

## **America and Securitization of Iran after the Islamic revolution 1979 till 2013; continuation or change**

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### **Abstract**

U.S foreign policy toward Iran had been so uncertain and variable since the beginning of this relation, but alongside fluctuations, some kind of consistency is distinguishable. Until the Islamic revolution of 1979 by the Iranian people, Iran was playing a major role in the U.S. anti-communist strategy in the Middle East. U.S grand strategy was based on its confrontation with USSR and Iran was the key for controlling the Middle East and process of underpinning Iran's power as a liberal ally in the region was at the core of U.S considerations in Iran. After the 1979 revolution, Iran's priority had changed as a regional actor and it no longer identified itself as a member in the Western coalition based on American foreign policy. On the other hand, U.S. also stopped to identify Iran as a friend and started to demonize the new role Iran was playing in the Middle East and the world. By having these trends in mind, a very fundamental, important question strikes the mind: Did U.S has a turning point in its foreign policy toward Iran after the 1979 or the principle of its foreign policy was fixed and only tactical changes occurred? In order to answer this question I'm going to examine the history of U.S foreign policy toward Iran, particularly the post-revolutionary period. This analysis will be conducted according to the Copenhagen school definition of security and concept of securitization. This theoretical frame work brought us a comprehensive understanding of security and also a relative, useful categorization of security strategy in foreign policy. Different methodological approaches could be used in these frameworks but in this research I have used the discourse analysis method to explore the subject of research. Conclusion of the research shows us that American strategy toward Iran covers both permanent and variable factors but the permanent element was the key and variable factors made changes only in tactical level.

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U.S foreign policy was basically directed toward securitizing Iran but the world system, regional and national events also made it more powerful. It means that after the Islamic revolution of Iran, U.S. has continuously made an attempt in persuading other actors to securitize Iran. Before the Cold War, this securitization was in a low level but after the Cold War it can be classified as a high-securitization.

**Keywords:** Iran, U.S, Foreign policy, Islamic revolution, Copenhagen school, Securitization.

### **1. Introduction**

Foreign policy is one of the most controversial issues in international relations and political science. Understanding the main goal and true strategy of foreign policy of each country, despite the different ways of declaring publicly their official goals which is a main subject for political scholars, political science, international relations, geopolitics etc. U.S. like other countries could be seen as an actor in international relations that targets various objectives in its foreign policy during each administration but always identify grand National interest for itself which almost shapes its grand strategy toward the key issues.

In other words, U.S. as a world power had a worldwide design for its national interest and according to that it formed a grand strategy; its regional strategy was to be formed accordingly. Each country in U.S regional strategy, plays a role and is identified by so many political, social, economic factors. Iran is not an exception in American foreign policy, and then U.S foreign policy toward this country had been deeply affected by America's grand strategy and its strategy for the Middle East (Walt, 2009: 7).

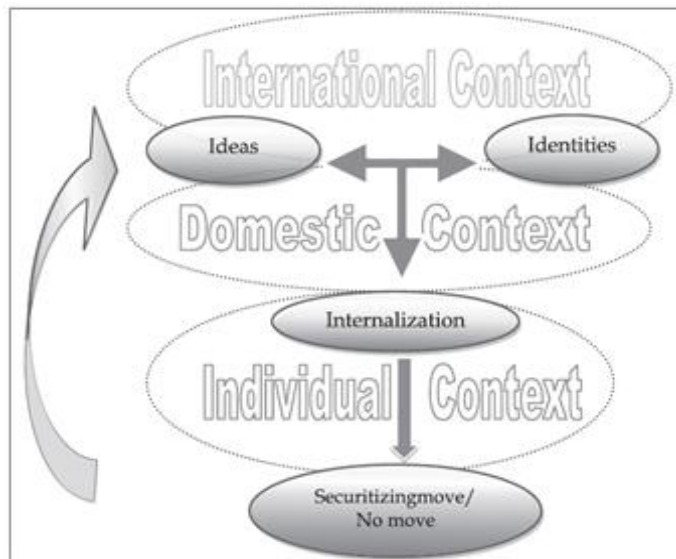
According to this categorization of U.S foreign policy and strategic level, this fact would be so tangible that Islamic revolution was a change in national level of Iranian politics and the collapse of Soviets Union was the world level variable in the American foreign policy. Besides these factors, Iran-Iraq war and the creation of a resistance nucleus in the region was the regional change that took place after the 1979. Then simultaneously three elements are influencing on the U.S foreign policy toward Iran.

As a matter of facts, Iran-U.S relation is a two side issue, but in this research just the American side of this relation will be explored so in this survey of U.S foreign policy, we should conduct the research with a theory which can simultaneously cover the foreign policy and international relations. Different epistemological schools appeared at the end of the 20th century and were brought to the discussion on the research method about a pluralistic sphere. Security was no longer just a military or a political concept based on the "Balance of power", "Deterrence", "peaceful coexistence" and "collective security" but has entered a comprehensive scale (UN Report for Secretary General, 1986: 4-14). Among the theories of security, some of realist and a small part liberal theories or a range of post structural theories could be used for this research title but they are not somehow suitable to explain the securitization's procedure of Iran in the U.S foreign policy because of two reason. First, most of these theories are just based on their positivistic presupposition and looking at the concept of security just as a high politics subject which limits the security to the military affair but Copenhagen school is a branch of security studies which defined security as the multidimensional concept between sub-nationals, national and international level. These post-Cold War theorists of international relations used the structural theory to define the concept of security and merge them with the international need to a new definition of security after the Cold War and created the concept of "societal security"(Ayoob,1981:127).

Second reason that makes the Copenhagen school views proper for this search is that securitization is neither a structural view to the concept of security nor a post structural understanding of security, but merges both of them and takes advantage of both. Copenhagen school and its understanding of security are based on the constructivist epistemology and it's then that different elements of structural analysis will appear in its conceptualization. Concepts like idea, identity, linguistic move, speech act... are the key

factors for framing security. In epistemological level, this school will look at the security as a subjective concept then it will focus on people's mind and the way that they formulate main concepts of security. In order to do this important job, Copenhagen school scholars not only use the nation-state level but they also use both domestic and international levels. The following graph will explain this idea and the layers of a securitization (Buzan, 1998:21).

Figure 1: Threat construction framework



According to these reasons securitization in the most proper theoretical framework to understand the American foreign policy toward the Iran since the 1979 to 2013. Because in this period of time, both of international system and American administration experienced changes but the process of securitization was consistent. In continuation of the article first we are going to explore the theoretical scope of the securitization and the research method that we have used for this article then we will go forward to discuss the application of the theory and the method on this period of time. At the end,

the conclusion will be a new model for analysis of American foreign policy toward Iran, in the post 1979's revolution era.

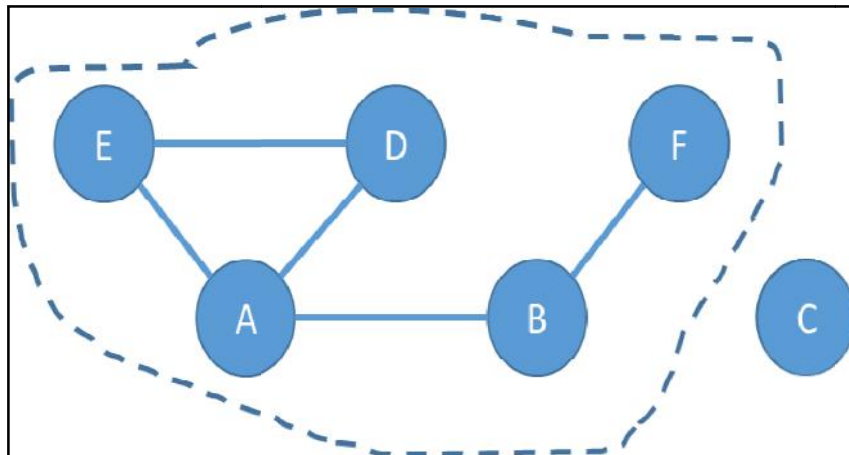
## **2. Methodology**

Because of the nature of this research we would like to use discourse analysis as the method for this research. Securitization has two different faces, first is about the tangible, materialistic, objective side of securitization and second part of this theory is concerning the subjective, intangible part of this theory. Then using discourse analysis as an appropriate research method is inevitable.

Discourse has a great number of definitions that give it different shapes. One of the most important definitions of discourse belongs to Laclau and Mouffe. In Laclau and Mouffes' opinion discourse is like a whole that has different elements and these elements are meaningfully articulated together. (Oswell, 2006:55). Laclau and Muffes argued that the meaning-making process is always open to create new forms of meaning and this process will never stop. In any discourses we can find a new articulation and it shapes a new meaning-making process. Then this process always changes itself and creates a new kind of meaning (R.Scatzkietal, 2001:53). Goldberg has another definition for discourse and discursive formation. He considered discourse as the totality of ordered relations and correlations of subjects to each other and to objects; of economic production and reproduction of cultural symbols and signification of law and moral rules and of social, political, economic or legal inclusion or exclusion (Henry, 2002:25). Foucault also sees the discourse in a different way. He believes that dominant discourse always reconstructs itself by the demarcation of a field of objects. In his idea, discourse permanently legitimizes itself as a subject of knowledge and setting of norms for elaborating concepts and theories(O'Farrell, 2005:80).

In addition to the theoretical level, discourse analysis could be seen as a research method so I would use this research method in my analysis and

view securitization as a discourse. In this research method a nodal point with different signifiers shape the discourse as a meaning system in which all phenomenon are considered as signs and all signs are just implied in the main nodal point. In discourse analysis, truth or falsehood of the nodal point is not a matter, what is important is to forming a system of meaning. The following picture will show how relation between E and D is supported by the linkage between A, B, F as signifiers and a meaning system is created and C is neglected as a fact.



### 3. Theoretical Framework

What made Copenhagen School definition of security too important is about the middle way that this school took to define security. Copenhagen School merged some elements of positivism with other post positivist factors and proposed a crossed-way for security studies. In Copenhagen School epistemology, security contains both facts on the ground and a linguistic game; therefore, this school of international relations linked definition of security to both structuralism and post structuralism by choosing the middle way.

### **3-1. Beginning of Copenhagen School**

Bill McSweeney is the one who called Buzan and Waever's work as the Copenhagen School. Buzan and Waever had been working on a new model of security studies at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) around the 1980-1990. In that time, the two scholars who tend to work on post structuralism began their attempt to introduce a new framework for international relations, so they started to work on security as the main concept of international relations. Especially after the Cold War, this issue became one of the most challenging concerns; the fact that should they be loyal to the structural definition of security in the post-Cold War era.

### **3-2. Comprehensive security**

Buzan intentionally tried to argue a new framework for security in which security extended to all spheres that can be threatened. In this new perspective, threat is the main concept to distinguish the border of security. Basically security means freedom from threats therefore; state, society or individuals can be the subject of security. He assumed that all states and societies search for survival, so different elements should be safe in order to call a situation secure; things like "independent identity" and "political integrity" will be engaged in the description of security. (Buzan, 1991:61).

In continuation of Buzan's comprehensive security, Waever argued that security is not an existing reality in the real world and even this concept is constructed by elites in international politics. He believes that articulation of security into political institutions is in a way that elites can have their influence in the world politics (Buzan,1995:7). Waever borrowed the comprehensive security from Buzan's works and linked it to the linguistic game which is playing a major role in the securitization. In the academic level, Waever created a link between comprehensive security and social discourse. He looks at the new framework of security through the discursive lens.."(Waever, 1997, cited in Floyd, 2010:16)

### **3-3. Securitization**

More than a new epistemological level in analyzing security or mixed roots of its school, securitization is a process in which an ordinary subject (Normal policy) in international relations will become a security threat (politicized) that requires the military to deal with.

In CS words, securitization is the illocutionary speech act that makes something a security issue by uttering it. Or what Wæver argued: “It is by labeling something a security issue that it becomes one” (Wæver 2004: 13). After the creation of a threat, securitizing actor will request an extraordinary tool to deal with the constructed threat. In fact the main goal of CS is about the exaggeration of a threat to survival level. With envisaging these facts, securitization process includes three main steps.

(1) Identification of existential threats.

(2) Emergency action.

(3) Effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules (Buzan et al. 1998: 6).

Speech act and illocutionary action that Copenhagen School and mainly Wæver argued is intertwined with all steps especially with the first step. In fact identification of a threat is the essence of making a politicized condition from a normal situation. In the first step maybe something implies to be a threat but the existential level of threat is constructed by the speech acts. Then we can name the first step of securitization as the most important basic level of the whole process of securitization, because the other step of securitization is based on the understanding of existential threat. If nothing necessary exists, no emergency action is needed.

To do this important job in the securitization process according to the speech act theory, facilitating conditions prepare the context for different audience to accept the particular threat as the existential threat. Facilitating conditions may change in different cases but normally they include the style of speech act that the actor uses, historical background of threat and the level of credibility of the speaker. At the end of this level, different audiences should accept the threat as

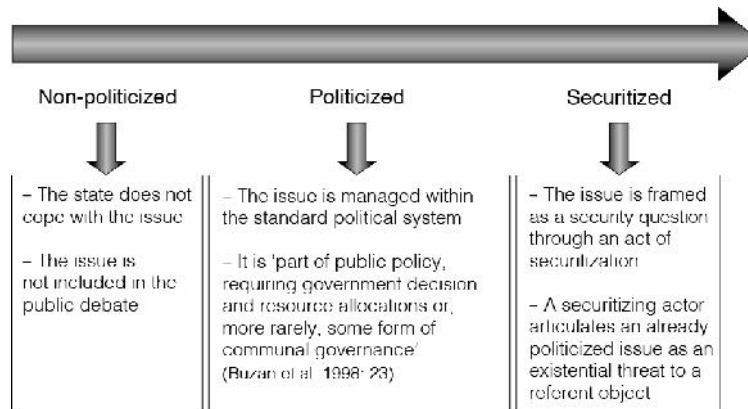


a survival threat to move the subject to the realm of emergency act.

Second level of this process is related to the manner that international actors should take to deal with the existential threat. If the first step is carried out successfully, international actors will be faced with a survival threat. Then no ordinary action will be enough to keep away from those threats, hence emergency act will require an emergency condition to react to the constructed threat. In many analyses, reaction in emergency condition is tightly linked with the preparation of military action to prevent the existential threat. This step and the next step of securitization process is inspired by Schmitt’s “The Political”.

Third step of a successful securitization is almost the conclusion of the two previous steps. After those levels are finalized and for the implementation of the emergency action, the last move should be taken into account while normal regulation of international relations will be neglected and the exceptional condition will be forced (Aradau 2001).

As Schmitt argued, in the exceptional conditions no ordinary rules will work. In this condition the securitizing actor determines the rules by breaking the normal condition rules. The next table clearly shows the process of securitization from normal politics to the security politics(Schmitt,1996: 25).



#### **4. Finding**

In order to understand and apply the theory and research method on the American foreign policy since 1979, we have to know that when the nodal point of U.S. foreign policy toward Iran has changed. So a very brief background of Iran-U.S. relations is needed to find out when and why Iran's role in U.S. grand strategy had change and the securitization of Iran became the American foreign policy agenda. In fact securitization just targets the enemies and securitization of friends or rivals is meaningless. So for understanding the process of U.S. foreign policy about Iran, history of the relations is playing a key role.

#### **4-1. Context of securitization**

##### **4-1-1. Beginning till the 1953**

When we are looking at the relation between Iran and United States of America it seems that the first diplomatic, formal contact between two countries was shaped in 1856 by treaty of "friendship and commerce". Samuel Benjamin selected as the first American ambassador in Tehran as Haj Hussein Qoli Khan became the first Iranian official in the Washington 5 years later. In that period of time, Iranians viewed United States as a foreign power that can balance against the British and Ottoman Empire. The content of the first agreement between the two countries shows that Iranians were seeking a new window though the United States to the new world. Because of no colonial experience of U.S., the primary perception of US was positive. This image consolidated by the death of Howard Baskerville who was a teacher in Tabriz. During the internal conflicts between the constitutionalists and royalists in Iran, he played as a constitutionalist and was killed by the forces of Iranian monarch, Mohammad Ali shah. This death made him the hero of Iranian democracy. But history of this relation didn't continue in the same way and the future action of America changed the rules (Bernstein, 2007).

During two World Wars, U.S. and Iran had never been closer to each other but the honey moon between them was put to an end when U.S. began to ignore Iranian democracy with conducting coup against Mohammad Mossadegh, the

democratically elected prime minister of Iran. The first crisis in Iran-U.S relations began with Iranian oil crisis and the American role in operating a coup against Mossadegh (Behestani and Shahidani, 2015: 2-3).

#### **4-1-2. 1953 till the 1979**

After the coup and restoration of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the crown, Iran and U.S relation flourished in different political, military and economic fields. In this period of time U.S. looked at Iran as the most important non-Arab alliance in the Middle East or perhaps as the important U.S. partner in the Middle East. On the other hand, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was considering U.S. as the biggest international supporter of his crown. In fact maybe British was the key for the 1953 coup but U.S. was the winner of Iran and little by little replaced the British. In 1953-1979 Iran was a unique partner for United State of America and played a major role in America's Middle Eastern foreign policy. First in 1955 Iran joined the military-economic treaty called CENTO which was one of the West's provisions for dealing with the USSR and American containment policy (Presidential Research etc, 2003: 6-25).

American foreign policy toward Iran in the 1953-1979 was part of its grand strategy toward the world which was the "containment policy" and Iran was a regional player for that grand strategy in the Middle East. In this vision, America looked at Iran as the most important country that should keep the "hygienic belt" and block the interpretation of communism in this region. This was U.S policy toward Iran during the Kennedy and Johnson era. When Kennedy became president of America, he introduced himself as a proponent of liberty and human rights two factors that shah of Iran was deprived of, then in the first glance it seems that Iran-U.S relations should have taken a downturn but they didn't (Donan, 1974: 84).

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty" (Kennedy, 1961).

#### **4-1-3. Carter before the revolution**

Conveys sent from Tehran to Washington can be the best way to understanding the importance of Iran for America. In this analyses Iran's six main benefits for United States of America are enumerated:

Iran can be a responsible alliance in the Middle East and it has ability and willingness.

Iran ties with U.S are warm, friendly and deep-rooted.

Iran is a stable and important source of energy oil resources.

Iran has a growing market for American goods and services in both civilian and military aspect

Iran is an essential air corridor between Europe and orient.(Murrey,2010:18-20)

Iran allows the U.S intelligence to use its territory for operation and create the facility for especial communication between two countries.

Pre-Carter history of Iran-U.S. relations can be seen as the peak in this relation which also includes American concerns about Iran; its stability, friendship and its role in the region. If we are going to account U.S suspicion on Iran, following reason seems adequate. Shah had a great amount of petro-dollar and felt more independent of U.S.:

The world petroleum is one of the most inhuman stories known to man during which basic principles of morality and society is jeered at. If powerful oil trusts no longer despoil and humiliate our country it is not because these predators have become human, but because we have won a hard-fought battle which has been going on since the beginning of the century. Page ..... If you remain our friends, obviously you will enjoy all the power and prestige of my country. But if you try to take an unfriendly attitude toward my country, we can hurt you as badly if not more so than you can hurt us. Not just through oil - we can create trouble for you in the region. If you force us to change our friendly attitude, the repercussions will be immeasurable(Pahlavi,1980:59).

Carter also keeps the previous agenda for selling arms to Iran and encourages Shah to continue the arm purchase from the U.S. This part of Carter's policy

toward Iran was an internal matter for U.S. because after the end of war in Vietnam and signing the SALT treaty with the Soviet Union, a large number of American job opportunities were dismissed. Around the 700000 persons were involved in the arms industry that half of them were related to Iran's purchases. With Keynesian political economy perspective, sales of arms to Iran were necessary for the U.S. so this trend continued. U.S. investment in oil industry was also so important and beneficiary for this country. U.S. oil companies gained 100% profit in exchange of investment in Iran's oil industry (Behestani and Shahidani, 2015:8-12).

These facts, led Carter to use the famous appellation of Iranians "Island of stability" in his trip to Iran:

Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world.....As we visit with leaders who have in their hands the responsibility for making decisions that can bring peace to the Middle East and ensure a peaceful existence for all of us who live in the world, no matter where our nations might be, it's important that we continue to benefit from your sound judgment and from your good advice.....We also had a chance to discuss another potential troubled area, the Horn of Africa. And here again we live at a great distance from it. But this region, which already sees the initiation of hostility and combat, needs to be brought under the good influence of you and others who live in this region. And we will be glad to cooperate in any way that we can. We want peace to return. We want Somalia and Ethiopia to be friends again, border disputes to be eased and those of us who do have any influence at all to use that influence for these purposes (Carter, 1977).

#### **4-2. Securitization of Iran**

As I mentioned in the theoretical framework all of the securitization process try to simulate the enemy as an existential threat for its own nation and other nations. During this process, the securitizing actors are using the speech act to make its target as a security issue. In fact, securitization is approximately a discourse of threat not a real threat and the nodal point in the securitization of Iran is that "Iran

is a threat for U.S. and the world”.

#### **4-2-1. Carter and hostage crisis**

In the last year of Carter presidency a very important incident changed the direction of American foreign policy toward Iran from friendship to enmity and that was the hostage crisis. After the hostage crisis, American policy toward Iran was neither friendly as in the past, nor neutral, as it was mentioned in the previous part and a paradigm shift had happened in the Iran-U.S relations.

**Political and military securitization:** Carter runs the Rose Garden strategy to handle the crisis for the U.S. In this strategy, Carter simultaneously pushed limitations on travel to Iran, sent an envoy to Iran and proposed negotiations to the Iranian revolutionary leader, blocked Iran’s foreign assets and even threatens Iran for bombing. This was the beginning of the new American policy toward Iran and a clear face of securitization of Iran. In this discourse, Iran became a symbol of insurgency and a threat for the U.S.

“I guarantee that if asked the people of plains what I should do, every last one of them would say “BOOMB IRAN”.....I’ve got to keep a lid on their emotion....if they can perceive me as firm and tough in voicing their rage, maybe we’ll be able to control this thing”(Murray, 2010:25).

Alongside the diplomatic pressure, Carter conducts a program to control the news of hostages in the media. As the last effort he ordered operation Eagle Claw, to rescue the hostages through the Delta Force army unit in April 1980. But the operation failed by sandstorm and the Carter military initiation in dealing with the hostage crisis failed. Hostage crisis continued till 1981, when Reagan was elected as the U.S. president.

The following Carter statement shows that the American language had changed since the crisis:

“50 Americans are still held captive, innocent victims of terrorism and anarchy..... to enlist the help of other nations in condemning this act of violence, which is shocking and violates the moral and the legal standards of a civilized world; and also to convince and to persuade the Iranian leaders that the

real danger to their nation lies in the north, in the Soviet Union and from the Soviet troops now in Afghanistan, and that the unwarranted Iranian quarrel with the United States hampers their response to this far greater danger to them”(Carter,1980).

**Economic securitization:** On the other hand, Carter banned all goods except food and medicine to be exported to Iran (Executive order 12211,1980). In fact Carter reaction to the hostage crises was passive because first, Washington was shocked at the Iran’s revolution and crisis snap, secondly, Carter believed that every extensive military action against Iran could endanger American grand interest in the region because of communism. In that period of time Iran was pro-communist and had a long border with USSR plus the fact that USSR had already invaded Afghanistan. So Carter thought that cost of every military action against Iran would be high and would bolster Iranian communist trend which consequently would Iran to a USSR ally in The Middle East and it was a greater failure for the U.S.

#### **4-2-2. Reagan era and powerful foreign policy**

When Reagan took office his foreign policy was extremely based on Cold War atmosphere and his view of Iran is under the shadow of the Cold War. On the first day of Reagan presidency, Iran released the American hostages so U.S. in Reagan era had no excuse to be hard about Iran. On the other hand, he needed to work with Iran because of the Cold War necessities. But according to different signs he continued the discourse of securitization of Iran while he was negotiating with this country. In fact Reagan team of foreign policy envisages two regional and international factors in the securitization of Iran but the nature of U.S foreign policy still followed the discourse of securitization(Scott,1996:19).

**Political and military securitization:** In the Reagan era the administration of United States of America first of all continued the Carter way to securitized Iran and was in fear about Iran’s revolutionary role in The Middle East. In this direction Reagan continued to threaten Iran even while he was negotiating with this country.

The process of securitization of Iran was also pursued by the process of weakening Iran. In this direction American state department removed Iraq from its list of sponsor of terrorism in 1982. And also nominated Iran as the sponsor of terrorism in the event of American hostages in Beirut. Reagan administration also linked bombing of US embassy in the Beirut to Hezbollah and Iran. In addition to these facts, Reagan attributed Iran's role in bombing Marines barracks in Beirut to Iran and Hezbollah(Levit, 2013).

During Reagan presidency international arms embargo levied on Iran was continued and documented and Iran was put on the list of sponsor of terrorism. In the continuation, U.S permitted Kuwaiti ships to re-flag their ships and actively responded to the threat of Iran by engaging itself in the Iran-Iraq war. In Reagan era, even U.S. was ready to attack Iran militarily and targeted Iranian airline that killed about 300 passengers as a proof of its strategy in the Middle East. And political and cultural securitizations of Iran were in the U.S agenda, the following statement could be a good example:

“In the battle for the Middle East, radical Islam is 3 for 3. First they drove Americans out of Iran. They blasted the U.S out of Lebanon. Finally they chased Israel out as well”(Murray, 2010:69).

**Economical securitization:** Reagan securitization not only in the political or military affair but also included the economic affair. In the 1988, Reagan signed the executive order number 12613 prohibiting all imports from Iran and added 14 broad categories of dual-used items to the list of proscribed export. In addition to this, Reagan approved all of the previous sanctions that Carter imposed on Iran(Executive order 12613,1988).

#### **4-2-3. George H. W. Bush: Persian Gulf War**

During Bush (the Father) presidency, U.S relations with Iran were facing two main issues. The first issue related to the end of Cold war and the collapse of the USSR and the second issue in U.S. foreign policy was about waging war against Iraq and launching the Desert Storm to remove Iraq from Kuwait. These international and regional factors deeply affected U.S foreign policy toward Iran



but facts show a continuation in the process of securitization of Iran. Bush presidency's securitization of Iran faced with intervening variable which then experienced a swing in its implementation.

**Political and military securitization:** When Bush took office United States was faced with hostage crisis in Lebanon and it led Bush to use Iran to solve the problem. Because of this reason the first posture of Bush in relation with Iran was positive:

There are today Americans who are held against their will in foreign lands, and Americans who are unaccounted for. Assistance can be shown here, and will be long remembered. Good will begets good will. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on(Bush,1989).

But this phenomenon did not change the grand strategy of securitization of Iran and even in the process of easing relations with Iran the key words for Bush administration was about considering Iran as a threat. Bush, Scowcroft and Baker sought to set a policy to control Iranian threat toward U.S interests in the Middle East besides liberating their hostages in Lebanon (Murray, 2010:75). At the time, U.S. unfroze just 567 million dollars of Iranian foreign assets as an incentive for freedom of Americans in Lebanon(Friedman,1983).Analysts believe that U.S foreign policy in that period of time was based on the assumption that Iran had the master key to release Americans in Lebanon.

Less than six month of freedom of American hostages in Lebanon, U.S was rapidly backed to the process of securitizing Iran. In October 1991 national U.S. intelligence argued that Iran was loyal to its revolutionary values and it makes this country ambitious and in a side contrary to the American values in The Middle East. This report concludes that Iran will not be reliable and ready to have relation with U.S and it is still a threat for the American national interest in the Middle East and also called Iran as the main supporter of terrorism and anti-Israel group in the Middle East plus these factors, Iran was considered as a country which will violate human rights in the future(National community report on Iran,1991: 20-24).

This report played a major role in returning to the old way of securitization and Iran also lost its strategic credibility of Cold War by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Then other fields of securitization were created for Iran. In the 1992, the director of the CIA told congress that Iran was trying to purchase nuclear and missile technologies and equipment from the republic of former Soviet and is also seeking to be linked with the source of nuclear and missile power in Asia(china and north Korea)(Gates,1992: 12-13).

In other levels, Americans had a bad feeling about six Muslim Republics who are close to Iran's border. And U.S. feared that Iran's revolutionary values be applied in these countries and this ideological threat was assigned to Iran. On the other hand, Iran enhanced its nuclear relations with Russia and this made the U.S very sensible about the subject of Iran (Gates, 1992: 12-19).

In 1992, Iran had been accused to assassinate the Kurd agents in Berlin and U.S. responded to the international campaign against Iran by banning the sale of dual-use items to Iran. In this context U.S officials argued that Iran posed a clear and present threat to the regional security as well as to our shared political and strategic interest. U.S. accused Iran to have seized (illegally) three islands in the Persian Gulf and to have helped the Bosnian Muslims as a sign of Iranian ambition and revolutionary mood(Murray,2010: 87-88).

During the Bush period, Iran was also securitized with human rights as a main subject in U.S. securitization of Iran. Imam Khomeini Fatwa in killing Salman Rushdie, Iranian human rights conditions and so many of other human rights issue like women rights, minority rights etc. was the subject for American securitization.

**Economic securitization:** Beside these attempts, in 1992 U.S Congress passed the most restrictive economic legislation on Iran under the subject of Iran-Iraq Non-Proliferation Act and also supported the anti-regime group called Mujahedeen. In this time government of United States also confirmed the previous economic and political law and presidential executive order. In fact America looking at economic sanctions as a preventive instrument for Iranian

economy and all of these actions were based on the grand concept of Iran as a threat to the United States of America (Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of, 1992).

#### **4-2-4. Clinton, New Generation of Securitization of Iran.**

There are two levels for the securitization of Iran in the U.S. foreign policy. The first level is the period of time since the 1979 till 1992 and the second level of securitization of Iran began from 1992 till 2013. Then according to the categorization of this research under Clinton's presidency begins what we call high securitization. By the lack of an international variable and with the new international system based on U.S. hegemony and besides the trend in which the Middle East was getting more and more important, Iran became the target of the most securitizing efforts that may had occurred before. With this introduction in this part we can identify political, military and economic securitization as the most important trend that U.S. pursued under Clinton, Bush (the Son) and Obama administrations. With these considerations of U.S. foreign policy, Clinton administrates the Dual containment policy which was aimed to impose new level of limitations on Iran as a threat for U.S. interests in the Middle East (Indyk, 1993).

**Political and Military securitization:** Clinton Doctrine for foreign policy in both East of the Middle East and West of this region (Israel and Arabs peace talk) tightly linked with Iran, so Iran during Clinton's presidency was a big problem for interests of the United States in the region. Plus these direct foreign policy interests, because of Clinton's grand strategy of economic boost within the country, U.S. had so many benefits in introducing Iran as a regional threat in order to sell arms to the countries in the region. In the first step Warren Christopher as the Secretary of State branded Iranian "Out Law" country which try to block the peace process and want to drive Americans out of the Persian Gulf and in addition to this accusation of U.S. official, different reports began to label Iran as a country that imports missile from North Korea, Bloch neighbors, searches for WMDs and breaches the UN sanctions (Jehl, 1993).

It's clear that U.S began a new level of securitization of Iran following the Dual Containment policy as we mentioned Christopher called Iran a terrorist country and a grave threat for the region and beyond. Scenario of securitizing Iran had deeply upgraded and American administration argued that Iran should be contained because of many reasons and the comprehensive sanctions and arms embargo must be supported by the use of force if its needed(Pollack,2004: 263-269).

Bruce O. Riedel believed that Clinton did nothing about Iran despite the positive atmosphere in Iran after Khatami presidency and different unproved suspicions heavily affected his policy toward Iran:

In 1993, William Jefferson Clinton inherited almost 15 years of troubled relations with Iran, impeded by no diplomatic ties, deep animosity on both sides and layers of sanctions. He left office in 2001 with no breakthrough in relations.....This shift happened despite Iran's suspected involvement in the 1996 attack on the U.S. barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. But the terror attack heavily influenced U.S. policy toward Iran in the Clinton years(Riedel,2010: 139).

In 1998,U.S. claimed that they have facts for holding Iran's proxy, Hizbollah accused in Khobar bombing but the fact had never been published or proved by the U.S officials and even Clinton asked Khatami for more investigations on the attack.

During the Khatami presidency, Clinton had a weak intention to talk with Iran but it never became a serious plan about Iran and even his secretary of State Albright who prepared a road map to create relations with Iran, called this country a rouge state which is branded for the new con's foreign policy. She argued that cooperation with rouge states is one of the greatest challenges of U.S. and believed that these states try to destroy the international system and Iran is a prime example for the rogue states(Albright,1997).

In this period of time the U.S officials also continued to charge Iran to have a WMD program in its military agenda and reported that Iran have enough material be able to build the missile which can target U.S. soil and make a bridge between

this and Iran's threat for United States(Risen,2000).

As it is obvious, in Clinton's presidency the process of political and military securitization of Iran's not only heightened but U.S. focused on the new field that had not been mentioned before and this pushed the process of securitization of Iran to a new level.

**Economic sanction:** In the field of economic sanction, Clinton did much more than the three previous presidents. In 1995, Clinton signed the most important Executive order for economic sanction that United States had ever imposed on Iran and blocked the Conoco-Iran oil deal which worth about 1 billion dollars and in continuation of the sanction regime Clinton imposed another comprehensive investment and trade embargo on Iran which was unprecedented in the U.S foreign policy toward Iran. In 1998, Clinton initiated another sanction on Gazprom and Petronas because of dealing with Iran and argued that for the sake of fighting with the terrorists funding Iran should be limited economically(Clinton,1995). In fact the game of sanctioning Iran in the Clinton administration was a competition between U.S Congressman's and Clinton to win the AIPAC's support. Because after the Cold War U.S. had no systematic considerations in limiting Iran and AIPAC realized this and used the opportunity to undermine Iran.

In response to Iran's stepped up nuclear program and its support to terrorist organizations such as Hizbollah, Hamas, and Palestine Islamic Jihad, resident Clinton issued Executive Order 12959 (May 6, 1995), banning U.S. trade with and investment in Iran(Katzman, 2007: 2).

In economic field, Clinton hugely began a trend for using sanctions as a means for securitization of Iran and made a linkage between Iranian economy and terrorism. In fact in this part of securitization of Iran Clinton opened a new chapter in the U.S foreign policy toward Iran.

#### **4-2-5. Bush and axis of evil**

In political literature, George W Bush is well known as model of new conservatism in the foreign policy which is heavily focused on the Real Politick

and the usage of power in promotion of liberal values. Bush foreign diplomacy also accepted as the heroic part of American entity which echoes the unilateralism in the foreign diplomacy. With these features of new conservatism Bush took office and began to wage two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the two neighbors of Iran and planned to wage the third war against Iran. Securitization under Bush presidency was a continuation of Clinton's efforts but with more reliance on the military threat and multilateral means.

**Political and military securitization:** In the first years of Bush presidency, Richard Hass became the person to plan about Iran and he argued that the sanction regime should remain and U.S. should help the reformists in Iran but after the 9/11 the other side of American foreign policy was revealed (Frum, 2003:238). After 9/11 attacks, U.S. started a new way for dealing with Iran and Iran-U.S. relations were no longer the most important factor but American foreign policy (wars) in the Middle East shaped U.S. relations with Iran as a rouge state and a supporter of terrorism and American foreign policy was War on Terror (Bush, 2001). Since 2001 till 2006 Iran was not the first priority of U.S in the Middle East and also Iran had some capability to help U.S. fight over the Taliban and Iraq. But after that Iran became the subject of a bureaucratic challenge within the Bush administration which led Bush to call Iran the Axis of Evil.

Our...goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terrorism from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. .... North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons, for over a decade (Bush, 2002).

In this speech Bush had mainly targeted Iraq but Iran was there and considered a sponsor of terrorism and part of the Axis of Evil. Bush argued that

Iran is the biggest threat for the world peace and encouraged the world to accept this perception. In this context despite Iran's cooperation in the war in Afghanistan, it became a much heightened enemy for the United States.

Iran's nuclear energy program was another part of U.S. securitization effort and U.S. thought that Iran's help in Afghanistan and Iraq was leverage for nuclear talk and didn't consider it as a sign of assistance. In 2001, CIA published a report that accused Iran for gaining the WMDs including nuclear weapon capability:

"Iran remains one of the most active countries seeking to acquire technology from abroad -- primarily from Russia, China, and North Korea -- that can be used to develop weapons of mass destruction. "In doing so, the report said, Tehran is attempting to develop a domestic capability to produce various types of weapons -- chemical, biological, and nuclear -- and their delivery systems(CIA Report, 2001).

Like during other American administrations, Iran rejected this claim and declared that this country is ready to talk about its nuclear issue and accepted to voluntarily execute the Additional Protocol and suspend its nuclear enrichment. But after the election of 2004 in Iran and regarding in protest to the pervious talks, Iran started to enrich uranium which put this subject back to the process of securitization of Iran. In 2004, Rice argued that Iran passed the authoritarian regime and became a totalitarian regime (Hiro, 2005:367). U.S. extremely needs to have information about Iran to know the Iranian WMD capability but it does not possess such information and at the end of other reports it was implied that Iran needed a decade to produce nuclear weapons but U.S concerns about Iran's nuclear activity remained. After the war in Iraq, U.S. used economic sanction as a means to demonize Iran's nuclear activity.

Support for terrorism had always been a subject of securitization of Iran and under Bush presidency the usage of this means continued. In fact after the Iraq war, U.S claimed that Iran gave the Iraqi tribe both Sunni and Shia the IED<sup>1</sup> to

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1 - Improvised Explosive Device

kill American soldiers and also denounced the Hezbollah 2006 war against Israel and was also very suspicious of what does Iran to help Hezbollah or triggered the war but no fact or verified report published. In this context most of Bush administration believed that no contact should be between U.S and Iran because Iran's big terrorist network from Iran and Syria to Lebanon and Palestine was threatening U.S interests in the Middle East and the world peace.

Bush argued that world nations has "unequivocal moral stand" against terrorism, he said that UN's members too often decried terrorist actions just after they took place instead of preventing them from happening in the first place. While a few regimes "like Syria and Iran" continued to sponsor terror, they were growing more isolated, he claimed (Bush, 2008).

**Economic securitization:** this part of securitization also played a major role in the process of securitization of Iran but because of the wide extension of military and political securitization it seems to be tiny. The bases for the crippling sanctions that Obama imposed on Iran were funded by Bush administration since 2006. In fact Bush after the failure of nuclear talks with Iran planned to use sanction as a means of pressure over Iran. UN Security Council resolution number 1696(2006),1737(2006),1747(2007), 1835(2008) were part of Bush plan for securitization of Iran and mainly focused on the suspension of nuclear enrichment and after the 2008 Obama with this background continued to build the sanctions regime against Iran.

In this period, economic sanctions were continued to be imposed on Iran the same as under other administrations because of the associating Iran to Terror, Iran's destabilizing role and Iran's endeavor for gaining weapons of mass destruction. Under President George W. Bush, the United States repeatedly froze the assets of people, groups, or businesses identified as helping Iran sponsoring terrorism, destabilizing Iraq, or working on weapons programs. The U.S. also froze the assets of foreign entities believed to be helping Iran in those areas(Jones, 2012).



#### **4-2-6. Obama and the climax of securitization**

Obama's foreign policy toward Iran has been so controversial since 2008. First he noticed that his administration is ready to talk with Iran but in continuation of his inspiring talks, he had focused on all securitization fields that United States had ever used to create a discourse about Iran as a threat. Maybe final deal between Iran and the 5+1(JPOA) did hide the elements of his attempt in securitization which we believe was more effective than what other presidents had done. Indeed Obama's foreign policy toward Iran could be understood as an example of the usage the Smart Power in securitization; he simultaneously used both hard and soft power toward Iran. It seems that Obama's "change" in U.S foreign policy was not meant a change in the principle of U.S foreign policy but it was about the change in the instrument and tactics of foreign policy.

**Political and Military securitization:** Obama in his presentation after the election focused on the same issues that every U.S president had used to accuse Iran after the revolution but with softer words. He praised Iranians and their civilization and then focused on the pernicious subjects that the previous U.S administration had stumbled upon.

but that its actions over many years now have been unhelpful when it comes to promoting peace and prosperity both in the region and around the world; that their attacks or their financing of terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas, the bellicose language that they've used towards Israel, their development of a nuclear weapon, or their pursuit of a nuclear weapon -- that all those things create the possibility of destabilizing the region and are not only contrary to our interests, but I think are contrary to the interests of international peace(Obama, 2009).

Obama almost repeated all of these topics to present Iran as a threat for United States and all of the world during the 2008 till 2014 and even in his presidency, U.S defense minister Gates implicitly threatened Iran to bomb its nuclear facilities(Gates, 2014).

According to this perspective Obama's foreign policy toward Iran alike previous president tries to securitize Iran but he focused on the international consensus

which made his efforts more effective. In fact Obama used the multilateralism in securitizing Iran's nuclear issue to be effective. He learned the lesson from the previous unilateralism and changed the way for an effective securitization.

Keep in mind unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran had been in place for decades, but had failed to pressure Iran to the negotiating table (Obama, 2015).

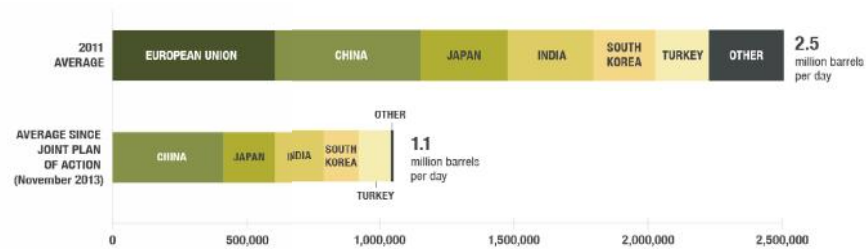
Iran always mentioned that this country didn't seek to gain nuclear weapons but Obama in every speech he made on Iran acknowledged the nuclear talks a way for preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. On the issue of terrorism, Obama also followed the old way and considered Iran as sponsor of terrorism even after the nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1.

"Iran clearly engages in a dangerous and destabilizing behavior in different countries across the region. Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. It helps prop up the Assad regime in Syria. It supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It aids the Houthi rebels in Yemen,"(Earle, 2015).

**Economical securitization:** Obama's economic securitization was unique in terms of number of sanctions and measures. The crippling sanctions were initiated under Obama's administration especially the embargo on oil exports and the money transfer had grave impacts on Iran and its international character. U.S treasury department's activity's engagement in the implementation of sanctions, among other efforts by the U.S international allies, was effective in limiting Iran's economic capabilities (Luab, 2015).

More than 10 executive orders and the most restrictive of all which was UN Security Council's resolutions against Iran were initiated during Obama's presidency which was more harmful for Iran's economy than any economic actions that U.S had ever implemented. The period of time after the 2013 primary agreement is not the subject of this article (Treasury Department, 2015).

IRAN'S OIL EXPORTS



Source: Congressional Research Service

Credits: Zachary Laub, Julia Ro

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

5. Analyses and conclusion

In order to understand and analyze the foreign policy, it's very necessary to concentrate on the tangible actions that governments are undertaking. In order to analysis American foreign policy toward Iran, this rule is applicable and substantial. According to this perspective on the American foreign policy, findings of this research shows us that after the 1979 Islamic revolution of Iran and because of so many bilateral and multilateral events in U.S-Iran relations, American government began to exercise a new framework of foreign policy toward Iran. Securitization conceptualized in the Copenhagen School includes five major fields in which securitization happens in political, military, economic, social and environmental forms and in this research we just focused on the political, economic and military securitization of Iran. This new framework could be seen in different theoretical contexts and because of lack of appropriateness in what Iran did and what American translate for its nation and rest of the world, securitization seems fit for American foreign policy. In order to conduct a research based on securitization theory discourse analysis can be a proper research method which can contain both vocal and actual facts and in this research I almost used the actual facts.

With this framework Iran had been subject of securitization in 1979-2013. In this period of time three types of securitizations were mainly directed by different U.S. administrations. Political and military securitizations include all attempts

that Carter initiated to demonstrate Iran as a political problem for the world and the region. He also tried to illustrate this perspective through Iran's hostage crisis and Reagan also continued this trend by accusing Iran of sponsoring terrorist groups in Lebanon. This is what Bush (the father) continued and believed that Iran was playing a destabilizing role in the Middle East. In this period of time, because of the Cold War and U.S. government considerations along with the fear of losing Iran to the communist world further pressure were not imposed on Iran. At the end of the Cold War, Clinton's presidency removed the ban for more securitization of Iran as supporter of terrorism along this label, the attempts attributed to Iran for gaining nuclear weapons and missile technology became the main subject of securitization of Iran. In his presidency the new literature of securitization of Iran emerged and Iran was branded as an "out low" and a "rouge state".

In Clinton's presidency and with lack of USSR's presence in the Middle East, Iran was regarded as the biggest problem for the U.S foreign policy. As a result, the securitization against this country was upgraded in width and depth. Bush's (the son) foreign policy targeted the Middle East and he waged two wars in the region and despite the help from Iran in Afghanistan he labeled Iran as "Axis of Evil". During his presidency, Iran was not only securitized by terrorism, nuclear weapons and Ballistic missiles but also American government was not so far from using a military attack against Iran.

Obama administration before the 2013 JPOA primary agreement was behaving in this way in framework of political and military subjects and perceived Iran as the major security threat for U.S and its ally in the Middle East and also for world peace. Like other presidents of United States, after the 1979 he claimed that Iran is a sponsor of terrorist groups, an anti-peace country looking for acquiring WMD<sup>1</sup>s, nuclear bombs and Ballistic missiles. During his administration, Iran and North Korea implicitly threatened to use the atomic bomb.

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1- Weapon of Mass Destruction

In economic arena, securitization like the political and military area was ongoing and it works when economy of a country became the subject of security threats for another country. The first economic limitation on Iran was imposed by Carter and in continuation of the trend of economic securitization Reagan put another kind of economic securitization and Bush the father approved the pervious sanction on Iran. All of these attempts for putting sanctions were initiated because of Iran's perceived destroying activities in the region and were somehow related to the securitization of Iran.

Clinton's presidency was a transition in the use of economic means against Iran. During Clinton's administration, U.S put more distractive economic actions that had ever been imposed on Iran and Bush(the son) followed the Clinton way in the use of economic sanctions to securitize Iran. In fact Bush after the 2006 founded the structure of crippling sanctions that Obama imposed on Iran. Based on the previous design of sanctions against Iran, Obama imposed the most economic sanctions in the world history against Iran and recorded a new level in the use of economy for the securitization of a country. Obama managed to make sanctions efficient through multilateralism that called the partnership of 66 countries to sanction Iran and persuade other countries to accept U.S. economic sanctions and participate in the executive initiation of sanctioning Iran.

Based on this conclusion it seems that during all the time after 1979, Iran has been subject of U.S securitization but after the Cold War, U.S. broadens its securitization attempts against Iran and made it more drastic. Then there seems two kind of securitization to be in place. The first one is before the Cold War that we can call it Low Securitization and the second one is in place after the Cold war till 2013 that we can label it with the term of High Securitization.

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