

INVESTIGATING THE REASONS FOR THE DIVERGENCE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND AMERICA AFTER THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN

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Abstract

America's policy toward Iran was dramatically changed after the Islamic revolution in this country which was previously considered as a regional gendarme; in other words, the country protecting America's interests in the Middle East was converted into the main base of opposition to America's policies. In fact, Islamic revolution of Iran led America to choose another country to protect its interests in the Middle East; that country was Iraq. Before Iranian revolution, Iraq was willing to have relations with the Soviet Union and purchased most of its weapons from the Eastern Bloc, but after Iranian revolution, Iraq expanded its relations with the West and received a lot of support from America, especially in the field of arms. However, these supports caused Iraq to be provoked to attack to Iran and create the Persian Gulf War. Actually, America tried to suppress and destroy or at least weaken Iran (which in those years had been converted into a model for Muslims' democratic and freedom-loving uprisings around the world, particularly in the Middle East, and had proposed the strategies of issuing the Islamic revolution) by Iraq and Saddam's expansionist policies and aggressive temper. In fact, Iran was involved in an unwanted war to prevent the growth of fundamentalism in the region and the world that had been initiated following Iran. Also, America proposing the reasons such as hostage, opposition to the Iranian regime, and so forth obviously continued to support Iraq during the Persian Gulf War. The present paper attempts to briefly describe the main challenging causes of relations between Iran and America. In addition, Iran's nuclear activities in recent years have caused more strained relations between the two countries. On the other hand, the factors such as America's support for Israel, Iran support for Islamic groups, America's arms sales, and so forth have caused the tensions between the two countries to increase.

Keywords: Iran, America, relations between Iran and America, challenging factors

Introduction

Here, the challenges between the two countries mean opposing theories in Iran and America about the relations between the two countries. In this paper, it is attempted to investigate the roots of the conflict between the two countries as well as the cooperation and interaction between them. In this regard, the effective factors causing the fields of convergence and divergence in relations between Iran and America have been studied.

The importance of research

The end of the Cold War and the rise of a unipolar international system caused America to become a hegemon in the system. Hence, America tries to control the international system to maintain the existing order as well as persuade other countries to be consistent with the standards and demands of America in order to achieve its goals. However, Iran which was one of the main allies of America in the world and especially in the region before the revolution became one of the main enemies of America in the world and the region after the revolution. Therefore, investigating the

reasons for the divergence in relations between Iran and America is important, because the convergence or divergence of the two countries can change political, social, economic, and cultural equations in the international system, particularly at the regional level.

The purpose of the research:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons for the divergence between Iran and America and the impact of this divergence on the relations of these countries with other countries in the world as well as the opportunities and constraints created for the two countries as the result of the divergence.

The research questions:

- 1- What are the fields of tension in relations between America and Iran?
- 2- Do the tensions between America and Iran affect their relations with other countries in the world?

The research theoretical concepts:

Intellectual and ideological roots

Principles of Politics in Islam and Iran

Unlike Western authors who believe that the history of policy dates back to the formation of human society, Quran states that the history of policy dates back to the time of prophets. In other words, according to Quran, prophets were legislative leaders who brought divine rules to manage the society. In fact, the most important feature of Islamic politics is that they are God-centered; this means that the Islamic politics have been formed based on monotheism. According to the political thought of Islam, the government is rooted in revelation and all the people shall live within divine rules as well as Islam is a universal law and does not belong to any particular race, ethnicity, or language. In fact, this political thought states the ultimate goal of Islam.

Principles of Politics in America

- 1) Humanism or human authenticity which is rooted in ancient Greece and the Renaissance [1].
- 2) Liberalism which is rooted in Renaissance and reformation in the West [2].
- 3) Christian Zionism: belief in the Savior which has been mentioned in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The followers of these religions have faith in the Savior for the comfort and welfare of the people.
- 4) Hamiltonism: this economic policy attributed to Alexander Hamilton is based on the paradigm of world order and consists of two main beliefs: 1- belief in the balance of power in Europe, 2- emphasis on American values rather than America's interests outside the country.
- 5) Cynicism: in terms of politics, Cynicism is based on protecting the national interests of America.
- 6) Wilsonism (Wilsonian) is the word used to describe a certain type of ideological perspectives on foreign policy. The term comes from the ideology of United States President Woodrow Wilson and his famous Fourteen Points that he believed would help create world peace if implemented. After the collapse of the Soviet Union which led to a unipolar world, America adopted Wilsonian policy towards Iran; in this regard, it can be pointed to various measures such as protection of human rights in Iran, promotional and political support for some opposition movements in Iran, and political pressure on Iran to create an atmosphere for growth of opposition movements.

Anti- Americanism in the Islamic world

The term anti-Americanism, or anti-American sentiment, refers to opposition or hostility to the policies, culture, society, economics, international, or superpower role of the United States. Anti-American Islamist tendencies and movements include the following concepts:

1- Anti-Americanism in the thought of Sayyid Qutb: according to some American analysts Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) is the first Islamist to declare a cultural war against the United States and Western civilization. Qutb was a senior official in the Egyptian Ministry of Education in the late 1940s and he was sent to the United States for two years to study methods of education in 1949. During the two years that he spent in the United States, he began to develop his radical ideas and doctrines, which, in the 1960s and 1970s, would become the philosophical basis of a wide spectrum of Jihadi groups [4].

2- Anti-Americanism and the theory of Islamic Revolution: in line with the ideas of Sayyid Qutb and Edward Said (1935-2003), the theory of Islamic Revolution can be considered as the most influential and comprehensive theory that is proposed as the link between Islamist and anti-American movements. Undoubtedly, this theory has practically and theoretically played an essential role in forming, stimulating, and strengthening the anti-American movements around the world in the last three decades. The main anti-American concept of Islamic Revolution theory includes the phenomenon of Shiism. In fact, the intellectual basis of Shiism is shaped based on the anti-oppression, the culture of Ashura, and Mahdism. The primary messages of Islamic Revolution are to protest the conditions of the international system and try to find the ideal situation. The messages can justify anti-imperialistic, especially anti-American, orientation of Islamic Revolution [5].

Strategic differences between the two countries:

America's macro strategies and foreign policy

America has always pursued the following objectives by its macro strategies and foreign policy:

- 1- Investment and expanding it in the whole world.
- 2- Globalization of liberalism: accordingly, today liberalism has become a lifestyle and is emphasized as a pattern and model.
- 3- Spreading democracy using military force is not only justified, but also is deemed necessary and good [7].
- 4- Nation-building actions: in this regard, it can be pointed to nation-building actions of America in Germany, Japan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq [8].
- 5- Hostile measures against Iran such as the stances against Iran's nuclear issue [9].

Iran's macro strategies and foreign policy

Iran has always pursued the following objectives by its macro strategies and foreign policy:

- A) The belief in ownership of Islam and expanding it throughout the world.
- B) Support for the oppressed people
- C) Negation of any domination and submission [10].

America's scenarios against Iran

- 1) Pressure for changing inappropriate policies of Iran as long as Iran intends to acquire weapons of mass destruction, undermines the Middle East peace process, and supports international terrorist. Hence, to reduce Iran's income, the investments of this country for development of the energy sector should be restricted.
- 2) America should take steps to strengthen structural reforms in Iran. America must apply the necessary policies to control the situation through intangible support for internal opposition groups. Also, it should create a massive riot in Iran through political tensions.
- 3) America should gradually provide appropriate fields for building relationship with Iran through talking to Iran, canceling Sanctions Act, solving disputes, facilitating Iranian travelling to America, removing trade barriers, trading with non-governmental Iranians, and so forth.

The tendencies in America to Iran:

1) Hostile tendencies: the supporters of hostile tendencies mostly include the Republicans in Congress and Jewish communities; for example, people like Rumsfeld or Senator Damato want more force against Iran.

2) Compromising tendencies: the supporters of compromise with Iran mostly include researchers or some of former officials of America such as Scowcroft, Richard Murphy, Gary Sick, and so forth who emphasize on Iran regional position and demand America to adopt behaviors similar to European policies towards Iran. These people believe that relations with Iran can reduce this country's relation with Russia and prevent the influence of Russia in Central Asia and Caucasus through Iran.

3) Moderate tendencies: the supporters of moderate tendencies mostly include democrats who have softer stances compared to the others. However, they demand to make Europe approve America's sanction policies against Iran.

The tendencies in Iran to America:

1) Continuing the severance of Iran-America relations: the supporters of this tendency are opposed to any negotiations with America and even reject to propose the issue. In fact, they believe that the severance of Iran-America relations is one of the main results of Iranian revolution which will be violated by building relations with America. Also, they believe that the negotiations with America are contrary to religious principles and national interests. Top officials and religious people are the supporters of this tendency.

2) The tendency of building relations with America: this view is exactly the opposite of the first view. The supporters of this view believe that the national security and interests require revising the relations with America. According to this view, building relations with America is not only contrary to the national interest, but also is necessary for the security of Iran. More academic individuals and scholars of international relations are the supporters of this view.

3) The Moderate tendency: the supporters of this tendency believe that the relations with America have no conflict with national principles and interests of Iran while they still believe that America is the symbol of arrogance. This view emphasizes on a more forceful foreign policy. The supporters of this view consist of various sectors of society who are concerned about both national interests and the regime [12].

September 11 attacks

The September 11 attacks opened a new chapter in America's foreign and domestic policies. Actually, America was suffering from a vacuum of security strategy after the Cold War. In fact, this country adopted deterrence strategy during the Cold War. The September 11 attacks provided opportunities for heads of the state to adopt new strategies in foreign policy and international issues. After this incident, the neocons took advantage of the opportunity and exaggerated the threat of terrorism at the national level to enhance the popularity and at the international level to establish hegemony and world leadership. In other words, the deterrence strategy was replaced with proactive strategy [13].

America's foreign policy toward the Middle East and Iran after September 11

Noam Chomsky has written about the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq in his "9/11" book that 11 September was the origin of complex transformations regarding the relations between the developed countries especially America and Third World Nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq [14].

The September 11 attacks and changes as well as the exigencies of the war against terrorism made Washington reassess its foreign policy. For a long time, America's Middle East policies were limited to support authoritarian regimes that were Washington's allies and protecting America's

interests in the region. In other words, maintaining the stability was the main goal of America's Middle East policies [15].

From the beginning, America shaped its strategy within a framework broader than the concept of national interests through maintaining the independence and preventing the formation of a hegemonic power which is a threat to the independence [16], but the September 11 attacks significantly changed the political literature of America [17]. This event was unbelievable and unique in its kind, because after the war of America and Britain in 1812 it was the first time that America's land attacked by an external enemy. Thus, the Americans who never had experienced the war at home for two centuries suddenly faced with death, destruction, fire, and blood so that they were seeing the momentary reports of the incident through the mass media and television. Trauma caused by such an event was so intense that people in America were in disbelief for a few days [18].

The events of September 11 proved the fact to Americans that absolute security is not possible under any circumstances. In fact, the events of September 11 helped America to keep the costs resulting from vulnerabilities within acceptable ranges and justify the hegemonic policies applied to provide more benefits. In other words, this event provided a historic opportunity for America to legitimize its patterns of authority which were criticized after the fall of communism. Thus, the September 11 attacks allowed America to operate its foreign policy objectives.

After the September 11 attacks, America faced with a world that had changed fundamentally and the necessity for America's leadership was inevitable due to the new threats facing the world and conditions that would justify a change in America's foreign policy.

The September 11th was the origin of changes in America's national security. The fundamental impact of this incident on America's national security strategy was that Washington decided to destruct the outstanding and potential sources and bases of terrorists. The September 11, 2001 accident caused America to change its military strategy to combat with the phenomenon of the age, the terrorists [19].

America's security doctrine (the deterrence policy)

The word "deterrence" means the act of making someone decide not to do something or the act of preventing a particular act or behavior from happening. In foreign affairs, deterrence is a strategy intended to dissuade an adversary from undertaking an action not yet started, or to prevent them from doing something that another state desires.

The deterrence policy gained increased prominence as a military strategy during the Cold War with regard to the use of nuclear weapons. It took on a unique connotation during this time as an inferior nuclear force, by virtue of its extreme destructive power, could deter a more powerful adversary, provided that this force could be protected against destruction by a surprise attack. In fact, the deterrence strategy was the balance of terror between the two superpowers during the Cold War. Although the doctrine of nuclear deterrence was proposed during the Cold War, it is applicable in any other position that nuclear weapons exist. Deterrence to its simplest form is a special kind of social or political relations in which one party tries to influence the behavior of the order in its desired direction.

The purpose of deterrence is to forestall and prevent the enemy's attack by persuading the adversary that the cost is much heavier than the benefit they would gain [21].

Human Rights:

Resolutions issued by the Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly regarding the situation of human rights in Iran often deal with the issues such as discrimination against ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, discrimination against women in law and in practice,

fundamental freedoms including freedom of the press, expression, opinion, thought, and society, death penalty, the forcible dissolution of political parties, and violence against human rights activists, non-governmental organizations, political opponents, religious and political reformers, journalists, parliamentarians, and so forth.

The issuance of such resolutions has caused Iran government to face with different challenges. In fact, Iran has shown different responses to the issuance of the resolutions in the last thirty years. Anyhow, after the Islamic Revolution, Iran has always condemned for human rights violations [25].

Israel:

The relationship between Israel and America is unique, because the Israeli government is the best option for securing America's interests in the Middle East.

The historical background of values and culture homogeneity between America and Israel dates back to the first Jewish immigrants in America society. In fact, Jewish immigrants found America as a land of utopia compared to their previous situations in Europe, because they experienced actual freedom for the first time which they were previously deprived. Values and religious ties between Jews and Christians caused the formation of Christian Zionism idea in America society so that the Christian Zionists believed that the only condition for the advent of Jesus Christ is the return of Jews to the Promised Land.

Pro-Israel groups or the Jewish lobbyists have always played an essential role in relations between America and Israel. They have various methods and instruments to influence America's foreign policy and affect America's decisions regarding the Middle East and Israel. This has caused strategic relations to be created between America and Israel [26].

The Middle East Peace:

After the 1973 war, creating a lasting peace between Israel and the Arabs became one of the most important objectives of America in the Middle East. Preservation and development of America's national interests in the Middle East demand that the country's strategic ally, Israel, as the surest regime and the only guarantor of Western values in the region is always considered as the main issue in America's Middle East policies.

Middle East peace process that was started in the 1970s stopped in the 1980s, but it was again seriously followed in the 1990s. Ineffective plans and policies of Bush and Obama on changing policies between Israel and its hostile neighbors, all indicate that America only seeks its interests and tries to maintain its dominance through the Middle East peace.

In the 1990s, Shimon Peres who was the Prime and Foreign Minister of Israel that time proposed the New Middle East plan in the form of peaceful coexistence and regional cooperation. Some issues of this plan are as follows:

- 1- Political stability (fundamentalism inhibition).
- 2- Economic stability (the improvement of living standards in the Middle East).
- 3- The national security (to make ineffective the strategic depth).
- 4- Promoting Democracy

In addition, America's Congress approved Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) law to support the national targets of Israel and withdraw it from the region's political and economic isolation. However, the current situation in the Middle East show that the plan is changing the way towards the dominance of Islamists on the region and creating a great Islamic Middle East [28].

Counterterrorism

This approach was proposed after the September 11 attacks, because after the incident, America faced with new threats such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and extremist states.

Hence, the statesmen of this country criticized all previous strategies and thought of new strategies to combat upcoming threats [29].

Nuclear Power in Iran

Western countries with the leadership of America are trying to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear technology through challenging actions such as physical assassination of nuclear scientists and scholars, economic sanctions, accusing Iran of secret activities and efforts to achieve nuclear weapons, etc.

Investigating the Causes of West challenges against Iran's nuclear technology:

Based on the analytical framework, it can be said that Iran, like other countries, follows the specific objectives (reflected in the 152 to 155 principles of the constitution) in its foreign policy. Generally, revolutions are historical and very rare phenomena which have a qualitative impact on the fate of nations who have chosen the revolution for social transformation. In fact, each revolution defines new directions and goals for the revolutionary nation as well as shapes a new set of international perceptions, expectations, and relations. It is natural that the Iranian revolution must be considered as the Iranians' reaction to the circumstances of Iran (as a regional base of America) at that time [32].

The hostage crisis

The causes and objectives:

Different and conflicting reasons and motivations have been mentioned for the conquest of America Embassy. Some believe that the main reason for conquest of America Embassy was the effort of ideological revolutionaries to purify the revolution from moderate liberal and nationalist forces. Some others believe that the influence of leftist ideology in the revolutionary forces caused the conquest of America Embassy to happen. Some groups state that each revolution goes through an evolutionary process in which such events are expected to happen. Although the mentioned factors may have contributed to the occurrence of this event, two fundamental reasons can be mentioned for the conquest of America Embassy on November 4, 1979. First, interventionist policies of America in Iran since 1953; second, the ideological and religious leaders' suspicion and distrust to the interim government's policy towards the West. However, the America agreement on the medical treatment of Shah in the country on October 20, 1979 as well as the meeting of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the interim government with Carter's National Security Advisor, Brzezinski, exacerbated the suspicion too.

The issue of hostages was handed over by Imam Khomeini to the parliament to be resolved. On November 2, 1980 (two days before presidential elections in America), the parliament issued a resolution in which four conditions had been determined for resolving the hostage crisis.

The approach of regime change in Iran by America:

Some believe that Iran's reason for achieving nuclear weapons is to be ready for tackling the America regime change policy in Iran. However, the experience of eight-year war with Iraq clearly showed that Iran does not believe in nuclear weapons to defend itself against external aggression. During the eight-year war with Iraq, America and the West supported the aggressive regime in any possible way; nevertheless, all finally accepted that Iran could become a powerful country in the region without the use of unconventional weapons while America's and Israel's position in the Middle East has been severely weakened over the past few decades despite having nuclear power [34].

America's energy security in the region:

In the years after World War II, the oil consumption in America has grown unprecedentedly; for example, there were 26 million cars in America in 1945, but the number reached 40 million in 1950. During these 5 years, gasoline consumption in America has increased by about 42 percent and for the first time gasoline surpassed coal in supplying energy needs of the country. On the other hand, crude oil imports and its byproducts had exceeded exports since 1948. Hence, America was dependent on oil of other countries to compensate the lack of oil production; as a result, the term "foreign oil" progressively became widespread.

After World War II, oil companies of America became more active to invest in oil-rich regions, particularly the Middle East. On the other hand, in America's foreign policy, the issues of energy security and its realization mechanism became increasingly important for Americans and their allies.

Oil has a strategic and key importance for America, because America's industry and economic highly depend on oil so that any disruption in oil supply can lead to the increased inflation and rapidly affect living standards. As a result, the energy security is closely related to the oil security so the energy crisis means the oil crisis for many people. While reviewing America's energy issues, it is found that the country's growing dependence on oil is one of main problems facing America's future. In fact, the problem should also be considered as a big problem for America's hegemonism [36].

Islamic Awakening in the Persian Gulf region:

Today, the turbulent waves of Islamic Awakening in the Middle East have caused this geostrategic region to be exposed to enormous changes that undoubtedly it can completely alter the balance of power in the region in the future. In fact, the scope of changes happened or happening in political systems of some Arabic countries are not limited to the borders of these countries and can influence other countries in the region and affect their political systems too. The wide variations will disturb the regional balance of forces and give rise to threats to other countries. Stephen Walt as an active realist has proposed the balance of threat theory after reviewing the balance of power theory. According to Walt, governments are united against governments that are the source of the greatest threats. In this case, the threatening government or governments are not necessarily among the strongest governments. In fact, Walt believes that the threat is not only resulted from power, but the combination of other factors such as offensive capabilities, military power, geographical proximity, and aggressive intentions can give a country the power to threaten others. Thus, the threat does not only depend on the extent of a state's power, but it depends on the states' perception of the threat in their relations. As a result, whenever governments with common interests feel that their entity or interests are threatened by other governments, they are united together to balance the threatening powers [37]. In this regard, Iran has a particular and sensitive situation in the Middle East due to its role in the spiritual leadership of these movements as well as its potential and actual power in the region. Many analysts believe that there is the possibility of a power struggle between America and Iran. However, future relations between the two countries, the situation management, and the role of countries in the events known as Islamic awakening will determine future relations of the region. With a realistic look, it should be noted that the recent events in Arabic countries of the Middle East and North Africa can provide opportunities for Iran or threaten its interests in the region.

The changes in current systems of the region and the collapse of governments which were dependent on America and the West can provide new opportunities for Iran. Most of the countries

that have undergone the wave of Islamic awakening were close allies of America and the West in the region and they had adopted the most severe stances against Iran in recent years. Anyhow, regional changes are consistent with diplomatic interests of Iran's foreign policy and America's recent policies in the Middle East confirm the fact [38].

Considering Iran policies and the negative propaganda about Iran done by America after Islamic revolution, there is the possibility of increasing suspicions about Iran. Therefore, as a result of new revolutions in the region, Iran's allies may increase and this can cause the other countries to feel threatened and be united with each other against Iran or decrease their relations with Iran [39].

America's arms sales in the Persian Gulf:

One of the important factors that is closely related to the stability and security of the Persian Gulf is the issue of arms. In fact, regional competitions and the resulted tensions have converted the Persian Gulf to one of the most insecure areas in the world and a global market for selling arms. The uncontrolled entrance of advanced weapons without considering the regional capacity has sparked regional instability and tensions. This insecurity and instability has caused alien powers prevent the creation of appropriate and comprehensive security systems by their presence and military maneuvers under the pretext of establishing peace and security in the region. The incompatibility of regional policies and the military situation of Persian Gulf countries have caused the countries of this region to seek security guarantees in the West and wait for them to solve their security problems. However, America tries to make the Persian Gulf countries powerful against Iran by supporting its allies in the region and selling arms to them [40].

Conclusions

Considering the depth of challenges between the two countries, it seems that the differences between these two countries are not solvable. These two countries have always tried to hurt each other in different ways; on the other hand, they need to continue these challenges at least at the regional level to maintain their position in the region to justify their actions. Thus, these differences seem to be necessary and do not end soon. On the one hand, the factors such as counterterrorism provide the fields of cooperation and convergence between the two countries; on the other hand, factors such as America's energy security in the Persian Gulf, Islamic awakening, combating Islamic extremism, the security of Israel, the Middle East peace process, arms sales, and so forth have led to the divergence in relations between them.

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