



# **Nuclear Iran Threatening or Threatened**

**Dr. Sami Calawy**  
**Al-Iraqia University**  
**College of Law and Political Science**



## Abstract

Since the triumph of the Iranian Islamic revolution of February ۱۹۷۹, the new republic has been involving in conflicts with almost all of the neighbor countries in addition to the world's great powers. Iran accuses its neighbors and their Western allies of attempting to topple the first real Islamic republic. In return, Iran's neighbors and their Western allies accuse Iran of attempting to export its revolutionary model of Islam to other countries and then to destabilize the region. This research aims at examining the threat Iran imposes to regional and global powers and the threat imposed by regional and global powers to Iran's national security. A number of hypotheses, about this mutual threat, are formed on the basis of the neorealist theory of International Relations, and tested against many empirical observations. The research also deals with Vienna nuclear deal and the position of the new American administration regarding this deal. Finally, an eventual military confrontation between Iran from one hand and the United States and its allies from other hand is discussed. It is concluded that the Iran's policy of exporting its model of Islam to countries allied with the Western powers, and the involvement in the regional conflicts in favor of pro-Iranian actors made of Iran a country surrounded by enemies. The Iranian nuclear program is another source of threat in a region characterized by an arms race. In return, the pressure exercised by the United States and its allies on Iran makes it feel threatened,

especially by the Israeli huge arsenal of developed weapons and the intensive American military existing in the region. With regard to Vienna nuclear deal, the research concludes that it would not last for a long time because of the significant resistance it meets from Israel, Saudi Arabia and other regional powers in addition to the new American administration. However, a military confrontation is not likely to happen in the short run

### ملخص البحث

منذ انتصار الثورة الإسلامية الإيرانية في شهر شباط من عام ١٩٧٩ والجمهورية الجديدة منهكة في نزاعات مع معظم دول الجوار إضافة الى القوى العالمية الكبرى. وتأتي تلك النزاعات على خلفية اتهام إيران لتلك القوى بالعمل على إسقاط أول نظام حكم إسلامي حقيقي. هذا في حين تُتهم إيران بمحاولاتها لتصدير نموذجها الإسلامي الثوري الى غيرها وبذلك تزعزع استقرار المنطقة. ويهدف هذا البحث الى تحليل التهديد الإيراني لدول المنطقة وكذلك تهديد الغرب وعلى وجه الخصوص الولايات المتحدة وحلفائها للأمن القومي الإيراني. ويقدم البحث خمسة افتراضات صيغت وفق المدرسة الواقعية الجديدة في العلاقات الدولية، واختبرت على ضوء وقائع ميدانية متعددة. وشملت تلك الافتراضات الاتفاق النووي الموقع في فيينا وموقف القيادة الأميركية الجديدة منه الى جانب احتمال نشوب نزاع مسلح بين الولايات المتحدة وحلفائها من جهة وإيران من جهة أخرى. ويستنتج البحث ان سياسة تصدير النموذج الاسلامي التي تتبعها إيران والتدخل الإيراني في النزاعات الإقليمية ووقوفها الى جانب قوى موالية لها يجعل منها بلدا محاطا بالأعداء. كما وان المشروع النووي الإيراني يشكل هو الآخر مصدر تهديد لدول المنطقة التي تعاني من مخاطر سباق التسلح. وبالمقابل، فان الضغط التي تمارسه الولايات المتحدة وحلفاؤها على إيران يحملها على استشعار الخطر، وخصوصا من ترسانة الأسلحة الإسرائيلية والتواجد العسكري الأمريكي المكثف في المنطقة. وفيما يتعلق باتفاق فيينا النووي، يخلص البحث الى ان هذا الاتفاق لن يدوم طويلا وذلك بسبب المعارضة الشديدة له من قبل إسرائيل والمملكة العربية السعودية وغيرهما من دول المنطقة إضافة الى الإدارة الأميركية الجديدة، ولكن هذا لا يعني احتمال نشوب نزاع مسلح في المستقبل المنظور.

### Introduction

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran after being in exile for around fourteen years. This return came to remark the triumph of one of the greatest revolutions in the twentieth century. It was so amazing to watch an eighty-year turbaned man wearing black aba talking to millions of Iranian people about establishing a republic on the basis of Islam. Moreover, this man came with a dream to spread his version of Islam all around the Muslim World. He did not fear any superpower. He defied both two superpowers at that time (i.e. the United States and the Soviet Union), and

described them for 'great Satan' and 'less Satan' respectively. Consequently, his Islamic republic was surrounded by enemies and was invaded by Iraq.

After eight years of severe war against Iraq, the eighty-eight-year Ayatollah Khomeini had no option but to swallow the 'poison' of the defeat, as he himself described the acceptance of the ceasefire. Two years later, the founder of the Islamic republic died. His successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, decided not to swallow any drop of a 'poison' similar to that of Khomeini. To achieve this goal, the new spiritual leader gave a green light to have a very developed military machine. The Khomeini's fatwa which forbade the acquirement of nuclear weapon was ignored and the halted nuclear program was revived.

In August ٢٠٠٢, the *National Council of Resistance* of Iran, a dissident group based in the United States revealed details about a very secret site used by Iranian scientists for nuclear researches. The site was provided with advanced centrifuges for uranium enrichment. Since then, marathon negotiations between Iran and Western powers have taken place in many countries to determine the fate of the Iranian nuclear program. More than a decade later, Iran and what came to be known as group ٥+١ (United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, China and Germany) signed, in Vienna, a deal on the Iranian nuclear program recognizing the right of Iran to have nuclear technology but restricted the use of this technology only to peaceful purposes. However, many of Iran's enemies, especially Israel and the Saudi Arabia, did not welcome the deal and continued to regard Iran and its proxy organizations as the main source of threats to the stability of the Middle East. The Iranian deep involvement in the conflicts of Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen reflects, according to Iran's enemies, the desire of the Islamic Republic to destabilize the region. For their own part, the Iranians believe that the ultimate objective of the United States and its allies is to rule the Muslim World by completely pro-Western governments in order to put control over the wealth of the region. The aim of this research is to answer a number of questions:

What are the motivations behind the Iranian nuclear program? Does Iran really threaten the region? Or, does Iran itself feel threatened? Will Vienna deal put an end to the Iranian nuclear threats? And, finally: Is a large-scale military confrontation likely to take place in the region during the reign of the president Donald Trump?

### Method

Within the field of social research, one can distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches of research. Unlike quantitative analysis, which is largely dependent on numerous data and, accordingly, independent of the researcher, qualitative analysis is extensively dependent on already formulated theories and assumptions, and, consequently, on the analytic skills of the researcher and his personal knowledge of the social context where the

data is gathered (Bhattacharjee, ٢٠١٢: ١٢٢). Accordingly, this research is classified as a qualitative one so long its goal is to analyze the threats imposed by/on Iran on the basis of the neorealist theory. Thus, what concerns the research is qualitative values, such as trust, intension, beliefs and alike, but not quantitative ones, such as the number of populations, income per capita, and so on. One of the methods used to test and evaluate the relationship among qualitative variables is to form hypotheses, deduce consequences from them, checking the deduced consequences against observations, and finally, making inferences about the hypotheses based on the observations. This method is called 'hypothetico-deductive method' (Singleton, ١٩٩٣: ٥٤) and was founded by the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper (١٩٠٢-١٩٩٤), who suggested a model constituting of several steps of scientific research. The most important steps of the model are; determining a phenomenon, developing testable hypotheses, testing these hypotheses, and deducing a theoretical framework on the basis of the verified hypotheses. Based on the neorealist theory, I will form and examine a number of hypotheses about the threats imposed by Iran, as well as the threats imposed on it, by regional and global powers. Maximizing national interests, balancing the power of the rivals and the deterrence policies are the most important realists' assumptions from which the hypotheses would be derived.

This research will hypothesize that:

- Iran's revolutionary model of Islam threatens its neighboring countries more than its nuclear program.
- Iran's efficient involvement in the local conflicts of the Middle East contributes to the military escalation in the region.
- Iran's attempts to form an opponent political and military alliance to the American-led coalition would bring the Middle East to a danger phase of tension which in return revives the competitive politics of the Cold War.
- The nuclear deal signed in Vienna on July ٢٠١٥ would fail in resolving the conflict between Iran from the one hand and the Western powers and their Mideastern allies from the other.
- An eventual military confrontation between the United States and Iran is not likely to take place during Trump's reign.

The research will be divided into six parts. The first one explains the main lines of the neorealist theory of international relations. The following four parts will discuss and analyze, on the basis of the theory, Iran's motivations to acquire nuclear technology, and the threats it imposes to the national security of the region's states as well as to the interests of the Western powers. The threats imposed by regional and global powers on Iran will also be examined. Finally, the analyses will be summed up to make a comprehensive conclusion.

### ١. Theoretical Framework

The Iranian nuclear threats take more than a single dimension. Thus, while the Iranian nuclear program threatens the military balance in the region, the Iranian interventions in many regional conflicts influence the political and societal stability of that region. Accordingly, the threats imposed by Iran cannot be explained and analyzed by a single theory. A number of theories within the field of social and political science must be used in order to make a comprehensive analyze of this issue. Neorealism, however, will be the theoretical backbone of this research, which aims to explore and analyze the Iranian threats. Realism could be divided into two main schools; classic Realism and Neorealism. Hans Morgenthau is considered as the most important theorist within the classic Realism. His book "*Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*" became "undisputed standard bearer for political Realism, going through six editions between ١٩٤٨ and ١٩٨٥" (Williams, ٢٠١٣: ١٧). *Power or interest*, defined in terms of power, is the keystone in Morgenthau' realist theory. He believes that selfishness and power-lust are rooted in the nature of humanity and are the main cause of conflict. Consequently, the international politics, according to him, like all politics, is a struggle for power (Morgenthau, ١٩٤٨: ٢٥). Neorealism (also called structural realism) occurred in the late ١٩٧٠'s, when Kenneth Waltz published his book '*Theory of International Relations*'. This work replaced Morgenthau's "*Politics Among Nations*" as undisputed standard bearer for political Realism. Waltz accepts Morgenthau's assumption that power plays the most significant role in the international politics but he does not accept the assumption that the ambitions of the leaders and the characteristics of states are causal variables for conflicts, with exception to the minimal assumption that the ultimate goal of states is to survive. Unlike Morgenthau, Waltz concentrates on the international political system as a function of states' and leaders' behavior. According to Waltz (١٩٧٩: ٨٨-٩٩), the international system is composed of a structure and its interacting units. Political structures have three elements:

١. the character of the system (anarchical or hierarchical)
٢. The character of the units (similar or different)
٣. The distribution of capabilities amongst the units (Polarity)

**Further, Waltz assumes that:**

١. State is the single and most important representative actor in the international political system.
٢. The international political system is anarchical.
٣. States adopt a policy of self-defense (Balance of Power)
٤. States seek their interests and attempt to maximize their power.

Today's world politics, especially the 'War on Terror', clearly shows that the assumptions of the realists still work well. Thus, the international political system is still anarchic so long it lacks a strong authority to prevent wars,

aggressions and conflicts. With regard to the units of the system, states are still the most important actors on the world arena and they act rationally so long all of them attempt to maximize their utilities and power. Further, in order to survive and protect their utilities, states are always attempt to balance the power of their rivals by their own abilities or by allying with other great powers. This balance, according to the neorealists, contributes to keep peace among states. The polarity of the international political system is subject of disagreement among the scholars. Some of them argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War transformed the system from bipolarity to unipolarity led by the United States. Other scholars believe that Russia is still acting as a serious and powerful rival to the United States and accordingly no significant change has taken place into the system. However, with regard to the nuclear capabilities, the neorealists are divided into two main camps; offensive and defensive. The offensive neorealists assume that, given the required capabilities, states will seek regional hegemony as the best means for surviving in a dangerous world. The defense neorealists argue that the international system is relatively benign, and "technology and geography make offensive action difficult, and states can signal their peaceful intentions" (Williams, ٢٠١٣: ٢٧-٢٨). On the basis of the neorealist theory, the research will hypothesize that the anarchic character of the international political system, the struggle for power and interests in the Middle East, the national pride and the need for energy are the main factors behind the Iranian attempts to maximize and develop its military power. Further, the Vienna nuclear deal cannot put an ultimate end to the dispute between Iran and the Western powers and their regional allies about the intentions of the Iranian nuclear program.

### ٢. The Birth and Strength of Iran's Nuclear Program

The first step, Iran made toward nuclear program took place in ١٩٦٧. Then the United States provided Iran with a five-megawatt research reactor. According to Akbar Etemad, the president of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) from ١٩٧٤ to ١٩٧٨, the Iranians started nuclear researches at the University of Tehran before the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been entered into force on March ٥, ١٩٧٠. During the mid of ١٩٧٠s, Iran has launched an extensive nuclear energy program. In ١٩٧٤, the Shah, Mohammed Riza Pahlavi (١٩١٩-١٩٨٠), set a plan to produce ٢٣,٠٠٠ megawatts of electrical power from a number of nuclear power stations within twenty years (Etemad, ١٩٨٧: ٢٠٧). In February ١٩٧٩, the Islamic revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini toppled the regime of Shah Pahlavi and established an Islamic republic. The founder of this republic, Ayatollah Khomeini reportedly described the nuclear energy as 'unislamic' and, accordingly, all of Iran's nuclear activities came to an end by the end of Pahlavi's regime (Caravelli, ٢٠١١: ٨٧). Twenty months after the revolution, a

full-scale war outbreak between Iraq and Iran and lasted for eight years (١٩٨٠-١٩٨٨). The war inflicted heavy damaged on the Iranian infrastructure including the nuclear program. The Iraqi fighter aircrafts succeeded several times in bombing two power reactors under construction at Bushehr after which the leading global engineering and technology services company 'Siemens' abandoned the project.<sup>١</sup> With the aid of China, Iran opens a nuclear research center in Isfahan on December ١٩٨٤.<sup>٢</sup> Since then, serious efforts have been made to develop the nuclear program. Argentina and Pakistan also were among the countries from which Iran sought nuclear cooperation in the ١٩٨٠'s. Pakistan, despite its close ties to the West, especially the United States, provided the Iranians with a significant help to revive their program. The Pakistani nuclear scientist 'Abdul Qadeer Khan', the founder of the Pakistani [uranium enrichment](#) program for [atomic bomb project](#), himself put his knowledge and experience at the disposal of the Iranians (Caravelli, ٢٠١١: ٨٨). This return to the nuclear program, despite the fatwa of Ayatollah Khomeini, was a response to the shortage of weapon supply during the Iraqi-Iranian war. The nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan from the one hand and Iran from the other, in the ١٩٨٠'s, was motivated by two main factors. For the first, both China and Pakistan were in need to exchange their nuclear experiences for the Iranian oil. For the second, the three countries (China, Pakistan and Iran) resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and found in the Soviet military existence in a neighboring country a source of threat to their national security. During the ١٩٩٠'s, Iran moved from research to operational capability in its enrichment program. Iran derived valuable insights about the enrichment process from Khan and his associates and, on its own, moved forward with construction at Natanz of two centrifuge facilities, one above ground holding one thousand centrifuges and a much larger underground facility for as many as ٥٤,٠٠٠ centrifuges.<sup>٣</sup> In late ١٩٩٦, Iran requested that its experts would be allowed to observe an upcoming Chinese nuclear test and subsequently to have its experts learn from Chinese counterparts how to prepare for and conduct similar tests. Russia has also contributed to the Iranian nuclear program in the ١٩٩٠'s. in ١٩٩٥, the Russians took over a project of building a ١٠٠٠ MW light water nuclear power reactor at Bushehr, the same project begun years earlier under the Shah and halted by Ayatollah Khomeini. Less than a year later, a separate agreement has been signed with Russia to provide fuel for the reactor (Caravelli, ٢٠١١: ٩٦). Last decade, the Iranian nuclear program was revealed. In ٢٠٠٢, the opposing group "National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)" uncovered the secret nuclear facilities in Iran, including the Natanz facilities and a heavy water production facility at Arak (Reardon, ٢٠١٢: ١٤-١٥). A few months later, Iran's program and efforts for building sophisticated nuclear facilities at Natanz and other cities were also revealed. Accordingly, the then president

Mohammad Khatami had no option but to announce the existence of the Natanz and other facilities on Iran's television and invited International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to visit them. The IAEA reaction was to give the Iranian officials an ultimatum to reveal all the details of the nuclear activities by October ٣١, ٢٠٠٣.<sup>٤</sup> The announcement of the president marked a new and very serious round of confrontation between Iran and the Western great powers led by the United States. In ٢٠٠٦, the United States failed to impose economic sanctions upon Iran through the United Nations' Security Council because of the Russian and Chinese opposition. Therefore, the Americans were compelled to join the four permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany (P٥ + ١) and to offer new inducements (in addition to those already offered by the Europeans) to Iran as an attempt to stop its nuclear program. Finally, after ١٧ days of negotiations and ١٢ years of deadlock, an agreement between the two sides was reached in Vienna on July ٢٠١٥. The deal, which contains ١٥٩-pages, obliged Iran to dismantle much of its nuclear infrastructure, while the United Nations, United States and European Union were obliged to lift the sanctions built around Iran over the past nine years.<sup>٥</sup> However, nobody knows how many years the deal is going to last.

### ٣. Iran's Motivations

Since the very beginning of the Iranian nuclear program in mid ١٩٧٠s until the present day, the intention of building this program has been a subject of disputes between the Iranian officials and the United States and its allies. While the Iranians insist that their nuclear program has always been peaceful and designed to meet the country's need for energy, especially electricity, the Americans and their European and Mideastern allies, particularly Israel, believe that this program aims at producing nuclear weapons. Taking into account the fact that nuclear energy can be used for both civilian and military purposes, no one can be perfectly confident that the Iranians tell the truth about their program. Nor can one be absolutely certain of the Iranian intentions to acquire nuclear weapon.

However, in order to make a comprehensive analysis of the Iranian nuclear program, it is of a good use to deal with the Iranian motivations behind the development of nuclear technology at three levels; domestic, regional and global. This separation does not mean that there are no links among the three levels. Contrarily, these three levels are linked to one another in such a manner that it is impossible to ignore the mutual influence among them. Separating them from each other is just to locate the motivations in their right place.

#### ٣.١ The Domestic Motivations

After the collapse of Shah's regime and the establishment of an Islamic rule led by ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian nuclear program halted. In an

interview with the American journal '*Foreign Affairs*', Mohsen Rafighdoost, the minister of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) during the Iraqi-Iranian war, revealed that he had suggested to Ayatollah Khomeini that Iran was in need for working on both nuclear and chemical weapons but Ayatollah Khomeini told him, in two separate meetings, that weapons of mass destruction were forbidden by Islam.<sup>١</sup>

Moreover, a report published by two [Washington think tanks](#), stated that the costs of the Iranian nuclear project was enormous: More than \$١٠٠ billion of oil revenue and foreign investment alone. And, according to some estimates, relying on nuclear fuel enriched domestically could cost Iran \$١٢٥ million more per year than buying fuel on the international market. Furthermore, Bushehr reactor supplies just ٢ percent of Iran's electricity needs, while ١٥ percent of the electricity is lost through old and ill-maintained transmission lines. Separately, the report adds: "Iran's solar energy potential may be ١٣ times higher than the country's total energy needs". On the basis of this data, Ali Alfoneh, an Iranian specialist at the "[Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#)" in Washington", raised the question: "Why is the regime in its entirety ready to pay such a high price, and make such great sacrifices, if there is no military component?"<sup>٢</sup> A same question raised by Thomas W. Wood and other authors. According to Wood: "calculations show that while the annual market cost of purchased fuel for a seven-reactor scenario would be approximately \$٣٥٠ million, the costs of indigenous fuel production in Iran's facilities could exceed that by nearly \$١٢٥ million. This finding call into question the economic logic of Tehran's program and suggests that other factors may be motivating its drive to acquire indigenous front-end nuclear capabilities".<sup>٣</sup>

For their own part, the Iranians regard the American argument as invalid. According to Mohammed Sahimi, many countries which are rich in fossil energy resources, including United Kingdom and Russia, which both are oil exporters, rely on nuclear power for an important part of their energy needs. Sahimi also remarks that since the Islamic Revolution of ١٩٧٩, Iran's population has increased from ٣٢ to nearly ٧٠ million, while its production of oil is only ٧٠٪ of the pre-Revolution level. This fact makes the Iranians raise the questions: Why did the United States and its Western allies believe that Iran was in need for nuclear energy in the ١٩٧٠s when its population was ٣٠ million but is not in need now? "How do the US and her allies suggest Iran should feed, house and educate her population, create jobs for her army of educated people, and develop the country, all with oil and gas alone, while she has very significant uranium deposits that can be used for generating electricity?"<sup>٤</sup>

Moreover, the "World Economic Forum" ranked, in a recent study, the world's countries according to their energy security. Iran was ranked ١٠٢ out

of ١٢٤.<sup>١١</sup> On the basis of this study, the Iranians believe that nuclear energy is inevitable for their country in the future.

The chairman of the "Expediency Council", Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has been the driving force behind the nuclear program since the late ١٩٨٠s, also asserted the need for nuclear technology so long the oil is going to run out soon. He added that: "Iran is willing to apply unprecedented monitoring and control on its nuclear activities, but the United States rejects this because Washington truly aims to keep Iran from becoming a developed country".<sup>١٢</sup>

Another domestic important reason for Iran's attempt to acquire nuclear technology is the national pride. This fact is confirmed by many scholars occupied with the Iranian nuclear program. George Perkovich, for instance, argues that the Iranians insist on acquiring nuclear technology to show the world that their nation is advanced, fully developed and strong, that Shiite Iran is the greatest society in Southwest Asia.<sup>١٣</sup> Neil Macfarquhar also notes that from nuclear negotiators to student dissidents, from bazaar merchants to turbaned mullahs, Iranians agree: the right to develop nuclear power is a point of national pride.<sup>١٤</sup>

Moreover, many Iranians, like many other nations, believe that acquiring nuclear technology would put their country side by side with the development countries. Angus McDowall argues that for Iranian nationalists, the membership of the nuclear club is an old ambition whose realization they believe will put Iran at the forefront of modernity.<sup>١٥</sup> The Iranian pride of having nuclear technology was expressed by the Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaking on Iran's Nuclear Day, April ١٠, ٢٠٠٧: "I declare today, in all pride, that from this day, Iran is among the countries producing nuclear fuel on an industrial scale. Today, Iran's enemies are embarrassed by Iran's progress in various areas" (Cordesman, ٢٠٠٩: ٢٥٦). Jeffrey Knopf is another example of scholars who think that national pride is among the important factors behind Iran's nuclear program. He concludes that the provision of security assurances has played only a modest role in Iranian affairs, while pride, anti-imperialism, and domestic discontent have often influenced Tehran's behavior, including its nuclear policy (Knopf, ٢٠١٢: ١١١). Knopf added that one cannot help but suspect that even if Iran had faced no credible external threat, it still would have pursued a nuclear program, be it under the Shah or under the Islamic Republic. Pride, prestige, the ghost of Persian empires past, and domestic political problems might have been motivation enough. (Knopf, ٢٠١٢: ١٢٧).

However, the very high price, Iran has paid and is still paying for its nuclear program show that the national pride cannot be one of the crucial factors behind this program. Other factors, in addition to the need of energy, are responsible for such expensive sacrifices.

### ٢.٢ The Regional Threats

Kenneth Waltz argues that two reasons are behind the Iranian attempts to have a nuclear program. First, Iran is surrounded by unstable countries from both the east and west. To the east, Iran shares hundreds of kilometers of borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and these two countries are not stable, and that might make any neighbor feel uncertain about what is going to happen next. To the west, Iran shares more than thousands of kilometers with Iraq; the country with which it had an eight-year severe war. borders Iraq, the country with which had eight bloody years in the ١٩٨٠s. "I wonder", Waltz concludes, "if Iran really feels more comfortable now that it's not Saddam Hussein but instead the United States who represents the great military force in Iraq. If I were ruling Iran, I certainly would not think this region of the world is safe. Second, if the president of the United States says three countries form an axis of evil which George Bush said in ٢٠٠٢, and he then proceeds to invade one of them, Iraq, what are Iran and North Korea to think?"<sup>١٥</sup>.

However, Israel is the most powerful one among Iran's regional enemies, and that is, of course, due to its arsenal of nuclear weapons. The Iranian leaders have repeatedly declared that the removal of Israel from the world map is an unquestionable goal for the Islamic republic of Iran. The former Iranian president, Ahmadinejad, for instance, addressing a conference titled 'The World Without Zionism' in Teheran on October ٢٦, ٢٠٠٥, recalled the late Ayatollah Khomeini saying: "Israel must be wiped off from the world's map." Five years earlier, Rafsanjani, a former president has also called the Muslims to annihilate Israel with a nuclear strike.<sup>١٦</sup> To achieve this goal, Iran has no options but to balance the Israeli military capabilities, especially the nuclear arsenal. Simultaneously, to ally itself with Syria, the country which refuses to sign peace agreement with Israel, the Lebanese Hezbollah, which has adopted an armed struggle to liberate Lebanese territories occupied by Israel, and the Palestinian movements whose ultimate goal is also the removal of the Jewish state. Such disputes make the Israeli-Iranian conflict an existential one and open for full-scale confrontations.

Iran's relations to the Gulf states, especially the Saudi Arabia, has witnessed long periods of tension since the very beginning of the Islamic revolution. According to Christin Marschall (٢٠٠٣: ٢٥), Iran in general was more serious in its official attempts to export the revolution to Iraq and Lebanon, where Shia connections were stronger, than to the Gulf. Nevertheless, the Gulf states deeply distrusted Islamic Iran after a number of coup attempts, bomb explosions, sabotage acts and assassination attempts. These happened mainly in the early ١٩٨٠s, but were clearly still in the minds of the ruling elites a decade later, which has made any rapprochement difficult. Responding to these threats, the Gulf States, especially the Saudi Arabia was in need to seek American protection to balance the Iranian power. The Americans, for their own part, found in the Iranian threat to their allies and vital interests in the

Gulf a very good pretext for intensifying their military existence in the region. This military existence played a crucial role in changing the balance of power between Iran and Iraq to the favor of the later during the last two years of the Iraqi-Iranian war. Consequently, the Iranians started to feel more threatened than threatening, and that was an important factor behind the attempts to have unconventional weapons.

Today, Iran is involving in many regional bloody conflicts, and confronting with many regional and global powers because of these conflicts. In Iraq, for instance, the effective participation of the "Islamic Revolution Guards Corps" (IRGC) in the war waged by the Iraqi army to liberate the territories occupied by the so-called "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) shows that the Iranians are deciding not to leave the future of Iraq in American hands. For their part, the Americans cannot reject the participation of General Soleimani so long he is invited by the Iraqi government to provide military counselling to the Iraqi forces.<sup>١٧</sup> At the same time, the Americans can never be satisfied of such cooperation between Iraq and Iran.

In Syria, the Iranians are fighting hard beside the al-Assad's regime. This position deepens the rift between Iran and the regional countries, which support the armed groups that fight against the Syrian regime, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and most importantly Turkey. Both Iraq and Syria turned into arenas for severe Iranian-Turkish proxy war. Taking into account the facts that Turkey possesses a developed military arsenal, and it is a member in NATO, the Iranian concerns about such an aggressive and threatening neighbor can never be dismissed.

Yemen is another arena where Iran and the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia and Arab United Emirates (AUE), are confronting each other. There, the Iranians support the "Houthi Movement" against forces loyal to the internationally-recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who is backed by a multi-national coalition led by Saudi Arabia.

Finally, Lebanon is probably the most dangerous arena where Iran is involved. The Lebanese Shiite party 'Hezbollah', which is totally backed by Iran, has been fighting against Israel since its establishing in ١٩٨٢. The July War of ٢٠٠٦, however, was the most serious one between Hezbollah and Israel. The war was waged by Israel as a response to the kidnaping of two Israeli soldiers by a detachment of Hezbollah. Hezbollah demonstrated surprising capabilities against the Israeli invasion. Israel could not locate and destroy all of Hezbollah's rockets and missiles, many of them previously supplied by Syria and Iran, so even after firing four thousand of these weapons during the fighting, Hezbollah still retained fifteen to twenty thousand rockets and missiles when the fighting ended (Mattair, ٢٠٠٨: ٩٢).

As a result of the involvement in so many regional conflicts, Iran became surrounded by enemies from which some have powerful armies. Accordingly,

it is inevitable for the Iranians to have the weapons by which it could deter these enemies from attacking them. Moreover, Iran seeks to influence the politics of the region in such a manner that enables it to impose its political agendas on the region. Such a political influence cannot be reached without being backed by a military superiority, and that is why Iran is going ahead with its nuclear program.

### ٣.٣ The Global Threats

The dissolution of the communist block and the American invasion of Iraq remarked a significant change in the international political system. While the collapse of communism transferred the system from bipolarity to unipolarity led by the United States, the invasion of Iraq in ١٩٩١ and ٢٠٠٣ represented a clear manifestation of the American domination over the world's politics. The invasions were also a clear message to all of the Mideastern regimes that anyone attempts to disobey the orders of the White House would be a subject of severe punishment. Many countries around the world got the American message and attempt to change their behavior in accordance with the new world order. Iran, however, was not among those countries. Thus, despite the American dominance over the region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Iran continued its hostility towards the Americans.

Responding to the Iranian long-standing hostility, President George W. Bush, in ٢٠٠٢, labeled Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea, as a founding member of what he called "Axis of Evil." The American administration categorized Iran as one of the main sources of instability in the region. This categorization is based on the American beliefs that Iran supports international terrorism, undermines the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and backs anti-American armed groups in Iraq after the occupation of ٢٠٠٣. Accordingly, a primary goal of the American foreign policy has been to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Many U.S. officials feared that Iran's leaders would either use these weapons to facilitate international aggression or perhaps even use them against America or its allies (either directly or through terrorist proxies) (Haas, ٢٠١٠: ٦٦).

In order to escape a fate like that of Saddam Hussein, the Iranians adopted two strategies. The first one is to develop its military capabilities to the extent that it could deter the Americans from attacking their territories. The second one is to ally with a great power which is able to balance the American military existence in the region. With regard to the first strategy, Iran has made great efforts to acquire developed weapons, and it made most of the world's states think that the ultimate goal of the Iranian nuclear program is to produce nuclear weapons. With regard to the second strategy, the Iranians succeeded in establishing informal alliance with Russia and China. Aligning with two nuclear powers and permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations could prevent any aggression against the country.

It is so hard to believe that the American-Iranian relations would turn from hostility into friendship and cooperation. That is because of the long history of antagonism between the two countries; an antagonism based on ideological factors which are the most powerful barriers to prevent them from coming together. All of the Iranian leaders, be they hardliners or moderate, view the Americans as the enemy number one for Islam and the Muslims, and view the alliance between the Americans and the Israelis as a satanic alliance aiming at destroying the Muslim World through dividing its nations and countries. In return, the U.S. government, as argued by (Beeman, ٢٠٠٥: ١٦٣): “No matter which party is in power, would like to see a very different form of government in Tehran, and the leaders of the Islamic Republic know this. For this reason, accusations of current misdeeds on the part of Iranian officials coming out of Washington are viewed askance by Tehran”. Accordingly, the US-Iranian antagonism will continue despite the signed agreements between them.

Britain is Iran's second Western enemy after the United States. Since the establishment of the Islamic republic until the present day, the Britain-Iranian relations have witnessed many conflicts and tensions. Most importantly was the conflict which followed the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini on the British Indian novelist Salman Rushdie in February ١٩٨٩. The fatwa which shed the blood of Rushdie came as a response to his novel ‘*The Satanic Verses*’ which was regarded by Ayatollah Khomeini as a serious insult to Islam and the Muslims. In ١٩٩٢, an Iranian diplomat was expelled in retaliation for Tehran's expulsion of a UK diplomat. Later, three Iranians are expelled from London (two embassy officials and a student) after an alleged plot to kill Mr. Rushdie.<sup>١٨</sup> In June ١٩٩٩, the Iranians accused the Britain of supporting the protests against the reelection of president Ahmadinejad. Commenting this issue, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says: “arrogant powers” in the US and European countries tried to encourage protests. He added that the “most evil of those powers was Britain”. The British media was also criticized.<sup>١٩</sup> That is why, it was not a surprise to see the British position towards the Iranian nuclear program very close to the American during all of the negotiations' phases. Moreover, the Britain were the toughest supporter of the American sanctions against Iran before the signing of the nuclear deal in July ٢٠١٥. The alignment of these two great powers against Iran makes her feel seriously threatened and in need for powerful weapons.

### ٤. Iran's Allies

In spite of the fact that Iran has many enemies, it has friends too, and these friends are spread around the world; from China at East to Venezuela at West. Paradoxically, most of Iran's friend-states are not Muslim. Syria, probably, is the only Muslim country with which Iran enjoys very close ties. However, the

Iranians sponsor and cooperate with many Muslim groups fighting in different countries and regions across the Muslim World. Iran's lack to Muslim allies and friends could be explained by the fact that the Iranians deeply believed that their model of Islam is the only right one and all of the others are wrong. Moreover, Iran regards the United States and Israel as the most vicious enemies for Islam and Muslims. On the basis of this view, Iran detaches itself from the Islamic countries which enjoy stable relations with Israel and/or the United States, such as Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, the Gulf States and to some extent Turkey. Conversely, Iran strengthens its relations with the countries which are against the United States and Israel, such as Syria, Cuba, Venezuela.

Iran's allies and friends could be classified into two groups; regional and global. This classification is useful to understand the influence of Iran on the politics of both regional and global levels, and its ability to defy the threats it faces at these levels.

### ٤.١ Iran's Regional Allies

As mentioned above, Syria became the closest Mideastern state to Iran after the triumph of the Islamic revolution. Many Western analysts, such as (Hirschfeld: ١٩٨٦: ١٠٥) wondered how Iran and Syria came together so long the Iranian regime is a Persian Islamic theocratic while the Syrian is a pan-Arab secular republic. This closeness, however, was not based on ideological factors but on the famous principle 'My enemy's enemy is my friend'. Thus, both countries aimed at defeating Israel and helping the Palestinians to liberate their occupied territories, both countries were hostile to Saddam's regime, and both fear Turkey and the United States. As argued by (Hinnebusch, ١٩٩٧: ٨٧): "In the geopolitical school, the geographically shaped balance of power shapes alliances: contiguous states tend to be rivals and balancing dictates alliances, checkerboard fashion, with one's neighbor's neighbor". The most obvious factor in the Syrian-Iranian alliance, then, would be the shared threat from contiguous Iraq, Turkey and Israel.

The Iranian hostility towards Israel inspired Iran's leaders to find influential allies close to the Jewish state. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in ١٩٨٢ and establishing what they called a security zone in the southern part of this small country gave the Iranians a unique opportunity to create the Shiite party 'Hezbollah' in Southern Lebanon where the Shi'a constitute the vast majority of population. Hezbollah caused a headache for the Americans and Europeans as well. Just a single year after its establishment (i.e. in ١٩٨٣), the party stood behind the bloody attack against the American marines in Beirut where ٢٤١ Americans were killed. It was the deadliest single day for the U.S. Marine Corps since the battle of Iwo Jima during World War II.<sup>١</sup> Simultaneously ٥٨ French paratroopers were killed by a second bomb-laden truck. Hezbollah has also been involved in kidnaping of many American and Western citizens in

Lebanon. This strategy used by the Iranians through their proxy (Hezbollah) to impose their own agendas in the region. Thus, the use of violence was an effective strategy to achieve the departure of America, France and their allies from Lebanon and the termination of the influence of any 'imperialist' power in the country, as argued by Richard Norton (٢٠٠٩: ٧١). Simultaneously, the Iranians have employed the kidnapping of American and Western citizens to achieve immediate goals. Iran Gate is an example. On November ٢, ١٩٨٦, a pro-Syrian Lebanese publication, *Al Shiraa*, reported that Reagan's administration secretly sold arms to Iran in exchange for the release of hostages held in Lebanon (Gibson, ٢٠١٠: ١٧٤-١٧٥).

The Palestinian Hamas is another ally. According to many sources, Iran is the main source of weapons smuggling to Hamas through many channels. In late October ٢٠١٠, for instance, the Nigerian authorities seized ١٣ containers of weapons from Iran. The weapons, headed for Gambia, included a cache of artillery rockets that, if placed in the hands of highly trained militants, could accurately hit targets more than five miles away, killing everything within about ٤٠ feet. Insurgent fighters in Afghanistan and Iraq have used similar rockets against U.S. troops (Roshandel, ٢٠١١: ٥٤).

Despite the fact that Hamas can never defeat the Israelis using such weapons, an armed Hamas could prevent the Israelis from putting full military control on the Palestinian territories, especially the Gaza strip. Moreover, the Iranian weapons could inspire the Palestinians to develop their military capabilities and, then, to strengthen the Iranian-led alliance against Israel. Accordingly, the Israelis consider any Iranian military support to any Palestinian organization as an attempt to shift the balance of power in the Middle East to the favor of Iran, and such a move is strongly unacceptable in Tel Aviv, and could hasten the military confrontation in the region.

Yemen is a new arena where the Iranians found an ally. That took place in March ٢٠١٥, when the Iranian-backed militia 'al-Houthis' put control on wide territories including the capital Sanaa. Responding to this move, the Saudi Arabia led a multinational coalition and waged an aerial war against the Houthis. In return, Iran involved in the conflict to help the Houthis.

According to both the Iranians and Houthis, the president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi is an unjust ruler appointed by the Saudi Arabia and the 'imperialist' America to assure their interests in Yemen. While the Saudi goal is to spread their ideology of Wahhabism in the neighboring country, the American's goal is to assure control over the strait of Bab al-Mandab, through which huge quantities of oil a day flows to the West.

Although the Iranians deny any direct involvement in the conflict, the developed weapons, including ballistic missiles, used by the Houthis show that Iran is making serious efforts to defeat the Saudi Arabia and its local allies in Yemen. And if these efforts result in the marginalization of the pro-

Saudi groups, Yemen will turn into an Iranian ally and then the Shi'a Crescent which threatened many regional and global powers will turn into a Shi'a semi-circle starting from Yemen through Iran, Iraq, Syria to Lebanon.

On the basis of these facts, one can conclude that Iran has allies and proxies all over the region, and then it can strongly affect the politics of this region.

### ٤.٢ Iran's Global Allies

After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in ١٩٨٩ and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in ١٩٩١, the Russian-Iranian relations witnessed a remarkable improvement. Both countries rethought the principles on which their external relations have been based and they concluded that national interests and security should be the key elements of their international policies.

In the ١٩٩٠s, the Iranians recognized that they could not go ahead with their nuclear program without an essential help from a nuclear power. Further, this nuclear power should be among the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations. This would assure the Iranians both nuclear know-how and protection against any eventual aggressive reactions from other superpowers. Russia, for its own part, was in need of the Iranian market to improve its bad economy. Moreover, it wished to avoid any Iranian negative role in the ethnic conflicts the Russians had after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Thus, friendship and cooperation were the best or win-win choice for both countries. The Russians began to supply Iran with weapons and agreed to complete Bushehr nuclear reactor. In return, the Iranians did not back the Muslims in the first Chechen war (١٩٩٤-٩٦), and showed understanding and support for the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. The two neighbors also cooperated to put an end to the five-year Tajik civil war (١٩٩٢-٩٧). Finally, both neighbors supported Afghan forces opposing the Taliban (Parker, ٢٠٠٨: ١٦٩-١٨٢).

When Putin came to power in ١٩٩٩, expectations emerged that the Russian-Iranian relations would approach a level of an alliance. The new Russian president gave a significant push to these relations by providing Iran with developed weapons and renewing commitment to completing the Bushehr reactor. The Russians have also promised to provide Iran with long range surface-to-air missile system S-٣٠٠s<sup>١١</sup>. Such a system is very necessary for the Iranians to avoid an eventual missile attack carried out by Israel or the United States against its nuclear facilities. Moreover, some Western sources maintain that Russia helped Iran acquire missile technology, and also that Iranian students have received training in Russia on nuclear-related skills (Hunter, ٢٠١٠: ١١١). However, the Russian resistance to the American demand of issuing a resolution by the Security Council of the United Nations to force Iran, by all necessary means, to abandon its nuclear program is the worthiest attitude the Russians have ever assumed towards Iran. This attitude saved the Iranian regime from a disaster similar to that of Saddam or Qadhafi.

The Syrian armed conflict which erupted in ٢٠١١ pushed the Russian-Iranian relations to a level of a non-declared alliance. Both Russia and Iran view the regime of Bashar al-Assad as an ally and make serious efforts to prevent its collapse in the hands of extreme and pro-Western groups. While some Iranian-backed militias fight beside the Syrian army on the ground, Russian jets carry out air sufficient strikes against the bases of the anti-regime groups on the Syrian soil. The Russian-Iranian cooperation and coordination reached a very high level in September ٢٠١٦ when Russia used Iranian territory for the first time as a base to launch air strikes against Syrian militias, widening its air campaign in Syria and deepening its involvement in the Middle East. Such a level of cooperation makes the Iranians feel secure and protected against eventual American or Israeli attacks.

China is another superpower showing support for Iran. The two countries maintained close military contacts throughout the ١٩٨٠'s and ١٩٩٠'s. Among other things, China helped Iran boost its military capabilities by providing it with tactical ballistic and anti-ship cruise missiles, advanced anti-ship mines, and Houdong fast-attack boats equipped with anti-ship missiles. Iran and China have also signed on November ١٤, ٢٠١٦ an agreement to hold joint military drills and cooperate in fighting terrorism.<sup>٢٢</sup>

In addition to the military cooperation, China has always used its veto right in the Security Council of the United Nations to prevent issuing any resolution which could be interpreted in favor of using military action against Iran to force it to abandon its nuclear program.

There are several factors behind the deep and broad partnership between China and Iran. During the past several years, China has become Iran's biggest oil customer and trading partner. In return, China has aided Iran to modernize its military hardware and doctrine through the transfer of military technology and sales of small arms and tactical ballistic and anti-ship cruise missiles. China has also assisted in the development of Iran's nuclear program via the transfer of technology and machinery. Further, China's economic ties to Iran have shielded the Iranian regime from the effects of international sanctions.<sup>٢٣</sup> Such mutual interests between China and Iran could assure deep-rooted and long-lasting ties between the two countries.

It is to conclude that Iran's cooperation and coordination, at almost all levels, with two permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations would make Iran's nuclear disarmament a very difficult task.

### ٥. Vienna Nuclear Treaty

After a decade of negotiations, the ٥+١ world powers (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China and Germany) reached, on July ١٤, ٢٠١٥, an agreement with Iran regarding its nuclear program. The agreement could be regarded as a win-win deal because both the United States and Iran claimed victory. The Americans argue that Iran had almost ٢٠,٠٠٠ centrifuges

in July ٢٠١٥. “Under the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#), it will be limited to installing no more than ٥,٠٦٠ of the oldest and least efficient centrifuges at Natanz for ١٠ years. Iran’s uranium stockpile will also be reduced by ٩٨٪ to ٣٠٠kg for ١٥ years. It must also keep its level of enrichment at ٣.٦٧٪. By January ٢٠١٦, Iran had drastically reduced the number of centrifuges installed at Natanz and Fordo, and shipped tones of low-enriched uranium to Russia. In addition, research and development will take place only at Natanz and be limited for eight years. No enrichment will be permitted at Fordo for ١٥ years, and the underground facility will be converted into a nuclear, physics and technology center. The ١,٠٤٤ centrifuges at the site will produce radioisotopes for use in medicine, agriculture, industry and science”.<sup>٢٤</sup>

As for Iran, minister of foreign affairs and the leader of the Iranian delegation to Vienna, Mohammed Javad Zarif, described the deal as a win-win solution but not perfect. According to this deal, the world’s great powers recognized Iran’s right to have nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The Iranian people regarded this recognition as a significant triumph. It was an experience added to a lot of experience, Iran has had in resisting external powers trying to frustrate its ambitions and desires, as argued by William Beeman (٢٠٠٥: ٩٢). It simply satisfies the Iranians’ national pride of being an advanced nation. Further, the sanctions imposed by the UN, US and EU in an attempt to force Iran to halt uranium enrichment will be lifted. These sanctions have crippled Iran’s economy, costing the country more than \$١٦٠bn in oil revenue since ٢٠١٢ alone. Moreover, Iran stands to gain access to more than \$١٠٠bn in assets frozen overseas, and will be able to resume selling oil on international markets and using the global financial system for trade.<sup>٢٥</sup>

However, many questions could be raised about this deal. To what extent will Iran and the United States live up to their obligations? Will the inspectors of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) be always allowed to have access to the Iranian nuclear facilities? Will the deal be affected by the change of the leaderships in Iran or the United States? Is this deal going to appease Iran? What will happen to Iran’s nuclear program when the deal ends in ١٠-١٥ years’ time?

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was among the first who condemned the deal and described it as a ‘historic mistake’ that would create a “terrorist nuclear superpower” instead of ‘historic agreement’ as it was described by the American president Obama. The Saudis also criticized the deal and expressed their concerns that it could encourage an arm race in the region.<sup>٢٦</sup> These critics which came from the Iran’s strongest rivals in the region showed that the deal could not put an end to the tension between Iran and its regional rivals. The deal met fierce objections in Congress as well. According to many Congress’ members, the deal preserves Iran’s ability to

produce as much nuclear fuel as it wishes after year ١٥ of the agreement, and allows it to conduct research on advanced centrifuges after the eighth year. Moreover, the Iranians won the eventual lifting of an embargo on the import and export of conventional arms and ballistic missiles.<sup>١٧</sup>

A few weeks before president Obama left office, the U.S. Congress voted to extend some sanctions on Iran to which the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani responded by giving Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, three months to come up with a plan for nuclear-powered ships and producing fuel for them.<sup>١٨</sup> If this presidential order were implemented it would simply mean that the Iranians will turn again to the uranium enrichment and then to violate Vienna deal.

The new American president, Donald Trump, expressed his unhappiness with the nuclear deal. On numerous occasions, he has called it a "really, really bad deal," and has said that he [may want to renegotiate its terms](#).<sup>١٩</sup> The Iranian reaction to Trump's position towards the nuclear deal was not calm but violent. Ten days after Trump took office, Iran conducted a missile test. This test could be regarded as a defying message telling the new American administration that overstepping the bounds of Vienna deal would not be an easy move.

According to Eric Lorber, while the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is imperfect, tearing up the agreement during Trump's first few weeks in office would carry significant consequences. Although the president could walk away from the agreement and reimpose sanctions, Iran has already received approximately \$١٠٠ billion. Walking away would allow Iran to continue its work on the nuclear program while enjoying this significant financial windfall.<sup>٢٠</sup>

On the basis of these facts, one can conclude that Vienna nuclear deal cannot put an end to the tension that characterizes the relationship between Iran from the one hand and the United States and its allies, especially Israel and the Saudi Arabia, from the other hand. Thus, while Iran will always feel insecure so long it does not have the weapon by which it could deter the regional and global enemies, the United States and its allies will also feel insecure so long Iran is attempting to acquire nuclear weapons.

However, Iran's huge arsenal of ballistic missiles and its firm ties to Russia and China would turn any American or Israel attempt to attack Iran into an adventure whose consequences are totally unknown. Therefore, such a move is not likely to happen, at least in the next few years.

### ٦. Conclusion

Since its very beginning, the Islamic revolution of Iran has been representing a serious threat to most of the region's countries. The danger of this revolution lies in its model or version of Islam. According to the leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, all rulers of the Muslim World were

tyrants oppressing their nations and they might be removed from power through revolutions similar to that of Iran. Israel, in the view of Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers was like a cancerous tumor inside the Muslim body, and it should be removed by all means. Consequently, the regime established by the revolution got no friends but enemies. With exception of Syria, all the region's regimes detached themselves from Iran.

At the global level, the leaders of the Islamic revolution believed that while the United States represented a 'great Satan', the Soviet Union represented a 'less Satan'. Accordingly, both of the superpowers wished to see the new Iranian regime collapsed.

Due to many factors, such as geographic proximity, border disputes, Shi'a majority, Iraq felt very threatened by the Iranian revolution. That is why, it waged a full-scale war against Iran in ١٩٨٠. Almost all of the global and regional powers lined up with Iraq. After eight years of severe war, Iran had no option but to accept a resolution of the Security Council calling for ceasefire.

The worthiest lesson, the Iranians taught from the war was that they must acquire the weapons which enable them to deter any power attempting to attack their country. Accordingly, the Iranians made great efforts during the ١٩٩٠'s to build a serious nuclear program. Many factors contributed to made a successful start. The more pragmatic Iranian foreign policy after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in ١٩٨٩, the high revenues of oil, the dissolution of the Soviet enemy and emergence of the helpful Russian regime were among the important factors behind the good start of the nuclear program. In ٢٠٠٢, the nuclear program was revealed and became a subject of marathonic negotiations between Iran from one side and the world's great powers from the other. On July ١٤, ٢٠١٥, a deal was reached in Vienna to restrict the program to only peaceful purposes.

Taking into account the fact that the way to acquiring nuclear weapon must always be secret and decisive, no one can be confident about the Iranians' claims that their nuclear program is peaceful. However, one can be confident that even in the case of acquiring nuclear weapon, the Iranians will never use this weapon against any nation. That is simply because this kind of weapon is used to deter enemies but not to attack them. Iran's involvement in many of the region's conflicts, such as in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Palestine, increases the number of its enemies. So, it is not a surprise that Iran feel threatened by some global and regional powers, most important of them the United States and Israel. At the same time, other countries, such as the Gulf states (with exception to Oman), feel threatened by Iran and its proxy organizations, such as Hezbollah, the Houthis and other armed groups. However, the question which is raised today; will the conflict between Iran from one hand and Israel, United States and its allies from the other hand lead to a military



confrontation in the near future? The answer is NO. The current Russian-Iranian rapprochement which reaches to an extent of semi-alliance makes any dramatic shift in the regional balance of power almost impossible.

### Notes:

١. Iran Watch: <http://www.iranwatch.org/government/iran/iran-irna-sabouri-bushehrdelay-٠٨٢٢٠٤.htm>.
٢. CNN Library: <http://edition.cnn.com/٢٠١٣/١١/٠٢/world/meast/irans-nuclear-capabilities-fast-facts/>
٣. "Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, A.Q. Khan and the Rise of Proliferation Networks," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, London, May ٢٠٠٧, P. ٧١
٤. Mohammad Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program, Part ١: Its History," [www.payvand.com/news/٠٣/oct/١٠١٥.html](http://www.payvand.com/news/٠٣/oct/١٠١٥.html)
٥. "Iran Nuclear Deal: Historic Agreement in Vienna", *The Guardian*, July ١٥, ٢٠١٥
٦. Gareth Porter, "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes", *Foreign Affairs*, October ١٦, ٢٠١٤.
٧. Scott Peterson, "How Much is a Nuclear Program Worth?", *The Christian Science Monitor*, April ٣, ٢٠١٣
٨. Thomas W. Wood, Matthew D. Milazzo, Barbara A. Reichmuth, and Jeffrey Bedell, "The Economics of Energy Independence for Iran", *Non-proliferation Review*, Vol. ١٤, No. ١, March ٢٠٠٧
٩. Sahimi Mohammed, "Iran's Nuclear Program", Part II, 'Payvand', October ٤, ٢٠٠٣. Available on <http://www.comw.org/pda/fulltext/٠٣sahimi.html>
١٠. *Al-Monitor*, February ٢٠, ٢٠١٤. Available on: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/٢٠١٤/٠٢/iran-nuclear-energy-domestic-need.html>
١١. George Perkovich, "For Tehran, Nuclear Program is a Matter of National Pride", *YaleGlobal*, March ٢١, ٢٠٠٥
١٢. Ibid
١٣. Neil Macfarquhar, "Across Iran, Nuclear Power is a Matter of Pride", *The New York Times*, May ٢٩, ٢٠٠٥
١٤. Angus McDowall, "National Pride is the Spur for Iran's Nuclear Ambitions", *The Irish Times*, March ٣, ٢٠٠٥



١٥. Sagan, Scott and Waltz, Kenneth, "A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?", *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring-Summer ٢٠٠٧
١٦. The Guardian, October ٢٧, ٢٠٠٥
١٧. Fars News Agency, August ٦, ٢٠١٦
١٨. BBC World News, "Timeline: Iran and UK Relations", August ٢٠, ٢٠١٥
١٩. Ibid.
٢٠. USA Today, October ٢٣, ٢٠١٣
٢١. Mark N. Katz, "Russian-Iranian Relations in the Putin Era," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* ١٠, no.١ (Winter ٢٠٠٢): ٧١.
٢٢. Associated Press, November ١٦, ٢٠١٦
٢٣. Scott Warren Harold, Alireza Nader, 'China and Iran: Economic, Political, and Military Relations', *Rand*, ٢٠١٢
٢٤. "Iran Nuclear Deal: Key Details" *BBC World News*, July ١٦, ٢٠١٥
٢٥. Ibid.
٢٦. BBC World News, July ١٤, ٢٠١٥
٢٧. The New York Times, July ١٤, ٢٠١٥
٢٨. CBS NEWS, December ١٣, ٢٠١٦
٢٩. The New York Times, January ١٧, ٢٠١٧
٣٠. Eric B. Lorber, 'President Trump and the Iran Nuclear Deal' *Foreign Policy*, November ١٦, ٢٠١٦

## Bibliography

Beeman, William O. "*Great Satan vs. the Mad Mullahs: How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*", Praeger, Westport, CT. ٢٠٠٥

Bhattacharjee Anol, "*Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, And Practices*", University of South Florida, Florida, USA ٢٠١٢

Caravelli, Jack, "*Beyond Sand and Oil: The Nuclear Middle East*", Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara, CA. ٢٠١١.

Cordesman, Anthony H. & Seitz, Adam C. "*Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Birth of a Regional Nuclear Arms Race?*", Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara, CA, ٢٠٠٩

Cordesman, Anthony H. "*The Military Balance in the Middle East*", Praeger, Westport, CT.

- Etemad, Akbar, *"Iran: A European Non-Proliferation Policy"*. Ed. Harald Muller, Oxford, Clarendon Press, ١٩٨٧
- Gibson, Bryan R. *"Covert Relationship: American Foreign Policy, Intelligence, and the Iran-Iraq War, ١٩٨٠-١٩٨٨"*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, CA. ٢٠١٠
- Haas, Mark L., *"The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security"*, Oxford University Press, New York, ٢٠١٢
- Hinnebusch Raymond A. & Ehteshami Anou Bryan R. Shiravan, *"Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System"*, Routledge, London,
- Hirschfeld, Yair, "The Odd Couple: Ba'thist Syria and Khomeini's Iran", in Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv (eds) *"Syria Under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks"*, St Martin's Press, New York, ١٩٨٦
- Hume Cameron, *"The United Nations, Iran, and Iraq: How Peace-making Changed"*, Indiana University Press, ١٩٩٤
- Hunter, Shireen T., *"Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order"*, Praeger. Santa Barbara, CA. ٢٠١٠
- Knopf, Jeffrey W. *"Security Assurances and Nuclear Non-proliferation"*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, ٢٠١٢
- Marschall, Christin, *"Iran's Persian Gulf Policy: From Khomeini to Khatami"*, Routledge Curzon, New York, ٢٠٠٣
- Mattair, Thomas R., *"Global Security Watch-Iran: A Reference Handbook"*, Praeger Security International, Westport, CT. ٢٠٠٨
- Morgenthau, Hans, *"Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace"*, A.A. Knopf, New York, ١٩٤٨.
- Norton, Augustus Richard, *"Hezbollah: A Short History"*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. ٢٠٠٩
- Parker, John W. *"Persian Dreams: Moscow and Tehran Since the Fall of the Shah"*, Potomac Books Inc.; ١<sup>st</sup> Edition, ٢٠٠٨
- Pelletière, Stephen, *"Iraq and the International Oil System: Why America Went to War in the Gulf"*, Praeger, Westport, CT. ٢٠٠١
- Reardon, Robert J., *"Containing Iran: Strategies for Addressing the Iranian Nuclear Challenge"*, Rand, Santa Monica, CA., ٢٠١٢
- Roshandel Jalil & Lean, Nathan Chapman, *"Iran, Israel, and the United States: Regime Security vs. Political Legitimacy"*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, CA. ٢٠١١
- Singleton Royce, Bruce C. Straits, Margaret Miller Straits, *"Approaches to Social Research"*, Oxford University Press, ١٩٩٣
- Waltz, Kenneth, *"Theory of International Relations"*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., California, ١٩٧٩
- Williams, Paul D., *"Security Studies: An Introduction"*, Routledge, New York, ٢٠١٣