

**IRAN'S ASSERTIVENESS IN MAINTAINING ITS PEACEFUL
NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY:
FOREIGN EFFECTIVENESS AND DOMESTIC EFFICIENCY**

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In the early December 2005, increasing evidences emerged in favor of the confirmation of the hypothesis of this paper which stipulates that the political elites of the Islamic Republic feels compelled to play an assertive game in its bid to maintain “the glorious achievement in peaceful nuclear technology” apparently as an indispensable necessity to redress its already fractured legitimacy back home: to show its effectiveness in tackling Iran's nuclear policy effectively and demonstrate the technological efficiency. This assertive foreign policy has instead generated claimed/and or actual security concerns amongst their counterparts in EU-3, Israel and the US regarding the intentions of Iran to maintain benign peaceful nuclear technology/or else divert it to a nuclear weapon.

As an independent political scientist and a layman in nuclear technology, I try to reflect and explain the mindset of the political elites of the Islamic Republic regarding nuclear technology. In this endeavor, I attempt my best to present an objective analysis in following sections: First, to portray the threat perceptions in the Islamic Republic, second to account the motivations, third to explain the assertive foreign policy of the Islamic Republic regarding Iran's nuclear case and finally to generalize on Iran's approach to foreign policy under Ahmadinejad's administration. In this scholarly endeavor, I will browse into rival dailies sponsored by conservatives' (such as *Quds* and *Iran*) and Pragmatists' (such as *Sobhe Eghtesad* and *Iran News*) and residue reformist dailies (such as *Sharq*) elaborating on the positive and negative citations in support or against the aforementioned hypothesis.

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Islamic Republic's Threat Perceptions and its Responses

The threat perceptions of the Islamic Republic arise from three levels: First, against the regime; second, against its secular (territorial integrity plus the national interests) or moral objectives (Islamic values); and third against its fundamentalists' authorities. Recent politicization of Iran's achievements in nuclear technology has been interpreted in Tehran as a new round of rising pressures most basically read as against the Islamic Republic and as an attempt to betray its relevance and viability as a sustainable political regime committed to the national interests of Iran and Iranians in general. In practical terms, the new round of pressures has brought the Islamic Republic to a turning point in its turbulent political life with only a quintile of a century history.

On one hand, the Islamic Republic needs to maintain its peaceful nuclear technology as originally planned to sell it to the domestic audience as a relevant and modern political regime, first to eradicate the notorious label implicating the Islamic Republic as a "reactionary" force against technological development, registering its achievement as equal to the "Nationalization of Petroleum" under Premier Mossadeq between 1950-1953, and second to demonstrate its effectiveness in assertively obliging the international community to accept its legitimate right to maintain its peaceful nuclear technology. On the other hand, this achievement has raised adverse international environment against the Islamic Republic's intention. The Islamic Republic would like to publicize the analogy of Mossadeq's case as a bid to change the emergent challenge to an auspicious opportunity. This change, the Islamic Republic deem would enable it to fend off the concurrent domestic and international pressures on it. Moreover, the Islamic Republic is determined to introduce the adverse human right case against it as a foreign ploy to subdue the Islamic Republic's reputation particularly due to its assertiveness against extra-legal demands of IAEA, allegedly provoked by Israel, US and the EU-3.

The Islamic Republic has already acknowledged the accumulated threats at times arising from antithetical domestic and foreign pressures exerted on it. Consequently, the Islamic Republic has found itself in a very delicate situation emerging from both its foreign and domestic environments. In case it continues its populist rhetoric in its bid to compromise over the domestic pressures versus exclusive goals of (political, technological, economic, social and cultural) developments, it needs to somehow compensate it in the foreign policy area. If this compensation unfolds in terms of benign assertiveness even within the international status quo, it might be intentionally/and or inadvertently as an anti-status quo by benign or hostile political actors. In case of Islamic Iran, Israel is much enthusiastic to build upon its assertive policy as an aggressive trend against the global community, either due to its security consciousness or due to its strategic interests to disrupt any attempt to unify Middle East countries across primordial (religious or ethnic) values. Assertiveness then might expose the survival of the Islamic Republic at the risk of foreign threats. Conversely, any passive compromise over the already publicized achievements in its peaceful nuclear technology will endanger both the effectiveness of its foreign policy and the efficiency of its domestic agenda for industrialization. Consequently, any one-dimensional decision made by the Islamic Republic over its nuclear technology would have the potential to produce two mutually exclusive unacceptable scenarios for it.

Various factions within the Islamic Republic are in consensual agreement about the adverse impacts of continuity of pressures or instead a drastic retreat in the nuclear case over the already plummeting legitimacy of the Islamic regime. They concurred Islamic Republic needs a symbolic success in this campaign. The feasible scenario for Iran according to the Islamic Republic's reading is "to make an assertive gesture in maintaining its peaceful nuclear technology, undermining the significance of bowing to the hitherto-labeled-as "enemy's" demand for providing "objective guarantee" to the international community.

The Islamic Republic's compromise deal has already demonstrated itself in terms of assertiveness for maintaining "the right to the full-cycle fuel enrichment on its own territory albeit supervised by any benign foreign partner". This compromise deal with the hitherto "enemy" is the most feasible exit strategy that the Islamic Republic could put forward on the negotiating table, without risking its plummeting legitimacy. The Islamic Republic hopes this compromise deal to expedite the removal of the imposed sanctions, enables Iran to play a more constructive role in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Caspian Basin, though with a drastic change in favor of healing its relation with the US.

By now, the Islamic Republic has been frustrated in its attempt to convince the international community regarding the benignity of its nuclear intentions. The Islamic Republic increasingly comes to the conclusion that the accumulated pressures over nuclear technology and human rights are the supplementary means for a gradual legitimating process on the part of the US and EU-3, aimed at mobilizing a united global campaign potentially capable of dislodging the Islamic Republic from power with the least possible costs. It is yet to be seen the veracity of this hypothesis: Does the new round of pressures against the Islamic Republic really arise from the US concern over Iran's nuclear policy (and other accusations such as support for terrorism), as often claimed? Or, conversely, is it an extension of Western Initiative for the Greater Middle East and only as a pretext to remove the Islamic Republic as interpreted by Tehran government?

There are contradictory evidences supporting either scenario. Prior to El-Bradei's remark on December 9, 2005, the Islamic Republic had announced its gradual losing of patience due to its unfulfilled goals through its hitherto "compliance and negotiations". According to its statesmen and diplomats, the Islamic Republic had already modified its revolutionary *anti-status quo* in terms of the change of its own status within the existing global order. Allegedly, the 20-year vision has been improvised to indicate the formal document aimed at substantiating this transformation. Up to now, all these provisions have not produced anticipated outcome for the Islamic Republic.

Of course, dislodging the Islamic Republic through a surgery *blitzkrieg* seems to be as yet a distant possibility, due to the US failures in Iraq and unaccomplished task in Afghanistan. Thanks to these unwelcome events, the Islamic Republic has produced a “mockery comedy TV show” to convince its domestic audience of this failure.¹ In spite of this rhetoric, the Islamic Republic's elites are deeply concerned about alternative corroding strategies to expedite the collapse of the regime by stripping it from its plummeting legitimacy. In fact, the leaders of the Islamic Republic deem the pressures exerted upon its nuclear technology are correlated to this destabilizing strategy against it. Accordingly, it is argued that they are aimed at depriving the Islamic Republic from this legitimating achievement. For instance, President Ahmadinejad warns of a calculated campaign in the making to build an alliance against the Islamic Republic: “Some members of the IAEA were doing under influence of the big powers. They gave up to big powers pressures but we expect the IAEA to act upon the law....We will never accept any negotiation which aims at depriving Iranian nation of its rights enshrined by NPT”.² Most of the recent political statements reflect this threat perception by the Islamic Republic.

The most recurrent item refers to the rumors regarding Israel surprise attack on nuclear sites in Iran. President Ahmadinejad's occasional crude statements regarding Israel demonstrate the hectic impacts of such reports on the Islamic Republic's political elite. *Iran News* reflects the more sober Iranian approach toward Israeli initiatives against Iran in following terms: “Iran Threats to Retaliate Any Israeli Attacks.” The choice of topic is based on former Foreign Minister Kharazi's remark in New Zealand, in reply to a question posed on him by a reporter. In response, he emphasized “if they would do that, we would react....We have our defense capability and that certainly keeps others from exercising such a threat....They know our capability and how...we react”. In a balancing statement, he was quick to clarify the conventional capability of Iran: “Iran has no program to produce nuclear weapons. It is our legitimate right to have nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.”³

1. *IRIB*, 10.12.2005

2. *Iran News*, 08.10.2005

3. *Iran News*, 25.08.2004, p. 1.

Quds had a military report on its August 10, 2004 issue, focusing on Iran's strategy to deal with any contingent Israeli attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities. This report starts with the threat perception of the Islamic Republic: "During last few weeks that Zionist Regime has enhanced its threat against Iran's nuclear facilities harmonious with enhanced US propaganda for disturbing the region against Iran." The daily reflected the unwavering will and the resolve of the Islamic Republic "to retaliate" it without any hesitation. Gholamali Haddad Adel also emphasized Iran's determination to retaliate any attacks on its peaceful nuclear facilities: "Iran will surely respond to such threats. We are not expected to ignore the rights of the nation."⁴

Most recently, during the early days of December 2005, once again rumors abound regarding Israeli or the US *blitzkrieg* on Iran, particularly in the aftermath of Ahmadinejad's recent statement over "transferring Israel to Europe". According to Persian Service of the *Voice of America*, Israeli officials categorically rejected the reports published in Sunday Times regarding attacking Iran in March 2006:⁵ "In case the nuclear deadlock on Iran remains unchanged, then it is possible that Israel applies the same approach used against Iraq in Iranian case as well..., both Israel and the US will consider selective assault on Iran in next few years." According to John Wolfsthal, a member of the *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, "historical experiences have proved the efficacy of threat and terror against nuclear scientist in precluding the proliferation of nuclear weapons". He also refers to other methods and means in depriving Iran of nuclear technology. Raul Mark Grechett, a former CIA officer maintains that "for the destruction of Isfahan, UFC does not need more than a backpack of plastic explosives". A *Purdue* legal professor has led a group of former military and intelligence officers of Israel in advising Sharon to "deter" Iran from accruing uranium enrichment. According to their written document,

4. *Iran News*, 11.08.2004, p. 2.

5. *Voice of America*, 11.12.2005.

“the remaining problem is the extent of global reaction to the cruelty, notoriety and the destabilizing impacts of the assault”.⁶

The Islamic Republic once again reiterated its sustained official analysis and position. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Asefi maintains: “We believe the threats of Israel against Iran must be noticed by international community and other countries....We reiterate our reading once again.... They are well aware in case of a strategic mistake, Iran's response will be dreadful.”⁷ Major General Rahim Safavi-Commander in Chief of the Revolutionary Corps of Iran deems the threat to be more imminent. He goes that far to warn of the presence of Israeli intelligence officers in Iran.⁸ Due to these pessimistic assessments, Minister of Defense and Logistics of Armed Forces Brigadier General Mostafa Mohammad Najjar asserted that the Islamic Republic has boosted its defense system up to the level “no power dares to target Iran”.⁹

The Islamic Republic's mid-term threat perception is currently overshadowed by the deliberate US-European policies against the Islamic Republic defined in terms of Greater Middle East Initiative. According to *Quds* daily, US Neo-cons have already devised a nine-step ploy to remove the Islamic Republic. The daily has referred to a report translated by *Fars News Press* from the website of US Enterprise Institute. This report allegedly contains a more alerting step-by step scenario apparently articulated by Newt Gingrich.¹⁰ In his return from the Summit of Organization of Islamic Countries held in Saudi Arabia, Ahmadinejad touched upon one of the Islamic Republic's security concerns: “The most critical decision of the Summit was the ratification of a legal act to proclaim the invasion of any Islamic country as an instance of invading the collective bodies of Islamic community. This provision has paved the way for a

6. Trance Henry, “Tarhaye Esrael alayhe Iran: Ehtemale Terror Daneshmandan” (Irani/scientists/Israeli Ploys against Iran/Terror Attempt Probable Against Iranian) Azar 14 1384/05.12.2005; Rooz Online, cited from *Atlantic Monthly*, 01.12.2005.

7. *Quds*, 05.12.2005 and *Sobhe Eqtesad*, 07.12.2005.

8. *Quds* 06.12.2005.

9. *Iran News*, 07.12.2005.

10. *Quds* 01.12.2005.

collective security pact amongst the Muslim states to defend the territorial integrity of all parties involved.”¹¹

Whereas the Islamic Republic considers the worst-case scenario for a hypothetical run-off, it is determined not to be lured by the inflated image of opportunities for Iran. Saddam Hussein's illusion over victory against Iran or the US had taught the Islamic Republic precious lessons.¹² In spite of the emergence of luring reports to entice the Islamic Republic to follow Taliban and Saddam's belligerent positions, the general trend in Tehran is to resist this temptation. The Islamic Republic seems attentive of the use of the inflated image of Iran's power potentials in selling to the general domestic audience. In this context, the analysis written by Geoffrey Kemp- the former staff of National Security Council under President Reagan has been interpreted in Tehran. The study claims that Iran's leaders appear to have calculated that they can withstand the diplomatic pressures they are likely to face in the coming months from the United States, the Europeans and many members of IAEA..., and that even sanctions are imposed, Iran has the will and financial resources to rid them out.¹³

Neither do they seem to be under the illusion of Russian political games planned to play on the Iranian cards. Rapporteur of Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Kazem Jalali reflects this detached position. “Other countries should not patch up their differences by taking advantage of this nuclear case.” In illustrating his point, he said that “our national policy-makers should notice that there is not much difference between Russia's stance on Iran and that of United States and Europe....Several experts believe that adopting no resolution against the country during the IAEA Board of Governors on November 24 was meant to give a kind of ultimatum to Iran and bring Russia's stance closer to that of Europe and the US.”¹⁴ In the same vein of thought, Iran's Secretary of Supreme National Council under Ahmadinejad-Ali Larijani deems a

11. *Quds*, 10.12.2005.

12. *Quds*, 01.12.2005.

13. *Iran News*, 07.12.2005.

14. *Iran News*, 05.12.2005.

sustained anti-Islamic Republic strategy to unfold in recurrent stages: “The US methodology of propaganda is that every time the Agency planned to hold talks on Iranian nuclear program, the US came up with new allegations and asked the UN Agency to examine them.”¹⁵

The distinct character of Ahmadinejad's administration arises from its full alertness on security issues. Due to the lingering turbulence and riots in Iraq, Saudi's accusation of Iran against its role in Iraq, the colored revolutions in its northern theater of Central Asia and Caucasus and also more frequent domestic turbulences in its border provinces such as Khuzestan and Kurdistan, the Islamic Republic is ostensibly panic over the possibility of the threats in favor of regime change, formulated in terms of Iran's nuclear technology. Ali Larijani-Iran's Secretary of Supreme Council of National security said that “after Iran's proposals for objective guaranteeing measure refuted, we came to the conclusion that Iran is intentionally trapped within a breath-taking process of inconclusive negotiation”. Concurrently, Hamid Reza Asefi-Foreign Ministry Spokesman argued the following: “We have repeatedly said that Iran does not seek nuclear weapons. The United States wants to propagate a public policy that has no clear end”.¹⁶ “I do not believe that the US might have any good intentions.”¹⁷ Mohsen Pak-Ayee-Iranian Ambassador to Thailand - substantiate its suspicion by demonstrating the intentional negligence of the Great powers over Iran's flexible solutions: “We have called for access to nuclear energy and have adopted all necessary measures, including temporary suspension of (uranium) enrichment, to build confidence in the international community. But the opposite side is moving towards depriving us of nuclear energy through procrastination.”¹⁸ The ideological Ahmadinejad also supports the offer made by Pak-Ayee: “However the door is open for any states to enter into Tehran nuclear talks.... Tehran proposal was indicative that we completely believe in the peaceful nature of our nuclear program.”¹⁹

15. *Iran News*, 06.12.2005.

16. *Quds*, 28.08.2005.

17. *Iran News*, 11.10.2005.

18. *Iran News*, 06.10.2005.

19. *Iran News*, 08.10.2005.

There is yet another recurrent soft-power security concern in Iran. For instance, based upon earlier US scientific assessments regarding the needs of Iran to nuclear technology, Ramtin Ravandi in an op-ed in *Hamshahri* has argued about Iran's security at risk for the negligence to invest on nuclear plants for electrical purposes. According to him, "Iran will need to double its electric production to 60,000 mega watt. Environmental concern requires Iran to substitute its existing facilities with nuclear ones which is more favorable to the environment." He emphasized that with consumption of 30 tons of nuclear fuel per annum, after half a century, Iran would produce 1.500 tons of nuclear waste, to be reduced just to a few tons after processing. Based upon this rationality, he concludes that "from both economic and environmental security, nuclear facilities are required for Iran's sustained development". Against such a complex situation, the Islamic Republic has consistently been considering the appropriate means to withstand against both software and hardware threats over its own survival, interests and values and the territorial integrity of Iran. Due to cumulative impacts of mounting global and domestic pressures exacerbated by sporadic minority uprisings in Western and Southern Iran, the Islamic Republic has fielded a carrot and stick strategy to overcome the emergent pressures. President Ahmadinejad has intentionally formed a security administration deep down to the lower echelon of Iran's bureaucracy, filled by intelligent officers and revolutionary Corps. By early December 2005, apparently, the success of this provision was tested in pre-empting the prospective student uprising on December 7, 2005. In its bid to avoid a new student fiasco to turn this opportune student anniversary to a challenge for the Islamic Republic, Ahmadinejad's administration has seized the opportunity arisen by the rising pollution in Tehran. It announced two-day official holiday from December 7 to 8, 2005 before the official weekend day. This decision was reinforced by extending the restricted traffic zone beyond the downtown, where most major universities are located.

This trend has emerged in Iran in the aftermath of Bush's declaration of "Greater Middle East Initiative". Since then, all appointments and elections have been implemented with due notice to emerging security

measures. The general rule of avoiding military officers' access to political power was intentionally dispensed with. Iran's public sphere has almost filled up with former military and intelligence officers. Many of them were elected as Majlis deputy in the seventh Parliamentary election. Since then, this has become a rule rather than exception.

Iran's Nuclear Technology: "Regime's Glorious Achievement"

As a supplementary measure for enhancing its legitimacy, the Islamic Republic tries to inflate its achievements in peaceful nuclear technology. This "glorious achievement of the Islamic Republic" demonstrates the Islamic Republic's capacity in developing its human resources as compared to Dr Mossadeq's success in nationalizing petroleum natural resources in 1951, despite its collapse by a US-British orchestrated coup in 1953. The deliberated comparison is deemed as a very potential leverage both to convince the domestic audience and Western powers. The powerful Chair of Expediency Council has emphasized the failure of the "enemies" to defeat technological achievements in the Islamic Republic: "The conspiracy to debilitate Iranian plans to develop the country has already failed. Of course, still the enemies did not remove sanctions. They are even enacting new regulations against Iran, which will prove ineffective in blocking our developments, though it will have an impeding impact on development of Iran, i.e. in nuclear technology."²⁰ Consider also President Ahmadinejad's unorthodox patriotic position in the following phrase: "I said I'll do every thing in order to uphold our national interest....One of these things that we will have access to the nuclear supply process....We don't want to be at war with the world."²¹ He is so upset to see the adverse reading of Iran's intentions: "Today, global arrogance is opening a new front against Iran. It strives to deprive the Iranian nation from its legal rights by mobilizing all its political, economic and military potentials....Access to peaceful nuclear technology is the Iranian nation's right.... Enemies should know their hold on destructive weapons will have no impact on the firm will of the Iranian

20. *Hamshahri*, 07.08.2004, p. 2.

21. *Iran News*, 03.10.2005.

nation and their decision.”²² He attempts to illustrate the Islamic Republic's intention to use the nuclear technology: “Given its considerable material and spiritual resources, potentials and manpower, the Islamic Republic of Iran is well-equipped to develop a strong Islamic community....Today, the country needs to take effective action in the economic field and fill in the current gaps. We should come up with strategies to give momentum to the country.”²³

Haddad Adel-Majlis Speaker a proponent of Japanese style for technological developments of Iran labeled by him as “Japanese Model with Islamic Culture,” asserts Islamic Republic's determination: “The Iranian nation will proudly advance the goals of Islamic Revolution and will never surrender to bullying and will proceed with its legitimate rights.”²⁴ With this legitimating ambition in mind, the Music and Song Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) “has produced two musical pieces in parallel with supporting the peaceful nuclear technology,” the Center reported in a statement on Saturday December 3, 2005.

Beyond emotional involvement, the Islamic Republic has made yet another attempt to engage the public in the issue even financially. Kayhan Daily reports of “a plan” submitted to “the Supreme National Security Council” to be discussed in a bid to “offer...to the public...the bonds in order to provide finance for building nuclear plants....The plan is based on the peacefulness of the nuclear energy.” On December 5, 2005, Iran's cabinet ratified a plan to establish two other nuclear plants by offering its Tender to the domestic contractors.²⁵

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi deems that “Washington's interference is one reason the talks have become increasingly complicated.”²⁶ On the contrary the inexperienced top negotiator of Iran's nuclear dossier, Secretary Larijani is unskillfully hasty: “Our patience has

22. *Iran News*, 01.12.2005.

23. *Iran News*, 06.12.2005.

24. *Iran News*, 04.10.2005.

25. *Iran News*, 05.12.2005.

26. *Ibid.*, p.2.

already run out (and/ or “Iran's patience for enrichment is running out). We will restart enrichment”, in his interview with France Press.²⁷ “The Suspension of Iran's nuclear activities, Russian proposal for enrichment in their country, and the emphasis of Iran on enrichment on its own territory” are the three items for dialogue with Europe.”²⁸ Expediency Council Chair Hasemi Rafsanjani has heralded this mild warning with prior modification on November 25, 2005 at the Friday Prayer Sermon. He called the option of deferring the final decision on Iran's nuclear case by the UN nuclear watchdog on November 24, 2005 as indicating “wisdom and vision” to prevail IAEA board of governors. He admired moderation and prudence demonstrated in the decision calling upon the parties to move toward “the spirit of dialogue and cooperation”.²⁹ The content of report labeled by Rafsanjani to implicate “wisdom and vision” conceded to the cooperation of Iran with providing additional documentation, permitting interviews with relevant individuals, and allowing further access.³⁰ Finally, Gholamreza Aghazadeh-Iran's Nuclear Energy Chairman- promised the official determination of the Islamic Republic to postpone uranium enrichment during negotiation with the EU-3.

In spite of the fact that Iran's ambition can be gratified through joint venture in Russia, the Islamic Republic's effectiveness as being in an assertive position will be defeated. This prospective solution may satisfy only those who fear Iran's nuclear ambitions, but would be a political setback susceptible to displease those offended by the IAEA's extra-legal pressures on Iran. Moreover, in such a circumstance, Iran's enormous investment for various enrichment plants will become out of use and idle. For the patriotic forces in Iran, these extra-legal pressures and suspicions will be interpreted as institutionalizing the dependent rather than interdependence of Iran's political structure within the global community. The political costs of such an eventual concession are indeed an important parameter that should be taken into account in any future negotiations. Last but not the least is the

27. *Kayhan*, 14 Azar 1384/05.12.2005; and *Iran*, 14 Azar 1384/05.12.2005.

28. *Jom-e Jam*, Azar 14 1384/05.12.2005.

29. Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Iran Daily*, 26.11.2005, p. 1.

30. See Statements of the Director General to the IAEA Board of Governors, 24.11.2005, Vienna, Austria.

challenge arising from this proposal. The negotiating team of Iran well understands the adverse costs of rejecting the proposal. In this case, then Russia and other perplexing parties will not hesitate to join the consensus sought by the United States and this would probably pave the way for referral of the case to the UN Security Council. Analytically speaking, the Islamic Republic's assertive discourse over its peaceful nuclear technology could turn Islamic regime in a comparable situation to the patriotic democracy of Premier Mossadeq. US liability due to its coup against Mossadeq for his *de jure* attempt in nationalization of petroleum taught an instructive lesson to the political elites of the Islamic Republic. As it appears, the Islamic Republic is determined to capitalize on its more sophisticated achievement in peaceful nuclear technology as a vehement means on two counts: to invigorate its plummeting legitimacy both through demonstrating its technological efficiency and its effective foreign policy through effectiveness and to pre-empt the prospective attempt to remove it from the power. In fact, the Islamic Republic has long been criticized for its "poor achievements" of Iran in the post-revolutionary period. The horrendous impacts of these accusations have already caused bottlenecks for the political maneuvers of the Islamic Republic.

Under Ahmadinejad, due to the adverse situations created in both domestic and international environments, Tehran has felt compelled to entice its public opinion in support of its nuclear technology. Increasingly, it is emerging as a "national pride". According to Felahat Pisheh-Majlis deputy at National Security Committee, "People should be informed about the impact of the coward retreat on the future destiny of Iran-to remain a part of Third World.

Assertiveness to Negotiate: Neither a Rogue Nor a Collapsing Regime

As times go by, there emerges some op-ed and political statements regarding both the assertiveness of the Islamic Republic and dialogue with the EU-3 to convince of benign nature of Iran's nuclear technology.

Notwithstanding the direct refusal, the same dailies publish the “reluctant but necessity” of resolving differences with the US, though very indirectly. For instance, the very traditional and moderate Imami Kashani, Leader of Friday Prayer Sermon on December 9, 2005, expressed the purposeful assertiveness of “Iranian nation” to support the Islamic Republic's plea for maintaining its peaceful nuclear technology. Whereas he has played a sustained role in screening the applications for candidacy of various individuals based upon their nationalist tendencies, he seized the opportunity to warn the EU-3 and US about the national conscience in this round of anti-West challenge: “The arrogance should know it is facing the 70 million Iranian nation and can by no means be able to meet its objectives.” He then went on to criticize the silence of the Summit in the recent meeting of Organization of Islamic Countries on December 6-9 2005, in support of Iran: “Unfortunately in this meeting they kept mum against the legal rights of countries, including Iran, because enemies do not wish the world of Islam get powerful and they do not like our country be in such a scientific position.”³¹ Of course, he did not elaborate on the mechanisms whereby “enemies” of the “world of Islam” has influenced the Summit of the OIC.

Other Iranian politicians built upon the sad occasion of the arising from the crash of the C-130 military carrier-aircraft in their opposition to the crude ideological rigidness in dealing with the security of Iranians and the national interest of Iran. In this respect, there lies a tacit reference to the Iran-US.³² Emad Afroogh- the right wing deputy turned critical of Ahmadinejad infers to this possibility in the following terms, while expressed his doubts over the inclusion of the Aircrafts' spare-parts in the sanction, he emphasizes: “If these sanctions are in force, certainly it's the moral and legal responsibility of those who create obstacles for the country to update its technological know-how according to its needs: “For (Ahmadinejad's) administration having a pro-justice stance and emphasizing on the balance between power and responsibility in its political rhetoric, this necessity is doubly more important.” Mohammad Reza Bahonar, the

31. Iran News, 10.12.2005.

32. Rooz Online.com, 11.12.2005.

powerful Deputy-Speaker of the Seventh Majlis, concedes to the “impacts of the sanction.”³³ Roozonline reports “this is the first time that Iranian authorities refer to the impacts arising from the continued sanctions on the crash of an aircraft....It is without any precedence in previous 26 years, or in cases mentioned the military and administrative officials denied it.” More astonishing is the report by Hamshahri daily regarding “secret issues” involving the crash, and the “summon of the Chief Editor of Hamshahri to the Ministry of Intelligence.”³⁴

Of course, there are rival factions in Iran's political landscape. On the positive side, there are idealists in Iran who assess the pressure by the US and EU-3 as a bargain chip to normalize relation with Iran. Contrary to previous rebuffs, the hitherto hard-liner daily “Islamic Republic” has surprisingly assessed for scenarios ahead of Iran for negotiation with the US. The author of the editorial juxtaposes two apparent separate events: Iran's demand for uranium enrichment on its own territory and the US opts for negotiating on Iraq with Iran. According to the first scenario, the US once again would like to engage Iran in the process to solve its own crisis in Iraq as in Afghanistan and other cases. The second best scenario emerges due to the change in assertive President Bush administration to assess the Iraqi fiasco only as a pretext for resolving its chronic cold war with Iran. Whereas the op-ed rejects the first unbalanced option, he favors the seizure of opportunity and ask US to comply with Iran's long-held request, primarily posed by Ayatollah Khomeini: release of Iran's frozen assets, written apology by US for its hitherto intervention in Iran's domestic affairs, and the pledge to refrain from intervening in future. According to the third scenario, the US is trying to pacify Iran's revolutionary status, without complying with its liabilities. In the final analysis, the op-ed concludes that “the current situation whereby US needs Iran to salvage itself from Iraq, is the best opportunity for to ask for concessions. In case, Iran misses this opportunity, Iran will never have similar opportunity.”³⁵

33. *Sobhe Eqtesad*, 10.12.2005.

34. *Rooz Online.com*, 11.12.2005.

35. Cited by *Sobhe Eqtesad*, 06.12.2005.

Sharq Daily also reflects the same opinion. According to this similar op-ed, “American objective is to restrict the talk with Iran only to Iraqi issue, fight against terrorism, finding a solution to the ongoing instability in Iraq and achieving the desirable security measures. It is crystal clear that this is not what the Islamic Republic is pursuing in a hypothetical negotiation with US. The Islamic Republic can make a compromise deal with US: To exchange its support for solving US crisis in Iraq with that of its own problem in IAEA.”³⁶

This accommodative attitude coincided with the similar trend in the US. Geoffrey Kemp appreciates the strategic value of Iran for assisting US policies in Iraq, notwithstanding his resentment arising from the assertiveness of Iranian leaders: “(D)espite Iran's undoubted success in embedding itself deeply into Iraq politics and its continued, almost gleeful defiance of the United States, EU and...IAEA on the nuclear issue, it would be unwise for Iran's leaders to take their current good luck for granted. (Iran) faces significant social and economic challenges that can only be made more difficult by alienating the West.”³⁷

Hamid Reza Asefi-Foreign Ministry spokesman-officially announces Iran's general will for negotiations on its nuclear technology: “Iran has no problem with resuming talks. But it will not accept condition talks under pressure...Instead of sending mixed signals, the EU should practically show it is interested in talks.”³⁸ In a later press conference, as a confidence-building measure, he tried to relieve the Western counterparts of Iran by rejecting the emergent allegations surfacing against Iran's intention to produce nuclear bomb: The answer is only “(o)ne word: it's a lie. It needs no more explanation. I hope Mr. ELBaradei tries to keep his agency far from being involved in political games and to pursue its professional and technical duties. We had a good and constructive cooperation with El-Bradei and like him, we also wish to put an end to Iran's nuclear dossier.”³⁹ Similar

36. Cited by *Sobhe Eqtesad*, 07.12.2005.

37. *Iran News*, 07.12.2005.

38. *Iran News*, 05.12.2005.

39. *Iran News*, 10.10.2005.

position has been given by the Seventh Majlis Speaker: "The Iranian nation will proudly advance the goals of the Islamic Revolution and will never surrender to bullying and will proceed with its legitimate rights....We have made clear that Iran follows regulation of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran is a signatory to Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT.) Iran implemented Additional Protocol to NPT voluntary to build confidence with international community and ensure that Iranian nuclear program is civilian....We have proved our good faith by opening up Iranian nuclear sites to IAEA inspectors in the past two years."⁴⁰ President Ahmadinejad: "I said I'll do every thing in order to uphold our national interest....We don't want to be at war with the world."⁴¹ Secretary of the Supreme National Security of Iran-Ali Larijani also joins this conciliatory attitude:

Our Country will not object to any proposal for enrichment of uranium inside Iran. Russia or any other country would be welcomed if they put forward such an offer....Of course the proposal should aim to resolve the problem not to erase the entirety of the problem. The new proposal should respect Iran's right to enrich the uranium on its territory and ensure non-Iranian parties that Iranian nuclear program will not be diverted from civilian application....We allowed the inspection to show that Iranian nuclear program is transparent....(In other words,) Iran is obliged to accept the IAEA demands within regulation of the Agency.⁴²

Islamic Republic's spokesman for Committee on National Security of Seventh Majlis further also emphasizes on Iran's accommodative approach. According to him a compromise deal is within the reach: "For example the proposal for joint enrichment both in Iran and Russia." He emphatically rules out the division of labor in enrichment process. Rather he asserts on Ahmadinejad's position: "No! We will use all our capacity in enrichment including our capital investment in Natanz. In the meantime, we would counter-propose this: Iran will secure most of our needs from joint venture with Russia....Natanz is not sufficient to all our needs. The rest will be enriched in Russia....We will sustain the enrichment within the country and powerfully remain emphatic on our position."⁴³

40. *Iran News*, 04.10.2005.

41. *Iran News*, 03.10.2005.

42. *Iran News*, 06.12.2005.

43. *Quds*, Azar 6 1384/27.11.2005.

In such an accommodative circumstance, El-Baradei reflects the necessity of attempts aimed at building mutual confidence between Iran and the West:

I know they are trying to acquire the full fuel cycle. I know that acquiring the full fuel cycle means that a country is months away from nuclear weapons, and that applies to Iran and every body else....That is why there is the concern of the international community about Iran....You would open a Pandora box....Everybody would hurt.... There would be efforts to isolate Iran: Iran retaliates; and at the end of the day you have to go back to the negotiating table to find the solution.⁴⁴

This scholar does not have any hard fact about the undisclosed interactions behind the scene. Nonetheless, he is of the opinion that both sides started to seize the nuclear dossier as an opportunity to have the ice between Iran-US melted. Analytically speaking, it might look logically ironical to expect the ideological assertiveness in both Tehran and Washington could ever conduce to a constructive dialogue. The counter-argument emerges from the empirical facts. Historical evidences abound regarding the potentials of more assertive administrations in settling highly-charged disputes. The achievements of ideologically assertive Richard Nixon's in reaching out to the hitherto ideologically taboo regimes of China and Soviet Union have made the most viable precedence in the past century. The new assertiveness of the Ahmadinejad's administration can also be an asset to accommodate more convenient ground for negotiation with his ideologically assertive counterpart- President Bush- having already reciprocated the misnomer of "Great Satan" by labeling Iran as a part of "Axis of Evil". The same assertive President instructed the US Ambassador Khalilzad to Iraq to conduct a limited dialogue with Iran in early December 2005. Unlike the previous occasion, the strictly controlled print media under Ahmadinejad started to elaborate on the hitherto taboo issue of US-Iran Relations. Of course, due to both domestic and foreign factors, the Islamic Republic is in a very favorable situation for negotiation than any time before.

44. Cited from Independent by *Iran News*, 06.12.2005.

On one hand, the hard-line fundamentalists are sitting in the cart-horse position. Subsequently, the new administration is not threatened by a strong hard-line opposition. On the other hand, the new administration needs to substitute practical solutions for their earlier shifting positions in terms of either ideological militancy in opposition or populist rhetoric during previous three elections. From international perspective, US problems in Iraq and Afghanistan have its due blessings for Iran. Consequently, the Islamic Republic well understand the merits of this emergent context for a favorable win-win exit strategy for all parties involved, at all global, regional and national levels.

In practical terms, the Islamic Republic seems to have learnt though inadvertently to advance the dialectics of its foreign policy objectives with alternate means of ideological assertiveness or ad-hoc compromises. Instead of fused trends in the past, all factions in the Islamic Republic are striking a more positive balance between ideology and interest on one hand and the rival international interests in terms of West and the new East, namely China, India, Russia,...and Singapore, on the other. A short glance at print media in Iran on November 27 explicitly verifies this shift: "Majlis delegation Heads for Singapore,"... "Europeans, Iranians Mull Natural Gas Line,"... "Iran to establish Joint Oil Brokerage with Leading Stock Markets Worldwide,"... "Supreme Leader's Advisor in Riyadh."⁴⁵ Yet this list is supplemented by other reinforcing trends in other pages: "India's 'Tremendous' Diplomatic Efforts Helped Avert a Vote on Iran."⁴⁶

The preceding statements well demonstrate Iran's compromising approach as a drastic shift in post-revolutionary developments in Iran's politics. Notwithstanding the short-term practical modification in Ahmadinejad's regio-globalist ambitions, it seems scientifically plausible to expect in the longer-term, the rising pressures on the Islamic Republic would sooner or later force Ahmadinejad to justify his failing policies in

45. *Iran News*, 27.11.2005, p.2.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

ideological terms. This shift does not disturb fundamentalists. In fact they would help them to justify their failures by accusing foreign agents as the culprit in their failures. The non-democratic measure of bestowing new supervisory role for Expediency Council headed by Rafsanjani and fed by intellectual support of “Center for Strategic Studies” respectively supervised and directed by former President Khatami and former Secretary of Supreme Council of National security-Hassan Rohani- has left rooms for avoiding such a disastrous pitfall.

In a bid to exit from this precarious situation, it is imperative to think of a workable solution. This solution needs compromises by both sides. First is the attempt to sustainable confidence-building between Iran and the West. This is a *sine-qua-non* for any successful solution, due to earlier hostile discourse between the parties involved. Second is an acceptable solution to the frustrated public opinion of Iranians. Iran should assure that the enrichment process to be done in Iran, though under IAEA's strict supervision. Third refers to the problem of objective guarantees. This shall be resolved by bringing in new partners within the framework of Iran's president proposition at the UN General Assembly and the related domestic legislation allowing the government to that effect. The actual modalities of this partnership should be studied by specialists. Fourth, the partnership of foreigners must attend to both Iran's obsession toward a dependent situation and the international community concerns over precluding diversion from peaceful means. The exact detail of this agreement should be rigorously worked out by the parties.

Iran is now deeply concerned about the possibility of existing tricky trap in Russian proposal. The Islamic Republic well understands the adverse impacts of the rejection of the proposal offhand. On one hand, if Iran concedes to it, this may achieve only a fraction of the objectives the West is pursuing with respect to Iran. Since, Iran's nuclear case is only one main element of the prevailing squabble between Iran and the West. As we know, other thorny issues such as human rights, terrorism, Middle East peace process, Iraq security are on the table as well. Human rights issue and the

hostility between Iran and Israel needed to be dealt with. Iraq is the bargain chip of Iran in this negotiation. Caught in a quagmire, the United States is not in a position to disregard Iran's influence and impact upon the internal situation in Iraq.

Theoretical Generalization and Practical Orientations: The Conceptual Framework

Notwithstanding the new round of brinkmanship between the Islamic Republic and the West, the Islamic Republic is seeking to prevent a confrontation with the West or international community. In the meantime, the Islamic Republic in this respect tries to capitalize on Iranians' misfortunate historical memory. Due to its strategic significance, a weak Iran will remain as dependent on others, whereas a stronger Iran can engage in the emergent processes of globalization rather interdependently. Within the hegemonic New World Order and the hierarchical international system, the alternative choice for Iran lies on a spectrum from misfortunate dependence to fortunate interdependence. Iran is becoming both a bridge for global interaction with both Caspian and Persian Gulf sub-regions and the buffer zone to frustrate destabilizing forces capitalizing on primordial forces such as ethnicity and religion. Unlike the preceding eras of Cold War and early heydays of the Revolutionary backlash, Iran's interests will be served by proactive interaction both other regional and global actors.

Against this complementary background, due to the security concerns of regional actors (Arabs and Israelis), Iranian relations with the West and US become captive of a destructive cold war confrontation revolving now over nuclear issue. The global interests of other competing regional powers such as Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were better served by this cold war. In spite of attitudinal change in Iran, the transition from either client-patron or instead cold war to more constructive interdependent relations has still proved difficult for both parties of the game. Both sides are still speculating on apparently false presumptions to reinforce

misunderstanding and mutual distrust. Neither side does try to build confidence in the adversary. West strives hard to sustain its belief in the covert attempt by the Islamic Republic to develop nuclear bomb-albeit Iran invited all countries to directly engage in joint-ventures in areas suggested by US experts over the need Iran has to peaceful nuclear technology. The US has already built a major global consensus against Iran. On the other hand, the Islamic Republic interprets the Western intention as to increasing pressures on it in a bid to divert its attention from developing its human resources and domestic technology. They are suspicious of the US intention in retreating from their earlier assessment for Iran under Shah to need nuclear plants for energy.

Due to the adverse impacts of Iran's benign attempt to commit itself to confidence-building measure, and the new extra-legal demands made by IAEA to force Iran to resign from its legal rights within additional NPT protocol, Iran's approach in foreign policy has started to shift in favor of reversing the previous trend in terms of more assertiveness even in the final days of Khatami's incumbency. In the meantime, the Islamic Republic officials were fully cautious to demonstrate its satisfaction over the extra demands posed on Iran apparently due to allegedly unwarranted lenience on behalf of Iran. In short, Iran was very outspoken in justifying its emergent assertiveness as only a defensive measure deemed necessary to support its threatened bargaining power in the prospective negotiation. The Islamic Republic is determined to maintain Iran's legal right in acquiring peaceful nuclear technology. In fact, this nuclear technology has increasingly become an efficiency source of domestic legitimacy of the Islamic Republic. Hence, the change in attitude is not a by-product of the change in political administration. Instead, it is a change in approach of the Islamic regime as a whole. Unlike differences in other political discourses, the ideological administration of Ahmadinejad is determined to pursue the same moderate objectives set earlier in the 20-year vision though with more assertiveness. That is the Islamic Republic will capitalize on its transparent document in favor of social development. The announcement of the decision to build a nuclear plant by internal human resource and the symbolic significance of

purchasing of "29 Tor M-1 mobile system capable of bringing down both aircraft and missiles," demonstrates both the peaceful objective and the firm resolve of the Islamic Republic to defend its security.⁴⁷

This objective has earlier been devised to expedite aspiration of the Islamic Republic regarding revival its leading regional status by 1404/2025. Due to the failures of moderate discourses of reformist Khatami (1997-2005,) or pragmatist Rafsanjani (1989-1997,) assertiveness has been deemed required for securing a badly needed better deal on nuclear dossier for Iran. The combination arising from strategic document of 20-year vision with ideological crews in Ahmadinejad's administration will produce more flexibility within the hitherto cautious foreign policy of the country, particularly in respect to the nuclear technology. That is the Islamic Republic will try a more flexible foreign policy defined in terms of proactive interaction. This flexibility signifies of the emergence of a spectrum in the Islamic Republic's politics. Ahmadinejad's foreign policy will register as an antithesis of the foreign policy implemented by previous two administrations. Yet both approaches easily fit the general framework of proactive foreign policy.

Regarding the nuclear issue, Iran's foreign policy would be in search of a plausible solution. In case, it is offered a face-saving exit solution apparently reinforcing its claimed assertiveness; the Islamic Republic would seize the opportunity. Iran is now in search of a win-win solution whereby both the Islamic Republic and the US reach a compromise deal down the road. Under such a circumstance, the ideological administrations of Bush and Ahmadinejad will achieve the frustrated goal sought by their previous moderate counterparts. Subsequently, the ideological assertive discourse on one hand will expedite Iran's moderate strategic vision to transform Iran's unfavorable status within the existing globalized international system rather than romantically to set for change of the entire system in its own favor. On the other hand, Iran would help Bush administration for a safe-facing exit solution from Iraq.

47. *Iran News*, 05.12.2005.

A Conceptualized Conclusion

Theoretically speaking, it might be appropriate to generalize on scenarios regarding general orientations in Iran's foreign policy under the Ahmadinejad. The trend seems to revolve around one of following four choices: ideological, militant, assertive and pragmatists. Due to the security background of most forces in Ahmadinejad's administration and the social forces behind it, the hegemony of pro-status quo discourse or instead anti-status quo discourse depends upon the emerging trend arising from the following three dyads: 1. Confrontational-Interactive, 2. Assertive-Expressive and 3. Rigid-Flexible political style.

Notwithstanding Ahmadinejad's ideological proclivity and crews arrangement is in favor of the triad described in terms of confrontational, expressive and rigid, the socio-political context of Iran has already been defined in terms of the 20-year vision. The document calls for interactive, assertive and flexible political style. As a result, the two extremes of pure ideological and pragmatist orientation are out of context for a while. The general trend in mid-term foreign policy of Iran will be in favor of either militant or assertive or a mid-ground between the two. As a result, Iran will not revert to its earlier revolution's anti-status quo position. Nor it will go to the general pragmatic and reformist eras under either Rafsanjani or Khatami. In case, the face-saving solutions of Russia should not conduce to final detent between US and Iran, the incumbent regime would require incriminating the US and Israel in particular and the entire West in general as the main culprit in its ambitious goal. Iran will need more expressive claimed policy in foreign field to compensate its actual failing policies. Iran's foreign policy will turn to militancy. Due to its limited resources, the Islamic Republic had to form alliance with like-minded forces such as North Korea, Cuba, Syria and Venezuela. In case, the process proceeds to its logical conclusion and normal relations with US, the Islamic Republic will be assertive. In this case, Iran will be in search of genuine cooperation with the world, though expressing its dissent in its claimed policy. In this case, the Islamic Republic would act more similar to post-WWII Franco-Spain or De Gaulle.