the recluse of the Middle East.

The wishful thinking about the factional rivalry culminating in a less recalcitrant Iran has only been facilitated by the opaque and informal character of politics in the Islamic Republic. Indeed, prevalence of personal and at times fluctuating networks over stable and publicly visible organizations has been a fundamental feature of post-1979 Iranian politics. The feature in question is best demonstrated by the absence of officially recognized political parties whereby politicians would be expected to declare commitment to a concrete political agenda through membership. The revolutionary claim to advance a unitary ideology has definitely been a factor in the failure of party formation. Without political parties to represent the factions, there is less motivation to publicize diverging views and more leeway for individuals to move across the boundaries of different political groups. As a result, factional loyalties and political aspirations of individuals remain changeable and open to interpretation by outside observers leading to a discussion where political currents can be constructed according to expectations of the discussant.

Needless to say, understanding the different foreign policy views within the elite of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the reasons for this schism under an absolutist ideology that purports divine inspiration is necessary for demystifying the elusive nature of Iranian foreign policy.

Given this background, the aim of this thesis is to outline and analyze the foreign policy perspectives of the main political factions in Iran. The focus will be on the goals of the factions in the foreign policy sphere while other spheres of contention and the mechanics of factional rivalry will be discussed to the extent that they are relevant to this issue. In doing this, it will be acknowledged that although the factions are loose and fluid political coalitions, a group of core members for each faction can be isolated, whose statements and actions reflect the prevalent view within the faction. To avoid the misinterpretations mentioned above, membership of each faction will be determined based on the presence of confirmed formal or informal connections between persons claimed to belong to the same political current. Also, not all statements of these persons will be taken at face value

because the foreign policy discourse in Iran is often enveloped in ideological wording and some of the most confrontational statements in this regard are mere sloganeering with next to zero feasibility. Moreover, even when in control of key institutions, the factions may be restricted from fully realizing their foreign policy aspirations due to domestic pressures and inopportune international circumstances. Accordingly, the gap that exists between discourse and action is to be taken into account when evaluating the remarks and decisions of factions regarding the foreign policy.

The thesis consists of five chapters including this introduction and a conclusion.

The next chapter of this study presents a general profile of Iranian politics the notion of factionalism in the context of Iranian politics is discussed with references from previous works on the issue. Next, the intricate state system of Iran is described to give an institutional background for the policy formulation in the Islamic Republic.

The third chapter deals with the foreign policy perspectives of the factions in the first two and a half decades of the Islamic Republic and consists of three parts. In the first part, the origins of factions and Khomeini's ideological legacy will be discussed. As will be seen, the varying trends within Islamist political thought in Iran and Khomeini's policy of balancing the factions against each other instead of firmly standing behind one created a political legacy that granted legitimacy to a range of social and economic views, which would have meant different prospects about relations with the world. Yet, Khomeini was much less flexible in his confrontational posture in the international affairs, leaving the factions little leeway in articulating their foreign policy perspectives and paving the way for a tactless and truculent rhetoric. The second part is about foreign policy perspectives of the factions during Reconstruction Era, which coincides with the two presidential terms of Hashemi Rafsanjani and the third part deals with the foreign policy perspectives of factions during the Reform Era.

The third chapter scrutinizes the foreign policy perspectives of the factions in the post-reform period, which introduced a new arrangement of factions in Iranian politics and a return to tense relations with the West, both of which have continued

to the time this thesis is written. Four groups within the Iranian polity are examined. The first group is the radical wing of the Principlist faction (Osulgera) that consists of the circle of supporters of the president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The second one is the conservative wing of the Principlist faction that includes people such as Ali Larijani, Mohsen Rezai and Mohammed-Baqer Qalibaf who are critical of Ahmadinejad's confrontational foreign policy. The third is the pragmatist faction affiliated with the Kargozaran Party and Hashemi Rafsanjani. The fourth is the reformist faction symbolized by Mohammed Khatami. To delineate the general attitudes of the factions their views about four major issues in Iran's foreign relations are studied as cases. These issues are relations with USA, the nuclear issue and finally the relations with non-western powers such as Russia, China and India. Interviews, public speeches and remarks of the persons affiliated with the factions aired in Iranian and foreign media are used as main sources in this chapter, which intends to provide an account of the most recent factional positions regarding the foreign policy.

The conclusion includes an overall analysis of the views of the factions about the international relations. It will be argued that there are two factors that shape the foreign policy perspectives of the factions. Firstly, each faction seeks foreign policy goals that correspond to their goals in domestic politics. For instance, the pragmatists and reformists who emphasize economic liberalization see détente and rapprochement with the West as a condition to acquire the necessary technological and financial resources, while the radicals who see the Western cultural influence as detrimental to the regime shun such a policy. Secondly, to secure legitimacy in Iranian political scene, factions have to remain at least in rhetoric loyal to Khomeini's legacy expressed in the revolutionary motto, "neither east nor west, Islamic Republic". For the supporters of the president Ahmadinejad this is not a problem since the confrontational foreign policy of this group is already in line with the ideals of the revolution. However, conservative, pragmatist and reformist factions face the dilemma of balancing the needs of their domestic political visions with need to comply with the deeds of Khomeini. Finally, the argument will be linked to the point made in the second chapter that the Islamist ideology molded

by Khomeini throughout his leadership constricts legitimate foreign policy options while it allows for a larger range of policies in the domestic scene.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN OVERVIEW OF IRANIAN POLITICS

This chapter will deal with the politics of Iran to reveal how the foreign policy is formulated in the factionalized political environment of Iranian state. The first part will review the phenomenon of elite factionalism in Iran and attempt to discern the existing factions. The second part will discuss the formal institutions as well as the informal organizations that are involved in Iran's foreign policy.

#### 2.1 Factionalism

An important feature of politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran is the intra-elite disagreements over a broad range of issues regarding domestic and foreign affairs of the country. The divergent viewpoints transcend individual incidents and stem from fundamental differences about which direction the country and the revolution should be headed for. In 2002, Mehdi Moslem observed:

“More than twenty years after the revolution, the very essence, objectives and the modus operandi of the regime are still being contested and debated by the leadership.”<sup>4</sup>

Political figures, organizations and movements tied together by commitment to a certain vision of the Islamic Republic constitute the factions. Their contention to push their political agenda and to control the state is called factionalism. Lack of elite uniformity is often considered to portend disintegration for authoritarian regimes. The persistence of Iranian regime has been striking in this regard. Arang Keshaverzian draws attention to the fact that Iranian state is pervaded by parallel and loosely connected sets of institutions with overlapping mandates that create multiple centers of power thus making it impossible to completely remove any of the factions from the state. He explains the absence of authoritarian breakdown in Iran by stressing that no faction is totally estranged and forced to defect to the

---

<sup>4</sup> Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), p. 2



anti-regime camp. As enduring partners in the “fragmented autocracy” that is the Islamic Republic, “divided they rule and survive”.<sup>5</sup>

Jason Brownlee on the other hand claims that no matter how stable it may look, the Iranian regime is bound to collapse as a result of the factional rivalry. Drawing his thesis from new-institutionalist literature, Brownlee points out that absence of a central party structure in authoritarian regimes will result in elite defection and thus reducing the support base of the regime. Because of intense factionalism, the Islamic Republic Party in Iran was rendered useless by mid-1980’s and was subsequently closed down. Brownlee, suggests that this led to the alienation of the Leftist faction in 1990’s and the rise of the reform movement. This first political opening however was wasted by the reformist politicians -i.e. Khatami- who chose to avoid direct confrontation with the regime.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the question whether factional rivalry is to lead to a dissolution of Iranian regime, there is a general perception that factionalism results in incoherent policies. For instance, Lackel argues that political tensions caused by factional competitions inherent in Iran’s government institutions is a major obstacle for through reforms in various fields.<sup>7</sup>

Factionalism has also had effects on Iran’s foreign policy. In 1994, a Western analyst commented on the issue:

Iran's foreign policy has been in complete disarray for a long period of time mainly due to the existence of extreme factionalism within the government and the regime. On the one hand, you have relative pragmatists - and I stress relative, people like Rafsanjani - and you have ideologues on the other hand...<sup>8</sup>

While to call it “at disarray” is definitely an exaggeration, Iran’s foreign policy indeed has been far from being steadfast. It has rather been marked with

---

<sup>5</sup> Arang Keshaverzian, Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran, in M.P. Posusney and M.P. Angrist (eds.), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005)

<sup>6</sup> Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 157-181

<sup>7</sup> Eva Patricia Lakel, (2008), *The Iranian Political Elite, State and Society Relations, and Foreign Relations Since the Islamic Revolution* (Doctoral Dissertation), Academisch Proefschrift Faculteit der Maatschappij en Gedragwetenschappen Universiteit van Amsterdam

<sup>8</sup> "Interview with Graham Fuller," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. II, 1993, No. 3, p. 130

intermittent periods of moderation and radicalization depending on the faction that controlled the decision making organs at the time. The factions pursue different ends in the international relations because they represent different social and economic aspirations that implicate certain positions in the international scene.

### **2.1.1 Which Factions?**

Before going on to name the factions that are studied in this thesis, it should be mentioned that there are a number of factors that obfuscate the factional borders in Iranian polity.

First of all, although factionalism is acknowledged in Iran, Iranian elite tends to downplay the factional divergences by stressing a delusive notion of unity transcending the political currents. In 1996, Supreme Leader Khamanei stated, “The classification of the domestic groups into left, right, modern, traditional... was a foreign plot to destroy the unity within Iran”.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of every election religious and political leaders concentrate on praising the voter turnout as a sign of people’s loyalty to the regime, rather than comment on the election outcome per se. Regardless of factional affiliation political groups identify themselves with common revolutionary concepts like Hezbollah (Party of God), Mobariz (Militant) and Hatt-e Imam (Imam’s Line). In some cases, rival political organizations have almost identical names such as the conservative Jame-ye Ruhaniyat-e Mobarez and the reformist Majme-ye Rouhaniyoun-e Mobarez (MRM), both simply meaning ‘association of militant clerics’. When fissures go deep those who disrupt the unity are condemned as foreign agents. Consider the way Hossein Hamadani, the IRGC commander of Tehran refers to the anti-regime demonstrators of the Green Movement:

We will not in any way allow what is called “Green Tide” to show its presence. Of course, all our people are the Green Tide (!), but we will

---

<sup>9</sup>Moslem, p. 238

not allow that green tide, which has a foreign color and odor to show its presence.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, while four factions will be discussed in this thesis, Iranian media and politicians refer to only two factions (cengah), the most recent labels for which are the reformist faction (cengah-e eslahtaleb) and principlist faction (cengah-e osulgera). The conservative-principlists and the radical-principlists, which espouse different policies, do not seem to acknowledge that they are two separate factions. At the inaugural session of the Broad Principlist Coalition, which was the main conservative-principlist organization in 2008 parliamentary elections, its secretary Hossein Mozaffer said, “We are in line with the various Principlist currents and our differences are only occasional. Because of this, we are trying to put forward a (separate) list (of candidates) so that the Principlist forces will be well-covered and in fact our emphasis is on broadening the Principlist base.”<sup>11</sup> As for the pragmatists epitomized in Hashemi Rafsanjani, they are not regarded to belong to a faction. According to Hussein Marashi:

Hashemi (Rafsanjani) does not belong to any of the factions and at the same time he does belong. That means he agrees with the reasonable and logical actions of the reformist faction and also supports the moderate actions of the principlist faction. He is literally a person beyond the factions.<sup>12</sup>

This beyond-the-factions posture is conceived as ambiguity by critics of pragmatists such as Majid Mohtashami who heads a small reformist party. Mostashami’s sarcastic remark on pragmatist Hassan Rouhani sheds light on how factions are perceived inside Iran:

Considering Mr. Hassan Rouhani’s past, he is neither a reformist nor a principlist... Perhaps he is affiliated with a third faction that we are not aware of...<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Etemaad, 31 Jan 2010

<sup>11</sup> Noandish News, February 20, 2008 [www.noandish.com/com.php?id=14207](http://www.noandish.com/com.php?id=14207) viewed on May 28, 2010

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Hussein Marashi, Fars News Agency, December 15, 2007 <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8609120358#sounds> viewed on March 15, 2010

<sup>13</sup> Rajanews, February 20, 2008, <http://rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=16964> viewed on May 28, 2010

Thirdly, there are no real political parties in Iran, a fact that severely restricts the ability of factions to express themselves in a coherent and organized manner as well as blurring the accountability of the candidates to the electorate. Actually, in 1981 a party law was enacted in IRI but it was not before 1989 that the commission stipulated by the law was formed to issue permits to would-be political parties. Even after that, the commission avoided sanctioning any politically relevant parties and instead occupied itself with giving permits to an assortment of entities such as the Islamic Association of Athletes, Association of Industrial Hygiene Experts and the West Azerbaijan Association of Graduates.<sup>14</sup> While there are various quasi-party organizations that declare their endorsement of particular candidates,<sup>15</sup> votes in elections are cast for individuals who once elected have no obligation to act in accordance with the organization that endorsed them. Even more confounding is that many a time same candidate can be placed on the lists of organizations that represent contradicting views.

Finally, the foreign policy perspectives of the factions and their positions vis-à-vis each other's views are prone to change over time. The terms like "hardliner" and "moderate" fail to effectively describe the factions in Iran because a certain faction that prefers détente with other countries at a certain time and context may at a different occasion come up with policies that would inhibit Iran's foreign relations. These terms therefore will only be used to describe the policy preference at a juncture rather than name any of the factions.

Despite the confusing aspects of Iranian politics, a review of the Iranian media and the literature on factionalism in Iran reveals that the Iranian political elite are divided into four discernible groups. However, these groups have been named differently in various sources and sometimes have been subsumed under another group. For instance Baktiari in his study of factionalism in Iranian parliament until 1994 mentions a schism between statist "Maktabi" and pro-private-sector

---

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Fairbanks, Theocracy versus democracy: Iran considers political parties, in Ali Mohammadi (Ed.), *Iran Encountering Globalization Problems and Prospects*, (London, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003)

<sup>15</sup>For convenience of expression, these organizations will be referred to as parties throughout the thesis.

“Hojjatiya” factions until 1983.<sup>16</sup> For the period between 1983 and 1986 he refers to these factions as Radicals and Rafsanjani faction. After 1986, the factions are called Radicals and Anti-radicals while Rafsanjani is portrayed as manipulating their contention to further his own agenda. Banuazizi on the other hand mentions radicals and conservatives until 1989 and radicals, pragmatists and hardliners for the post-Khomeini era.<sup>17</sup> In mid-1990s an Iranian political magazine *Asr-e Ma* used the terms ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ to describe the factions and divided the Right into traditional and modern. This usage was quickly adopted by Western observers of Iranian politics and bringing a level of uniformity to the discussion. All sources written after 1996 agree on naming three of the factions: The Left, which initially espoused a closed economy with an anti-Western foreign policy but later became the most liberal faction; the Traditional Right interested in a trade-based economy with little relation but also no direct confrontation with the West and the Modern Right eager to privatize the economy, develop international trade and to attract foreign investment. Yet, also in mid-1990’s a fourth faction stepped onto Iran’s political scene. A statist, egalitarian economy with a total rejection of the West both culturally and politically was the agenda of this faction embodied in the pressure group Ansar-e Hezbollah and the short-lived party called Union for the Defense of the Values of the Islamic Revolution. Sources assign to this faction a variety of names including Radical Right,<sup>18</sup> Traditional Left,<sup>19</sup> ‘New’ Left<sup>20</sup> and Neo-Fundamentalists.<sup>21</sup>

With the election of Mohammad Khatami to presidency in 1997, the members of the former Leftist faction backed by acolytes of Rafsanjani began to call themselves the Reformists. The Traditional Right favored by the Supreme Leader

<sup>16</sup>Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, (University Press of Florida, 1996, Gainesville)

<sup>17</sup> Ali Banuazizi "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance ", *Middle East Report*, No. 191, (Nov. - Dec., 1994), pp. 2-8

<sup>18</sup> A. A. Saeidi, “Dislocation of the State and the Emergence of Factional Politics in Post-Revolutionary Iran”, *Political Geography*, Vol. 21 (2002) pp. 525–546

<sup>19</sup>Sussan Sivoshi, “Cultural Policies and the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book Publication”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Nov., 1997), pp. 509-530

<sup>20</sup>Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? : the Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*, (Washington, DC : Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000)

<sup>21</sup>Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002)

and incorporating radicals of the Ansar-e Hezbollah brand was named the Conservatives (Mohafazakaran). However, it appears that the opponents of the Reformists did not espouse the word Conservative because beginning with 2004 parliamentary elections they introduced the word “Principlist” to define themselves. Until 2009 presidential elections the labels “Reformist” and “Principlist” were used by Iranians to describe the two sectors of the political spectrum.

The names used for the factions in this thesis are intended both to achieve correspondence with the sources and to clearly display factional continuity. In line with this, the parties and individuals affiliated with Hashemi Rafsanjani are referred to as Pragmatists. The faction that espoused a statist economy and a hard-line foreign policy until 1996 is called the Left while its rather liberal reincarnation led by former President Khatami is called the Reformist Faction. The line that stems from traditionalist, pro-private-sector clerics and merchants and is now represented by three prominent figures Ali Larijani, Mohsen Rezaei and Mohammed-Baqer Qalibaf is referred to as Conservative-Principlist or Conservative Faction. Finally, President Ahmadinejad’s circle and its supporters among the clergy and IRGC constitute the Radical-Principlists or Radicals. In some parts, Radicals and Conservatives may together be termed as Principlists since for long periods these two factions were in close cooperation.

## **2.2 Decision Making in Iran’s Foreign Policy**

The political factions in Iran have different foreign policy perspectives but these differences do not exist in a vacuum. To comprehend the roots of factionalism and its effects on Iran’s foreign policy, it is necessary to have an understanding of the political structure through which the policy is produced. In the following part therefore the government of Islamic Republic of Iran will be scrutinized to identify the formal and informal institutions and actors that are involved in the foreign policy formulation process. Before going on to describe them in detail two points about Iranian politics should be mentioned however.

One point about the political system in Iran is that when scrutinizing it, the existence of informal networks should be considered as well as the formal configuration of government institutions. The informal connections include kinship, friendship; common educational, occupational or revolutionary experience and patronage relations. In a political environment where bureaucratization is weak and true party formation is lacking such connections provide an alternate conduit for flow of information and maintenance of control as well as reinforcing the links between people with similar political views. Indeed, in many cases members of the same political faction have connections additional to political commitment. For example, the reformist President Khatami's two brothers, Mohammad Reza Khatami and Ali Khatami were both reformists.<sup>22</sup> Hussein Marashi, the speaker and onetime secretary of the pragmatist Kargozaran Party is a relative to Hashemi Rafsanjani.<sup>23</sup> The conservative-principlist Ali Larijani whose father was a prominent cleric, still has strong links in the seminary city of Qum, which he reportedly employed to lobby against Ahmadinejad pending 2009 presidential elections.<sup>24</sup> Ahmadinejad on the other hand has his own circle of associates, including alumni of Iran University of Science and Technology, his colleagues in Ardabil local government and most importantly his comrades in IRGC.<sup>25</sup>

Another aspect of politics in Iran is the fluidity of rules and conventions that regulate the behavior of institutions and individuals who man them. The influence of agencies and offices changes over time, often depending on the incumbent. The changing relationship between Presidency and Supreme Leadership is instructive in this regard. When elected to the office in 1989, Supreme Leader Ali Khamanei was an insignificant and insecure figure occupying a powerful post, while Hashemi Rafsanjani who was elected to the constitutionally secondary post of presidency was influential and well-connected. Consequently, the Leader was in

---

<sup>22</sup> Sami Oğuz, Ruşen Çakir, *Hatemi'nin İmanı*, (İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p. 200

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 197

<sup>24</sup> Walter Posch, Prospects for Iran's 2009 Presidential Elections, *The Middle East Institute Policy Brief*, No:24, June 2009 p. 7

<sup>25</sup> Ali Alfoneh, Assessing Ahmadinejad's Closed Circle, <http://www.aei.org/docLib/JIAA-2010-01-26.pdf>

no position to overbear the President. Khamanei at this stage concentrated on building his power by developing a network of representatives in every government agency and other patronage links. He was still cautious in 1998, when he visited Tehran University in the wake of pro-democracy student demonstrations and talked about his rejection of violence and his approval of political party formation.<sup>26</sup> However, after the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) proved their loyalty to Khamanei by quashing the student demonstrations in 1999, the Supreme Leader became increasingly assertive initiating a crackdown on reformist media in 2000 and eventually exhausting the President Khatami's attempts of democratization. By the end of Khatami's term, it had become evident that the Supreme Leader was above the President. This did not make Ahmadinejad a weak president though, because he enjoyed strong connections with IRGC and he did not have a democratic vision that could bring him into conflict with Khamanei. As for the post-Khamanei era, the place of the Leader in the system will vary on the person in office. An imposing and high-ranking cleric could become an autocrat in this post. On the other hand, a weak cleric brought to office with the blessing of IRGC could easily become a ceremonial leader in a military dictatorship.

### **2.2.1 The State System**

The Islamic Republic is a unique system of government. The core principle of this system is the juxtaposition of a clerical hierarchy topped by the office of Supreme Leader with institutions akin to those of a modern democratic state such as parliament and presidency. The contradiction of theocratic-elitist and popular-republican government organs is further complicated by a web of clerical and non-clerical councils, the presence of the charitable religious foundations with huge economic assets on the fringes of the state authority and a multitude of security forces. The result is a decision making structure that not only seems obscure to the

---

<sup>26</sup>Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? : the Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*, (Washington, DC : Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p. 185



outsiders but also at times stirs controversy among its own political elite as to who has the real mandate to make various decisions.<sup>27</sup> Concerning the foreign policy however, the possibility of disorder in decision making has been avoided by establishing of a Supreme National Security Council.

### **2.2.2 The Supreme National Security Council**

The main government organ that formulates Iran's foreign policy is the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). Article 176 of the constitution describes the functions of this body as follows:

1. Determining the defense and national security policies within the framework of general policies determined by the Leader.
2. Coordination of activities in the areas relating to politics, intelligence, social, cultural and economic fields in regard to general defense and security policies.
3. Exploitation of materialistic and intellectual resources of the country for facing the internal and external threats.

According to the same article the members of the council include the heads of three branches of the government, chief of the Supreme Command Council of the Armed Forces, the officer in charge of the planning and budget affairs, two representatives nominated by the Leader, ministers of foreign affairs, interior, and intelligence, a minister related with the subject, and the highest ranking officials from the Armed Forces and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

SNSC works as a forum where different branches of the state are represented and consensus can be achieved on policies about vital issues and be implemented in a consistent way. In a political environment ridden with factionalism and complicated by a plethora of security institutions, the importance of SNSC for providing inter-agency coherence is paramount. For instance, during 1998 crisis with Afghanistan SNSC adopted a reasonable policy in the face of the bellicose

---

<sup>27</sup>Arıkan has discussed the inherent conflict between religious and popularly elected parts of the Iranian state in detail. See Pınar Arıkan, (2005), Uneasy Coexistence: "Islamism vs. Republicanism" Debate in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Master's Thesis), Middle East Technical University.

elements in security agencies. Capturing the city of Mazar-e Sharif in 1998, Taliban massacred many Shias among them a number of Iranian diplomats. IRGC, which probably was already providing weapons to Iran's allies in Afghanistan, favored a retaliation that could lead to a war but it had to submit to the SNSC decision of controlled escalation, which also received the approval of the Leader.<sup>28</sup> SNSC gained much salience during talks over Iran's nuclear program. The secretary of the council has also been acting as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator. The post was occupied by the pragmatist Hassan Rowhani until August 2005 when the newly elected president Ahmadinejad appointed the relatively hard-line Ali Larijani as the chief negotiator. However, the president's uncompromising stance in the nuclear issue eventually put the two at odds resulting in the resignation of Larijani in October 2007 and his replacement with Saeed Jalili.

### 2.2.3 The Majlis

The Iranian parliament (Majlis-e Shura-ye Islami) is elected through direct popular vote for a term of four years. As of 2008, it consists of 290 deputies. In addition to its primary function as the legislative body, Majlis is also responsible for approving the annual state budget, ratifying the international treaties and giving vote of confidence -or no confidence- to cabinet members.<sup>29</sup>

From the beginning, the Majlis of IRI has always been scene to substantial discussion about various policy issues and served as an effective medium for the articulation different factional perspectives.<sup>30</sup> It is observed that Majlis is an institution to be reckoned with in Iranian politics rather than one subordinate to the agenda of the government at large. For instance, the principlist dominated Majlis that was formed after February 2004 parliamentary elections vehemently resisted

---

<sup>28</sup>Frederic Wehrey, Jerrold D. Green, Brian Nichiporuk, Alireza Nader, Lydia Hansell, Rasool Nafisi, S. R. Bohandy, *The Rise of the Pasdaran Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, (RAND Corporation, 2009), p. 24 and p. 71

<sup>29</sup>Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? : the Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*, (Washington, DC : Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.58

<sup>30</sup>For a coverage of factionalism in Iranian Parliament see, Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, (University Press of Florida, 1996, Gainesville)

the suspension of uranium enrichment that was in effect at the time. Arguments against suspension by delegates were raised in parliamentary sessions but more importantly the newly elected hard-line Majlis Speaker Haddad Adel declared his unwillingness to get the Additional Protocol ratified, which stipulated closer cooperation of Iran with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>31</sup> In addition to its fervent debates, Majlis also has a more direct say in Iran's foreign policy through the Speaker, who sits in SNSC sessions as the head of the legislative branch.

#### **2.2.4 The President and the Foreign Minister**

The president who acts as the head of the cabinet is also directly elected by the people every four years. The ministers in the cabinet are nominated by the president and each must be approved by the parliament while the vice-presidents are appointed by the president without the need for approval of the parliament. The vice-presidents include the heads of the Central Bank, the budget and planning body<sup>32</sup> and the Atomic Energy Organization (AEO).<sup>33</sup>

As long as the Supreme Leader does not decide to veto his decisions, the president stands as the person with the greatest part in formulating Iran's foreign policy. He not only presides over the SNSC but also nominates or appoints a substantial number of its members including the secretary of SNSC. Moreover, as the head of the cabinet, the president is in charge of the diplomatic and economic relations of the country, which are not directly related to the security issues dealt with by the SNSC. For example, the President Khatami paid several visits to European countries to alleviate Iran's international isolation and to secure loans and investment. President Ahmadinejad on the other hand concentrated his diplomatic initiatives on Asia and Latin America, presumably in order to find alternate trade

---

<sup>31</sup> Tehran's Demons Revisited, *Asia Times*, June 26, 2004

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/FF26Ak03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FF26Ak03.html) viewed on May 18, 2010

<sup>32</sup> Named Plan and Budget Organization until 2000, Management and Planning Organization until 2007, currently Office of Strategic Planning and Supervision

<sup>33</sup> Sami Oğuz, Ruşen Çakır, *Hatemi'nin İrani*, (İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p. 44

partners and allies to counter the international sanctions imposed on Iran. The President's top aide in such efforts is the foreign minister.

The President nominates the Foreign Minister and appoints the ambassadors on the Minister's recommendation. Functioning as the diplomatic arm of the government, the Foreign Ministry has generally been more of a policy implementer than a formulator.<sup>34</sup> Still, this is not to mean that it does not have an inclination. In fact, until recent years outside observers used to consider the Foreign Ministry as a stronghold of moderation in Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>35</sup> This was in line with the foreign policy agendas of both Rafsanjani and Khatami but under the presidency of Ahmadinejad a purge was initiated in the ministry whereby senior staff was forced to quit or accept the Principlist agenda.<sup>36</sup> The Centre for Strategic Studies, a think-tank headed by Hassan Rouhani and affiliated with Hashemi Rafsanjani has become a refuge for the dismissed diplomats.<sup>37</sup>

### **2.2.5 The Supreme Leader**

Velayat-e Faqih, the political theory developed by Khomeini as a reinterpretation on the Shia doctrine stipulates that the ultimate power in politics reside with the clergy. The post of the Supreme Leader is based on this theory. As the highest office in the Islamic Republic of Iran, it must be occupied by a cleric. Ali Khamanei has been the Supreme Leader since the death of Khomeini in 1989. The duties of the Supreme Leader as specified in the Article 110 of the constitution include, delineating and supervising the general policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, resolving the deadlocks between government organs, declare war, mobilize and assume command of the armed forces and appointment of the following:

---

<sup>34</sup> Jalil Roshandel, Evolution of the Decision Making Process in Iranian Foreign Policy, in Eric Hooglund (ed.), *Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution Political and Social Transition in Iran since 1979*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002) p. 131

<sup>35</sup> For example, İpek Çalışlar, Oral Çalışlar; *İran Bir Erkek Diktatörlüğü*, (İstanbul: Gendaş Kültür Yayınları, 2004) p. 6 and pp. 43-46

<sup>36</sup> Ali Ansari, *Iran Under Ahmadinejad The Politics of Confrontation*, (Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge, 2007) p. 73

<sup>37</sup> Farideh Farhi, Iran's "Security Outlook", *Middle East Report Online*, 9 July 2007 <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero070907.html>

1. Six clerical members of the Guardian Council
2. Head of Judiciary
3. Head of the state radio and television body
4. Chiefs of the Army, The Revolutionary Guard and the joint staff.

Furthermore, Khamanei has developed a network of representatives present in ministries, security forces, the cultural centers in Iranian embassies abroad, religious foundations and finally in major provincial mosques as Friday prayer preachers. This army of supervisors, which was estimated in 1997 to number two thousands,<sup>38</sup> provides Khamanei with considerable clout over social, economic and political life in the country. Particularly, the affiliation with the religious foundations (bonyads) is believed to be a major source of cash for the Leader, the extent and uses of which remain unknown to public.<sup>39</sup>

Although it is a constitutional office with a defined mandate, in practice the limits of the Leader's power are nebulous. Conventionally, the Supreme Leader's decisions are unquestionable and he is able to interfere in the country's affairs the way he sees fit, though this is a right not so often used. For example, in August 2000 a parliament bill meant to attenuate the restrictions on the press was suspended when the Leader issued a missive to the parliament that disapproved of the amendment.<sup>40</sup> More recently in May 2009, upon Khamanei's order, the president's decision to replace the head of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization and to subordinate the body to the tourism committee was negated.<sup>41</sup> Not surprisingly, those who dare to argue with the Supreme Leader face severe penalties. A prime example is the case of Ayatollah Montazeri. Once the right hand man of Khomeini, Montazeri had to endure six years of strict house arrest after his criticism of Khamanei in 1997. In another incident, the Supreme Leader is known

---

<sup>38</sup>Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran*,p.48

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. p. 50

<sup>40</sup>Hamshahri , August 7, 2007; <http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/hamnews/1379/790517/siasi.htm> viewed on May 29, 2010

<sup>41</sup>Guardian, May 4, 2009; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/8488925> viewed on May 29, 2010

to have allowed his brother Hadi Khamanei to be beaten brutally by pro-regime militia, after Hadi Khamanei criticized him.<sup>42</sup>

Wielding extensive political clout, the Supreme Leader has also the last say over the country's foreign affairs. Article 176 of the constitution states that the decisions of the SNSC will be effective after the confirmation by the Leader. However, Khamanei has apparently been using his power in a coordinative way rather than dictate a rigid foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> For example, he has not directly intervened in the shift in Iran's nuclear policy in the past few years. Although, the three consecutive nuclear negotiators have varied noticeably in their tendency to give ground vis-à-vis western pressures to suspend the nuclear program, Khamanei criticized none of them and the bulk of his comments on the issue consisted of clichés stressing the peaceful ends of Iran's nuclear program<sup>44</sup> and Iran's inalienable right to develop nuclear technology.<sup>45</sup> While Khamanei did at times stand behind Ahmadinejad administration's firm stance to continue the nuclear program,<sup>46</sup> his remarks were the reification of a policy that was already under way. There is no reason to believe that he favors Ahmadinejad's nuclear policy over that of former nuclear negotiator Rouhani as he did not object when Rouhani under the presidency of Khatami decided to suspend the uranium enrichment in 2003 and 2004 and when Ahmadinejad sacked Rouhani in 2005, Khamanei appointed him as his own representative in SNSC. Likewise, Khamanei remained silent on the eve of 2009 presidential elections when Ahmedinejad's attacks at the foreign policy of former administrations sparked fierce debate.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Karim Sajdadpour, *Reading Khamanei The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader*, (Carnagy Endowment for International Peace, 2008), p. 8

<sup>43</sup>Lionel Beehner, Iran's Multifaceted Foreign Policy, April 7, 2006;

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/10396/>

<sup>44</sup> See, Iran's Religious Leader Says Nuclear Program is Peaceful, *The New York Times*, June 3, 2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/03/world/africa/03iht-04iran.13441821.html> viewed on May 29, 2010

<sup>45</sup> See, Iran Leader Asserts Nuclear Right, BBC, January 8, 2007

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6242365.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6242365.stm) viewed on May 29, 2010

<sup>46</sup> See, Khamenei Hails 'Nuclear Win', BBC, 26 Feb 2008,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7264636.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7264636.stm) viewed on May 29, 2010

<sup>47</sup> For Ahmedinejad's attacks on the opposition foreign policy, see Ahmedinejad reviews policy of compromise, *Press TV*, 31 May 2009,

<http://www.presstv.ir/classic/detail.aspx?id=96618&sectionid=351020101> viewed on May 29, 2010

Khamanei's limited involvement in foreign policy debate can be explained with his general attitude to remain outside the mundane political bickering, which would mean to further risk bringing his legitimacy as the Supreme Leader into question. Indeed, despite the vast power granted to him by his post, since the inception of his Leadership, Khamanei has been concerned with his own legitimacy deficit. Khamanei hardly enjoys a fraction of the charisma and popularity of Khomeini who rose as the natural leader of the revolution and unlike Khomeini who was one of the highest ranking clerics of his time, Khamanei's credentials as a religious scholar are lacking, a fact he acknowledged by calling himself "a truly minor seminarian".<sup>48</sup> Not surprisingly, even after years of repression by regime proponents, the doyens of the clergy continued to tacitly disapprove of his position.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is quite likely that Khamanei wants to use his political credit selectively by primarily concentrating on issues that are directly related to preservation of his authority.

### **2.2.6 Security Agencies**

Three security agencies have influence over Iran's foreign policy: The army (Artesh), the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). On the whole, these institutions have two channels through which to affect the country's relations with the outside world. Firstly, they influence the official decisions through their representation in decision-making bodies such as the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) and the Cabinet or through feedbacks and consultation provided to state officials such as the Supreme Leader. Secondly, they may decide to act independently from other government institutions by carrying out clandestine operations or supporting non-state actors in other countries, an option that applies to IRGC and MOIS rather than the Artesh.

---

<sup>48</sup> Khamanei's inaugural address as Supreme Leader, quoted in Sajdadpour, *Reading Khamanei*, p. 6

<sup>49</sup> Buchta, pp. 86-98

Artesh is mainly concerned with minimizing risks to national security and it would be a cogent assertion to call it the most realist security agency of Iran. It is also the least vociferous one. To push its agenda it depends on official conduits, mainly the discussions in the SNSC and it is less likely to develop and use behind-the-scenes connections to lobby for policy proposals.<sup>50</sup>

Artesh was tolerated but scorned by the Islamic regime early on after the revolution because it was seen as a leftover from the Shah's coercive apparatus and a potential source of royalist backlash to the new order. With the ascendancy of pragmatism in Iranian politics in 1990's, the Artesh's fortunes turned. Both Rafsanjani and Khatami favoured the Artesh and preferred its professional and cautious attitude to the revolutionary zeal of the IRGC. According to a 2001 study of Iranian security policy, the Artesh had at the time become more influential in foreign policy formulation than the IRGC.<sup>51</sup>

MOIS is tasked with collecting intelligence pertinent to national security and accomplishing various covert missions. It is represented by the Minister of Intelligence and Security in the SNSC and the Cabinet and thus contributes to formal decision making. In addition, MOIS is informally linked to regime's principlist inner circle. A special law stipulates the minister to be a cleric, ensuring control by the religious establishment.<sup>52</sup> More importantly, its cadres are recruited from the graduates of Madrase-ye Haqqani, an isolated seminary in Qum presided by Guardian Council secretary Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, who as will be seen in following chapters espouses radical policies similar to those of president Ahmadinejad. The graduates of the same seminary serve in the Special Clerical Court, an extra-constitutional body used by the Supreme Leader Khamanei to discipline dissident clerics.<sup>53</sup>

The major effect of MOIS on Iran's foreign policy used to come from its operations against Iranian dissidents residing outside Iran's borders. Its most

---

<sup>50</sup> Daniel L. Byman, Shahrām Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Jerrold D. Green; *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-revolutionary Era*, (RAND. 2001), p. 28

<sup>51</sup> *Iran's Security Policy*, pp. 28-29

<sup>52</sup> Buchta, p. 166

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



notorious deed in this regard is the assassination of Kurdish opposition leaders in Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992. Mykonos incident resulted in a crisis in Iran's relations with Europe, when in 1997 a German court implicated that the murders had taken place with the consent of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamanei and President Rafsanjani. The role of MOIS in Iran's foreign policy was restrained significantly during Khatami's term. In 1999, after it was revealed that MOIS had been involved in what is known as the chain murders against reformist intellectuals, Khamanei had to accept the reformist Ali Yunesi to replace Dorri-Najafabadi as the Minister of Intelligence and Security. Ali Yunesi pledged loyalty to Khatami's policies and promised reform in MOIS.<sup>54</sup> MOIS has since abandoned its assassination policy and because it was seen by Khamanei as an institution lost to the reformists, its influence has diminished in favor of IRGC. Under Ahmedinejad administration, MOIS arrested Hossein Mousavian who was a former member of the nuclear negotiation team and a pragmatist close to Rouhani and Rafsanjani, for charges of espionage on behalf of foreigners.<sup>55</sup>

IRGC was established in 1979 by a decree of Khomeini with the intention of protecting the Islamist grip on power against rival political currents and to balance out the monarchist Artesh. An army in itself with its own land, naval, air forces and intelligence service, the praetorian guard of the Islamic Republic represents the radical-principlist core of the regime that gives weight to the principles of the revolution more than the national interest. Rahim Safavi, a former commander of IRGC once said, "The IRGC has no geographical border. The Islamic Revolution is the border of the IRGC."<sup>56</sup> In line with this, IRGC has from the beginning been the proponent and implementer of export of the revolution. For instance, IRGC elements dispatched to Lebanon in 1982 were instrumental in founding Lebanese Hezbollah.

Similar to other security agencies, the official channel for the IRGC to participate in foreign policy formulation is the SNSC. Also, IRGC can influence Iran's

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. pp. 163-164

<sup>55</sup>Farideh Farhi, Iran's "Security Outlook", *Middle East Report Online*, July 9, 2007  
<http://www.merip.org/mero/mero070907.html>

<sup>56</sup>*Salam*, June 3, 1998. Quoted in *Iran's Security Policy*, p. 54

foreign policy in two other ways. Firstly, due to its ideological character, IRGC enjoys a special relationship with the Supreme Leader, which can be used to lobby for a more radical orientation. This relationship is fluid and hinges on how much the Leader sees IRGC as pertinent to regime survival at the time. Secondly, ex-IRGC members can advance the agenda of their former institution when they take other government offices, provided they personally embrace that agenda. Ahmadinejad for instance, served in IRGC and under his presidency Iran adopted the most confrontational foreign policy since the end of Iran-Iraq war in 1988.

The first half of 1990's was the nadir of IRGC influence in Iran's foreign policy as President Rafsanjani sought a rapprochement with the West and to rein in the radicalism of the previous decade. IRGC also fell from favor of the Supreme Leader, when in 1994 its units defaulted in using force to put down the anti-regime demonstrations in Qazvin. However, the course of events changed with the rise of the reform movement. Haunted by the looming threat of political reform, the Supreme Leader was obliged to depend on IRGC in domestic politics augmenting the influence of this institution within the political system. IRGC performed well by regularly admonishing President Khatami against violating the Supreme Leader's authority and putting down popular unrest namely the student riots in July 1999. The rise of Mahmood Ahmedinejad augmented IRGC influence to unprecedented levels. Today IRGC has immense clout in Iran's economy<sup>57</sup> and politics.<sup>58</sup> Although IRGC officially declared that its priority is to protect the regime against internal threats,<sup>59</sup> the growing radicalism of Iran in the international scene cannot be assessed in isolation from IRGC cadres that now fill the parliament and cabinet seats.

---

<sup>57</sup>Ali Alfoneh, How Intertwined Are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran's Economy? , AEI Outlook Series No:3 <http://www.aei.org/outlook/26991>

<sup>58</sup>Ali Alfoneh, Iran's Parliamentary Elections and the Revolutionary Guards' Creeping Coup d'Etat, AEI Outlook Series No:2 <http://www.aei.org/outlook/27549>

<sup>59</sup>Frederic Wehrey, Jerrold D. Green, Brian Nichiporuk, Alireza Nader, Lydia Hansell, Rasool Nafisi, S. R. Bohandy, *The Rise of the Pasdaran Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, (RAND Corporation, 2009), pp. 32-33

### 2.2.7 Parastatal Foundations

A number of parastatal foundations called Bonyads were established in Iran after the revolution. Bonyads are in theory charity organizations based on the Islamic institution known as Waqf. In practice, they range from small, state-sponsored entities with a specific function to huge conglomerates with extensive material assets and indistinct activities. For example, the Farabi Foundation is exclusively devoted to subsidizing the Iranian cinema sector,<sup>60</sup> while the Astan-e Quds-e Rezavi Foundation taking care of the Imam Reza shrine in Mashad controls tens of companies in various sectors in addition to owning 90 percent of the arable land in the former province of Khorasan.<sup>61</sup> Bonyads that are immersed in economic activities benefit from tax exemptions, preferential exchange rates and even direct government funding and are not subject to any inspection or regulation. Thus they are often associated with inefficiency and corruption and are considered obstacles to economic development.<sup>62</sup>

Appointed by and answering only to the Supreme Leader, the heads of the Bonyads are generally hardliners who frown upon the idea of developing relations with the West and opening Iran's economy to the world. At times, Bonyads with financial power have become actors or tools in Iran's foreign affairs. The Foundation of the Oppressed and Disabled (FOD) for instance, an economic giant second only to the National Iranian Oil Company, has reportedly been funding Lebanese Hezbollah.<sup>63</sup> This foundation is believed to be connected to the IRGC as Mohsen Rafiqdust, the former director of FOD and Mohammad Forouzandeh, the current director are both former IRGC commanders. Ali Alfoneh refers to FOD as "an independent financial body traditionally run by a retired IRGC commander and used by the state as a proxy to fund off-the-books IRGC

---

<sup>60</sup>Sussan Siavoshi, Cultural Policies and the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Nov., 1997), pp. 509-530

<sup>61</sup> Buchta, p. 76, it should be noted that the province was split into three in 2004.

<sup>62</sup>Suzanne Maloney, 'Agents or Obstacles? Parastatal Foundations and Challenges for Iranian Development', in Parvin Alizadeh (ed.), *The Economy of Iran : Dilemmas of an Islamic State*, (I.B. Tauris, 2000, New York)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 159

operations".<sup>64</sup> Likewise, Astan-e Quds-e Razavi Foundation is said to have transferred \$ 180m to Hezbollah in 2006.<sup>65</sup>

A blatant Bonyad intervention into Iran's foreign policy came from 15-Khordad<sup>66</sup> Foundation. During 1990's, Hasan Sanei the head of the foundation caused crisis after crisis in Iran's relations with Britain by placing a \$ 2m bounty on the head of Salman Rushdie and announcing its increase whenever Iranian government attempted to distance itself from Khomeini's death edict and rebuild its ties to Britain.<sup>67</sup>

### **2.2.8 Pressure Groups**

A lasting feature of Iranian political landscape has been the use of proxy bands of vigilantes generally known as pressure groups (*guruhha-ye feshar*). These groups resort to violence to further the ends of their patrons among the higher ranks of political and religious hierarchy to whom they are affiliated through personal and often secret connections. Their most common activity being the harassment and assassination of the members of the opposing camp, some pressure groups also got involved in Iran's foreign affairs.

The story of Hashemi Gang is the most important example for the role of Iranian unofficial organizations in advancing international goals. Shortly after the revolution, Mehdi Hashemi became the head of the Office of Liberation Movements (OLM), which supported Islamist insurgency movements in Middle East and initially functioned as part of the IRGC. In 1982, OLM became an entity independent from the state and started to work under the auspices of Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, the heir designate of Khomeini at the time. Mehdi Hashemi's brother was married to Montazeri's daughter. The activities of OLM were in line with the

---

<sup>64</sup>Ali Alfoneh, How Intertwined Are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran's Economy? , AEI Outlook Series No:3 <http://www.aei.org/outlook/26991>

<sup>65</sup>Andrew Higgins, Branded Terrorist by U.S., Israel, Microcredit Czar Keeps Lending, Wall Street Journal, December 28, 2006 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116727430979461207.html> viewed on May 29, 2010

<sup>66</sup>In Iranian calendar it is the date of a rebellion led by Khomeini against the Shah.

<sup>67</sup>Rushdie death bounty raised. BBC, October 12, 1998 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/191724.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/191724.stm) viewed on May 29, 2010

regime's goal of exporting revolution until mid-1980's, when the pragmatists led by Rafsanjani took the upper hand in Tehran. Probably in an attempt to derail the pragmatist's attempts of rapprochement with USA and with the Arab states, Mehdi Hashemi took a recalcitrant course. In August 1986 he allegedly dispatched armed operatives disguised as pilgrims to Saudi Arabia to stir violence. On October 3, his men seized the Syrian Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran and kept him under custody for a few hours. His moves must have been perceived a serious menace to the government policies as on October 12, Hashemi and several of his followers were arrested. The remnants of his organization struck back hard at the Pragmatists by leaking the knowledge of secret talks and arms deals between Iran and USA to a Lebanese magazine and embarrassing the whole government. Yet, their coup de grace to the nascent Iranian-American truce did not save their leader. In 1987, Mehdi Hashemi was executed on real and imaginary charges ranging from murder to collaboration with the Shah's intelligence service.<sup>68</sup>

More than a decade after Hashemi's demise, proxy groups got back to work when President Khatami took serious steps to mend the ties with the West. In November 1997, a group of American businessmen and experts went to Iran with the prospect of starting a dialog between Iran and USA. When they were travelling in Tehran, their bus was attacked and some of the visitors were wounded by members of a long dormant radical group called Fedaiyan-e Islam. The Americans left the next day and the instigators behind the Fedaiyan-e Islam attack remained unknown.<sup>69</sup>

### **2.3 Conclusion: Contention but not Chaos**

The factionalism in Iranian politics does create a fair amount of contention over the foreign policy. This contention has at times manifested itself as seemingly incoherent behavior like disavowing the death edict for Salman Rushdie and simultaneously offering a fortune to whoever is to carry it out. As a result Iran has given the image of an unconsolidated regime, unable to rein in its own extremists

---

<sup>68</sup>Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001, Washington D.C.), pp. 31-36

<sup>69</sup>Buchta, p. 158

and consequently lacking the credibility to be engaged in any meaningful deal. However, it should be noted that Iran has been pursuing a more or less unitary although not always amenable nuclear policy that is accepted and implemented by all relevant agencies. Moreover, Iran was engaged by USA concerning the security in Afghanistan and Iraq and has been consistent. These examples show that factional contention over the foreign policy does not necessarily lead to chaos.

Another exaggeration about Iran is to ascribe the Supreme Leader an overbearing control over every aspect of the foreign policy. Some commentators go so far as to suggest that the president and other officials are completely devoid of power,<sup>70</sup> an assertion that would mean the foreign policy of Iran would come under little affect with the change of administrations. In fact, Iran's attitude in relations with other states has shown shifts throughout the two decades of rule by the Supreme Leader Khamanei, a clear indication that the Leader is not the sole determinant. Factional differences play an important role in shaping the Islamic Republic's behavior albeit bridled by institutions and overseen by the Supreme Leader.

---

<sup>70</sup>See for example, Steve Inskeep, In Iran, Supreme Leader Wields True Power, NPR, February 13, 2009 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100645236>

## CHAPTER 3

### FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF FACTIONS UNTIL 2004

This chapter has three parts. The first part discusses the original differences among the revolutionary elite and their prospects about the itinerary of the Islamic Revolution. In this part due attention is paid to the factions' domestic agendas to demonstrate how their foreign policy perspectives were a reflection of these agendas. More importantly, this part tackles Khomeini's attitude to the factional rivalry as well as the ideological legacy he created and its repercussions on how factions articulated their views on issues related to Iran's relations with the other states.

The second part covers the period between the death of Khomeini in 1989 and the election of Khatami to presidency in 1997, often named "Era of Reconstruction" and third part covers the period of Reformist ascendancy from 1997 to 2004. These parts start with brief discussions of Iran's political situation and factional power distribution in the respective periods and move on to discuss the foreign policy agenda of each faction at the time.

#### 3.1 Khomeini Era

Khomeini was a charismatic leader. His followers referred to him as Imam, a title Shias retain for twelve infallible saints. Nasr conveys an account where a parliament deputy publicly asked Khomeini whether he was Mahdi, the hidden twelfth Imam.<sup>71</sup> Not surprisingly, during the decade he led the Islamic Republic of Iran, he had an absolute albeit not so institutionalized authority over the country. The centralization of power and legitimacy in one person to such an extent led to an autarchic rule but more importantly to the formation of an enduring ideological legacy.

Khomeini's legacy is central to the political ethos of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). His rulings during the decade he lead the country were not only beyond

---

<sup>71</sup>Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival How Conflicts in Islam Will Shape the Future*, (New York: W.W.Norton, 2006), p. 131

questioning during his time but also outlived him as principles that must be followed by the political elite of the Islamic regime. Even two decades after Khomeini's death, no political group in Iran can forswear its loyalty to these principles and consequently, Khomeini's ideology continues to determine which views and actions are legitimate in various fields of policy.

Within such a political ethos, factionalism can exist only to the degree that rival groups find elements in the late leader's legacy that can be interpreted to the favor of their particular views, in other words to the degree that the factions have leeway for "reinventing Khomeini".<sup>72</sup> The question then is whether or not Khomeini left to his heirs a ductile ideology that can be plied to fit with a multitude of factions. Mehdi Moslem gives a clear answer to this:

Here it must be asked why the factions propose such divergent views of the principle features of the Islamic Republic. Is there not a guideline or a specific model of an Islamic state and its governing principles? The answer is no. ... (Khomeini) did not provide specific guidelines about what this Islamicity meant in terms of governing principles or particular policies. Moreover, by repeatedly oscillating and changing his views on major issues during the ten years of his leadership, Khomeini offered differing and at times conflicting readings on what constituted a "true" Islamic republic.<sup>73</sup>

However, Moslem omits one specific field in which Khomeini created quite an evident roadmap for his followers. In spite of his ambiguity and vacillation in economic and cultural issues, Khomeini demonstrated an undeviating hard-line attitude in foreign policy. His rule allowed for the flourishing and elaboration of different perspectives in matters concerning domestic politics, while sculpting a not so multifaceted legacy in dealing with foreign countries. Consequently, economic and cultural views were articulated and represented by government institutions in relative liberty but obedience rather than discussion was the order of the day in, for instance, the war with Iraq. On this issue, Baktiari notes the inertness of Majlis vis-à-vis Khomeini's assertiveness:

---

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Brumberg (ed.), *Reinventing Khomeini The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, London; 2001)

<sup>73</sup> Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002) , p. 4



Despite the fact that the Majleses of the Islamic Republic have been the scene of robust discussions on economic issues, one cannot ignore the fact that the same level of attention is remarkably absent with regard to issues of national security and foreign policy. This is particularly noticeable when one considers the fact that less than five months after its inception, the Iraqi regime invaded Iran and engulfed the country in senseless war for eight years. The reason for the Majleses' (limited) involvement was Ayatollah Khomeini.

From the beginning of the war, Ayatollah Khomeini set the parameters of the country's policy vis-à-vis this war and clearly enunciated a policy of no compromise until Saddam Hossein resigned from power. In contrast to the hostage crisis, when he entrusted the Majles with determining the fate of the American hostages, Khomeini did not see it appropriate for the Majles to get involved in determining a resolution of the war with Iraq.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, Maziar Behrooz in his study of factionalism in the first decade of IRI, notes that prior to the end of Iran-Iraq War, Khomeini maintained a firm grasp over foreign policy decisions, making it impossible for the development of conflicting perspectives:

During this period, say 1981 to 1988, the foreign policy of the IRI was heavily influenced by the war factor. This is to say because of priorities given to war efforts of the IRI and especially because of Ayatollah Khomeini's insistence on these priorities, foreign policy remained, for the most part outside factional struggles.<sup>75</sup>

To better comprehend the significance of Khomeini's preferences, the three major factions that existed within the Iranian political-religious elite must be scrutinized.

### **3.1.1 Conservatives**

The Conservative faction represented the interests of the bazaar-clergy alliance. Traditionally, merchants had supported clerics with donations in return receiving their legal arbitration in transactions as well as protection against the kleptocratic tendencies of the state. They sought a laissez-faire economy and had no interest in expansionist or isolationist foreign policies, which just harmed their trade. While

---

<sup>74</sup>Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, (University Press of Florida, 1996, Gainesville) pp.236-237

<sup>75</sup> Maziar Behrooz, *Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini*, Maziar Behrooz, *Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini*, *Middle Eastern Studies* vol:27 no:4 (Oct 1991), pp. 597-614

supporters of the conservative clergy-bazaar alliance were present throughout the state apparatus, the leading figure of the faction at the time appears to be Ayatollah Golpayegani (d. 1993), who was a very high-ranking cleric with no direct participation in government. Khomeini had seen it necessary to secure this Grand Ayatollah's support by appointing his son-in-law as a member of the Guardian Council.<sup>76</sup> Not surprisingly, Guardian Council demonstrated a steady conservative line throughout the period, regularly turning back legislation that would have paved the way for greater state intervention in economy.

Ayatollah Golpayegani's opposition to a statist economy was pervaded by religious terminology. In 1984, he complained to Khomeini about the high tax rates on the grounds that it was impoverishing the merchants and consequently curbing their donations to his mosque.<sup>77</sup>

He also alluded to the traditional Shia disregard towards political authorities to stress that it was inappropriate to pay taxes to any government during the occultation of the hidden Imam.<sup>78</sup>

The Conservatives maintained that the genuine ordinances of Sharia protected property rights and that the Left's proposals about redistribution of wealth were a groundless innovation. In 1985, Ayatollah Golpayegani urged the reelected president Khamanei (who was already a conservative) to be guided by "the primary ordinances of Islam, not the ordinances which God's servants wish to say are God's ordinances."<sup>79</sup> Guardian Council members, also frequently stressed that "adjustment of wealth" was "Islamically incorrect".<sup>80</sup>

Concerning foreign policy, there are claims that Golpayegani was opposed to the continuation of the war after Saddam's forces were repelled from Iranian soil.<sup>81</sup> This would have made sense as it was a huge burden for the bazaaris who had to pay taxes to fund the war effort. In 1984, Rafsanjani had countered Golpayegani's

---

<sup>76</sup>Mehdi Khalaji, *The Last Marja: Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism*, *Policy Focus* no. 59, The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2006 p. 20

<sup>77</sup>Baktiari, p. 123

<sup>78</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, 'Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.41, No.2 (1987), p.190

<sup>79</sup>Akhavi, p. 192

<sup>80</sup>Baktiari, p. 92

<sup>81</sup>Akhavi, p.191

argument against increased taxation by reminding that it was necessary lest they be forced to stop the war.<sup>82</sup> However, Golpayegani must have been extremely cautious because Khomeini showed a great deal of sensitivity to deviations in foreign policy issues. For example, Qumi, who was another Grand Ayatollah, had his residence ransacked by regime militants when in 1985 when he spoke against the war.<sup>83</sup>

### **3.1.2 The Left**

Not all clerics were allied with the bazaar. Some lower ranking members of the clergy with humble social backgrounds found themselves more sympathized with the plight of the poor segments of the society and were attracted to the pro-mostazafin discourse of Khomeini.<sup>84</sup> These were joined by lay Islamists with similar views and masses of urban poor organized into pressure groups often named as Hezbollah and constituted the Leftist faction. For this faction, Islamic Revolution was a rebellion against the tyranny of landlords and urban profiteers gathered around the Shah and backed by the imperialist United States. Islamic Leftists not only sought to establish a statist, egalitarian order but also wanted to isolate Iran from imperialism lest the local collaborators regain power.

This group's most famous figure in Khomeini period was Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, who between 1981 and 1989 served as the Prime Minister. However, the domestic aspirations in relation with the foreign policy orientations of this faction can best be observed in Mohammad Mousavi-Khoiniha, who was a young, low-rank cleric arrested a few times due to his seditious activities under the Shah. The turning point in Khoiniha's career was his role as the religious consultant of the radical student group that stormed the US Embassy in late 1979. Appointed as the head of state broadcasting, Khoiniha started a witch-hunt based on documents captured at the embassy. He saw the blow against the Americans as part of the domestic struggle against the collaborators:

---

<sup>82</sup> Baktiari, pp. 123-124

<sup>83</sup> Akhavi, p. 191

<sup>84</sup> Mostazafin means the downtrodden and is a term with strong religious connotations. It was popularized by Ali Shariati, who attempted to remold Shi'ism into a third-worldist revolutionary ideology. Khomeini appropriated the word to rally the urban poor in service of the revolution.

... all those revolutionary and nationalist elements that have been brought to scene by the US were unmasked ... and clandestine relations between such elements and the US were revealed. Many pro-US elements who had infiltrated the army ... were uncovered. We can then rightly say that the seizure of the Espionage Den (US Embassy) led to a purge relieving the country of any person inclined to the West.<sup>85</sup>

Khoiniha set out to implement his hard-line foreign policy vision in 1982, when he was appointed by Khomeini as the head of Hajj organization. Since he stirred protests and clashes in Mecca, Saudi Arabia expelled him.<sup>86</sup> In 1986, we see Khoiniha as the State Prosecutor General. At this position he called the laws that protected property rights “laws of the thieves” and implied that a way should be found to bypass them to prevent the wealthy from reclaiming their confiscated properties.<sup>87</sup>

### 3.1.3 Pragmatists

Majlis Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani led the Pragmatists. In June 1986, Rafsanjani acknowledged the existence of factionalism: “In Iran two relatively strong factions exist. One supports the nationalization of most industries while the other supports the private sector...” He added that Khomeini wanted the factions to engage in constructive criticism of each other rather than “clash” and “weaken each other.”<sup>88</sup> By these remarks, Rafsanjani not only implicitly defined his position as outside the factions but also lectured them about how the true way of conduct. Indeed, Rafsanjani had played the Left and the Conservatives against each other even before that. Pending the 1984 parliamentary elections he had appeared to be the leader of the conservative faction.<sup>89</sup> After the elections, he unexpectedly sided with the Leftist Mousavi cabinet.<sup>90</sup>

Rafsanjani proved to be the ultimate pragmatist in foreign policy. He was the architect of the arms deals with USA and Israel, which were nominally Iran’s

---

<sup>85</sup>Baktiari, pp.102-103

<sup>86</sup>Baktiari pp. 104-105

<sup>87</sup> Akhavi, p.186

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p.184

<sup>89</sup> Baktiari, p. 108

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.117

archenemies. When the knowledge of the secret talks was leaked to public, he not only ensured his own political survival by securing the backing of Khomeini but also witnessed the demise of his rival Mehdi Hashemi. Again, Rafsanjani is believed to have played an important role in persuading Khomeini to end the war with Iraq. It is remarkable that such a volatile figure gained so much support from Khomeini. The special leeway granted to Hashemi Rafsanjani must be a result of his personal rather than ideological affinity with Khomeini. Rafsanjani had earned the Supreme Leader's trust through a revolutionary career that went to the very inception of Khomeini's movement in early 1960's.<sup>91</sup> Khomeini favored his closest disciple even when he deviated from his prescriptions to some extent, allowing him to develop his own pragmatist line in foreign policy. As the only politician who had been able to introduce some pragmatism to Khomeini's foreign policy, in the post-Khomeini period Rafsanjani with his faction remained as the voice to outline a national interest based foreign policy perspective, fettered little by the tradition of the late Imam.

A point about Rafsanjani's faction that requires a mention is that it was for some reason not regarded as a faction. For instance, during a speech at the parliament, Rafsanjani made a reference to three factions. The delegates were confused and started to inquire the membership of this third faction. Rafsanjani sufficed with reiterating that there was a third faction and he had attended one of their meetings.<sup>92</sup>

#### **3.1.4 Khomeini's Ambiguity and Resolve**

Unending bickering between the Leftists and Conservatives often forced Khomeini to intervene to maintain the balance and preclude a regime breakdown. His support oscillated between the two sides and never did he completely exclude a faction. For example, in August 1984, Leftist Prime Minister Moussavi was shocked when he was slammed by Khomeini, who had recently urged the parliament to give him a vote of confidence. Only a week later, Khomeini criticized the Conservative

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 83

<sup>92</sup> Baktiari, p. 190

Guardian Council.<sup>93</sup> By 1986, Khomeini was once more on side with the Bazaar by stating:

It is only with the participation of the people that we can manage the country. Permit the people to participate in their affairs, in commerce, in all things... You must not imagine that the state, by itself, can accomplish everything.<sup>94</sup>

Towards the end of his life, leader of the revolution was back to support the Leftists with a series of groundbreaking fatwas that stressed the importance of the state in controlling the economy.<sup>95</sup> When Moussavi resigned in September 1988 in a hope to force Khomeini to give him greater support, Khomeini instead ordered him back to office with a rebuke.<sup>96</sup>

Khomeini's continued ambiguity maintained the factional balance but at the same time it portended political instability once the Imam passed away. Unable to reconcile their differences and in continued need for arbitration by Khomeini, towards the end of 1980's both Leftists and Conservatives grew anxious about the future of the Islamic Republic. A few months before Khomeini's death, Mohammad Ali Ansari, a brother of a parliament member sent him a letter pressing for a final judgment on the factional rivalry. In the letter, Ansari underlined that both factions were "aligned with the revolution and defenders of Islam" and subtly warned Khomeini about the impending escalation of the conflict in the absence of a clear answer by stating that the faction were now "competing more seriously".<sup>97</sup>

Khomeini's response to the request is per se an exemplary document reflecting the Ayatollah's political legacy and how it shaped the factionalized political landscape of the country as well as the inability of the factions to clearly articulate their foreign policy perspectives. Having referred to a mystified essence of Islam throughout his political career, Khomeini in the reply letter consents that there is

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. pp. 118-119

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Shahrugh Akhavi, 'Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.41, No.2 (1987), p.187

<sup>95</sup> Behrooz, pp. 602-605

<sup>96</sup> Baktiari, p. 155

<sup>97</sup> Akhavi, p.161

no one essence of Islam. Because of its call for coexistence, the document has come to be called the Proclamation of Brotherhood (Manshur-e Beraderi). In Proclamation of Brotherhood, Khomeini openly sanctions the presence of two factions in the Islamic Republic by admitting the ambiguities of the Islamist ideology:

Books of jurisprudence of Islamic notables are full of contradicting views, preferences and perceptions in various military, cultural, political, economic and devotional subjects to the point that in those issues where consensus is claimed one or more divergent voices exist and even in consented issues a divergent voice can be found... The obvious point is that even if there is disagreement among the wings and persons loyal to the revolution, it is entirely political unless given a doctrinal shape because all are in agreement about the principles and for this reason I approve them...<sup>98</sup>

The first part of Proclamation of Brotherhood has been cited by Rahnema and Nomani,<sup>99</sup> and Baktiari.<sup>100</sup> While these works have correctly pointed out to Khomeini's endorsement of the different factional perspectives in this letter, they have missed the fact that he then continues by prescribing a strict foreign policy agenda for his successors:

But both (factions) must completely understand that their positions must be such that the Islamic principles, the revolutionary hatred and rage of themselves and that of the people against the western capitalism with the world-devouring America on top and international socialism and communism with the aggressive Soviets on top, are maintained forevermore.<sup>101</sup>

This letter is still considered an important document in political circles. It is especially popular with the reformist elements nowadays, who are increasingly concerned about their political survival in the face of unbridled growth of Ahmadinejad's influence and eagerly seek ways to legitimize their existence as a

---

<sup>98</sup> For full text of Proclamation of Brotherhood in Persian, see [http://jamaran.ir/fa/NewsContent-id\\_13017.aspx](http://jamaran.ir/fa/NewsContent-id_13017.aspx) viewed on October 28, 2010

<sup>99</sup> Ali Rahnema, Farhad Nomani; Competing Shi'i Subsystems in Contemporary Iran, in Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (eds.), *Iran After the Revolution Crisis of an Islamic State*, (I.B. Tauris: London, New York; 1995), p. 89.

<sup>100</sup> Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, (University Press of Florida: 1996, Gainesville) p. 161.

<sup>101</sup> Full text of Proclamation of Brotherhood.

divergent voice under an authoritarian regime. For example, during 2009 post-election turmoil; Muhammad Khatami gave a speech on the anniversary of issuance of “Proclamation of Brotherhood”, in which he stressed, with references from Khomeini’s letter, the evils of excluding political rivals from decision-making processes and monopolizing power in one faction.<sup>102</sup>

Khomeini’s clear resolve about the Islamic Republic’s international relations is not limited to this letter. Throughout his rule, Khomeini adhered to a coherent set of principles that guided his conduct of foreign policy. After his death, these principles continued to encumber the moderation attempts by his successors. Khomeini’s foreign policy perspective was based on the assumption that the international system of states is an illegitimate order. It must therefore be replaced by an international Islamic government based on the theory of Velayat-e Faqih. One of the extensions of this perspective into practical realm is unrelenting animosity towards USA, which Khomeini named “Great Satan” and other “Lesser Satans” such as USSR, UK and Israel, which according to Khomeini dominated and perpetrated the illegitimate international order. The other practical consequence of Khomeini’s ideology was the necessity to export the Islamic regime, which was the only legitimate government in the world.<sup>103</sup>

Insistence on continuing the Iraq War until the Baath regime was replaced by an Islamic Republic, was a cornerstone of Khomeini’s foreign policy. Even when he was finally forced to accept ceasefire in 1988, Khomeini stressed that it was a decision forced upon him by the material conditions, not a shift in his ideals:

Had it not been in the interests of Islam and Muslims, I would never have accepted this and would have preferred death and martyrdom instead. But we have no choice and we should give in to what God wants us to do ... I reiterate that the acceptance of this issue is more bitter than poison for me, but I drink this chalice of poison for the Almighty and for His satisfaction.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> *Eteemad*, November 8, 2009.

<sup>103</sup> For more details on “Khomeini’s Ideological Crusade”, see R.K.Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran Challenge and Response in the Middle East*, (John Hopkins University Press: 1988; Baltimore, London), pp. 19-31

<sup>104</sup> Baqer Moin, *Khomeini the Life of the Ayatollah*, (I.B. Tauris: London, New York; 1999), p. 269



Khomeini did not back down from his position about the war until the end of his life. In February 1989, Khomeini's heir designate Ali Montazeri dared to call into question Khomeini's conduct of foreign policy by claiming the war with Iraq had ended in a victory for Iran's enemies and suggested that Iranian leaders consider the losses suffered and confess, "O God and the Iranian Nation! We have made mistakes. All the slogans we shouted were wrong and most of them made us hermits in the world and made all the nations to look to us in disdain."<sup>105</sup>

Khomeini in his Proclamation for the Clergy aired about ten days later addressed not only Montazeri but also anyone else who might in the future question the Iraq War and take Khomeini's acceptance of peace as green light to moderation:

(After elaborating on the achievements of the war with Iraq) All these were achieved after the striving... during the ten years of struggle with America and the West, with Soviets and the East. Our war was the war between right and wrong and it is endless. Our war was the war between poverty and wealth. Our war was the war between faith and profanation. And this war exists from Adam to the end of the world. How parochial are those who imagine that because we did not reach the ultimate goal at the front; martyrdom, courage, sacrifice, selflessness and strength are useless... We do not have one moment's remorse about our conduct of the war!<sup>106</sup>

Khomeini went further to sack his heir designate a few weeks later. Interestingly, another trusted fellow of Khomeini, Hashemi Rafsanjani would make the confession proposed by Montazeri at the tenth year anniversary of the revolution but in the absence of Imam.

Another incident that demonstrates how Khomeini continued to challenge to the rest of the world is his issuance of a death edict about Salman Rushdie, which led to a crisis with European countries, especially with UK. Hunter portrays the affair as imposed upon a disinterested Khomeini by the Leftists who sought a break for reclaiming factional superiority.<sup>107</sup> Even if the Leftists played a part in encouraging the Ayatollah, it fit perfectly into his ideological outlook to the

---

<sup>105</sup> Rajanews, <http://www.rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=55913> viewed on October 22, 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Full text of Proclamation for the Clergy in Persian, <http://www.rahpouyan.com/article/showart.asp?sid=627&aid=1163> viewed on October 22, 2010.

<sup>107</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran After Khomeini*, (Praeger: 1992, New York) pp. 118-119

outside world. By his address of the issue in Proclamation for the Clergy, Khomeini wanted to make sure that the fatwa becomes an example for future leaders on how to deal with the international norms and warned against future moderation:

My fear is that today's analysts (referring to unknown western-oriented political analysts) will sit at the judge's seat in the next ten years and say let us see if the Islamic fatwa and the death verdict for Salman Rushdie are in line with the principles (of jurisprudence) and rules of diplomacy and they will conclude that because declaring the God's commandment had effects and repercussions and because the Common Market and Western countries have turned against us, then we must not be greenhorns and we must side with those who insult Prophet's holy post and Islam and (Islamic) ideology. In short, what I say is that one must intend to research the practical jurisprudence without concern about the deceitful West and the aggressive East and independently from the prevalent (rules of) diplomacy in the world.<sup>108</sup>

For those who still did not get his message Khomeini had one last comment about USA in his political will to be aired after his death:

Our nation and also the Islamic and oppressed nations of the world are proud that their enemies are the enemies of Holy Qoran and gracious Islam.... And leading them (enemies) is America, the exemplary terrorist that set the world on fire...

I now advise the oppressed nations of the world and the gracious nation of Iran that they be firm, resolute, loyal and abiding in this straight divine path that is tied neither to the renegade East nor to the blasphemous West....<sup>109</sup>

### **3.1.5 Khomeini's Legacy**

As seen in these examples from Khomeini's statements in his last months, the leader of the revolution did not deviate from his ideals embodied in the revolutionary slogan, "neither east, nor west, Islamic republic" until the end of his rule. This created a restraining framework, within which the different factions had to articulate their foreign policy perspectives.

---

<sup>108</sup> Full text of Proclamation for the Clergy.

<sup>109</sup> Khomeini's Political Will – Vasiyatname-i Siyasi-yi Elahi-ye Imam Khomeini, (Muessese-i Tanzim va Nashr-e Asar-e Imam Khomeini, 2008, Tehran). pp. 9-10

This would create a dilemma for the factions, which had divergent visions about the Islamic Republic because their varying domestic agendas required differing positions in the foreign policy realm. For instance, those factions favoring a liberalized economy would have to trade ideological legitimacy deriving from loyalty to Imam's legacy with the necessity to develop relations with Western countries. The result would be occasional burst of sloganeering as well as an inability to intellectually delegitimize the radical forces inside the government.

### **3.2 Era of Reconstruction**

After Khomeini's death on 3 June 1989, Ali Khamenei was appointed as the new Supreme Leader and Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected the president. As discussed before in the thesis, the influence of the two leaders at this time was evenly matched and neither could attempt to dominate the political scene alone. Furthermore, at the beginning of their term they were in agreement in major policy issues and details of their economic and foreign policy agenda, which would eventually put them at odds had not yet come out. Indeed, both had supported the other's election to their consecutive offices. As a result of this initial harmony and balance between the two rulers of the Islamic Republic, their administration has often been referred to as "dual leadership".<sup>110</sup>

The main task in front of the President and the Supreme Leader was to redress the losses of the eight year war that had left the country's economy and infrastructure in ruins. This meant developing policies that prioritized expediency over ideological purity. The new perspective in administration of Islamic Republic of Iran was to have repercussions concerning the foreign policy. To achieve a rapid amelioration of the economy required in the eye of the dual leadership to lift the obstacles that inhibited the activities of the capitalist classes. This included more opportunities for foreign trade and investment and consequently better relations with countries with considerable economic potential. Both leaders were aware that

---

<sup>110</sup> See for instance, Rohollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Both North and South", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1992), p. 393

Iran could no longer afford ostracism. In a Friday prayer sermon, President Rafsanjani elaborated on the necessity of developing relations with the world and said he would not “engage in fantasies of an independent and self-sufficient society.”<sup>111</sup> Likewise, Khamanei had made his position clear even before he became the Supreme Leader, “In reconstruction, they say that everything should be built by Iranians. All right, but when? When Iranians have acquired foreign sciences?”<sup>112</sup>

The common agenda of the two leaders revealed their common rival to be the Leftist faction. There was no doubt that figures such as Mahdi Karrubi, Ali Akbar Mohtashami-Pour and Mir Hossein Mussavi would oppose the changes vehemently and had to be excluded from the decision making structures lest they derail the economic reforms and foreign policy reorientation. The first blow to the Left was the partition of the Islamic Republic’s top two positions between Khamanei and Rafsanjani and the dissolution of Prime Minister’s post, which was occupied by Mir Hossein Moussavi with the constitutional amendment of 1989. The second blow came in 1992, when the Guardian Council vetoed the key figures of the Left from running in parliamentary elections. By 1993, Left had lost all its institutional clout and remained relevant only as a discourse force in foreign and other policy decisions.

Overall the period between 1989 and 1997 can be regarded as a sharp break with the Khomeini era both in domestic and foreign policies. The leaders in power accepted they had made mistakes in the first years of the revolution. At the tenth year anniversary of Khamanei said that if he had a chance to change anything about the first decade of the revolution he, “would have created a special management school to teach the necessary skills to the revolutionary but inexperienced force that took over the state administration.”<sup>113</sup>

Rafsanjani added, “Some of our ideas were not practical”. He stated that he “would have prevented the war from breaking out” and said, “the war lasted longer

---

<sup>111</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini The Iranian Second Republic*, (Routledge, 1995, London and New York) p. 42

<sup>112</sup> Behrooz, p. 608

<sup>113</sup> Moslem, p. 71

than I anticipated and some of us opposed to the continuation of the war after 1982.”<sup>114</sup> Not surprisingly, scholars of Iranian politics refer to the Era of Reconstruction in ways that expressed the deviation from the ideals of the revolution such as “Thermidor”<sup>115</sup> and “Second Republic”.<sup>116</sup>

Then, between 1989 and 1997, Iranian politics were dominated by the Pragmatists led by President Hashemi Rafsanjani and Conservatives, who controlled the parliament and the Guardian Council with backing from Supreme Leader Khamanei. The Left was ostracized.

These three factions and a fourth radical faction continued to maintain their own foreign policy perspectives.

### **3.2.1 The Left**

Islamic Left in this period continued with its hard-line foreign policy perspective marked with rejection of the international order dominated by superpowers and solidarity with other oppressed people i.e. export of the revolution. For the Leftists, struggle against USA was an extension of the struggle against domestic oppressors and profiteers. While it was stripped of its political powers, this faction had no problem expressing its foreign policy views, which were in complete conformity with Imam’s line.

Islamic Republic of Iran entered its second decade in the shade of a grave regional crisis. In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. US President George Bush declared his resolve to drive Saddam Hossein out of Kuwait and began to amass US troops in Saudi Arabia as a prelude to an attack against Iraq. American soldiers on Muslim soil was something that Khomeini would never condone but the alliances of Conservatives and Pragmatists managed to ignore the founding leader’s dictates and kept Iran out of this conflict. Iran’s foreign policy during the Gulf Crisis can be summarized in three phrases: Neutrality during the war between Iraq and US,

---

<sup>114</sup>Moslem, pp. 71-72

<sup>115</sup> Matthew C.Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: the Rise of Muhammad Khatami", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26:1, (1999) pp. 27 -39

<sup>116</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini The Iranian Second Republic*, (Routledge, 1995, London and New York)

compliance with UN resolutions against Iraq and quiescence vis-à-vis the presence of Western military forces in the region.<sup>117</sup>

The Left was displeased with this policy and articulated its own understanding of how Khomeini's Iran should behave in this situation. Accordingly, Ali Akbar Mohtashami-Pour, one of the chief patrons of Lebanese Hezbollah, proposed that Iran should join forces with Iraq in a "unified Moslem front to attack the Zionist-American forces, who are plotting to establish a permanent foothold in the Persian Gulf."<sup>118</sup>

Likewise, the Left disapproved of the attempts to negate Khomeini's fatwa about Salman Rushdie. Mahdi Karrubi said, "Salman Rushdie will be executed. The Imam's decree is holy and eternal."<sup>119</sup>

Followers of the leftist faction exploited the fact that the current administration was deviating from Khomeini's foreign policy legacy. They exposed the discrepancy between Khomeini's principles and the policies of the Conservative-Pragmatist alliance to delegitimize Rafsanjani and Khamanei. This 1990 excerpt from a leftist magazine demonstrates how leftists invoked Khomeini to attack their political rivals:

Those people and currents who claim that we should work only within the framework of our own country are not knowledgeable about Islam. They are a bunch of liberals and nationalists who have not recognized Islam, the Imam, and his revolutionary ideas.... Those who present such talks and theses work in line with the enemy's policy and the United States. If we apply this thesis and forget about the disinherited outside our borders, it would be applying the US thesis.<sup>120</sup>

Although the Left had no institutional input in decision making, its emphasis on revolutionary zeal instead of national interest had reverberations among the factions who saw it necessary to prove their loyalty to Khomeini's will by voicing anti-American sloganeering.

---

<sup>117</sup>Afrasiabi, p. 62

<sup>118</sup>Baktiari, p. 212

<sup>119</sup>Moslem, p.179

<sup>120</sup>Ibid. p.153

### 3.2.2 Conservatives

With Khomeini's death and the appointment of Ali Khamanei as the Supreme Leader, the conservatives considerably buttressed their position in Iranian politics. Khamanei at this time had not yet gained much autonomy from his faction by developing his own power base and thus in general reflected the views of the conservatives during this period. Other prominent Conservatives were the foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati, whom Khamenei would later appoint as his own foreign policy advisor and Nateq Nuri.

Conservatives' were not interested in overthrowing the international order as Khomeni had prescribed putting them in line with the Pragmatists initially. Conservative Velayati had no problem working with Pragmatist Rafsanjani in implementing a balanced foreign policy during the Gulf Crisis between 1990 and 1991, whereby Iran abided by the UN resolutions. Moslem names the Conservative foreign policy as "Quetism":

The chaos that would result from exporting the revolution would inhibit the interests of the bazaaris, who are better served by open borders and an atmosphere conducive to free trade. When tranquility is preserved, the ulama also benefit because their authority and status within the society depend on the maintainance of the status quo.<sup>121</sup>

The conservatives' depart from Khomeini's path is also observed in their disavowal of the Salman Rushdie fatwa. Velayati said about this issue, "The fatwa is one thing but sending a group to kill Rushdie is another.... Our government will not send anyone to England or anywhere else (to kill him)."<sup>122</sup>

While they did not want to risk any confrontation with the West, the Conservatives were also unwilling to establish full relations with the USA. When the issue was raised in 1993 by Pragmatists, Nateq Nuri, who would in 1997 be presidential candidate of conservative faction countered by reminding that the Supreme Leader was opposed to relations with USA. Shortly after, Khamanei backed him by stating, "Relations with the United States at this stage are neither possible nor

---

<sup>121</sup>Moslem, p.110

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 226

beneficial.”<sup>123</sup> It is interesting that the Conservatives, who had no ideological bent for taking on USA, regarded relations with this country as “not beneficial”. To understand the conservative motives, their perception of benefit must be considered. In Moslem’s words:

As far as the conservatives were concerned, better relations with the United States signified the return of former citizens and possibly prerevolutionary industrialists, Western cultural infiltration, and the demise of the commercial bourgeoisie.<sup>124</sup>

As seen, the clergy-bazaar alliance represented by the Conservatives perceived relations with USA in particular and West in general as threat to the status quo that had better be avoided. This is why the conservative Majlis speaker Nateq Nuri reacted negatively against a draft bill about joint ventures with foreign companies by saying, “any rapprochement between America and the Islamic Republic is out of question, and we will not permit American companies to invest in Iran.”<sup>125</sup>

Some instances in the Conservatives’ foreign policy articulation can be categorized as pure rhetoric. For instance, at one point during the Gulf Crisis, Khamanei called for jihad against the US forces, which had been stationed in Saudi Arabia against Iraq.<sup>126</sup> The Supreme Leader did not make any follow-up jihad encouragements, nor is there any indication that he tried to carry out his call. Considering that at the time Leftist faction was arguing that Iran must side with Iraq against USA, there is good reason to think that the novice Supreme Leader felt under pressure to pay lip service to Khomeini’s legacy.

### **3.2.3 Pragmatists**

The Pragmatist faction consisted of a cadre of politicians and bureaucrats that gathered around the imposing character of Hashemi Rafsanjani. The agenda of this faction was, shortly, to build an industrialized economy with a modern capitalist class. Many aspects of this goal coincided with the interests of the commercial

---

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p.226

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 225

<sup>125</sup> Baktiari, p. 222

<sup>126</sup> K. L. Afrasiabi, *After Khomeini New Directions in Iran’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 71-72



bourgeoisie known as Bazaar but in the long term Rafsanjani's intentions required policies inconsistent with those favored by Conservatives. Being a Pragmatist, Rafsanjani at times resorted to high taxation to allow state-led industrialization. Moreover, to the consternation of Bazaar, he wanted to restrict imports to boost demand for national industry and even bring back the exiled capitalists of Shah Era as well as the foreign investors, both of which were anathema to the retail-minded Bazaaris and their clerical patrons.

Rafsanjani knew full well that without elevating Iran's international reputation he could hope neither to find loans for his various development projects, nor to attract foreign investment to vitalize the languishing economy. He declared Iran's intention to follow the international norms:

In our foreign policy and in the formulation of our relations with the countries of the world, we support the policy of respect for international regulations and are committed to the policy of non-domination and non-acceptance of domination.<sup>127</sup>

In line with his statements and supported by the Conservatives seeking to avoid confrontation in the international arena, Rafsanjani cooperated with the international community during the Gulf Crisis, a course of action which improved Iran's international image and led to a rapprochement with Europe.<sup>128</sup> This paved the way for a discussion about the possibility of rebuilding relations with USA. Rafsanjani openly pioneered the idea of rapprochement with USA, on the condition that the superpower has the similar intentions:

I have always been opposed to completely breaking our ties with the United States. They provide us with much needed spare parts and we sell them petrol. Therefore, our economic ties have never been completely halted and some kind of dialogue must always exist. Although we pursue pragmatism in foreign policy, we will not be the first to initiate further dialogue with the Americans. They must first show goodwill by unfreezing our assets in America.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup>Moslem, p. 175

<sup>128</sup>Hunter, p. 135-136

<sup>129</sup>Ibid. p. 225

However, as mentioned before, the Conservatives blocked further elaboration on the issue by bringing the Supreme Leader into the fray. Meanwhile, the Salman Rushdie fatwa continued to be a hindrance in relations with European countries, especially given the bounty promised by the 15<sup>th</sup> Khordad Foundation. Rafsanjani was in agreement with the Conservatives that this issue was not worth enduring a confrontation. In 1994, he said about the Satanic Verses:

An enlightened Muslim should not be afraid of a book.... It is nothing. A book may be written that puts forward a correct or incorrect wisdom, but the encounter must be logical.... Everyone who has read it says it is a worthless book... The Imam's view was one of a (religious) expert.<sup>130</sup>

Although his clout in Iranian politics had reached a peak in early 1990's, even Rafsanjani could not fully evade the ideological baggage left over from Khomeini and was at times forced to do the customary sloganeering. Simultaneously with Madrid Conference convened to seek a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Leftist faction in October 1991 organized the Tehran conference where the anti-Zionist, anti-American ideas were expressed. Rafsanjani found himself compelled to make speeches that contradicted his moderate image and it was a humiliation concerning his international reputation.<sup>131</sup>

### **3.2.4 The Radical Faction**

Finally, the activities of the obscure Radical faction merits discussion. The Radicals at this time had no definite organizational structure or a distinguished media organ that gave voice to their views. Moreover, their membership was most vague and the relations between individuals that could be categorized as radical were uncertain. Radicals came to develop publicly known political organizations after the middle of 1990's. These are Ansar-e Hezbollah pressure group and the Defense of the Values of the Islamic Revolution, mentioned in chapter 2. Two

---

<sup>130</sup>Ibid. p. 179

<sup>131</sup>Baktiari, pp. 214-215

important figures in the regime hierarchy were affiliated with these groups. Guardian Council Chairman, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati and former minister of intelligence, Mohammad Rayshahri.

Radical faction had another, shadowy façade. While their extent and organizational level is impossible to know, security agencies of Islamic Republic namely MOIS and IRGC were to some extent dominated by Radicals. This made Radical faction the mirror image of the Left in its clout over policy formulation. While the Left controlled no institutions and could only manipulate Iran's foreign policy through discourse generation, the Radicals were a silent but influential faction.

This faction shared the views of the Left in every issue except for the structure of power and the imposition of religious norms. Unlike the Left, which might have been regarded as progressive in sociopolitical issues, the Radicals envisaged a totalitarian Islamist dictatorship. Buchta describes this faction's views in different realms as "contradictory from start".<sup>132</sup> However, when one considers the extent to which their total rejection of West coincides with Khomeini's vision, it becomes clear that Radicals were the true followers of Imam's line.

Two examples among others demonstrate how Radicals independently implemented their own agenda. First one is the Mykonos incident discussed in chapter 2. Secondly, Iranian agencies are believed to be involved in 1992 Israeli Embassy bombing and 1994 AMIA (Asociacion Mutual Israelita Argentina - Argentine Israeli Mutual Aid Association) bombing in Argentina. While the issue is contested, Argentinian prosecutors have raised formal charges against high level Iranian officials including Rafsanjani.<sup>133</sup> The affair becomes even murkier when coupled with the fact that Argentine helped Iran with its nuclear program from late 1980's to early 1990's. In any case, such terror attacks perpetrated by people inside Iranian government were in direct contradiction to the dual leadership's

---

<sup>132</sup>Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? : the Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*, (Washington, DC : Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p. 18

<sup>133</sup>*Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 26, 2006

<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1072330.html> viewed on October 21, 2010

foreign policy agenda and are indicative of the presence of groups with radical views.

### **3.3 The Reform Era**

Mohammad Khatami was elected as the President of Iran on May 23, 1997. His term marked an unprecedented era in the history of Islamic Republic of Iran because of the political and social agendas he represented as well as the degree to which it polarized the Iranian polity. The pivot of Khatami's discourse was the simmering social aspirations for greater personal and political freedom vis-à-vis the constraints imposed by the Islamic regime. As a former minister of culture, who had been sacked by the Conservatives in the parliament because of his lax approach to arts and media, Khatami created a milieu suitable for the discussion of concepts like civil society, human rights and democracy. Under his presidency, intellectuals such as Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar and Mohammad Mojtabeh Shabestari emerged to reconcile these concepts with Islam and to question the cornerstone of Islamic Republic's ideology, Velayat-e Faqih.

Not surprisingly, Khatami's vision dragged him and his reformist movement into conflict with the Supreme Leader Khamanei and his entourage. His emphasis on democratic sovereignty was in direct contradiction to the divine sovereignty represented by Khamanei. Moreover, in the election he had defeated Nateq Nuri, the candidate implicitly favored by the Guardian Council and Khamanei, hence humiliating the Conservative faction.<sup>134</sup> Finally, his projects about rapprochement with USA and his penchant for attracting European sympathy and capital, which will be discussed in detail in this part, were anathema to both the Conservative and Radical factions. As a result, these two factions sided against Reformists and as the factional boundaries are often unclear, together came to be known as Conservatives.

Reformist movement was in essence a liberal reincarnation of the Islamist Left. By mid-1990's Left realized changing its views was the only way for political

---

<sup>134</sup> Sami Oğuz, Ruşen Çakır, *Hatemi'nin İrani*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), pp. 69-72

survival and starting with 1995, developed a much more moderate tone.<sup>135</sup> Thus, while there were those who stuck to hard-line views such as Ali Akbar Mohtashamipour, one of the founders of Lebanese Hezbollah,<sup>136</sup> Left abandoned its statist economic and hard-line foreign policies to embrace views that were by and large identical to the Pragmatists. Unable to run for a third time according to the constitution, Rafsanjani saw it fit to endorse Khatami, who was promising to implement the same vision as Rafsanjani anyway.<sup>137</sup> Rafsanjani's support went even further to the degree of openly warning the Supreme Leader not to commit fraud in the elections.<sup>138</sup>

The Reform Era lasted until the 2004 parliamentary elections, in which the Conservatives or the Principlists as they had named themselves by that time, won the majority of the seats and put an end to the hopes of political liberalization fostered by Khatami. During this period the factional polarization reduced the visible political diversity to the degree that indeed there appeared to be two factions. Vis-à-vis the Conservative coalition, the Pragmatists organized around Kargozaran Party merged with the Reformist-turned Left in the wake of 1997 presidential elections, with several pragmatists joining the Reformist administration. For instance, Ataollah Mohajarani, who was Rafsanjani's vice-president and one of the founders of Kargozaran became the Minister of Culture in Khatami's cabinet. Another example is Hossein Marashi, head of president's office under Rafsanjani as well as a relative to him and speaker of Kargozaran, who became a vice-president for Khatami. This was a natural outcome of their common policy agendas: Economic and political liberalization and détente with the West.

---

<sup>135</sup>Wells, pp. 34-35

<sup>136</sup>Shahram Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 103

<sup>137</sup>Moslem, pp. 245-246

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* p. 250

### 3.3.1 Reformist Foreign Policy

The reformist administration continued Rafsanjani's policy of rapprochement with the West in a more efficient way. Khatami's reputation as a democrat who intended to rein in the radicalism of the Islamic Republic and his public support as indicated by his election despite Conservative hindrances encouraged the Europeans and the US to adopt a more amiable approach towards Iran. This was especially visible with the several European countries' agreement on the return of their ambassadors to Iran, who had been withdrawn in the wake of Mykonos court verdict.

Khatami's most important achievements therefore were in relation with the European states. Within a year of his advent to power, several high level visits were exchanged between the sides culminating in a meeting between Iranian and British foreign ministers in New York, where the Iranian side guaranteed the Salman Rushdie fatwa would be shelved. Next, Khatami made visits to Italy, France and Germany, during which he secured some important contracts for joint ventures in Iran's energy sector as well as loans for further investment.<sup>139</sup>

Another pillar in Khatami's policy of détente was the relations with USA. In January 1998, Iranian President became the guest of an interview on CNN. Khatami began by praising the American civilization and went on to offer a moderation of the affairs through increased circulation of academics, writers, artists, journalists and tourists. Although directing mild criticism at USA in some parts and parrying when questioned about direct talks, Khatami's speech was a turning point in relations between the two countries.<sup>140</sup> In the period that followed tensions between USA and Iran was at a nadir and USA made a number of political gestures such as adding Mojahedeen-e Khalk Organization (a terrorist organization trying to overthrow the Islamic Republic) to the list of designated

---

<sup>139</sup>Shahriar Sabet-Saeidi, "Iranian-European Relations: A Strategic Partnership?" in Anoushirvan Ehteshami, Mahjoob Zweiri (ed.) *Iran's Foreign Policy From Khatami to Ahmadinejad*, (Ithaca Press, 2008, Berkshire U.K.) p. 63

<sup>140</sup>Oğuz, pp. 85-102

terrorist groups.<sup>141</sup> More significantly, in June 1998, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made a positive though not concrete proposal that the sides take mutual steps to build trust until a time comes when true relations can be established.<sup>142</sup> However, the possibility of USA-Iran rapprochement was finally frustrated due to the hostile attitude of Bush administration that came to power in 2001.

The drive behind the Reformist's diplomatic enthusiasm was the domestic agenda for economic reform. Due to their leftist past Reformists were sensitive about issues of social justice, however at the same time they had come to understand the faults of Moussavi administration's populist policies. Khatami gave voice to the change in outlook in a speech soon after his election, "We do not want a dispossessed society. When we talk about justice, we do not mean an equal distribution of poverty in society. To the contrary, we mean improving the means of living and distributing them justly."<sup>143</sup> Reformists wanted to continue Rafsanjani's reconstruction and as Sabet-Saeidi notes that Western countries had the resources Iran required desperately:

So, strategically Iran needed to look to the West to secure its economic and political interests. The root of the argument lay in the economic malaise of Iran and the need for immediate economic aid and foreign investment in order to advance the post-war reconstruction that were started by president Rafsanjani but were only half-finished or suffered technical difficulties.<sup>144</sup>

In addition to the economic incentives, Khatami was also aware that building stronger ties with the countries from whence the ideas of democracy were emanated would have beneficial effects concerning the domestic political milieu.

In the Organization of Islamic Conference summit in December 1997, he stated:

The civil society, which we seek to establish in our country –and would also like to recommend to other Muslim countries- is fundamentally different to the civil society born out of Greek classical philosophy and Roman Empire's political heritage... However, the two concepts of civil

---

<sup>141</sup>Ghoncheh Tazmini, *Khatami's Iran The Islamic Republic and the Turbulent Path to Reform*, (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009), p. 90

<sup>142</sup>Gary Sick, "The Clouded Mirror the United States and Iran", in John L. Esposito, R. K. Ramazani (eds.), *Iran at the Crossroads*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 201-202

<sup>143</sup>Sami Oğuz (ed.), *Gülümseyen İslam Hatemi'nin Ağzından İran'daki Değişim*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001), p. 30

<sup>144</sup>Sabet-Saeidi, p. 62

society should not necessarily contradict each other... For this reason we should never downplay the importance of learning... from the positive achievements of Western civil society.<sup>145</sup>

Based on this notion of cultural and intellectual interaction, Khatami made the proposal of “Dialog Between Civilizations”. As an evident answer to Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations, the Iranian President called for the creation of a public forum where intellectuals from different countries would come together to achieve a better understanding of cultural differences and similarities. Khatami’s idea found international appeal and 2001 was declared the “Year of Dialog Among Civilizations” by the UN.<sup>146</sup> Dialog between Civilizations project added to Khatami’s international reputation as an agent of détente and helped diffuse the negative image of Iran. However, as Zamini notes, it failed to address any concrete issues in Iran’s foreign policy and it did not mirror the views of the entire Iranian polity.<sup>147</sup>

### **3.3.2 Conservative Resistance**

The two branches of Conservative faction were in complete agreement that the Reformist agenda of rapprochement with the West was wrong. This faction was concerned as covered in the previous pages that opening Iran to the world would decimate the traditional economic forces and remove their social base. With the emergence of the Reform movement, however, the possibility of political and social liberalization asserted itself as the primary threat on the Conservative establishment, whose authority depended on the maintenance of traditional religious mores. In direct contrast to Khatami’s vision about considering the positive aspects of Western culture, as early as 1993, conservative Natiq Nuri had coined the term, “Western cultural onslaught” to describe the effects of mingling with Western countries:

---

<sup>145</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *The Dialectics of Globalization in Contemporary Iran*, in Toby Dodge, Richard Higgott (eds.), *Globalization and the Middle East Islam, Economy, Society and Politics*, (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington: Brookings Institution, 2002), pp. 141-142

<sup>146</sup>Tazmini, p. 83

<sup>147</sup>Tazmini, pp. 92-97



Spreading corruption and obscenity; ridiculing sacred Islamic terminology, sanctities and divine traditions; propagating debauchery, raunchiness... consuming alcohol; insulting clerics; instilling the impression that girls... are profligate and mocking religious chanting and so on.<sup>148</sup>

Supreme Leader Khamanei was still in a firm alliance with the Conservative coalition. During the OIC summit in Tehran in December 1997, he lashed against the Western civilization, which was “directing everyone towards materialism while money, gluttony and carnal desires are made the greatest aspirations”, launching an “all-rounded invasion” on the “Islamic faith and character” and exporting “culture of laxness and disregard for religion and ethics”.<sup>149</sup> Former Foreign Minister Velayati filled in the Supreme Leader’s abstractions about the West by stating that rapprochement with USA would extinguish the revolutionary zeal and the Reformist foreign policy was “stupid” or “dependent on foreigners”.<sup>150</sup> No longer in control of the diplomatic apparatus or the SNSC, Conservatives utilized their media arm to stain the Reformist foreign policy. Conservative newspaper Resalat warned that Reformists were disregarding the negative consequences of relations with USA, which were a reduction in “the level of Muslim hatred against the arrogance of America” and “despondency among militant Muslims”.<sup>151</sup>

During the Reform period, factional contention over foreign policy was at its peak as both sides criticized the other for using the issue for political gain. Reformist newspaper Jame’eh attacked the Conservatives by claiming that for them the rejection of relations with USA was “an instrument with which to settle domestic infighting”.<sup>152</sup> Likewise, Conservative mouthpiece Jumhuri-ye Islami accused the Reformists of turning the most important tenet of Iran’s foreign policy into a tool for factional bickering with which to further their own interests.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Baktiari, p. 222

<sup>149</sup> David Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran Religion, Society and Power*, (London, Portland: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 214

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 215

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. pp. 210-211

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. pp. 217-218

Conservatives also used the remaining institutions under their sway including the judiciary to embarrass the Reformist administration. The arrest of thirteen Iranian Jews in early 1999 for charges of espionage was construed in the West as attempt by the Conservatives to derail the rapprochement.<sup>154</sup> In mid-1999 the head of judiciary was replaced. The new incumbent Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi revealed that he was no less inimical to the idea of detente by stating, “Our national interests lie with antagonising the Great Satan. We condemn any cowardly stance toward America and any word on compromise with the Great Satan.”<sup>155</sup>

Finally, the Racial pressure groups functioning in impunity created a deadlock in Iran’s relations with several countries as the government was unable to provide security to the diplomats and citizens of Western countries, especially those from USA. Regarding this Michael Rubin made the following observation:

Indeed the Iranian government uses the presence of pressure groups both to control foreign visitors and as an excuse for not participating in Khatami’s “dialogue of civilizations.”... Iranians often argue that they cannot allow Americans greater access to their country for security reasons and for the sake of the visitors’ own safety...<sup>156</sup>

Americans were not alone as targets of Conservative intimidation. In February 1999, former chief representative of Deutsche Bank in Iran was killed in an armed attack in Tehran, while accompanied by the German military attaché. Police dismissed the incident as a common crime but there were rumors it was perpetrated by Conservatives.<sup>157</sup>

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The Islamic Revolution was carried out by a number of social groups who had different agendas to implement once they came to power. Their differences

---

<sup>154</sup>Sabet-Saeidi, pp. 64-65

<sup>155</sup>Ghoncheh Tazmini, *Khatami’s Iran The Islamic Republic and the Turbulent Path to Reform*, (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009) pp. 84-85

<sup>156</sup>Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows Radical Vigilantes in Khatami’s Iran*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001, Washington D.C.), p. 120

<sup>157</sup> Buchta, p.178

however were shrouded by their shared adherence to a mystified Islamist ideology personified in Khomeini. The glorification of the leader by segments of the society at large created a milieu wherein Khomeini could act as the final arbiter in interpreting the Islamist ideology but it at the same time forced Khomeini to remain cautious so as not to estrange those social segments that provided the bulk of his power base. As a result, Khomeini saw it fit to keep a balance between the urban poor represented by the Islamist Left and the traditional bourgeoisie represented by the Conservatives. Instead of choosing a side between these two evidently rival factions, he tried to mobilize them for his greater plans about putting in motion an international insurgency that would be prelude to a global or at least regional Islamic revolution. It can be suggested therefore that except for a determination for overthrowing the monarchy and hopefully other governments, Khomeini did not have a specific plan or a roadmap catering to the ills of the society. He improvised his ideology as he ruled Iran through the eight year war and the Islamist ideology he passed on to his successors was ambiguous and pliable. He particularly dismissed the question of how the wealth is to be distributed in the Islamic society. Khomeini was resolute and clear on only one single issue however, which per se came to constitute his legacy. He explicitly ordered his followers never to reconcile with “neither East nor West”. In this chapter the repercussions of this legacy on the foreign policy perspectives of the factions until the first years of the twenty first century was discussed. The next chapter will deal with the most recent factional dispositions vis-à-vis Iran’s major foreign policy issues and try to reveal to what degree factions can construct an understanding of their Iran’s place in the world in a political environment where confrontational and rejectionist pretension means instant legitimacy.

## CHAPTER 4

### FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF FACTIONS FROM 2004 TO 2010

#### 4.1 Introduction

As the second term of President Khatami neared its end, important changes took place in Iran's domestic and foreign affairs. In a process that culminated in the election of Mahmood Ahmedinejad to presidency in 2005, balance of power among the factions dramatically shifted towards the hardliner end of the spectrum. At the same time, with the 9/11 attacks and publicizing of Iran's nuclear program, new problems emerged in Iran's foreign relations and existing ones intensified. Between 2004 and 2009, we see an institutionally repositioned set of Iranian factions, facing and reacting to a redefined international environment with its new dilemmas. Yet, as it will be shown in this chapter, the foreign policy concepts of the factions continued to be reflections of their domestic agendas with those factions that prioritized economic and social development upholding the view that Iran's foreign policy should be aimed to develop and maintain ties with Europe and if possible USA, which have the resources Iran needs. Factions that desired to retain a hold on economic and political spheres on the other hand, continued to bar rapprochement by resort to ideological or intellectual arguments. Before discussing the foreign policy concepts of Iranian political factions in this new era in detail, a review of the domestic and international developments will be made.

##### 4.1.1 Domestic Politics: Resurgence of the Principlists

Electoral defeats in 1997 and 2001 presidential and 2000 parliamentary elections engendered a danger of permanent and complete loss of power for the Conservative elite occupying supervisory positions of the Islamic Republic. With IRGC barely able to keep in check the democratic aspirations of the populace, the Conservative old guard and their Radical apprentices knew full well that they had

to develop a discourse catering to problems of the people rather than preach against “cultural onslaught” as Nateq Nuri had done pending his defeat in 1997 elections.

The first temperament of image was the adoption of the word “Principlist” to identify the faction. Reportedly invented by Ahmad Tavakkoli, the word “Principlist” suggests idealism rather than ossification implied by “Conservative”. Secondly, Principlists produced a rhetoric that highlights economic issues and organized themselves around the newly formed parties Abadgaran (Builders) and Isargaran (Altruists) names that connote service oriented policies.<sup>158</sup>

Principlists reclaimed superiority by two electoral victories. In February 2004 elections, with the backing of the Guardian Council that vetted Reformist candidates, they secured the majority of parliament seats. In 2005, Principlists’ favorite Mahmoud Ahmadinejad defeated Hashemi Rafsanjani in the second run in presidential elections to complete the ousting of Reformists. Principlist supremacy was maintained in 2008 parliamentary and 2009 presidential elections.

Under the umbrella of Principlism, there were from the beginning two separate trends. One was the mainstream Conservatives elaborated on in detail in chapter 3. The other one is the Radical faction that was rooted in the extremist elements in security agencies and organized around pressure groups such as Ansar-e Hezbollah. The latter seems to have maintained a separate identity even when it was in close cooperation with Conservatives during the heyday of Khatami’s Reform Movement. Before the 2000 parliamentary elections Ansar-e Hezbollah had distanced itself from leading figures of the Conservatives faction such as Hossein Shariatmadari, Leader’s representative in Kayhan newspaper. In a series of articles published in the group’s newspaper Jebhe, it was argued that Ansar-e Hezbollah was a third faction that truly defends the revolution in the dichotomy of Reformists and Rightists (Conservatives).<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup>Walter Posch, Prospects for Iran’s 2009 Presidential Elections, *The Middle East Institute Policy Brief*, No:24, June 2009, p. 3

<sup>159</sup>Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows Radical Vigilantes in Khatami’s Iran*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001, Washington D.C.), pp. 56-57

After the Reformists were routed and Ahmadinejad was elected president, the differences between the two groups did not take long to come forward. The Radical president made a number moves that were not part of the Conservative-Principlist agenda including publicly calling for destruction of Israel and questioning of Holocaust.<sup>160</sup> Ali Larijani, a prominent Conservative and SNSC Secretary between 2005 and 2007, had to intervene by declaring that Iran did not mean to deviate from its official policy of leaving it up to Palestinians to decide their future.<sup>161</sup> Escalating tensions between the two Principlist camps led to Larijani's resignation in 2007. In 2008 parliamentary elections, Conservatives declared a separate list under the title Broad Principlist Coalition, while more pro-Ahmadinejad candidates gathered under the United Principlist Front. After the elections, Conservatives wrestled the superiority in Majlis from Radicals by electing Ali Larijani as the speaker. In 2009 presidential elections, Conservatives endorsed Mohsen Rezai, who performed very disappointingly.

Radical-Principlists currently headed but not necessarily controlled by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad represent the extremist elements inside the regime who want to turn the Islamic Republic's clock backward to Khomeini's time. Their foreign policy perspective is heavily influenced by Khomeini's ideology, which calls for a struggle against the international system at the expense of making Iran a pariah in the world. As the previous chapter has demonstrated Khomeini provided a surplus of ideological precedence for any faction that would choose to isolate Iran from the world and especially from USA. The question remains if the Radical faction is solely motivated by the desire to fulfill the Imam's ordinances and whether there is, like the other factions, a socioeconomic incentive for the Radicals in adopting their particular foreign policy stance. Karim Sadjadpour from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace gives an interesting insight about how the interests of the IRGC might be prodding the Radicals to preclude rapprochement with the West:

---

<sup>160</sup> Anoushirvan Ehteshami, Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives the Politics of Iran's Silent Revolution*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 109-112

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114

...there's a small but very powerful clique within Iran, among the political elite, who actually have entrenched political and financial interests in retaining Iran's isolation. And whenever there is the prospect of a U.S.-Iran dialogue or improved Iranian relations with the West, they do their very best to torpedo such efforts.

...hardline elements within the Revolutionary Guard, who right now have enormous financial assets, and they maintain a kind of a private mafia. And the last thing they want is Iran to open up to the rest of the world, to join the WTO. I think their logic is that right now Iran is a closed society, and the less open the merrier.<sup>162</sup>

Michael Rubin has also expressed similar views about the tendency of radical elements within the regime to block foreign investment in order to monopolize the economy.<sup>163</sup> While, the Radicals themselves are naturally not expressive on this issue, there is good reason to believe that ideology in this case is reinforced by domestic economic aspirations.

As for the Conservative-Principlist faction, its most prominent figures are Mohsen Rezai, Mohammed Baqer-Qalibaf and Ali Larijani.<sup>164</sup> Rezai was the commander of IRGC until 1997 and has been a member of the Expediency Discernment Council since then. Qalibaf also has a background in IRGC as well as Law Enforcement Forces but he reportedly estranged his former comrades because he started an investigation into smuggling through IRGC-run ports when he was serving as a police chief.<sup>165</sup> Ali Larijani is a seasoned and well-connected Conservative with family members in important posts of state and the clergy. He served as the head of state radio and television from 1994 to 2004.

What social agenda the Conservatives of 2000's represent is open to question. Keshaverzian argues that Conservatives in the post-revolutionary period lost

---

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Karim Sajdadpour, May 29, 2007,

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/13466/sadjadpour.html> viewed on December 3, 2010

<sup>163</sup> Michael Rubin, *Iran 2025*, paper presented in International Future Operational Environment Seminar June 22, 2010, <http://www.aei.org/speech/100153> viewed on December 3, 2010

<sup>164</sup> "Rezai, Qalibaf, Larijani; Silence, Criticism or Cooperation with Ahmadinejad?", AftabNews, August 20, 2005, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdci.5a3ct1avqbc2t.html> viewed on December 10, 2010

<sup>165</sup> Kasra Naji, *Ahmadinejad The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader*, (I.B. Tauris: London, New York; 2008), p. 76

contact with the bazaar to become an elite group with no social connection.<sup>166</sup> Khalaji, on the other hand, points out to the increased incorporation of the religious establishment under IRI, which terminated the traditional autonomy of the clergy as a force with its own agenda.<sup>167</sup> Deprived of the two basic components of its support base, Conservatives can be regarded a cadre of professional politicians, who rely more on their connections and revolutionary credentials than producing competent policies. Conservative candidates fare remarkably bad in presidential elections, exposing their remoteness from all social strata as well as lack of any other means to manipulate election turnouts.

That being said, Conservatives continue to enjoy some Supreme Leader support. In August 2009, Khamanei appointed Sadeq Larijani as the head of Judicial Organ, whose brother Ali Larijani is still the Leader's representative in SNSC. Conservatives also display a tendency to compete with the Radicals including Ahmadinejad. The latest instance of discord between the groups of the Principlists is the controversy over the redistribution of the funds saved by reducing gasoline subsidies. Ahmadinejad proposed a law granting the president the control of the funds; however the Majlis headed by Ali Larijani passed a revised version reserving for the Majlis the right to oversee the distribution.<sup>168</sup>

#### **4.1.2 9/11 and the coming of USA**

US-Iran relations have been virtually frozen since the Revolution and the sides basically avoided each other but the developments at the onset of the new millennium made this state of affairs geographically unsustainable. US President George W. Bush, who took office in January 2001, was strongly affiliated with what is called neoconservatism, an American political paradigm that can be

---

<sup>166</sup> Arang Keshaverzian, "Regime Loyalty and Bazaari Representation under the Islamic Republic of Iran: Dilemmas of the Society of Islamic Coalition", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No:41 (2009), pp. 225-246

<sup>167</sup> Mehdi Khalaji, *The Last Marja: Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism*, *Policy Focus* no. 59, The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2006

<sup>168</sup> Radio Farda, December 9, 2009,

[http://www.radiofarda.com/content/o2\\_guardian\\_council\\_returned\\_bill/1899736.html](http://www.radiofarda.com/content/o2_guardian_council_returned_bill/1899736.html) viewed on December 10, 2010



traced back to Cold War years and came to be a significant factor in US politics in late 1990's. In the international arena, the neoconservatives believe in hawkish policies including a more extensive use of armed forces, preemptive actions against what are called rogue states, changing authoritarian regimes through interventions and long term precautions to ensure that USA remains the unrivaled superpower in the world. After the Cold War, this policy was first manifested in a strategy document drafted in 1992 by undersecretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz. The initial draft before it was revised by Clinton administration, recommended a substantial addition to the defense budget that would be used to prevent the rise of global powers rival to USA.<sup>169</sup> Neoconservatives were critical of Clinton's Middle East policy and years before 9/11 attacks they advised Clinton to remove Saddam's Baath regime in Iraq.<sup>170</sup>

Terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 came as the spark that set in motion the neoconservative agenda on the Middle East. As part of a global campaign to defeat the international terrorist organization al-Qaeda, by the end of 2001 USA took down the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which had been harboring al-Qaeda elements and leadership. The next major operation in the war against terror was the invasion of Iraq in 2003. These military interventions were in the short term concerned with removing governments perceived as imminent threats to US security, while in the long run they were supposed to serve the building of democratic governments that buttress the international security rather than undermine it.

The presence of American forces in two neighboring countries was per se a source of danger to Iran. Moreover, remarks from US administration hinted that Iranian regime would be the next to be toppled. As early as January 2002, President Bush had called North Korea, Iraq and Iran parts of an "axis of evil"<sup>171</sup> thus indicating Iran was on the blacklist. Soon after the fall of Baghdad, US officials and especially defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld accused Iran of allowing al-Qaeda

---

<sup>169</sup>Louise Fawcett, *International Relations of the Middle East*, (Oxford University Press, 2005, New York) p. 300

<sup>170</sup>Ibid. p.300-301

<sup>171</sup>Transcript of President Bush's first State of the Union address, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/> viewed on May 9, 2010

members to reside and organize within its borders.<sup>172</sup> In January 2005, a Seymour Hersh article in *New Yorker* magazine about US special forces conducting reconnaissance missions inside Iran refueled suspicions of an impending US attack.<sup>173</sup> Rumors of plans to hit Iran continued to be leaked to media throughout George Bush's second term in presidency along with already heated war of words between the leaders of the sides.<sup>174</sup> While the coming of US destroyed Taliban and Saddam, both of which were in vendetta with Iranians, it also marked the period of highest tension between US and Iran as well as the most serious threat of imposed regime change for IRI.

Iran's response was mixed. On the one hand, the Islamic Republic launched a soft power campaign in Iraq to bring its political allies, Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq and Dawah Party to power through elections. On the other hand, it infiltrated agents and weapons into Iraq, to train and equip an assortment of militia groups to be used against USA.<sup>175</sup> American officials continued to blame Iran for instability in Iraq several years into the invasion.<sup>176</sup>

In May 2006, Mahmood Ahmadinejad sent a letter to US President Bush. Although the posting of the document was remarkable as the first incident of communication between the presidents of two countries in decades; the letter itself mostly consisting of a philosophical criticism of Bush policies, was ignored by US administration. Nevertheless, controversy was caused in Iranian political circles, revealing the approach of factions to relations with USA.

The Iraq-related tensions between Iran and USA reached a peak during 2007 with USA putting up a more firm stance to stop Iranian incursion into Iraq. One aspect of the toughening American attitude was the attempt to capture and expose Iranian operatives in Iraq. In December 2006, four Iranian nationals were arrested in

---

<sup>172</sup> White House says Iran harbors al-Qaeda, *Fox News*, May 21, 2003

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,87471,00.html> viewed on May 9, 2010

<sup>173</sup> BBC, January 17, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4180087.stm> viewed on December 13, 2010

<sup>174</sup> See for example, Target Iran: US able to strike in the spring, *The Guardian*, February 10, 2007 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/feb/10/iran.usa> viewed on December 13, 2010

<sup>175</sup> Joseph Felter, Brian Fishman, Iranian Strategy in Iraq Politics and "other means", *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Occasional Paper Series*, October 13, 2008, p. 26-48

<sup>176</sup> See for example, US General says Iran backs Iraqi Shi'ites and Sunnis, *Reuters*, April 19, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN19348645> viewed on December 15, 2010

Baghdad but released on the pressure of Iraqi government. In January 2007, Americans detained five Iranians in Northern Iraq. They continued to capture people they alleged to be Iranian agents including Mahmoud Farhadi, a man believed to be a member of the Quds force who was arrested in September 2007.<sup>177</sup> A more serious sign of escalation on behalf of the Americans was the President's reported authorization for US troops to kill Iranian agents operating in Iraq.<sup>178</sup> At this point, the sides agreed for a series of negotiations centering on the maintenance of security in Iraq. US Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker and Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi Qomi met three times in summer 2007 in Baghdad. This was the first high level direct talk between the two sides in decades.<sup>179</sup>

The situation deescalated in the following years. An intention to thaw relations with Iran was evident in the administration of Barak Obama who took office in January 2009. This new approach of American government became all the more public with the unprecedented Newruz speech by Obama, in which he addressed the rulers of Iran and called for application of diplomacy in relations instead of coercion.<sup>180</sup> While Obama's opening seems to have been overrun by the tumult of 2009 election controversy, high level Iranian and American diplomats came together once more during the nuclear talks in Geneva in October 2009 but this encounter, too, yielded little with regards to reestablishment of ties between these two countries.

The reestablishment of normal diplomatic relations between USA and Iran is a problematic issue. It would be a reductionism to view it as a process USA is ready to initiate but Iran is resisting because of ideological baggage. The trauma of Iran hostage crisis has prodded the American public to demonize Iran and the resulting

---

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 49

<sup>178</sup> Troops Authorized to Kill Iranian Operatives in Iraq, Washington Post, January 26, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/25/AR2007012502199.html> viewed on December 15, 2010

<sup>179</sup> Msnbc, May 29, 2007, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18899216/ns/world\\_news-mideast/n\\_africa/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18899216/ns/world_news-mideast/n_africa/) viewed on December 15, 2010

<sup>180</sup> Obama's Message to Iran Is Opening Bid in Diplomatic Drive, New York Times, March 20, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/21/world/middleeast/21iran.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/21/world/middleeast/21iran.html?_r=1) viewed on December 15, 2010

mutual distrust makes diplomatic relations a remote possibility in the current context. However, in Iran it is observed that the factions have come to be less influenced by Khomeini's legacy in this period. While no concrete steps are taken as the Radicals are in power, Factions have developed more sophisticated and diversified outlooks to USA. The views of the factions towards USA, although it may not necessarily lead to rapprochement in the short term, are an indication of the factions' perception of the West and their vision about Iran's place in the world.

#### **4.1.3 The Nuclear Issue**

The western allegations of nuclear weapons development against Iran is based on three arguments. Firstly, Iran's nuclear activities are inconsistent with peaceful intentions and economically irrational. For example, Iran has been building both heavy water nuclear reactors and enrichment facilities, which are mutually exclusive ways of reaching a peaceful nuclear fuel cycle. Secondly, Iran has constantly given the impression that it is hiding something by failing to reveal ongoing projects and in some cases denying IAEA observers access to facilities. Finally, Iran's interest in developing ballistic missiles spurs suspicions that it is after arranging delivery systems for future nuclear warheads.<sup>181</sup> In February 2010, President Ahmadinejad declared that Iran had enriched uranium up to 20 percent for medical purposes, far beyond 3.5 percent required for nuclear reactors, which had been Iran's established pretext for uranium enrichment.<sup>182</sup> One week later, International Atomic Energy Agency report issued a report indicating for the first time that all evidence suggest Iran is pursuing weaponization.<sup>183</sup> In the light of confirmation by this independent agency, it has become more difficult than ever to claim that Iran does not mean to acquire nuclear weapons.

It should be remembered however that no Iranian official has ever hinted that Iran might be seeking anything beyond peaceful application of nuclear technology.

---

<sup>181</sup> Mark Fitzpatrick, *The Iranian Nuclear Crisis Avoiding worst-case outcomes*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), pp. 14-22

<sup>182</sup> Tehran Times, February 10, 2010, [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=214178](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=214178) viewed on December 4, 2010

<sup>183</sup> Reuters, February 18, 2010 <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE61H4EH20100218>

Iranian officials argue that such weapons would actually harm Iran's security by turning it into an international target and the Supreme Leader banned the nuclear weapons with a fatwa. A logical presumption would be that Iran is committed to reach the technological threshold for weapons capability but has yet to decide whether or not to actually build one.<sup>184</sup> Iranian foreign ministers both under Khatami and Ahmadinejad have invoked the "Japan Option" as a desirable destination for Iran's nuclear program.<sup>185</sup>

In any case, as will be discussed in greater detail there seems to be unanimity among factions to carry on the nuclear program. In addition, all factions have demonstrated some tendency to engage in negotiations, even with parties including USA. Where the factions diverge is to what degree the USA, EU and IAEA should be appeased to prevent Iran's further isolation in the international scene. This difference appears to be tactical with some factions believing in the possibility of using temporary suspension and other maneuvers to delay or preclude sanctions against Iran. A brief history of Iran's nuclear program is needed to understand the relevance of factional discourse on the issue.

Iran's ambitions about nuclear technology predate the Islamic Revolution. In 1975, the construction of the first nuclear power station in Bushehr was started by German companies. After the revolution the nuclear program was initially abandoned completely due to the exodus of the nuclear experts along with the rest of old regime's elite, loss of international partners and dismissal of the issue by emerging clerical leadership as a symbol of Shah's pompous and profligate development projects. However, the nuclear research in Iran was revived in mid-1980's and it was greatly reinforced in 1990's by the will of the dual leadership of Khamanei and Rafsanjani. Considering how the nuclear issue put Iran at loggerheads with the West, it might seem paradoxical that Iran put more effort in the program at a time when both factions in power were seeking a compromise in international relations. In fact, the nuclear program appears to have

---

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. pp. 12-13

<sup>185</sup> MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 513, "Iran Foreign Minister: The Japanese Nuclear Model Applies To Us Too", May 5, 2009, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/121/2390.htm> viewed on December 4, 2010

become an essential part of Iran's security doctrine from the early days of the revolution. Saira Khan argues that Iran's protracted conflict with USA and its regional allies forced the Islamic Republic's leadership to take up the issue in 1980's:

This was the time when Iran realized that addressing all conflicts at the same time required it to acquire nuclear weapons. It was more important because Israel was an opaque state and the US, a nuclear rival of Iran, was Israel's ally. Saddam's ultimate intention to develop nuclear weapons was also revealed during the same period. No leadership – Revolutionary or Reformist- could ignore the security environment or conflict settings.<sup>186</sup>

Development of nuclear technology became an even greater priority when in the post-cold war setting Iran found itself in an asymmetric conflict with a superpower, which consistently gave signals of pursuing regime change in pariah states.<sup>187</sup> Especially, Operation Desert Storm that marked the end of the Cold War ways had reverberations in Tehran. In Chubin's words:

The rapid victory in Iraq in 1991 contrasted with Iran's eight year inconclusive war, underscoring the vast military disparity in conventional power between Tehran and Washington. Indian General Krishnaswamy Sundarji's comment –that if you wish to confront United States, it would be wise to have nuclear weapons- seemed especially relevant to the Iranians.<sup>188</sup>

In 1990's, Iran made a number of secret and open deals with China, Pakistan and Russian to acquire the nuclear technologies. These were coupled by other initiatives including industrial espionage in which disguised Iranian agents would buy dual-use material in other countries and inviting expatriate scientists or exonerating incarcerated ones. Rafsanjani played the leading role in all of this activity.<sup>189</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> Saira Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons Protracted Conflict and Proliferation*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), p.75

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 77-82

<sup>188</sup> Shahrām Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, (Washington, D.C. : Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), p. 20

<sup>189</sup> Yossi Melman, Meir Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, (New York, Carroll & Graf, 2007), pp. 99-105

Iran's nuclear program became a much graver international problem, after two facilities secretly built by Iran in Natanz and Arak were exposed in 2002. The concealment of the sites fueled the international suspicions about Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. In 2003 President Khatami announced Iran's intention to build a full nuclear cycle, which includes uranium enrichment as an essential component. The shared demand of US and EU that Iran does not engage in uranium enrichment on the grounds that it will eventually lead to weapons development lies at the heart of the conflict. With Khatami as the president and Hasan Rouhani as chief nuclear negotiator, Iran initially displayed a cooperative attitude, negotiating with EU-3 and reaching the Tehran Agreement in October 2003. Accordingly, Iran signed the additional protocol to Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and voluntarily suspended all uranium enrichment activities until a final deal is made. Although, the treaty was revoked in June 2004, a similar suspension agreement was made in November. In August 2005, the new president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad restarted the enrichment. Under Ahmadinejad, Iran's uncooperative behavior on the nuclear issue prodded IAEA to report Iran to UNSC, which resulted in the issuance of the Security Council Resolution 1737 in December 2006. This was followed by SCR 1747 in March 2007, SCR 1803 in March 2008 and SCR 1929 in June 2010. Each of these resolutions impose sanctions on certain Iranian activities, companies and persons and are intended to restrain Iran's ability to make transactions pertaining to the nuclear program. Furthermore, US and EU have initiated a number of unilateral economic sanctions to force the Iranian government to step back from its uncompromising position by causing hardship.

#### **4.1.4 Turn to East**

In August 2005, while the newly elected President Ahmadinejad was introducing his proposed cabinet members to the Majlis for vote of confidence, the prospective Foreign Minister Menuchehr Mottaki declared a new course of action that he planned to follow in foreign policy if he takes office:

I will toil in my “Turn-to-East”, to balance the foreign and economic relations with various geographic areas and so that in international affairs our strategy that is the strategy covered in our statements, is based on justice-seeking in international relations.<sup>190</sup>

This strategy or Turn-to-East (negah be sharq) as it came to be called, meant the redirection of Iran’s diplomatic efforts to those states that are outside the West i.e. North America and EU. Turn to East as it is discussed in this thesis includes not only a shift towards the states that are literally in the East such as China, Russia, India and Pakistan, but also a higher level of cooperation with known adversaries of the West, such as Venezuela and its smaller Latin American allies as well as seeking diplomatic and trade partners from among the neglected parts of the world such as Africa. Indeed, Ahmadinejad’s allies refer to this strategy as “Expansion of Capacity” rather than Turn-to-East.<sup>191</sup> It can be claimed to be both functional in the sense that it will give Iran alternatives to avoid Western influence and ideological because it implicitly depends on the premise that the target countries should act together to end western domination. While popularized under Ahmadinejad administration, such a strategy has had a part in Iran’s foreign policy even before. Ali Aqamohammadi from the policy-making and propaganda office of SNSC explained this in 2005:

Iran’s turn to south has been there from the beginning and that which is now being termed as Turn-to-East is in fact turn to south in other words those countries that are not considered global super powers. But their cooperation with Iran can reorganize the (distribution of) power in the world... Our turn to the southern countries is not incidental but continuous and we have had much cooperation with these countries since the victory of the revolution.<sup>192</sup>

Faced with a unipolar international order, in 1990’s Iran set out to improve its relations with Russian Federation, the former leader of the East that Khomeini

---

<sup>190</sup> Aftab News, August 26, 2005, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcci0qs.2bqxe8laa2.html> viewed on November 17, 2010

<sup>191</sup> Aftab, 22 Sept. 2005, <http://www.aftab.ir/articles/view/politics/diplomacy/c1c1127557307p1.php> viewed on December 1, 2010

<sup>192</sup> Hamshahri, October 8, 2005, <http://www.hamshahri.org/hamnews/1384/840716/news/iran.htm> viewed on December 2, 2010



condemned sternly. Russia became an important source to import weaponry and nuclear technology for the Islamic Republic. The milestone in Iran-Russia nuclear cooperation was the 1995 protocol for the completion of Shah's leftover nuclear plant in Bushehr. Iran, for its part abstained from challenging the Russian influence in Central Asia and Caucasia, especially Chechnya. Also, both sides wanted to keep USA out of these regions. Despite the common interests, the relation has also been tested where Russia's regional ambitions collided with Iran's Islamic sensitivities, namely in former Yugoslavia.<sup>193</sup>

As part of the Turn-to-East strategy of Ahmadinejad administration, Iran's economic and diplomatic relations with China and India also grew. Both are rapidly developing economic giants with a huge demand for fossil fuels, a commodity Iran has in surplus. Concerning the interests of Islamic Republic, they represented an alternate source of trade partnerships to circumvent Western sanctions and in the case of China, a prospect of UNSC resolution veto in favor of Iran.<sup>194</sup>

When compared with the prospects of Turn-to-East policy however, Iran's initiatives in the Asian continent have led to mixed results. This is most evident in the Russian and Chinese default in vetoing UNSC resolutions against Iran, which was one of the primary intentions of Turn-to-East. Still, Iran's relations with East have helped to check the asperity of the sanctions. China, although it did allow the issuance of resolutions against Iran, ensured the sanctions did not include limitations of oil or oil products. Since China has become a major market for Iranian oil and an investor in Iran's oil industry as well as gas sector, such limitations would be tantamount to China sanctioning itself.<sup>195</sup> The same is also the case for Russians who opposed targeting these vital sectors of Iran's economy on the grounds that the intention of sanctions should be "encouraging Iran to

---

<sup>193</sup> Mohiaddin Mesbahi, 'Iran's Foreign Policy Towards Russia, Central Asia and Caucasus', in John L. Esposito, R. K. Ramazani (eds.), *Iran at the Crossroads*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 149-174

<sup>194</sup> Sanam Vakil, 'Iran: Balancing East against West', *The Washington Quarterly*, 29: 4(2006), pp. 51-65

<sup>195</sup> Willem van Kemenade, "China vs. the Western Campaign for Iran Sanctions", *The Washington Quarterly*, 2010 Vol:33 No:3, pp. 99-114

negotiate, rather than inflicting punishment". Furthermore Russia slowed down the passage of some of the limitations on the nuclear program because of its investment in Bushehr nuclear station.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, the UN sanctions even in their tempered form cause difficulties for Iranian economy.

Also, on the investment and energy fronts, Iran had partial success amidst obstacles. India's default to participate in the planned Iran-Pakistan-India was the major disillusionment for the proponents of Turn-to-East in this issue. Instead India chose to satisfy its energy needs by signing a civilian nuclear power deal with USA in 2008, which was a blow to the spirit of Iranian strategy to rallying developing nations against Western imperialism. Iran compensated to some degree, however, by securing a deal to sell its gas to Pakistan in May 2010. While Western pressure on Pakistan persists, the failure of USA to offer a nuclear deal similar to the one with India makes more likely that Pakistan will buy the gas.<sup>197</sup>

Iran also started to build strong connections in Latin America in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The nexus of Iranian influence in this region was the oil-rich Venezuela. Through Hugo Chavez, Ahmadinejad found his way to other less resourceful Latin American countries such as Nicaragua and Bolivia.<sup>198</sup>

The Latin America pillar of this Principlist foreign policy was more flauntingly successful albeit with little real gain as these countries cannot be compared to Russia or China in economic or political clout. In addition to securing various economic partnerships in the region, Iran also managed to persuade its new allies to take positions that will benefit Iran in international issues. For instance, On 2 September 2008, after a meeting between the presidents of the two countries in Tehran, Bolivia issued a joint statement with Iran claiming that the involvement of

---

<sup>196</sup> Cole Harvey, Richard Sabatini, Issue Brief Russia's Lukewarm Support for International Sanctions against Iran: History and Motivations, 15 April 2010, [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/e3\\_russia\\_lukewarm\\_sanctions\\_against\\_iran.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_russia_lukewarm_sanctions_against_iran.html), viewed on December 5, 2010

<sup>197</sup> Syed Fazl-e-Haider, US presses Pakistan on Iranian gas, Asia Times Online, June 22, 2010, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/LF22Df02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LF22Df02.html) viewed on December 15, 2010

<sup>198</sup> Michael Rubin, Iran's Global Ambitions, AEI Outlook Series No:3 <http://www.aei.org/outlook/27658> viewed on December 2, 2010

UNSC in the nuclear issue was not justified.<sup>199</sup> In January 2009, Venezuela and Bolivia declared termination of diplomatic relations with Israel because of the latter's course of actions concerning the Gaza Strip.<sup>200</sup> Then in November 2009, Venezuela, along with Cuba and Malaysia voted against an IAEA resolution against Iran.<sup>201</sup> The importance of Iranian activity is also demonstrated by the alarm it gives to Iran's chief adversaries. In May 2009, Israeli Foreign Ministry prepared a detailed report on Iran's activities in Latin America and served it to a news agency.<sup>202</sup> Also in May, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned against growing Chinese and Iranian influence in the region.<sup>203</sup> In December 2009, Clinton admonished Latin American countries for their close ties with Iran.<sup>204</sup> Finally, Iran under Ahmadinejad built deeper ties in Africa. Iran had been a patron of the Islamist Sudanese regime since the country distanced itself from USA in late 1980's.<sup>205</sup> The new administration in Tehran in addition to maintain the interest in Sudan saw Africa's "fifty-two countries as diplomatic easy picking", making economic and political connections especially with Senegal and Zimbabwe.<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>199</sup>Iran, Bolivia issue joint statement, *Tehran Times*, September 3, 2008, [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=176941](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=176941) viewed on December 14, 2010

<sup>200</sup>[http://www.france24.com/en/20090115-venezuela-bolivia-break-diplomatic-ties-with-israel-?quicks\\_tabs\\_1=0](http://www.france24.com/en/20090115-venezuela-bolivia-break-diplomatic-ties-with-israel-?quicks_tabs_1=0) viewed on December 14, 2010

<sup>201</sup> IAEA calls for end to Qom reactor construction, Radio France International, November 27, 2009, [http://www.rfi.fr/actuen/articles/119/article\\_6008.asp](http://www.rfi.fr/actuen/articles/119/article_6008.asp) viewed on November 28, 2010

<sup>202</sup> Israel: Ties to South America Aiding Iran's Nuclear Program, Ynet News, May 25, 2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3721335,00.html> viewed on November 11, 2010

<sup>203</sup> Clinton Says U.S. Should Counter Iran, China Influence In Latin America, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, May 2, 2009,

[http://www.rferl.org/content/Clinton\\_Says\\_US\\_Should\\_Counter\\_Iran\\_China\\_Influence\\_In\\_Latin\\_America/1620140.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Clinton_Says_US_Should_Counter_Iran_China_Influence_In_Latin_America/1620140.html) viewed on November 28, 2010

<sup>204</sup> Hillary Clinton Warns Latin America off Close Iran Ties, BBC, December 11, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8409081.stm> viewed on November 28, 2010

<sup>205</sup> John Calabrese, *Revolutionary Horizons Regional Foreign Policy in Post-Khomeini Iran*, (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 155-159

<sup>206</sup> Michael Rubin, *Iran's Global Ambitions*

## 4.2 Radicals' Foreign Policy

### 4.2.1 Radicals on USA

It is interesting that Ahmadinejad, who is apparently the helmsman though probably not the mastermind of the Radical Faction, was the person to initiate contact with US by producing the 2006 letter to Bush. The Iranian President's move could be considered a contradiction to his faction's rejection of relations with US. Nevertheless, a scrutiny of the letter's content indicates that it is intended to condemn the US and attract political visibility rather than initiate any meaningful relation with the other side. Haddad Adal, the Majlis speaker from 2005 to 2008 underlined this aspect of the letter. Adal enjoys connections with both Radicals and Conservatives and his replacement by Ali Larijani in 2008 was considered a blow to Ahmadinejad's faction:

The message of the president's valiant letter to Bush was not the establishment of relations with America, it was rather a revelation of the reasons Behind Iran's lack of interest in relations with this country.<sup>207</sup>

US-Iran talks in Iraq, however limited in scope, were also a deviation from the mainstream Radical-Principlist rhetoric. Probably forced to the table by United States' escalation of the turf war in Iraq as it manifested in the arrest of Iranian diplomats, Ahmadinejad administration strictly underlined that meeting between Crocker and Qomi was a limited interaction rather than a prelude to normalized relations.

Another important point was that Americans had requested the meeting and Iran had condescended for the security of Iraqi people. On the day of the first meeting, foreign minister Menuchehr Mottaki, told a group of reporters that the talks were "in the wake of numerous requests by Iraqi government and an official request of American government through Swiss embassy" and "in accordance with their

---

<sup>207</sup>Afarinesh, May 11, 2006, [www.afarinesh-daily.com/afarinesh/News.aspx?NID=161](http://www.afarinesh-daily.com/afarinesh/News.aspx?NID=161) viewed on November 11, 2010

acceptance of the facts, in other words their reconsideration of the past policies and election of appropriate solutions”.<sup>208</sup>

The president also stressed that American beseeched for a meeting and Iran’s only intention was to help the Iraqis:

They sent messages more than forty times saying we should talk about the security of Iraq. I told them many times to make an official request and they made it... I hope (the talks) will be helpful to the Iraqi people and we will make every effort so that the talks take place in line with the interests of Iraqi people.<sup>209</sup>

Ahmadinejad also indicated that he had no desire to expand the talks:

In that missive (for the meeting request) they declared we made preparations so that if you want to talk about something else as well, say it. And I gave a negative answer.<sup>210</sup>

A far less apologetic approach to Baghdad talks came from an obscure but powerful figure of the Radical-Principlist faction, who had no reason to take heed in diplomacy. Ayatullah Ahmad Jannati as the head of the Guardian Council, plays no considerable role in foreign policy formulation but he has strong links to Ahmadinejad’s circle. Indeed, since early 1990’s Jannati has been one of the shadowy patrons of Ahmadinejad.<sup>211</sup> In a Friday prayer sermon the Ayatullah lashed against USA:

If we talked to Americans it is because we wanted to show them that they are accomplice in all the corruption, insecurity and explosions in Iraq and that to foster security they must evacuate the country...The regime (Islamic Republic) has not moderated its principle concerning the relations with America and its stance to relations with America retains its strength... The Islamic Republic is an anti-American regime and we are enemies with each other. Because we say justice must rule and coercion and oppression must disappear and (we ask) why are the defenseless people of Palestine being destroyed, why is so much pressure being

---

<sup>208</sup> Fars News Agency, May 28, 2007,

<http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8603070121> viewed on November 11, 2010

<sup>209</sup> Aftab News, May 28, 2007, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcdjk09.yt0fo6a22y.html> viewed on November 11, 2010

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Najji, pp. 263-265

imposed on Lebanese Hezbollah, and (why) every day we witness a new sedition and division in the Islamic world.<sup>212</sup>

The radical-principlist faction's vehement rejection of expanded negotiations with USA despite their consent to talks over Iraq's security can be, to some extent, considered an example of the divergence between the rhetoric and reality in foreign policy perspectives of factions. However, it must be noted that negotiations between USA and Ahmadinejad administration did indeed remain limited. Furthermore, Iranian side appears to have been less cooperative than the prospects of the American side, as the relations stayed tense to the point that in October, David Petraeus, commander of US forces in Iraq accused Iranian ambassador to Iraq of being a member of Quds Force, a secret unit of IRGC allegedly organizing Islamist movements outside Iran.<sup>213</sup> After three rounds of talks, plans for a fourth session were declared but it never materialized.<sup>214</sup> That the radicals in power put up no effort to develop the burgeoning contact with USA suggests their rhetoric had some considerable truth in it.

Another high level contact between IRI and USA took place during Geneva nuclear talks in October 2009 that brought together Iran with P5+1 i.e. permanent members of UNSC and Germany. It was popularized by Western media as a turning point in US-Iran relations.<sup>215</sup> Radicals' had a different view about the meeting, expressed in its most blunt form again by Jannati in the sermon on October 19. According to the Ayatollah, during the meeting Iranian negotiator Saeed Jalili turned down three requests by the Deputy Secretary of State only to grant him a talk on the fourth time:

American official mentioned the nuclear issue... Jalili declared that problems related to Iran's nuclear energy are going well and there is no

---

<sup>212</sup>Mehr News Agency, June 1, 2007, <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?pr=s&query=جنتی&NewsID=495712> viewed on November 11, 2010

<sup>213</sup>US accuses Iran's envoy to Iraq, BBC, October 7, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7032557.stm> viewed on November 11, 2010

<sup>214</sup>See, Bush Administration contacts with Iran, <http://www.meforum.org/2011/bush-administration-contacts-with-iran> viewed on November 12, 2010

<sup>215</sup> See for instance, Nuclear Talks Lead to Rare Meeting between US and Iran, Guardian, October 1, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/01/iran-nuclear-geneva-talks> viewed on December 5, 2010

reason to talk about this issue.... Deputy foreign minister of America says to Jalili, some issues are being mentioned about the breach of human rights in Iran. Jalili says to this official, we heard that Obama has said we will end torture in America. And upon these words, American official looks down. Some thought that the gate of negotiation with America has been opened but their thought is not correct because the positions of Islamic Republic of Iran on confrontation or non-confrontation with America are policies determined by Imam Khomeini and the office of Supreme Leadership and are immutable.<sup>216</sup>

Although the story could be partially fictitious, the speech by Jannati should not be dismissed as mere rhetoric from an irrelevant extremist. Jannati is believed to be affiliated with radical pressure groups that attacked an American envoy in Tehran back in 1997 (see chapter 2). He was one of the few Ayatollahs who endorsed Ahmadinejad in 2009 presidential elections; a fairly striking decision when considered that the majority of clergy condemned the idea of taking an open position in elections.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, the fact that Geneva talks produced no material results concerning the nuclear issue, let alone lead to dialog between Iran and USA vindicates Jannati's interpretation.

#### **4.2.2 Radicals on Nuclear Issue**

The conviction to attain self-sufficiency in nuclear technology, which Iranians assert is their inalienable right, is not a novelty introduced under Ahmadinejad. Engaging in various types of nuclear talks with changing partners including USA is also an activity the Principlists carried on after they replaced Reformists in power. What distinguishes the conduct of nuclear policy from 2005 on, both before and after the resignation of Ali Larijani as the chief nuclear negotiator is the complete absence of suspension of nuclear enrichment. Unlike its predecessor, Ahmadinejad administration did not agree to pause producing enriched uranium as precondition for starting negotiations but also when faced with sanctions. The core of the Principlist argument is that Western countries are abusing the negotiation process to delay Iran's nuclear program. In the words of Ahmedinejad:

---

<sup>216</sup> Fars News Agency, October 19, 2009, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8807240481> viewed on December 5, 2010

<sup>217</sup> Posch, p. 7

One of the intentions of the enemies in bringing up the issue of Iran's peaceful nuclear activity is to take the time of the officials in this way so that they can slow the acceleration of the engine of development and progress of the country. This policy is important for them and in such an environment; all officials must bind together so that we can build Iran up and fulfill our global responsibilities.<sup>218</sup>

When asked by a foreign reporter about possibilities of further suspensions, Iranian President made a similar implication about Western animus towards Iran and how it harmed the country:

The aim of suspension must be clear and we have misgivings about the goodwill (of the other side) because in the past Iran implemented a suspension, which resulted in the closing of all Iran's research centers and for more than two and a half years, billions worth capital of Iranian nation was idle and we fell behind two and a half years in the scientific progress in this sector. Who will pay for the losses of Iranian nation? In my view, the best advice is that they accept the rights of the Iranian nation.<sup>219</sup>

In addition to sustained enrichment activity, Iran built more facilities and limited UN inspections at nuclear sites. In April 2006, the news of production of low-enriched uranium was announced by Iranian authorities. According to IAEA, by February 2009 Iran had amassed enough low-enriched uranium that could, if enriched further, suffice for the production of one nuclear bomb.<sup>220</sup> The Principlist approach was summarized by the President, "Every time the Iranian nation hesitated vis-à-vis the bullying powers, they issued more demands... wherever we stood up (to the bullying powers), they retreated because the Iranian nation has stood on legitimate and just grounds."<sup>221</sup>

The defiant attitude of Iran in the nuclear issue, while it allowed for the program to continue uninterrupted, resulted in sanctions against Iran. However, it is evident

---

<sup>218</sup> Iran, December 23, 2006, <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1300297> viewed on December 8, 2010

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Reuters and Iranian al-Alam TV, April 23, 2007, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=3835> viewed on December 8, 2010

<sup>220</sup> Timeline: Iran's nuclear programme, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2007/12/20085251853218888.html> viewed on December 8, 2010

<sup>221</sup> TV interview, February 23, 2008, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=8502> viewed on 8 Dec. 2010



that Tehran's current rulers do not see the sanctions as menaces grave enough to divert Iran from its nuclear ambitions. The day after UNSC resolution 1737 was passed, Ahmadinejad dismissed the sanctions as the usual policy of the West that Iran had come to prevail:

They said, very well, we pass a resolution and we sanction you. We said, very well, until now have you not been sanctioning us? Other than a bunch of consumption goods, toys and other junk stuff, what did you give us? Which advanced system did you give us so that we can grow an industrial business with it. We made everything ourselves. You did not give anything.<sup>222</sup>

Still, imposition of sanctions was a consequence Reformists and Pragmatists had strived to avoid and it was the basis of the reasoning behind their consent to temporary suspension. Not surprisingly it became a major source of criticism against the government's foreign policy. The government officials in charge of country's nuclear policy, however, were positive that the effects of the sanctions could be alleviated. Ahmadinejad, for instance, is assured that the policy of finding economic partners alternate to the West will compensate for the effects of sanctions as he expressed in an interview on Iranian Channel 2:

They issued resolutions. So what? What happened? Nothing...We must open up new avenues in our economy. Fortunately, these avenues are open. You've seen how many agreements we signed during our visit to South America. Even after the U.N. resolution, we in Iran have signed contracts, worth 20 billion dollars, with countries aware of this resolution. We also signed significant contracts with countries that told us to refrain from declaring these contracts, and we said: "OK, we won't go public with them."<sup>223</sup>

Thus, introducing a perspective that was the opposite of his Reformist predecessor, by the end of his first term, Ahmadinejad had successfully reoriented Iran's nuclear policy and ruled out prospects of further suspension. In September 2008, Iranian President simply dismissed a reporter who asked about it:

---

<sup>222</sup> Speech at the First National Entrepreneurship Festival, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=4281> viewed on December 8, 2010

<sup>223</sup> MEMRI Clip Transcript no: 1369 [http://www.memritv.org/clip\\_transcript/en/1369.htm](http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/1369.htm) viewed on December 8, 2010

The time of the suspension babble has passed and this babble has become history. We have entered a new era and the level of relations has changed. Today, we are talking about global transformation and global guidance and leadership.<sup>224</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Radicals on Turn-to-East

Proponents of greater cooperation with the East underline that the term is not limited to Eurasia. In 2008, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Reza Sheikh Attar summarized the Radicals' perception of the world as follows:

When we say West or East, what we mean is not the geographical (location). It is rather a concept about status. In this definition, East is those places not seeking domination and domination is not the ultimate purpose of their foreign policy. When we say West, it is those who seek domination and they are not many. Indeed, the number of countries constituting the non-geographical West, be it in the leading position or a minion, does not exceed a dozen....<sup>225</sup>

Elaborating on the benefits of Turn-to-East strategy, Attar maintains that Iran's primary motive in adopting this policy is "to diversify our sources of economy, supply and export markets".<sup>226</sup> He reckons a number of economic fields including oil sector where ties with developing countries are helping to reduce Iran's vulnerability against the whims of the West, whose behavior is irremediable:

If Europe does not want to buy our oil, we are not going to have a problem because we have so many other customers. The policy of Turn-to-East had achievements in economic dimensions....

The deeds of the non-geographical West, in other words domination-seeking West is not going to be corrected through traffic with us. Mr. Khatami travelled to a number of European countries and what did he achieve? He honored France and made a contract with Airbus and was it not the French themselves who in this same period revoked this contract?<sup>227</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup>Press Conference, September 18, 2008, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=12065> viewed on December 8, 2010

<sup>225</sup>Fars News Agency, February 12, 2008, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8611220001> viewed on December 9, 2010

<sup>226</sup>Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

Principlists also believe that developing countries are more likely to sympathize with Iran's cause and lend Iran support in international forums namely UN than the Western countries. Hossein Nakevi Hosseini, a member of national security commission of parliament who also reportedly predicted Ahmadinejad would get 25 million votes before the 2009 election,<sup>228</sup> claims Turn-to-East yields more opportune diplomatic gains than the West:

In UN General Assembly each country has one vote and instead of building relations with Germany and France and not getting even half a vote, we build relations with ten small countries so that we get ten votes.<sup>229</sup>

President Ahmadinejad adds a more ideological reasoning to the economic and diplomatic benefits of cooperation with non-Western countries. His discourse is in line with Khomeini's views about a necessary and impending change in the international order, for which oppressed nations must strive together. For example during a visit to Pakistan in April 2008, Ahmadinejad said to Pervez Musharraf:

Imperialist powers are now in decline and they want to pass their problems unto us by disseminating insecurity in the region. But they shall fail in their actions and during this interval, the cooperation of countries in the region is very important for reducing the damage.<sup>230</sup>

In December 2008, Ahmadinejad elaborated further on his global plans in a meeting with Foreign Minister of Togo:

Presently the era of the rise of liberated nations has begun and conditions must be provided for all nations and countries to live in stability and wealth... An allied front must be established to confront the expansionist spirit of oppressive world system, which is fortunately at a state of weakness... The prerequisite of this task is the cooperation and solidarity of friendly and independent nations...<sup>231</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> Asr Iran, 2 March 2009, <http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/66433> viewed on 17 Dec. 2009

<sup>229</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, May 17, 2009, <http://www2.irna.com/ar/news/view/line-7/8802266828175441.htm> viewed on November 26, 2010

<sup>230</sup> Fars News Agency, April 28, 2008, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8702090884> viewed on November 29, 2010

<sup>231</sup> Fars News Agency, December 22, 2008, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8710021727> viewed on November 29, 2010

Regardless of the question to what degree the Iranian President truly considers overthrowing the international order, the idea that cooperation with the East can be and should be utilized as leverage against Western economic and political influence requires credence of the premise that there is a trend in which powers like EU and USA are no longer competent and are increasingly dependent on deceit and coercion rather than mutually beneficial relations with the developing countries. This perception is, though not necessarily correct, tenable in the light of recent global political developments. Therefore, Ahmadinejad's statements should not be set aside as irrational sloganeering often related to IRI leaders and should be considered to reflect his views.

#### **4.3 Conservative Foreign Policy**

The conservative wing of the principlist coalition tried to develop a more sophisticated foreign policy discourse in this new period. It is mainly based on identifying their position in relation to the positions of other factions, which were deemed extreme ends.

Mohsen Rezai, who would become the presidential candidate of Conservative-Principlists in 2009 elections, named this foreign policy approach as “logical resistance”. In November 2005, he sent a letter to Ahmadinejad, commending his conduct of nuclear policy. According to the Secretary General of Expediency Council, Iran's success in the last meeting of IAEA board had demonstrated that “the policy of logical resistance is a correct and successful way in defending the rights and interest of the nation”. In the letter, Rezai also lectured the president about the contours of this new foreign policy:

The approach of logical resistance is neither intended for adventurism nor ready for surrender or retreat. It is an appropriate replacement for the approach of unilateral détente, which during the past sixteen years dominated the foreign policy of Iran and which did not result in any accomplishments for the Iranian nation.

In principle, the Iranian nation voted for your Excellency for a number of reasons. One of these reasons was their exasperation with the rapacious attitude of the West towards Iran in the last sixteen years. ...has shown

to the Iranian nation that it must change its path and it must show Europe and the West that it was mistaken and it is not ready to retreat and give concessions any more....

...Naturally, one must consider that Principlism is essentially different from Fundamentalism (bonyadgerayi). Fundamentalists support a path of adventurism and ending relations with the world and terrorism and the consequences of their actions have no difference with those of liberals who intend to give unilateral concessions. In foreign policy, Principlism seeks neither adventurism nor surrender and retreat from national interests....<sup>232</sup>

While Ahmadinejad would before long prove he was not a subordinate as Rezaei had conceived, Conservatives continued to define their foreign policy perspective with an abstract notion of judiciousness. Mohammad Baqer-Qalibaf, Khamanei's former police chief and doctor of geopolitics, is one of the polished mouthpieces of the Conservative faction who elaborates in his academic language on how the correct conduct of foreign policy should be devoid of the two extremes:

In my view, (Iran) should move from the position of confrontation to the position of competition in some issues in the field of international relations. Some believe we must do confrontation, some believe we must do interaction. I think it is time for neither interaction nor confrontation. Now is the time for competition in international relations....

...One time, you talk with rhetoric of confrontation and you make some issues more costly for yourself. Another time, you do interaction and it turns out to be capitulation, which is not in line with the Islamic Revolution. There is another option in which you engage in competition. In competition, the person makes decisions and takes actions according to interests and in consideration of ideals.<sup>233</sup>

As seen, Conservative rhetoric about the abstract principles of foreign policy is quite promising in the sense they could be expected to bring balance to the dichotomy of moderates who are frustrated by lack of legitimacy and the hardliners who hold the true power, a prevalent perception about Iran's foreign policy. However, a scrutiny of the actual policies they propose with regards to the

---

<sup>232</sup> Aftab News, October 29, 2005, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcgxx9x.ak97w4prra.html>, viewed on December 6, 2010

<sup>233</sup> Interview with Khorasan special newruz edition, March 21, 2009, <http://www.ghalibaf.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=65&mid=558&ctl=ArticleView&articleId=19&language=en-US> viewed on December 6, 2010

issues at hand reveals that in practice Conservatives have failed to come up with a coherent foreign policy perspective that would distinguish them from the Radicals.

#### **4.3.1 Conservatives on USA**

An important point about the attitude of the Conservatives to the idea of reestablishing relations with USA is that in contrast to Radicals' Manichean perception of confrontation with the West, Conservatives stress that their position is not based on an inflexible ideology forged by Khomeini. Instead, they present rationality and expertise as the source of their reasoning. Mohammad Javad Larijani, former Majlis deputy and brother to Ali Larijani, made the following comments in the wake of 2007 Baghdad negotiations with USA:

We have no taboo; we have a calculator, which is the interest of our nation we must examine... Now the question is what agenda of dealing with America will be a good agenda. Of course this is not a fixed agenda. In my view, an agenda changes according to conditions. In the present conditions, what agenda of dealing with America will be suitable? Well, this is an issue of expertise, in other words the office of Supreme Leadership has annulled the religious prescriptions so that experts can express views on this issue...<sup>234</sup>

Javad Larijani thinks negotiations with USA are expedient:

In order to take advantage of the opportunities that have emerged around us, it is good to have serious, unequivocal and planned negotiations with the American side. And these negotiations are in no way a sign of weakness because today our opponents are in need of these deals more than anyone....

....These diplomatic negotiations about Iraq are in my view very good but they must not be limited with Iraq nor should they always be in Iraq. We must definitely pursue our intentions at highly influential and effective levels, we must initiate negotiations on the issues that our views converge and this is in the interest of our nation.<sup>235</sup>

---

<sup>234</sup> Resalat, February 12, 2008, <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1572085> viewed on December 6, 2010

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

However, even in his approval of negotiations with USA, Javad Larijani expresses his profound distrust of this state and implicitly rules out permanent diplomatic relations:

...we must not forget that we are going to implement the plan of interaction with an entity whose role in the international scene is mostly against us. We must always consider that we are dealing with our father's enemy. It is not like we think; now this will go and someone else will come and we will be friends. Friendship and diplomatic camaraderie are one issue but in expert calculation for setting up a plan we must consider the various aspects so that we are protected against strikes of the enemy. Be it in issues of defense, culture or economy.<sup>236</sup>

Conservatives are similar to Pragmatists in their rhetoric about rational decision-making but they have a very cynical perception about the intentions of USA, which makes it not in the best interest of Iran to establish further ties with the superpower. In this sense, they constitute a negative replica of the Pragmatists who believe it is beneficial to have normal diplomatic relations with USA. Clearing the Conservative position towards USA, Ali Larijani, the current Majlis speaker explains why Iranians must learn to live with the fact that USA will remain an enemy:

We must seriously recognize the interventions and steps taken by America in our nuclear issue as the main obstacle for the realization of our national rights... Although it is possible that the rhetoric of Americans change, it is because their uncivil, militarist behavior faced general rejection and hatred in the world. For this reason, they had to change their statements... Struggle with America is not a slogan for our country. It rather conveys a fact. Iranian nation must realize what kind of phenomenon it is facing and how this phenomenon has harmed its national interest.<sup>237</sup>

Indeed, Conservatives are averse of the idea of reestablishing full diplomatic ties with USA. Even Mohammad Baqer-Qalibaf, who is one of the most moderate figures in the Conservative faction, parried when pressed by the reporter from

---

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Fars News, October 4, 2009, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8808111759> viewed on December 7, 2010

reformist newspaper Eteemad. His response is in direct contradiction to Pragmatist perspective, which takes lack of relations with USA as Iran's "essential problem":

First, we should answer this question. Do relations with America mean solving all our problems? In other words, do all our present problems arise from not having relations with America? Then, why do those countries that have relations with America are not removing all their problems? We always have wrongfully believed that relation with America can alone solve our problems....

Firstly, our primary problem and the root of all problems are not lack of relations with America. Secondly, why was this notion created in the minds of people that all our problems are because of not having relations with America?<sup>238</sup>

In the final analysis, Conservatives remain on the reluctant side of the factional spectrum of perceptions of relations with USA. Despite the renovation of image they went through to overcome their irrelevancy to the electorate, their xenophobic look to the West betrays their roots in the clergy-bazaar alliance. That being said, they are not shy about talking to USA on specific issues as long as both sides go home when the talks end. In the unlikely event that Larijani-Qalibaf-Rezai trio takes control of Iran's diplomatic apparatus, they will presumably ignore USA for as long as possible. Needless to say that reestablishment of Iran-US ties would also require the enthusiasm of the American side.

#### **4.3.2 Conservatives on Nuclear Issue**

Management of diplomatic aspects of Iran's nuclear program is another issue that the views of Conservatives diverge from the policies of the Radicals in power. Nevertheless the difference is more to do with the confrontational style of the President than his resolve to carry on the enrichment process in the face of Western pressures.

The Conservatives agreed with the recommencement of uranium enrichment in 2005. As a matter of fact, Ali Larijani was personally involved in the decision as

---

<sup>238</sup>Interview with Eteemad special newruz edition, March 22, 2009, <http://www.ghalibaf.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=65&mid=558&ctl=ArticleView&articleId=16&language=fa-IR> viewed on December 7, 2010



the secretary of SNSC and chief nuclear negotiator. He remained in charge of Iran's nuclear diplomacy until late 2007, demonstrating there is in essence harmony between Radicals and Conservatives. Towards the end of his time in Office, Ali Larijani stressed his rejection of suspension by calling it "an unwelcome and threadbare issue".<sup>239</sup> Further revealing their position as hardliners in the nuclear issue, Conservatives are critical of Rouhani's suspension policy just as much as the Radicals. In an interview shortly before the 2009 elections, Mohammad Baqer-Qalibaf bluntly described the nuclear policy during Khatami period as "complete capitulation at the very best".<sup>240</sup>

In the wake of the passage of first UN sanctions against Iran in December 2006, Conservatives began to show signs of criticism against Ahmadinejad's handling of the issue. However, the Conservatives' call for composure and restraint to the President is essentially different from the attacks by Reformists and Pragmatists who blame the administration for failing to preclude the sanctions. Conservatives do not question the policies that led to Iran's referral to UNSC, a process in which they partook but direct criticism at Ahmadinejad's controversial remarks that dent Iran's diplomatic efforts. In January 8, 2007 an editorial in conservative newspaper *Jumhuri-ye Islami* included some condescending counsel for the radical President:

Your statements on the nuclear issue, which are so aggressive and (include) inappropriate words, indicate that you have taken an obstinate position... Why do we need pronouncements of this sort, which give those aggressors (i.e. the Western countries) an excuse to increase the pressure (on us)...

You should not speak too much about this issue in your speeches in the various districts, and should leave it to the officials (in charge) of the dossier (i.e. Ali Larijani) to take a stand vis-à-vis the hooliganism of the Americans and the Westerners, if needed... For every issue... there are officials (who are in charge of it, and there is no need for you) to deal with the nuclear issue on a daily basis...<sup>241</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> Tehran Times, September 11, 2007, [http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index\\_view.asp?code=152522](http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=152522) viewed on December 7, 2010

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 317, "Iranian Domestic Criticism of Iran's Nuclear Strategy", January 24, 2007 viewed on December 12, 2010

Ali Larijani's resignation as chief nuclear negotiator in October 20, 2007 more openly exposed that there were divergences between Radicals and Conservatives over Iran's nuclear issue but on the reasons why he quit, Larijani was ambiguous and refrained from addressing any specific issues that put him in dispute with the President:

From management point of view I had differences with the president and after some studies I felt that these differences would hurt the work... and therefore I proposed that another person take my place and, of course, I will help him.<sup>242</sup>

Even after this point Conservatives did not criticize any policies per se, finding occasional faults only in the ways of the administration. In addition to their attempt to rein in Ahmadinejad's harsh rhetoric, Conservatives also invoke the notion that Iran should apply a more intense diplomatic effort in the nuclear issue while they do not clarify what diplomatic efforts would prevent Iran's increasing isolation as long as enrichment goes on. In September 2008, commenting on yet another IAEA report that berates Iran's behavior in the nuclear issue, Ali Larijani gave an example of the Conservative position:

In my view, El-Baradei should have been careful and domestically a more active and conscious diplomacy should have been pursued... Sitting at a table and addressing the other side is not proper diplomacy. In diplomacy the actions should be such that the other side is compelled to change his place and necessary and appropriate means should be used to this end. Things like conferences and telephone speeches will not solve the issue on their own. Rather a scientific diplomacy should be used.<sup>243</sup>

On the whole, Conservatives do not propose a nuclear policy that is conspicuously different from the Radicals. They are opposed to the policies followed by Pragmatists and Reformists and would not have been easily persuaded to implement another suspension to win Western rapport. Had they not needed Ahmedinejad and his cohorts for maintaining control of the regime, they would probably have acted in the same uncompromising manner in the nuclear issue

---

<sup>242</sup> Tehran Times, October 11, 2008, [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_view.asp?code=179669](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_view.asp?code=179669) viewed on December 12, 2010

<sup>243</sup> ISNA, September 5, 2008, <http://isna.ir/ISNA/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-1204242> viewed on December 12, 2010

although without Ahmadinejad's remarks international reaction against Iran would have been slower.

#### **4.3.2 Conservatives on Turn-to-East**

Conservatives are consensus with Radicals over the Turn-to-East policy. While the Radicals, as the ones who put this policy into practice, made the bulk of the statements in reference to Turn-to-East, the Conservative support for recourse to non-Western countries was publicly known to the point that Ali Larijani, one of the most prominent members of the Conservative faction was referred to as "Architect of Turn-to-East" in Iranian media.<sup>244</sup>

It should be mentioned that Conservatives' interest in turning to East focuses on China because of its status as the most likely candidate to challenge Western supremacy. China provides an example for an alternate development path referred to as "Chinese Model". The concept is favored by both varieties of Principlists who like the idea of replicating the Western economic and technological breakthroughs while avoiding the cultural transformation.<sup>245</sup>

#### **4.4 Pragmatists' Foreign Policy**

This stronghold of the Pragmatist Faction inside the political system is currently the Expediency Discernment Council. This institution, which in fact has very little say in policy formulation, is chaired by Hashemi Rafsanjani. The Council's involvement in foreign policy debate is mainly through a think-tank working under its auspices, named Centre for Strategic Studies (CSC). Hasan Rouhani, who was the chief nuclear negotiator under Khatami and later became the Leader's representative in SNSC is also the director of CSC. Rouhani is known for his moderate policies in Iran's nuclear issue, the cornerstones of which were the

---

<sup>244</sup>Etemad-e Melli October 21, 2007, [www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1504703](http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1504703) viewed on December 8, 2010

<sup>245</sup> Anoushirvan Ehteshami, Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives the Politics of Iran's Silent Revolution*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 47-48

Tehran Agreement and the temporary suspension. During Ahmadinejad's terms he gradually became a vocal albeit tactful critic of the Radicals' foreign policy, effectively serving as the mouthpiece of the Pragmatist Faction. He is also a prominent member of Moderation and Development Party.

The Moderation and Development Party (MDP) is the main political vehicle of the Pragmatists and identifies itself with a claim to support candidates from different factions with moderate views in elections.<sup>246</sup> In this regard, it has replaced Kargozaran, which by mid-2000's appeared to exist only nominally. Secretary General of MDP is Mohammad Baqer Newbakhht, who is also the deputy of the economic research department in CSC. Other important members include Akbar Turkan, Rafsanjani's defence minister and Fatema Hashemi, Rafsanjani's daughter. In 2008, there were plans for MDP to consider Hasan Rouhani as its presidential candidate in 2009.<sup>247</sup> However in 2009, the party declared its endorsement of Mir Hossein Moussavi in elections.<sup>248</sup>

Pragmatists continue to see the foreign policy primarily in terms of acquiring the economic resources necessary for Iran's development. Hasan Rouhani's statements in a meeting with Majlis deputies underline how the economic agenda influences the foreign policy perspectives of the factions:

About the question whether in today's world we can have a prosperous economy without interaction with the outside, some say that this is possible and there is no need for interaction or even this interaction is harmful. However, according to another approach, without an appropriate economic relation with other countries development and prosperity will face many problems and difficulties.<sup>249</sup>

In another statement Rouhani defines his faction's position in this debate:

With an active foreign policy and mutual relations with the world we must be able to attract the capital of other countries and we must not bring harm to national interests with witless slogans. There is a durable

---

<sup>246</sup> Eteemad, January 14, 2008, <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1554618> viewed on December 2, 2010

<sup>247</sup> Tabnak, January 15, 2008, <http://www.tabnak.ir/pages/?cid=4994>, viewed on December 2, 2010

<sup>248</sup> Fars News Agency, 30 April, 2009, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8802201228>, viewed on December 2, 2010

<sup>249</sup> Aftab News, 12 September 2008, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdce7p8f.jh8oxi9bbj.html>, viewed on December 2, 2010

connection between these two components... A strong economy without a cautious foreign policy is impossible and a strong foreign policy requires a supportive economy.<sup>250</sup>

Pragmatists maintain their position that Iran's primary goal in foreign policy should be to secure amiable relations with the West because it is the most reliable source of finance and technology that can satisfy Iran's needs.

#### **4.4.1 Pragmatists on USA**

The pragmatists constitute the only faction that conspicuously and coherently demonstrates a positive perception of reestablishing relations with USA. Pragmatists welcomed the 2007 talks with USA rather than try to downplay the issue. Concerning the relatively moderate approach of Obama towards the Middle East, they again express prospects for better relations in addition to an expectation of more material changes in US policies. In this regard, the pragmatists seem to completely ignore Khomeini's denunciation of any kind of cooperation with USA. Not bothering to recall the prescriptions of the late Imam, Rafsanjani and his affiliates underline the benefits of developing relations with USA.

The pragmatists not only endorsed the talks with the superpower over the future of Iraq but also professed their hope that this could lead to greater openings. While the US-Iran talks were going on, in a press conference on 26 July 2007, Hasan Rouhani acknowledged that the discussions were limited to issues about the security in Iraq and stability of Maliki government. However, he also added that this could be the starting point for more comprehensive negotiations, if USA was cooperative:

We did not take an oath not to have any relation with America until the End Time. We have always stressed that if they show goodwill, we will be willing for negotiations... If achievements are made in the talks, the

---

<sup>250</sup> Donya-ye Eqtesad, March 3, 2010, [http://www.donya-e-  
eqtesad.com/Default\\_view.asp?@=198359](http://www.donya-e-eqtesad.com/Default_view.asp?@=198359), viewed on December 2, 2010

talks will be expanded and if we do not observe any achievement, we will not need to do that because we are not after ceremonial stuff.<sup>251</sup>

In the same conference Rouhani elaborated on how better relations with USA would help with Iran's other problems:

Concerning that on the nuclear issue America has always been against us –of course Zionists encouraged them from behind the curtain- the decisions of Americans have always had effect... It seems if the situation between the two countries is alleviated, our nuclear issue will also be alleviated...<sup>252</sup>

Although his positive outlook is apparent, it is noteworthy that Rouhani does not specify what level of relation Iran should develop with USA. Hasan Rouhani is a bureaucrat who knows his statements on this sensitive issue must not explicitly betray the divergences among Pragmatists, Conservatives and Radicals, all of whom contribute to decisions in SNSC. Another Pragmatist was more open in calling for diplomatic relations between the two countries. Rafsanjani's brother-in-law Hossein Marashi, who continued to write blogs on his personal website until he was jailed after 2009 presidential elections, described his prospects about Iran-US relations before the Baghdad talks:

If we imagine that Iran and America had more friendly relations or even normal relations... for example if the relations of Iran and America were like the relations of Iran and Arabia... Two countries with both common and diverging interests that can through dialog and mutual respect solve the problems between them...<sup>253</sup>

According to Marashi, the dispersal of the mutual distrust between the two countries would lead to a greater cooperation in Iraq, where both countries in essence wanted stability and peace:

In turn, this cooperation would pave the way for the American government to respect Iran's rights instead of threatening it and even if it did not protect Iran's rights in the international scene, at least it would

---

<sup>251</sup> Fars News Agency, 26 July 2007, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8605040166> viewed on November 10, 2010

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Iraq and common and diverging interests of Iran and America, May 16, 2007, [www.marashi.ir/WebLogDetail.aspx?WID=95](http://www.marashi.ir/WebLogDetail.aspx?WID=95) viewed on December 6, 2010

not oppose them... The opportunity at hand for solving the problems between Iran and America is exceptional and historic. This opportunity must be used without sentimentality. Success is conditional on realism on both sides.<sup>254</sup>

While the Baghdad talks turned out to be far from leading to full relations, Barak Obama's promise of reconciliation in the Middle East raised new hopes for Iran-US rapprochement. Pragmatists were again optimistic. In February 2009, reportedly talking to Japanese Kyodo News Agency, Rouhani stated that he did not desire the continuation of conflict between Iran and USA:

Obama's rhetoric shows that American government is considering policy change. Should we witness a considerable and actual change in policy, this issue can make grounds for a transition in relations.<sup>255</sup>

He expressed similar hopes in a meeting with national media reporters:

If the Islamic Republic truly sees that America is making a serious decision to change its past attitude towards Iran, it will definitely respond accordingly. But until now such a proceeding at the American side has not been observed. In any case we hope the relations that have until today existed in a hostile manner between the two countries, will, with a change of attitude by Americans move towards an easing of tensions.<sup>256</sup>

It should be mentioned however, that the Pragmatists' perception of the relations with USA is by no means rosy. Being a cadre of experienced technocrats, members of this faction are wary of the adverse policies of USA vis-à-vis Iran and will openly criticize the Americans when their actions harm IRI's interests. For example, despite his well-known penchant for rapprochement with USA, in November 2009, Rafsanjani dismissed Obama's calls for change as rhetoric not reflective of the actual policies. The reasons for his complaint he shared with the Swiss Ambassador were the seizure of Alavi Foundation's assets and US government's allocation of a \$ 55 million budget for regime change in Iran, which

---

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Mehr News Agency, February 12, 2009, <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?pr=a&NewsID=833481> viewed on December 7, 2010

<sup>256</sup> Mehr News Agency, February 18, 2009, <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?pr=a&NewsID=836516> viewed on December 7, 2010

were according to Rafsanjani, “continuation of the former policy and even worse.”<sup>257</sup>

#### **4.4.2 Pragmatists on Nuclear Issue**

Like the other factions, Pragmatists are committed to advance the nuclear program and their intention is far from permanently ending enrichment as the West demands. However, Pragmatists strongly stress that the international community can be persuaded to accept the legitimacy of Iran’s activities. In 2004, Hasan Rouhani, the chief nuclear negotiator at the time explained his policy at a gathering of Assembly of Experts:

We have two goals ahead of us that we must achieve. One is closing Iran's nuclear dossier with the IAEA and bringing the board of governors to take it out of their agenda, and the other is to have Iran recognized globally as a nuclear country.<sup>258</sup>

According to Rouhani, the Western denial of Iran’s right to achieve the nuclear fuel cycle is in contradiction of international treaties. Iran must make its case at IAEA and other forums instead of displaying a suspicious and recalcitrant image. In December 2006, he made the following comparison between the nuclear policies before and after the change of government:

It is similar to an enemy with a claim on our house and instead of fighting the enemy, we thought we would first go and prove our ownership of this house in the court. We proved that our programs are from a legal perspective, peaceful... The achievement of the former negotiation team was the protection of (Iran’s) legitimate right to enrich uranium. However, after the forming of the new administration and the change of nuclear team, we reached a point where this legitimate right is by legitimate means being taken from Iran.<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>257</sup> FardaNews, November 18, 2009, <http://www.fardanews.com/fa/pages/?cid=96138> viewed on December 7, 2010

<sup>258</sup> Safa Haeri, Iran demands entry to nuclear club, Asia Times, March 9, 2004, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/FC09Ak03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FC09Ak03.html) viewed on December 9, 2010

<sup>259</sup> Eteemad-e Melli, December 5, 2006, <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1282892> viewed on December 9, 2010



As part of the Pragmatist preference for maintaining economic ties with the world, Rouhani also underlines that confidence building measures such as temporary suspension boost the willingness of Europeans to trade with and invest in Iran.<sup>260</sup> Furthermore, he challenges the Radicals' claim that sanctions are futile by reminding that dearth of trade and technology transfer restrain the economy and "result in pressure on the people".<sup>261</sup> However, Pragmatists' economic rationale does not concern the Radicals, who have no problem with destroying Iran's relation with the West. Before 2009 presidential elections, temporary suspension policy was frequently targeted by Ahmadinejad as part of his campaign, forcing Rouhani to respond. Former nuclear negotiator's defense refutes any assumption that Pragmatists could be negotiated into an abandonment of the nuclear program:

Despite all the lies that are being said, I stress that during the twenty two months I was responsible for the nuclear program, not for a moment did the facilities in Esfahan, Arak, Natanz or Bandar-Abbas or our grand research projects stop. At every stage the Islamic Republic suspended one section but it never took the burden of complete suspension. Our overall policy was to suspend the completed sectors for a while so that we could do the unfinished sectors.<sup>262</sup>

Indeed, Pragmatists and in particular Hasan Rouhani, display a genuine intention to foster Iran's interests in the nuclear issue and protect the achievements of the program. While he is evidently one of the most moderate members of SNSC, who wants to come to terms with the world on the nuclear issue, Rouhani opposed the treaty of fuel swap that was publicized in late 2009, when he saw it detrimental to Iran's nuclear program. He argues that the regulations of AIEA obliges it to sell the 20 percent enriched uranium to Iran for use in the medical reactor in Tehran. Offering Iran's existing fuel reserves, which are to be used in power stations as a swap is an unwarranted concession:

---

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Hasan Rouhani's criticism of government policies, February 20, 2010, [http://www.aftab.ir/news/view/2010/feb/20/c1c1266670123\\_politics\\_iran\\_hasan\\_rohani.php/](http://www.aftab.ir/news/view/2010/feb/20/c1c1266670123_politics_iran_hasan_rohani.php/) viewed on December 9, 2010

<sup>262</sup> Farda News, June 5, 2009, <http://www.fardanews.com/fa/pages/?cid=84427> viewed on December 9, 2010

It was said (by Iranian officials) that we shall give 3.5 percent enriched uranium in exchange for 20 percent (enriched) uranium... This mistaken remark threw the Westerners into greed. They said what a nice remark.... And they were even happier when they saw with deliberation they could take from us the output of what we did in the name of enrichment in last three or four years. It is this enrichment for which our file went to the Security Council....<sup>263</sup>

It should be noted that Rouhani's argument is correct as it would have been an irrational behavior on Iran's part to send away the low-enriched uranium after years of work and enduring the sanctions, giving the impression that Iranian side did not believe the swap deal would be implemented even as they negotiated it.

#### **4.4.3 Pragmatists on Turn-to-East**

Pragmatists have no problem with the policy of Turn-to-East per se. Developing diplomatic and economic relations with Asian or third world countries does not contradict Pragmatist foreign policy agenda of seeking external resources that will help with the country's economic development. In this sense, Rafsanjani and his allies actually welcomed the idea in the early days of Ahmadinejad administration. Naturally, their endorsement of Turn-to-East policy did not mean that they gave the Radicals or Conservatives credit for it. Rather, they described this strategy as a policy of the state at large.

As early as August 2005, when Admadinejad administration was busy introducing its new policies to the public, Rafsanjani not only advocated Turn-to-East as "the foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran" but also started implementing it himself by meeting the Vietnamese ambassador and talking about how both countries would benefit from expanded trade and economic relations.<sup>264</sup>

Even after the Ahmadinejad administration's prospects about a more comprehensive cooperation against Western pressure had turned out to be too optimistic because of the national interests of the states in question, Rafsanjani was

---

<sup>263</sup> Hasan Rouhani's criticism of government policies, February 20, 2010, [http://www.aftab.ir/news/view/2010/feb/20/c1c1266670123\\_politics\\_iran\\_hasan\\_rohani.php/](http://www.aftab.ir/news/view/2010/feb/20/c1c1266670123_politics_iran_hasan_rohani.php/) viewed on December 9, 2010

<sup>264</sup> Fars News Agency, August 15, 2005, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8405240255> viewed on December 1, 2010

supportive of developing relations with Asian countries. In November 2008, during a meeting with the Indian foreign minister, he stressed the importance of cooperation in natural gas industry as well as in regional issues such as Afghanistan, where the West had failed to provide solutions and placed his views in the framework of the overall policy of the government:

India has a special place in the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategic outlook of Turn-to-East and IRI is resolute in expanding relations with India.<sup>265</sup>

Approving the beneficial aspects of the Turn-to-East policy, the Pragmatists were critical of the Radicals' definition of this strategy as a way to facilitate the break with the West. Pragmatists continue to see the solutions to Iran's problems in the West while Turn-to-East is viable as a diplomatic and economic bonus they will not reject. The Pragmatists' attitude in this issue was summarized in a roundtable discussion in September 2006, organized by CSC. The result document of the roundtable on Turn-to-East policy also sheds light on the faction's broader vision about Iran:

Let us imagine that East has the technology. Considering the state of our affairs with America, are we going to be able to use this eastern technology? The answer is a hundred percent negative. Even if the East could meet our needs, without having extensive relations with America, it is unlikely that we will be able to establish extensive relations with the East. In no way, can East be a substitute for relations with America. If we can remove our essential problem (i.e. lack of relations with USA) once and for all, perhaps then we can make good use of the East in our rivalry with the West.<sup>266</sup>

After the Radicals's extremist outlook to Eastern countries led to a dead end, Pragmatists became more vocal in this issue. Shortly before the 2009 presidential elections in "a meeting with experts of Iran-Russia relations", Hasan Rouhani

---

<sup>265</sup> Jumhuri-ye Islami, November 3, 2008, [http://www.jomhourieslami.com/1387/13870813/13870813\\_jomhori\\_islami\\_04\\_dakheli.HTML](http://www.jomhourieslami.com/1387/13870813/13870813_jomhori_islami_04_dakheli.HTML), viewed on December 1, 2010

<sup>266</sup> Roundtable: Turn-to-East Policy, September 6, 2006, organizers: Department of Foreign Policy Research, Strategic Studies Group, <http://www.csr.ir/departments.aspx?lng=fa&abtid=01&depid=44&semid=181> viewed on December 2, 2010

conceded that Turn-to-East had been misconstrued. Rouhani underlined that Russia-Iran relations were strong and they were working together to balance the US influence in areas such as Central Asia but he maintained that their league had failed to meet the expectations of the Radicals:

Of course, at some point during the past four years we witnessed the emergence of a very optimistic and extreme view concerning the relations of Iran and Russia. The refutation of this theory in practice and the fall-back of the administration from the strategy of Turn-to-East showed that extreme and unrestricted optimism is not going to break new ground.<sup>267</sup>

As the factional infighting intensified in the wake of presidential elections and Pragmatists were lured into the fray with Ahmadinejad's verbal attacks on Rafsanjani, Rouhani abandoned the diplomatic language typical of his faction and bluntly exposed the grave mistake of the Radicals in counting on the solidarity of Easterners when dealing with the nuclear issue:

If you remember on the first days of the ninth administration some said, we are going to solve the nuclear issue by cooperation with the East. They even criticized the former administration for negotiating with the West and they said, West is not useful for anything. Then, they declared, we are going to solve the issue with India, China and Russia. They especially mentioned the Indians a lot. And after a few months we saw that not only India but also China and Russia voted against us so this policy was not successful. A policy is successful when we do the enrichment and the file does not go to Security Council.<sup>268</sup>

#### **4.5 Reformists' Foreign Policy**

Of all the factions discussed in this thesis, Reformist faction is the one that exhibits the most evident signs of divergence between rhetoric and reality in its foreign policy perspective. This is strongly intertwined with the fact that among the political forces that garnered Khomeini's approval in the wake of the establishment of IRI, Leftists-Reformists have come to be the most castaway

---

<sup>267</sup> Aftab News, May 18, 2009, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcd9f0j.yt0nz6a22y.html>, viewed on December 1, 2010

<sup>268</sup> Aftab News, 8 March 2010, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcd5z0n.yt09x6a22y.html>, viewed on December 1, 2010

faction, exposing them more than others to allegations of deviation from Imam's path. While the Radicals, Conservatives and Pragmatists are all given positions in the higher levels of the system, namely SNSC, Expediency Council, Guardian Council and Judiciary; Reformists have never been welcome in Khamanei's court and never enjoyed the religious legitimacy accruing from having the favor of Supreme Leader. To compensate, they felt the necessity to pay more lip service to Khomeini's legacy although after mid-1990's they became the faction to challenge to the highest degree. Consequently, their foreign policy perspective is greatly obscured by a rhetoric hinting their political considerations.

#### **4.5.1 Reformists on USA**

Reformists' confusing attitude towards the idea of relations with USA is a good example of how rhetorical boundaries blur foreign policy perspectives of the political factions. Being allied with the pragmatists and having a liberal domestic agenda that makes them inclined to develop relations with the West, Reformists would be expected to be downright supporters of establishing relations with USA, perhaps even to a greater degree than the Pragmatists. A reformist politician's approach to Ahmadinejad's 2006 letter to Bush reveals the faction's view. Esmail Gerami Moqaddam was the speaker of the National Trust Party headed by Mahdi Karrubi:

The principle of this attempt is acceptable. (Reminding about a letter written to Saddam Hossein soon after Iran-Iraq War by the then president Hashemi Rafsanjani) The difference between the letters of Rafsanjani and Ahmadinejad is that in the latter mostly historical issues were dealt with and no clear demand is present from Mr. Bush concerning the current affairs and the (nuclear) file.

The problems of the country cannot be solved with this discourse of addressing the issues. I wish in this letter... for example the interests of Iran and America could be discussed to show which countries have benefited from this twenty seven years of absence in relations or what harm has accrued to Iran and America from the same state of affairs. If these points were mentioned and the relations were normalized, it would

be apparent to America that Iran's attempts to acquire nuclear technology are peaceful.<sup>269</sup>

Other statements by Reformist politicians are also in this direction. For instance, as one of the two reformist candidates in 2009 presidential elections Mahdi Karrubi said during his campaign:

Interaction and dialog will be the headpiece of our agenda and with the exception of the Zionist Regime occupying Palestine; we are ready to negotiate with all the countries, even with America... Of course there are conditions for negotiations with America and America has to give up its past actions against Iran and abandon the idea of bullying Iran and threats and intimidation.<sup>270</sup>

Mir Hossein Moussavi, too, was positive about relations with USA stating that in Iran "there is no taboo that we will not have relations with a country."<sup>271</sup> Similar to the rest of Pragmatist-Reformist discourse, Moussavi gives his consent to relations on the condition of improved behavior by USA:

Even Imam Khomeini said at a time when the relations of Iran and America were in ruins, that reestablishing relations was tied to America behaving itself. I believe if Obama moves in this direction with logic, finally this relation will be built.<sup>272</sup>

These statements are straightforward. However, the Reformists have had difficulties evaluating Ahmadinejad administration's negotiations with USA. In contrast to their pro-Western reputation exemplified in Khatami's famous CNN speech, the Reformist discourse falters between criticizing Ahmadinejad's aggressive rhetoric and trying to explain the breaking of the US taboo during his administration. Shortly before the 2009 elections, Deputy Secretary of Mahdi Karrubi's National Trust Party alludes to Ahmadinejad's US policy in the following manner:

---

<sup>269</sup> Afarinesh, May 11, 2006, [www.afarinesh-daily.com/afarinesh/News.aspx?NID=161](http://www.afarinesh-daily.com/afarinesh/News.aspx?NID=161) viewed on November 11, 2010

<sup>270</sup> Fardanews, March 3, 2009, <http://www.fardanews.com/fa/print/77344>, viewed on November 15, 2010

<sup>271</sup> Fars News Agency, April 6, 2009, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8801171029> viewed on November 25, 2010

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

We cannot keep shouting slogans for domestic consumption, for alluring the public the view of our country or some other Muslim countries, while taking steps for negotiations behind the curtain. If we believe that negotiations are needed, we must arrange the conditions and premises for it both in essence and in impression. I think, Mr. Karrubi does not agree with the dual approach in which we shout harsh slogans and plan negotiations behind the curtain.<sup>273</sup>

The Reformists are prone to attacks from Principlists, who cunningly use their adversaries' positive stance towards USA to delegitimize them. The Principlists' arguments usually rest on the claim that USA is supporting the Reformists because of the latter's tendency to comply with the American interests.<sup>274</sup> The gap between the past hard-line foreign policy stance of the Left and the reconciliatory rhetoric of today's Reformists is also an embarrassment the Principlists are eager to exploit. Recently, pro-government Fars News Agency aired an interview in which Hamid Rouhani, an alleged former member of Leftist-Reformist clerical organization MRM, accuses the Reformists of changing their anti-American stance to be able to come to power:

...there are some (inside MRM) who act according to the vicissitudes of the day. When the conditions of the day required it, they pretended to be anti-American but today their interests require them to condone the Palestine Conflict and discuss negotiations with USA.<sup>275</sup>

Consequently, the Reformists not only have to deal with the fact that Radicals have made more concrete achievements in making contact with USA, but also they have to endure charges of being American lackeys. The Reformists counter by denouncing Ahmadinejad administration's negotiations with USA, in the process contradicting their own foreign policy perspectives. For example Mostafa Tajzade,

---

<sup>273</sup> Interview with Rasul Montejbneya on the foreign policy agenda of Mahdi Karrubi, April 26, 2009, <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/index.php?Lang=fa&Page=24&TypeId=&ArticleId=4415&Action=ArticleBodyView> viewed on November 25, 2010

<sup>274</sup> See for example, Causes and Nature of American Support for Reformists, Fars News Agency, February 23, 2008, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8612010085> viewed on November 25, 2010

<sup>275</sup> When Khatami came to power the anti-American attitude of MRM changed, Fars News Agency, November 14, 2010, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8908231229> viewed on November 25, 2010

deputy interior minister under Khatami and central committee member of the reformist Mosharakat Party slams the incumbent President with the very accusations directed at his faction by the Principlists:

With his behavior, Mr. Ahmadinejad has humiliated the cerement-wearers and embarrassed Ansar-e Hezbollah.<sup>276</sup> Ninth administration has broken many of the taboos and today you see that they are explicitly seeking to negotiate with everyone in America. The comments of Mashai show that the government has reached the conclusion that the road to Washington passes through Tel Aviv and they are ready to give green light even to Israel.<sup>277</sup> Even in this situation, Mr. Hossein Shariatmadari, the Leader's representative in Keyhan Newspaper asks Reformists to clear their stance towards America!<sup>278</sup>

In another occasion, Mohsen Aminzade, deputy foreign minister under Khatami condemned the Admadinejad admistration for “begging for contact with America”, while at the same time supporting the initiative to negotiate with USA:

I was really shocked when I saw Mr. Ahmadinejad's interview with Larry King. In a one-hour interview, the President of Iran revealed his desire for dialog with America not only once but perhaps four or five times. In answering every question regardless of whether it had anything to do with the issue, he dragged the talk towards his tendency to speak to Americans and expressed his desire to negotiate Americans. However, I approve the current administration's negotiations with Americans and I believe the breaking of this taboo by this administration to whatever extent is good.... But the repetition of all these requests and even the unrequited beggary by the president, the insulting of the honor and dignity of Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic.... I really cannot accept the Iranian President to yield to these in vain to repair the foreign policy.<sup>279</sup>

The Reformist politicians who criticize Ahmadinejad's way of dealing with Americans focus on an alleged fawning behavior he displays vis-à-vis Americans but they fail to propose an alternate course of action to improve US-Iran ties. Reformists' detachment from the Conservative core of the regime has created a

---

<sup>276</sup> Cerement-wearers are a radical group demonstrating in white garments in memory of martyrs.

<sup>277</sup> Mashai is a politician close to Ahmadinejad. He once made a controversial comment about Isrelis being friend of Iranians.

<sup>278</sup> Advarnews, October 12, 2008, <http://www.advarnews.biz/organization/8040.aspx> viewed on November 25, 2010

<sup>279</sup> Noandish News, 8 Nov. 2008, <http://noandish.com/com.php?id=20036> viewed on November 25, 2010



major concern for political survival, making this faction prostrate in the face of the anti-American rhetorical environment of Khomeini's Iran. Behzad Nabavi, Moussavi's minister of heavy industries in 1980's, explained the Reformist dilemma shortly before the 2005 presidential elections:

If a Reformist candidate wins, he will have no opportunity to improve the relations with America -of course there is negative propaganda about the Reformists- but if the rivals of Reform can take power, perhaps they will try to improve relations with America and they have already given signs that they will do this.<sup>280</sup>

#### **4.5.2 Reformists on Nuclear Issue**

Reformists share the Pragmatists outlook to the nuclear issue but their language is, as is in other foreign policy issues, more apologetic than the analytical approach of the Expediency Council cadres. This highly politicized faction is in consensus with the rest of the political elite that achievement of nuclear technology is a legitimate intention and the nuclear program must be continued to the extent that prior to the 2009 elections, Moussavi was on the verge of endorsing Ahmadinejad's obstinacy in the nuclear issue:

Towards the end of (the term of) Khatami administration nuclear activities were restarted and this policy was continued by the ninth administration. But it was some of the policies of ninth administration such as invoking some issues like Holocaust that created difficulties and were unwarranted and in the end Iran's file went to UN... It looks like we should pursue the continuation of the activities on this technology and we cannot back down. But it is wrong if the program deviates to weapon-related issues.<sup>281</sup>

Moussavi is not falsifying completely as Khatami was the person who announced Iran's decision to start enrichment in 2003. As a matter of fact, Reformist discourse refutes the perception that any of the factions in Iran would compromise on the nuclear issue. Like the Pragmatists, Reformists underline in their statements

---

<sup>280</sup> <http://jomhouri.com/a/05let/002304.php>, viewed on November 25, 2010

<sup>281</sup> Mehr News Agency, May 23, 2009,

<http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=884148> viewed on December 17, 2010

that they did not at any point intend to halt Iran's nuclear program and the suspension of uranium enrichment under their administration was a provisional measure to disperse the Western pressure. Khatami's cabinet spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzade explains why they had to take this course:

At that time we were in such a situation that in the opinion of the international community we were trying to acquire atomic weapons. We accepted the suspension to prove well that this is not the case. Secondly, in the secure conditions that came up thanks to the suspension, we were able to import many important pieces of nuclear equipment.... More than 65 percent of the nuclear activity took place under the eighth administration and only 10 percent was done under the ninth administration. And under the ninth administration, due to the standing sanctions they were not able to import even one new piece (of equipment) to be used in nuclear facilities.<sup>282</sup>

Portrayed by Principlist mouthpieces as lesser revolutionaries who succumb to Western intimidation, Reformists put up a special effort to prove their nuclear credentials. For instance, in another occasion, Iran's former deputy foreign minister stressed Khatami's contribution to nuclear program by invoking exactly the same ratios.<sup>283</sup> Moreover, Reformists suffice with defending Khatami's policies and they are reluctant to directly criticize Ahmadinejad's nuclear policy as it has ostensibly led to a betterment of Iran's prestige vis-à-vis the Westerners. When asked about the nuclear issue, Mehdi Karrubi's assistant, Rasul Montejbeynia provided a view that very much resembles the Conservative rhetoric in criticizing Ahmadinejad's policies:

More than the nuclear program per se, the harsh and provocative rhetoric and the mismanagement of the diplomatic apparatus caused the file to be transferred to there (UNSC). Every time a resolution was issued against Iran we had the chance to prevent the resolution by activating our diplomacy but unfortunately our diplomacy was greatly weakened and disabled and harsh slogans by the President and provocative rhetoric

---

<sup>282</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, May 17, 2009, <http://www2.irna.com/ar/news/view/line-7/8802266828175441.htm> viewed on November 26, 2010

<sup>283</sup> Noandish News, November 8, 2008, <http://noandish.com/com.php?id=20036> viewed on November 25, 2010

alienating the world allowed them to be successful in expediting the issuance of resolutions and the consequence is the sanctions.<sup>284</sup>

Similar to their attitude in relations with USA, Reformists' perspective of the nuclear issue is smothered by the political pressures they are prone to. Unlike the Pragmatists, who bask in their association with the still influential figure of Hashemi Rafsanjani, Reformists have no patron to depend on if they wanted to go beyond the defensive rhetoric they present in nuclear issue. This also suggests that they would be unable to implement any form of détente in Iran's foreign policy without their alliance with the Pragmatists.

#### **4.5.3 Reformists on Turn to East**

Developing relations with developing countries is not an obstacle for opening Iran to the world. In this regard, Iran's relations with the East did not deteriorate in the years of Reformist ascendancy. To the contrary, in 2001 Khatami became the first Iranian president to visit Russia. In 2005, he was presented the Golden Key to the City of Caracas by Hugo Chavez because of his contributions to Iran-Venezuela relations.<sup>285</sup> However, presently, the Reformists ignore the positive aspects of this policy and primarily view it as a vantage from which to attack the policies of Ahmadinejad. Abdollah Ramazanzade, the cabinet speaker in Khatami's second term has chosen Turn-to-East as his niche of criticism. Referring to both the approach to Asian countries and visits to small developing states, Ramazanzade describes Radicals' policy towards "the East" in a very derogative way:

...the result of this policy was that we buy junk weaponry from Russia and China and that we give important oil and gas concessions to Chinese.

---

<sup>284</sup> Interview with Rasul Montejbneya on the foreign policy agenda of Mahdi Karrubi, April 26, 2009, <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/index.php?Lang=fa&Page=24&TypeId=&ArticleId=4415&Action=ArticleBodyView> viewed on November 25, 2010

<sup>285</sup> Ariel Farrar-Wellman, Venezuela Iran Foreign Relations, May 12, 2010, [http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/venezuela-iran-foreign-relations#\\_ftn32](http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/venezuela-iran-foreign-relations#_ftn32) viewed on November 26, 2010

Likewise, we establish contact with very small and unimportant countries so that we can say the country is not isolated.<sup>286</sup>

Ramazanzade also stressed that Iran's diplomatic initiatives to befriend the Asians turned out to be in vain when the Iranian prospect that "they would for once vote in favor of Iran in UNSC" was not realized.<sup>287</sup>

In addition to being fruitless, according to Ramazanzade, "Turn to East" policy also prevents Iran from defending its national interests vis-à-vis its would-be allies in the struggle against USA and UN. Iran's Caspian Sea policy is a case.

The countries bordering the Caspian Sea are not in agreement over the just allocation of the area's resources. Iran proposes an equal share of 20 percent for each state, while Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan suggest a division in accordance with the coastline ratios whereby Iran's share would be 13 percent. During Ahmadinejad's Presidency, an oil pipeline project between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan led to an additional dispute, in which Iran and Russia opposed the idea of exporting Central Asian oil to the West without passage through the soil of either.<sup>288</sup> Consequently, Russia was distanced from his coalition partners over the original Caspian dispute and Iran's position was reinforced. Ramazanzade believes Ahmadinejad administration failed to see the opportunity because of its fixation over alliance with Asian countries:

...Iran could have exploited the conflicts (over Caspian Sea) to its advantage, but indeed this did not happen and Iran's initiatives in the framework of "Turn to East" are only concessions we give to others.... The fact is that the policy of "Turn to East" vis-à-vis the Western pressure leads to a debacle.<sup>289</sup>

Of all the diplomatic initiatives of Ahmadinejad administration, the President's penchant for Comoros Islands has drawn the greatest reaction from reformists. In

---

<sup>286</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, May 17, 2009, <http://www2.irna.com/ar/news/view/line-7/8802266828175441.htm> viewed on November 26, 2010

<sup>287</sup> Fars News Agency, May 17, 2009, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8802161430> November 26, 2010

<sup>288</sup> Mark Katz, Russian Iranian Relations in the Ahmadinejad Era, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No:2, 2008, pp. 202-216 pp. 209-210

<sup>289</sup> Jahan News, January 12, 2008, <http://www.jahannews.com/prtd950x.yt0fj6a22y.html> viewed on November 26, 2010

June 2009, Ali Abdalalizade, Minister of Housing and Urban Development under Khatami, accused USA of staging velvet revolutions even as he suggested West should be the objective of Iranian diplomacy:

Ninth administration cannot go and take the velvet glove off the hands of America, this administration is not ready to give answers and it runs away to Comoros Islands. There is no one to say what place Comoros Islands has in our diplomacy. When Europe and America have boycotted our banks and our industry, is it worthy to look for an ally in Comoros Islands instead of negotiating with world powers?<sup>290</sup>

The media arm of the Reformist Faction has shown even more interest in relations with Comoros. Investing a lot of diplomatic effort in such an obviously insignificant country is indeed an odd course of action. Reformists portray this as the symbol of Ahmadinejad's impractical foreign policy and ridicule it to the greatest extent possible. For instance, a scandalous remark by Comoros Islands Ambassador to Iran that goes, "we established relations with Iran so that it will not be isolated" and the apologetic response by the Iranian Foreign Ministry explaining the benefits of relations with small countries has received extensive coverage in Reformist media.<sup>291</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> Aftab News, June 1, 2009, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcewv8v.jh8ovi9bbj.html> viewed on November 26, 2010

<sup>291</sup> See for instance, <http://www.kaleme.com/1389/07/21/klm-35140> viewed on November 26, 2010

## CONCLUSION

One of the world's grievances about the order of Islamic Republic of Iran is that they do not have the ability of prediction about this order. They do not know what we will be up to next month. The only system that is unpredictable to the world, the power and transformation of which cannot be predicted correctly is the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>292</sup>

Hasan Rowhani, Speech before the notables of the city of Mashad, 11 March 2005

The Islamic Republic of Iran is already twenty-eight years old. In appraising its evolution, the western world has continuously made serious errors of judgement, beginning by not foreseeing the advent of the 1979 Revolution. These errors have been repeated regularly because they reflect our wishes: we were lulled into believing in the triumph of reform over the revolutionary spirit, in the irresistible power of Iranian society's aspirations and in Tehran's reconciliation with the west.<sup>293</sup>

Thérèse Delpech, Director for Strategic Studies at the Atomic Energy Commission of France

### 5.1 Demystifying the Factions

The elusive boundaries between the factions have often clouded the observations about Iranian politics. The result of this has been an ambiguity that pervades many commentaries on Iran's internal dynamics and how these dynamics are reflected on Iran's international behavior. A recurring theme of this line has been an unidentified group of moderates who would upon taking power redirect Iran's foreign policy to a more reasonable path. Certainly, there are groups that could be called moderate in Iran but the search for these has often been eclipsed by a recurring neglect of individuals' affiliations with the factions.

For instance, in an article in late 2004 Ray Takeyh and Nikolas Gvosdev portrayed a Conservative faction that was, on the grounds of pragmatism, ready to engage in

---

<sup>292</sup> Rahbord (Strategy), No:35, Spring 1384 (2005), p. 10

<sup>293</sup> Thérèse Delpech, *Iran and the Bomb The Abdication of International Responsibility*, Trans. Ros Schwartz, (New York Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 1

a meaningful dialog with USA and come to terms over the nuclear issue.<sup>294</sup> This was a tenable argument, especially in 2004, when the Conservative image making had climaxed. However as evidence to their argument, the authors make references to statements of Hasan Rouhani and Ali Hashemi, both of whom are not affiliated with the Conservatives. Moreover, the Pragmatists' party, Kargozaran is implicated to be a predecessor to Conservative Abadgaran party, which was established around 2004.<sup>295</sup> As a matter of fact, Kargozaran faced considerable criticism from the Conservatives since its inception in mid-1990's and its senior members became cabinet members under Khatami. This party can in no way be representing the Conservatives in Iran.

In a yet more surprising manner, Takeyh and Gvosdev expand the boundaries of the faction in question to include Reformists by claiming that "this clerical cadre of pragmatic conservatives is grouped around influential former Iranian president Rafsanjani and the outgoing parliamentary speaker Mehdi Karrubi".<sup>296</sup> These two names have no affiliation with the Abadgaran Party that was representing the Principlists at the time. As discussed in the thesis, Rafsanjani broke with the Conservatives in mid-1990's and has allied his followers with Khatami's movement, in which Karrubi was a prominent figure. These two individuals were completely detached from the Conservative faction that was busy reclaiming its power in 2004, let alone play a central role in such a movement.

A more severe example of misconstruction about factions in Iran took place pending the 2009 presidential elections. This time the exaggeration was in the opposite direction and Reformist candidates were branded as Conservatives pretending Reformism. For instance a June 2009 report of MEMRI suggested, Reformist faction had been "wiped out by the regime, through a systematic policy which began with the 1998 assassination of intellectuals" and Moussavi and Karrubi were not Reformists because they "belong to the old guard and to the elite

---

<sup>294</sup> Ray Takeyh; Nicholas D. Gvosdev, Pragmatism in the Midst of Iranian Turmoil, *The Washington Quarterly*, 27:4, pp. 33–56.

<sup>295</sup> Takeyh, Gvosdev, p. 38

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37

of the Islamic Revolution”.<sup>297</sup> In fact, Moussavi and Karrubi have been core members of the Leftist faction since early 1980’s. Reformist faction is a reincarnation of the Leftist faction, which means Karrubi and Moussavi are die-hard Reformists, who have been in conflict with the Conservatives for three decades. Again, institutional and individual connections are not paid due attention and elusive concepts like “old guard” and “elite” are presented as proofs to propositions.

Two major factors contribute to the failure to correctly assess the positions of the factions with regards to Iran’s foreign policy and their ability to put their views into practice. The first reason is to do with politics, while second reason is about the institutions of Iranian regime.

The political reason can be defined as a persistent Western aspiration for a spontaneous moderation in Iran’s policies and the reflection of this aspiration in media and academia. The persistence of the Islamic Republic as a force that challenges the West not only politically but also ideologically has fueled the public sensitivity for signs of change in the behavior of this adversary. In particular, USA has been concerned with the presence of a hostile regime in a very sensitive area and has looked for ways to come to terms with Iran. Consequently, producing answers for the question of which segments within the Iranian regime may be willing to cooperate with USA has become a prestigious niche that intellectuals and commentators are willing to cater to.

Yet, the abovementioned attitude could not have been very effective had it not been for the fluid and informal character of Iran’s political institutions, which makes it difficult to make acute observations and paves the way for subjective deductions. Firstly, formal political parties do not exist in Iran and as such identifying factions correctly requires delving into the rather elusive informal networks that bind people with similar views. Secondly, in an attempt to buttress the image of ideological unity, Iranian media tends to deemphasize factional differences and refers to only Reformist and Principlist factions out of the four

---

<sup>297</sup>MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 522, “Elections in Iran – Part II”, June 9, 2009, [http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/3346.htm#\\_edn4](http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/3346.htm#_edn4) viewed on December 20 , 2010



discussed in the thesis, making it all the more problematic to discern the real political alignments. Also, the general fluidity and lack of transparency in Iran's political system allow for several political figures to shift allegiances or to act as fence sitters. Finally, factions may evolve over time as seen in the conversion of the former Leftist faction into the Reformist faction. Given these conditions, the urge to interpret Iranian politics according to expectations can easily be coupled with insufficiency of information to lead to incorrect conclusions.

To avoid similar obscurity in this thesis, connections between the people presented as representatives of factions have been scrutinized. Throughout the thesis, views expressed by people have been matched with information concerning their affiliation with evident core members or organizations of the factions in question. These connections include close kinship; common political experience in cabinets, party organizations or pressure groups; widely known patron-client relations and inclusion in candidate lists endorsed by factions.

As a result, it is revealed that four discernible groups exist within the Iranian political elite. Of these, Radicals exemplified by Ahmadinejad and Reformists exemplified by Khatami are very distinct and straightforward as two extreme ends of the legitimized political spectrum. However, Conservatives such as Ali Larijani and Pragmatists led by Rafsanjani have often been subject to misinterpretations described above. Given this, one of the aims of this thesis has been to clear the identity of these middle-ground factions usually referred to as "moderates" or "pragmatic-conservatives". It is seen that Conservatives continue to uphold the anti-Western, avoidant foreign policy perspective of the old bazaar-clergy elite. Although, this faction is certainly more cautious than the Radicals, it should not be expected to mend Iran's problematic relations with the international community. Rafsanjani's faction on the other hand, can rightly be described as moderate. This faction adheres to the view that Iran must develop its relations with the West, as the countries in this category are gateway to the technological and economic resources Iran requires.

## 5.2 Between East and West

The general tenets of Iran's foreign policy after the Islamic Revolution are based on a categorization of the world divided between East and West. While the underlying notion of struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor prevails, it is noted that the perception of East and West in 2000's is different from the East and West rejected and excoriated by Khomeini. Khomeini used these terms to refer to an international system dominated by two superpowers, the Eastern one of which came to an end in 1990. In contrast to relations with USA; Iran's relations with Russia flourished after the end of the Cold War, a development that never became a subject of concern in Islamic Republic's ideological discourse. Presently West continues to represent the forces referred to by Khomeini "global arrogance", while East has come to signify those countries that could through cooperation pose an alternative to West. The foreign policy perspectives of factions center on this dichotomy and the question of how Iran is supposed to deal with it. The varying attitudes adopted by factions are not based on a unified perception of national interest as their visions about Iran have been different from the start. Factions are not heedless of how Iran's foreign policy will affect the domestic balances.

The groups that had gathered under the common revolutionary goal of Islamic government were representing varying social aspirations even under Khomeini's rule. Those revolutionaries in contact with lower classes strived to create an egalitarian society, while the clergy-bazaar alliance simply intended to curb the modernizing influence of the state, which was inevitably infringing of its economic interests. Although Khomeini allowed for the existence of both tendencies, he blocked the controversy from spreading to the realm of foreign policy.

Factional differences over the trajectory of the Islamic Republic surfaced immediately after the death of Khomeini. Supreme Leader Khamanei, who at the time represented the Conservatives and President Rafsanjani who lead the Pragmatist faction were to some extent in agreement over liberalizing the economy and this necessitated the abandonment of Khomeini's uncompromising foreign

policy. The Leftists, on the other hand, stuck to their ideals about social equality and saw relations with the West as inimical to their goals.

In mid-1990's the Leftist faction went through a change shedding its statist economic views and embracing liberal values, which brought it into an alliance with the Pragmatists. Christened as the Reformist faction, the former leftists had to change the confrontational foreign policy approach as it contradicted their new domestic agendas. In 2000's, it is still observed that Pragmatists and Reformists who prioritize economic development are in a tendency to support reconciliation with the West. The review of the foreign policy perspectives of political factions in Iran in the past three decades shows that their agendas in international relations are closely linked to what they want to achieve inside the country.

If Iran's relations with USA and EU develop, economy will not be only the field in Iran where changes will come. More opportunities for Iranian people to come into contact with the culture of these countries and more exposure to foreign media and academia will follow. These coupled with dissipation of the general atmosphere of hostility will lead to an increased circulation of ideas that cater to the segments of the society that do not comply with the Conservatives' provincial view of the Iran. Reformists want it, Pragmatists can live with it.

Conversely, this is a reason for the Conservatives and Radicals to oppose the idea of détente with the West. Domestically, these two factions represent vested interests concentrated in political and clerical elite circles and security agencies. These interests would be challenged both economically and ideologically by exposure to norms and institutions that emanate from the West. Conservatives and Radicals, then not only abide by the teachings of Khomeini in their tendency for isolation but also ensure the continuation of their exclusionist hold over power.

Nevertheless the domestic considerations of factions cannot be taken as the only factor in how the factional perspectives are shaped. There is an ideological framework in the Islamic Republic that gives legitimacy to certain policies in international relations. The ideology in question has been molded by the Leader of Revolution during his autocratic rule in the first decade of the Revolution. The Khomeini's legacy of opposition to the international system made it more

politically tenable to espouse views that prioritize confrontation over negotiation, making those factions with rather radical foreign policy perspectives more powerful from the start. As a result, although their liberal economic and social agenda requires rapprochement with the West, Reformists and Pragmatists have to be tactful when articulating on their views leading to a divergence between rhetoric and real perspectives. In such a political environment, it should not be surprising that Conservative and Radical factions in time prove superior to their moderate rivals.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Interview with Graham Fuller," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. II, 1993, No. 3.
- A.A. Saeidi, "Dislocation of the State and the Emergence of Factional Politics in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *Political Geography*, Vol. 21 (2002).
- Ali Alfoneh, Assessing Ahmadinejad's Closed Circle,  
<http://www.aei.org/docLib/JIAA-2010-01-26.pdf>
- Ali Alfoneh, How Intertwined Are the Revolutionary Guards in Iran's Economy? ,  
AEI Outlook Series No:3<http://www.aei.org/outlook/26991>
- Ali Alfoneh, Iran's Parliamentary Elections and the Revolutionary Guards' Creeping Coup d'Etat, AEI Outlook Series No:2  
<http://www.aei.org/outlook/27549>
- Ali Ansari, *Iran Under Ahmadinejad The Politics of Confrontation*, (Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge, 2007).
- Ali Banuazizi "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse: Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance ", *Middle East Report*, No. 191, (Nov. - Dec., 1994).
- Ali M. Ansari, The Dialectics of Globalization in Contemporary Iran, in Toby Dodge, Richard Higgott (eds.), *Globalization and the Middle East Islam, Economy, Society and Politics*, (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington: Brookings Institution, 2002).
- Ali Rahnema, Farhad Nomani; Competing Shi'i Subsystems in Contemporary Iran, in Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (eds.), *Iran After the Revolution Crisis of an Islamic State*, (I.B. Tauris: London, New York; 1995).
- Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini The Iranian Second Republic*, (Routledge, 1995, London and New York).
- Anoushirvan Ehteshami, Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives the Politics of Iran's Silent Revolution*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).
- Arang Keshaverzian, "Regime Loyalty and Bazaar Representation under the Islamic Republic of Iran: Dilemmas of the Society of Islamic Coalition", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No:41 (2009).

Arang Keshaverzian, Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran, in M.P. Posusney and M.P. Angrist (eds.), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005).  
Ariel Farrar-Wellman, Venezuela Iran Foreign Relations, May 12, 2010, [http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/venezuela-iran-foreign-relations#\\_ftn32](http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/venezuela-iran-foreign-relations#_ftn32)

Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, (University Press of Florida, 1996, Gainesville).

Baqer Moin, *Khomeini the Life of the Ayatollah*, (I.B. Tauris: London, New York; 1999).

Bush Administration contacts with Iran, <http://www.meforum.org/2011/bush-administration-contacts-with-iran>

Cole Harvey, Richard Sabatini, Issue Brief Russia's Lukewarm Support for International Sanctions against Iran: History and Motivations, 15 April 2010, [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/e3\\_russia\\_lukewarm\\_sanctions\\_against\\_iran.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_russia_lukewarm_sanctions_against_iran.html)

Daniel Brumberg (ed.), *Reinventing Khomeini The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, London; 2001).

Daniel L. Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Jerrold D. Green; *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-revolutionary Era*, (RAND. 2001).

David Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran Religion, Society and Power*, (London, Portland: Frank Cass, 2001).

Eric Hooglund, "The Search for Iran's "Moderates" *MERIP Middle East Report*, No. 144, (Jan. - Feb., 1987).

Eva Patricia Lakel, (2008), *The Iranian Political Elite, State and Society Relations, and Foreign Relations Since the Islamic Revolution* (Doctoral Dissertation), Academisch Proefschrift Faculteit der Maatschappij en Gedragwetenschappen Universiteit van Amsterdam

Farideh Farhi, Iran's "Security Outlook" , *Middle East Report Online*, 9 July 2007 <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero070907.html>

Frederic Wehrey, Jerrold D. Green, Brian Nichiporuk, Alireza Nader, Lydia Hansell, Rasool Nafisi, S. R. Bohandy, *The Rise of the Pasdaran Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, (RAND Corporation, 2009).

Ghoncheh Tazmini, *Khatami's Iran The Islamic Republic and the Turbulent Path to Reform*, (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009).

Interview with Eteemad special newruz edition, March 22, 2009,  
<http://www.ghalibaf.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=65&mid=558&ctl=ArticleView&articleId=16&language=fa-IR>

Interview with Karim Sajdadpour, May 29, 2007,  
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/13466/sadjadpour.html>

Interview with Khorasan special newruz edition, March 21, 2009,  
<http://www.ghalibaf.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=65&mid=558&ctl=ArticleView&articleId=19&language=en-US>

Interview with Reuters and Iranian al-Alam TV, April 23, 2007,  
<http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=3835>

Iraq and common and diverging interests of Iran and America, May 16, 2007,  
[www.marashi.ir/WebLogDetail.aspx?WID=95](http://www.marashi.ir/WebLogDetail.aspx?WID=95)

İpek Çalışlar, Oral Çalışlar; *İran Bir Erkek Diktatörlüğü*, (İstanbul: Gendaş Kültür Yayınları, 2004).

Jalil Roshandel, Evolution of the Decision Making Process in Iranian Foreign Policy, in Eric Hooglung (ed.), *Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution Political and Social Transition in Iran since 1979*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).  
Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

John Calabrese, *Revolutionary Horizons Regional Foreign Policy in Post-Khomeini Iran*, (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1994).

Joseph Felter, Brian Fishman, Iranian Strategy in Iraq Politics and “other means”, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Occasional Paper Series, October 13, 2008.

Karim Sajdadpour, *Reading Khamanei The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader*, (Carnagy Endowment for International Peace, 2008).

Kasra Najji, Ahmadinejad The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader, (I.B. Tauris: London, New York; 2008).

Lionel Beehner, Iran's Multifaceted Foreign Policy, April 7, 2006;  
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/10396/>

Louise Fawcett, *International Relations of the Middle East*, (Oxford University Press, 2005, New York).

Mark Fitzpatrick, *The Iranian Nuclear Crisis Avoiding Worst-case Outcomes*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).

Mark Katz, *Russian Iranian Relations in the Ahmadinejad Era*, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No:2, 2008.

Matthew C. Wells, "Thermidor in the Islamic Republic of Iran: the Rise of Muhammad Khatami", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26:1, (1999).  
Maziar Behrooz, *Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini*, Maziar Behrooz, *Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini*, *Middle Eastern Studies* vol:27 no:4 (Oct 1991).

Mehdi Khalaji, *The Last Marja: Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism*, *Policy Focus* no. 59, (The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2006).

Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001, Washington D.C.).

Michael Rubin, *Iran 2025*, paper presented in International Future Operational Environment Seminar, June 22, 2010, <http://www.aei.org/speech/100153>

Michael Rubin, *Iran's Global Ambitions*, AEI Outlook Series No:3  
<http://www.aei.org/outlook/27658>

Mohiaddin Mesbahi, 'Iran's Foreign Policy Towards Russia, Central Asia and Caucasus', in John L. Esposito, R. K. Ramazani (eds.), *Iran at the Crossroads*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

Pınar Arıkan, (2005), *Uneasy Coexistence: "Islamism vs. Republicanism" Debate in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Master's Thesis), Middle East Technical University.

R.K.Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran Challenge and Response in the Middle East*, (John Hopkins University Press: 1988; Baltimore, London).

Rahbord (Strategy), No:35, Spring 1384 (2005).

Ray Takeyh; Nicholas D. Gvosdev, *Pragmatism in the Midst of Iranian Turmoil*, *The Washington Quarterly*, 27:4.

Rohollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Both North and South", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1992).



Rohollah Khomeini, Proclamation for the Clergy,  
<http://www.rahpouyan.com/article/showart.asp?sid=627&aid=1163>

Rohollah Khomeini, Proclamation of Brotherhood,  
[http://jamaran.ir/fa/NewsContent-id\\_13017.aspx](http://jamaran.ir/fa/NewsContent-id_13017.aspx)

Rohollah Khomeini, Vasiyatname-i Siyasi-yi Elahi-ye Imam Khomeini,  
(Muessese-i Tanzim va Nashr-e Asar-e Imam Khomeini, 2008, Tehran).

Saira Khan, Iran and Nuclear Weapons Protracted Conflict and Proliferation,  
(London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

Sami Oğuz (ed.), Gülümseyen İslam Hatemi'nin Ağzından İran'daki Değişim,  
(İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001).

Sami Oğuz, Ruşen Çakir, *Hatemi'nin İranı*, (İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2003).  
Sanam Vakil, 'Iran: Balancing East against West', *The Washington Quarterly*, 29:  
4 (2006).

Shahram Chubin, Iran's Nuclear Ambitions, (Washington, D.C. : Carnegie  
Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

Shahram Chubin, Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,  
(New York, Oxford University Press, 2002).

Shahrough Akhavi, 'Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Middle  
East Journal*, Vol.41, No.2 (1987).

Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran After Khomeini*, (Praeger: 1992, New York).  
Speech at the First National Entrepreneurship Festival,  
<http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=4281>

Stephen Fairbanks, Theocracy versus democracy: Iran considers political parties,  
in Ali Mohammadi (Ed.), *Iran Encountering Globalization Problems and  
Prospects*, (London, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

Sussan Sivoshi, "Cultural Policies and the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book  
Publication", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Nov.,  
1997).

Suzanne Maloney, 'Agents or Obstacles? Parastatal Foundations and Challenges  
for Iranian Development', in Parvin Alizadeh (ed.), *The Economy of Iran :  
Dilemmas of an Islamic State*, (I.B. Tauris, 2000, New York).

Thérèse Delpech, *Iran and the Bomb The Abdication of International Responsibility*, Trans. Ros Schwartz, (New York Columbia University Press, 2007).

Timeline: Iran's nuclear programme,  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2007/12/20085251853218888.html>

Transcript of President Bush's first State of the Union address,  
<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/>

TV interview, February 23, 2008, <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=8502>

Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival How Conflicts in Islam Will Shape the Future*, (New York: W.W.Norton, 2006).

Walter Posch, Prospects for Iran's 2009 Presidential Elections, *The Middle East Institute Policy Brief*, No:24, June 2009.

Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? : the Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*, (Washington, DC : Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

Willem van Kemenade, "China vs. the Western Campaign for Iran Sanctions", *The Washington Quarterly*, 2010 Vol:33 No:3.

Yossi Melman, Meir Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, (New York, Carroll & Graf, 2007).

### **Media Sources**

Advarnews, [www.advarnews.biz](http://www.advarnews.biz)

Aftab News, [www.aftabnews.ir](http://www.aftabnews.ir)

Asia Times, [www.atimes.com](http://www.atimes.com)

Asr Iran, [www.asriran.com](http://www.asriran.com)

BBC, [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)

CNN, <http://www.cnn.com>

Donya-ye Eqtesad, <http://www.donya-e-eqtesad.com>

Eteemad, available at [www.magiran.com](http://www.magiran.com)

Eteemad-e Melli, available at [www.magiran.com](http://www.magiran.com)

Farda News, [www.fardanews.com](http://www.fardanews.com)

Fars News Agency, [www.farsnews.com](http://www.farsnews.com)

Fox News, [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)  
France 24, [www.france24.com](http://www.france24.com)  
Guardian, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)  
Hamshahri, [www.hamshahrionline.ir](http://www.hamshahrionline.ir)  
Iran Diplomacy, <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir>  
Iran Newspaper, available at [www.magiran.com](http://www.magiran.com)  
Islamic Republic News Agency, [www2.irna.com](http://www2.irna.com)  
ISNA, [www.isna.ir](http://www.isna.ir)  
Jahan News, [www.jahannews.com](http://www.jahannews.com)  
Joe Klein, Iran's Pragmatic Face, *Time*, May 22, 2005.  
Jomhuri, <http://jomhuri.com>  
Jumhuri-ye Islami, [www.jomhourieslami.com](http://www.jomhourieslami.com)  
Kaleme, [www.kaleme.com](http://www.kaleme.com)  
Mehr News Agency, [www.mehrnews.com](http://www.mehrnews.com)  
MEMRI, [www.memri.org](http://www.memri.org)  
Msnbc, [www.msnbc.msn.com](http://www.msnbc.msn.com)  
Noandish News, [www.noandish.com](http://www.noandish.com)  
NPR, [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)  
Press TV, [www.presstv.ir](http://www.presstv.ir)  
Radio Farda, [www.radiofarda.com](http://www.radiofarda.com)  
Radio France International, [www.rfi.fr](http://www.rfi.fr)  
Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)  
Raja News, [www.rajanews.com](http://www.rajanews.com)  
Resalat, available at [www.magiran.com](http://www.magiran.com)  
Reuters, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)  
Tabnak, [www.tabnak.ir](http://www.tabnak.ir)  
Tehran Times, [www.tehrantimes.com](http://www.tehrantimes.com)  
The New York Times, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)  
Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com>  
Washington Post, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)  
Ynet News, [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com)