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**IRAN’S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN
SINCE THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION**

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ÖZET

İSLAM DEVRİMİNDEN İTİBAREN İRAN'IN AFGANİSTANA YÖNELİK DIŞ POLİTİKASI

Bu çalışma İran'ın Afganistan'a yönelik dış politikasının sadece Humeyni'nin ideolojik söylemlerine mi yoksa pragmatist dış politika anlayışına da mı dayandığı sorusuna cevap aramayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu sorunun cevabını ararken Ayetullah Humeyni'nin dış politika görüşlerine ve İran'ın Afganistan politikasının etkileyen önemli uluslararası gelişmelere odaklanılacaktır. Bundan dolayı, bu çalışmada, İran'ın Afganistan politikasını analiz ederken bölümler Soğuk Savaş, İran İslam Devrimi, Sovyetlerin Afganistan'ı işgali, Afgan sivil savaşı, Taliban'ın yükselişi ve 11 Eylül gibi İran dış politikası için kritik olduğu kadar dünya siyaseti açısından da kritik olan uluslararası olaylara göre sınıflandırılmıştır. İslam Devrimi'nden sonra İran'ın dış politika söylemi Şah Pehlevi'nin batı yanlısı görüşlerinden Humeyni'nin ideolojik kavramlarına ve Batı karşıtı görüşlerine dönüşse de, bu çalışmada, İran'ın Afganistan politikasının büyük ölçüde, İranlıların dış politikasını ulusal çıkarları üzerine kurmaya sevk eden ve İranı bölgesel güvenlik kaygılarına sevkeden uluslararası gelişmelere göre şekillendiği savunulmaktadır. Bu uluslararası gelişmeler çerçevesinde, bu tezin bir amacı da, İran'ın Afganistana yönelik dış politikasının arkasındaki ideolojik ve etnik saik olan, Afganistan'daki Şii azınlık ile İranlıların tarihi ilişkisini ortaya koymaktır. Ayrıca, ulusal çıkar ve güvenlik gibi realist yaklaşıma ait kavramların İslam Devrimi'nden önceki dönemlerde olduğu gibi İran'ın dış politikasında ön planda tutulmaya devam edildiği savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Humeyni, Ulusal çıkarlar, Dış Politika, Realizm, Pragmatizm, Retorik

ABSTRACT

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

This thesis aims to find answer to the question whether Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan after the Islamic Revolution have depended only on ideological rhetorics of Khomeini or, also on pragmatic foreign policy approach. While finding answer to the question, this study focuses on foreign policy views of Ayatollah Khomeini and important international developments affecting Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. So, in this study, for analysing Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, stages were classified according to the international events, such as the Cold War, Islamic Revolution, Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Afghan civil war, rising of Taliban and the 9/11 Attacks, which were crucial for Iranian foreign policy as well as world politics. However, Iran's foreign policy transformed into Khomeini's ideological views after the Islamic Revolution, in this study, it is argued that Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was considerably shaped according to international developments which caused Iran to concern about her regional security that forced her to base their foreign policy on national interests. Within the framework of these international developments, one of the aims of thesis is to reveal close relationship between Iranian and Shiite minority living in Afghanistan which was ideological and ethnic motive behind the Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. It is also argued in this study that, after the Islamic Revolution, Iran continued to prioritize the concepts of the realism like national interests and security, same as the periods before the Islamic Revolution.

Keywords: Khomeini, National interests, Foreign policy, Realism, Pragmatism, Rhetoric

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BİLİMSEL ETİK.....	i
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ KABUL FORMU.....	ii
ÖZET.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Subject of the Research.....	2
The Research Question of Thesis.....	3
Purpose of the Research.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Methods of Data Collection.....	7
Organization of Thesis.....	8
1.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	9
1.1.Introduction.....	9
1.2.Foreign Policy and Realism.....	9
1.3.Foreign Policy Making Process.....	12
1.4.The term of Rhetoric and Khomeini's Rhetoric.....	14
1.5.Foreign Policy and Pragmatism.....	15

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN.....	18
2.1. Introduction.....	18
2.2. Iran's Quest for Regional Security After the World War I.....	21
2.3. The Cold War Period and Iran's Fall Under the Influence of the USA.....	24
2.4. Road to the Islamic Revolution	28
2.5. Conclusion.....	33
3. IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN IN 1980s.....	35
3.1. Introduction.....	35
3.2. The Islamic Revolution of Iran.....	35
3.3. The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan	40
3.3.1. The Resistance of Afghan Mujahideen.....	47
3.4. Conclusion.....	55
4. IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN IN THE 1990s....	58
4.1. Introduction.....	58
4.2. The Afghan Civil War.....	60
4.2.1. The Emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan.....	67
4.3. Conclusion.....	80
5. IRAN'S QUEST FOR INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN IN THE POST 9/11 ERA.....	83
5.1. Introduction.....	83
5.2. Iran's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan After The Toppling of Taliban.....	84
5.2.1. Ahmedinejad's Era	90

5.2.2. The Softened Foreign Policy of Rouhani.....	99
5.3.Conclusion.....	108
6. CONCLUSION.....	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	



Table 1: Donor Pledges for Afghanistan in Tokyo Conference (2002).....	89
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ABBREVIATIONS

BSA	Bilateral Security Agreement
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
EU	European Union
HIA	Harkat-e Islami Afghanistan
HIH	Hezb-e Islami (Islamic Party)
HWIA	Hezb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan (the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan)
JIA	Jama'iat-e Islami (Islamic Society)
JIP	Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan Party (Islamic Society Party)
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
ISI	Inter -Services Intelligence
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organizations
NASR	Sazeman-e Nasr
NIFDA	National Islamic Front for the Deliverance of Afghanistan
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PDPA	Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SAVAK	Sazemane Etteleat va Amniyate Keshvar (Organization of Intelligence and National Security of Iran)
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCO	Shangay Cooperation Organization
SIEIA	Shura-e-Inghalabi Etefaqh-e-Islami
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction



INTRODUCTION

Iran and Afghanistan are two neighbouring countries in a region in which the people have historical, linguistic and cultural ties with each other. Iranians has very close relations with the Afghans, Tajiks, Persianian speakers in Herat, and the Shiite Hazaras living in central and northern Afghanistan.¹ Iran's official language, known as modern Persian or Farsi, is also widely spoken in Afghanistan, where it is called Dari, and Tajikistan, where it is simply referred to as Tajik.² About 30 million people are living in Afghanistan and there are many ethnic groups living in Afghanistan. The main ethnic groups living in Afghanistan are: Tajiks, Hazaras, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Aimags, Turkmens, Baluchis. Among these groups, Pashtuns, are the main ethnic tribes in Afghanistan, they constitute about 40 to 45 percent of Afghanistan's population.³

Influence of Iran in Afghanistan runs deep. Herat was not only the capital of the Persian Empire in the early fifteenth century, but also it was centre of Iranian power and culture. Dost Mohammed Khan took Herat in 1863 and made a de facto Afghan border state.⁴ Iran's interests in Herat are geopolitical. The Hazara Shiites, who claimed to be descendents of Genghis, lived in the mountain and plains of the western province of Nimruz.⁵ As it has been throughout history, there is a great struggle in that part of Asia region which includes Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India between hegemonic powers, such as; the USA, Russia, India and China and

¹Greg Bruno and Lionel Beehner "Iran and the Future of Afghanistan". Accessed on February 19, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/iran-future-afghanistan/p13578>.

² Arthur G. Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East: Understand The People, The Politics, And The Culture Of This Conflicted Region*, (Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 2011), 226, Proquest Ebook Central.

³Thomas Barfield "Afghanistan's Ethnic Puzzle, Decentralizing Power Before the U.S. Withdrawal" *Foreign Affairs* 90, no.5(September/October 2011):54-65.

⁴Bill Samii "For Century-Old Water Dispute". Accessed on March 09, 2019, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1061209.html>.

⁵ Gulshan Dietl "War, Peace and the Warlords: The Case of Ismail Khan of Herat in Afghanistan" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 3, No.2-3 (Summer&Fall 2004).

other western powers. So, as a regional power, Iran has great concerns for the region, especially for Afghanistan that her southeast neighbour. Iran considers that having control of Afghanistan will pave the way for her to control the energy resources of the region and to ensure her regional security.

The Subject of the Research

The subject of this study is Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan since the Islamic Revolution. Throughout history, Iran had been one of the major regional actors in the struggle for influence over Afghanistan. During Shah Rıza Pahlavi's period, Iran had close relations with Western countries after the World War II. But since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, relations on both sides deteriorated. Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution, argued that western countries were the enemy of the Muslims and it was important to establish an Islamic cooperation among Muslim countries. With the Islamic Revolution, the foreign policy of Iran was based on some Islamic principles.⁶ According to The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, these principles are that Iran is based on the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defence of the rights of all Muslims, nonalignment with respect to the hegemonist superpowers.⁷

As a neighbour to Iran, Afghanistan has geopolitical importance for Iranian foreign policy. On the one hand Afghanistan plays a very vital role in Iran's regional security and on the other hand, Iran has close relationship with the Shiite minorities in Afghanistan - who compose of about 15 percent of the Afghanistan's population. After the Islamic Revolution, Iran's relations with the Islamic groups in Afghanistan, especially with Shiite minority, increased. From the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the present, contrary to foreign policy principles stated in the Constitution of the

⁶ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chapter 1, Article 2 [Foundational Principles]. Accessed on March 15, 2019, <http://en.mfa.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=3&fkeyid=&siteid=3&pageid=2144>

⁷ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chapter 10, article 152, Accessed on March 15, 2019, <http://en.mfa.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=3&fkeyid=&siteid=3&pageid=2144>

Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranians could not secure the rights all of Muslims in Afghanistan. Rather, Iranian leaders preferred to keep close relations only Shiite minority so as to keep her regional interests.

The Research Question of Thesis

Despite countries differ from each other while shaping their foreign policy in the frame of their ambitions, ideology, leaders, geography, interests and the other motives, Realism is in a central position in the contemporary foreign policy decision making process. According to Realism, the objectives of foreign policy of states must be defined in terms of national interest, not ideological ambitions in the international relations. As one of the most important realist thinker, Hans J. Morgenthau, asserts that national interest is defined in terms of power. Realism argue that national interests of a state are determined by its position in international arena and states consider defining their foreign policy in accordance with balance of power which is described necessary outgrowth of foreign policy.⁸ Balance of power is described as that one or more states' power being used to balance that of another states or groups of states. However, sometimes the definition of the national interests depends largely on the type of domestic society and culture of a state. The states adopting ideological foreign policy have some principles which are based on their religion and political culture of their society. The states that adopt ideological foreign policy establish their foreign policy mostly on those principles. Sometimes ideological foreign policy ambitions and national interests of any state could intersect in some international cases. In that cases statemen could have to implement pragmatic foreign policy towards any states in order to keep national interests which are essential for survival of itself.⁹

Whether adopt realist foreign policy or ideological foreign policy, sometimes states could implement pragmatic foreign policy in their relations with other states.

⁸ Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126, Ebook Central.

⁹ Joseph S.Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, Sixth Edition, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 50.

Pragmatic statemen, whether ideological or realist, focus only on consequences of any events. Pragmatic foreign policy aims to base foreign policy on national interests like realism. Despite pragmatists focus on power like realists, they consider to establish alingments with other states.

Before the Islamic Revolution, Shah Reza Pahlavi based Iran's foreign policy on Realism and he implemented pragmatic foreign policy which prioritized only Iran's national interests. During the Cold War, Shah Reza Pahlavi considered to make Iran the dominant power in the Middle East. The Islamic Revolution, which was one of the turning points in Iran's history, was the beginning of a new era for the Middle East as well as Muslim countries such as Afghanistan. Due to Shiite minorities residing in Afghanistan, Iran has great concerns on developments in Afghanistan. However Khomeini's ideological foreign policy rhetoric towards Afghanistan, in this study, I tried to answer the question: Since the Islamic Revolution, has Iran based her foreign policy towards Afghanistan only on Khomeini's ideological rhetoric or also on pragmatic foreign policy that focused only on national interests. According to Khomeini's ideological foreign policy rhetoric, Islamic principles which are enshrined in the Constitution of Iran, should rather be prioritized in Iran's foreign policy. In this study, I tried to find out whether Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan since the Islamic Revolution has been established on Islamic principles or Iran's national interests.

Purpose of the Research

The geopolitical position of Afghanistan has made it one of the most important intersection points in the world, attracting more regional and global powers as it has been in the past. Recently, these countries including the USA, the Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan, use Afghanistan as a battlefield to carry out proxy wars. Afghanistan shares a border with Iran, and it is thought to be the opening of Iran to Central Asia. Thus, any development occuring in Afghanistan caused concerns for Iranian foreign policy makers.

The purpose of this research is to pinpont the motives of Iran's foreign policy

towards Afghanistan since the Islamic Revolution. As a model to other Muslim countries, Khomeini supported Afghan Mujaheddin when the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan. But, in the 1980s, Khomeini had to prioritize the regional security as a consequence of the war against Iraq. Thus, Iran's support to Afghan Mujaheddin was limited. In the post- Cold War period, the main foreign policy perspectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Afghanistan did not change. During the period of civil war in Afghanistan and then the period of Taliban, Islamic Iran supported various Muslim groups against Taliban and struggled with Muslim countries like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for economic and political influence in Afghanistan. In the post 9/11 period, Iran also continued to seek economic and political influences on Afghanistan rather than the ambitions of the Khomeini's Islamic Revolution. Another purpose of this research is to set forth Iran's foreign policy actions in the face of these important regional and international developments which made profound effects on foreign policy of Iran towards Afghanistan.

Significance of the Study

Under Khomeini, Iran's foreign policy rhetoric towards Afghanistan completely changed compared with the term before the Islamic Revolution. While before the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was based only on realist concept that focused on Iran's national power and economic interests. In order to reach the economic and political achievements, Shah Reza Pahlavi implemented a pragmatic foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Since the Islamic Revolution, Khomeini began to use ideological rhetoric on issues related to Iran's foreign policy. However, Khomeini sometimes had to continued pragmatic foreign policy approach towards Afghanistan. In this study, readers will find the opportunity to figure out what the perspectives of Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan in certain domestic and international circumstances. While figuring out the perspectives of Iran foreign policy towards Afghanistan, it is important to understand that perspectives of Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan are not only related to Afghanistan but also regional security against global powers such as the USA and the Soviet Union/Russia. Thus, to balance the hegemonic powers, the USA and Soviet Union, Iran implemented

pragmatic foreign policy related to Afghanistan issue. This pragmatic foreign policy consisted of supporting various groups in Afghanistan and not to cutting diplomatic and economic ties with Soviet Union/Russia and the USA. Even, when the communist Soviet Union occupied muslim Afghanistan, Iran did not disrupt her relations with the Soviet Union, due to prevent the Soviet military aid to Saddam and to balance the US diplomatic pressure .

After the Islamic Revolution, the new regime in Iran was cautious about relations with the USA and the Soviet Union. The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the communist coup in Afghanistan were one of the most important breaking points in the relations between Iran and Afghanistan. After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Khomeini, stated his concerns over the danger of a communist regime in his neighbourhood. Hence, Iran along with the USA began to support Islamic groups, especially Shiites, against Afghan government and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Thus, when assessing Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, this study tries to demonstrate that it is impossible to analyze Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan without understanding the struggle for Afghanistan between hegemonic powers, like the USA and the Soviet Union/Russia.

The research on Iran's foreign policy generally composes in the frame of Iran's relations with global powers including the USA, Russia and other regional powers like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Israel. However, there are not sufficient studies in the literature of foreign policy that especially focuses on Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Thus, this study not only reviews the Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, but also contributes to understanding of the geopolitical importance of Afghanistan and the deep rift between the two important denominations of Islam, Iran and Saudi Arabia, relating to Afghanistan issue. This thesis will also set forth the complicated relations that include both cooperation and rivalry between regional powers, like Iran, Pakistan, India, which seek to take role of regional leader in South Asia region.

Methods of Data Collection

In this thesis, firstly, the findings were obtained from regional and international events in the historical process that made profound effect on Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan by using historical research method that attempted to systematically recapture the events and even ideas of people in the past that have influenced and shaped the present.¹⁰ Historical research method relies on wide variety of primary and secondary sources including legal documents, newspaper, books, articles, etc.¹¹ Secondly, these historical process was traced and historical events were examined using the case study method which focused both religious and ideological elements including ethnicity, religion and realist concepts including regional security and economic interests. To accomplish, this thesis was mainly organized according to the basic developments in Iran's political history and important events in the region, including the Islamic Revolution, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Afghan civil war, emergence of Taliban, the 9/11 Attacks and then the US intervention in Afghanistan in order to topple Taliban. In order to shed more light on the subject sometimes it would be appropriate to refer to the US foreign policy towards Iran and Afghanistan – the development of a flow-axis, Iran-Afghanistan-the USA.

While examining the evolution of Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan I focused the successive epochs in which Iran's foreign policy was determined by different political actors of Iran. While collecting the data, I used both primary data collection method that includes legal documents and secondary data collection method that includes books, newspapers, journals and online portals, etc.¹² Since the books on Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan are limited in number, this creates perhaps the biggest constraint on this research. However, I have extensively read different materials ranging from newspapers, books, documents to journal

¹⁰ "Historical Research Method", Accessed on May 13,2019, <https://ecu.au.libguides.com/historical-research-method>

¹¹ "Historical Research Method", Accessed on May 13,2019, <https://ecu.au.libguides.com/historical-research-method>.

¹² "Data collection methods", Accessed on May 13,2019, <https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/data-collection/>

articles. I have also benefited greatly from reading internet sources.

Organization of Thesis

In analysing Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, I separated the chapters according to international and regional events which were turning points for Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. However, in the first chapter, some concepts which are frequently used in both the studies of international relations and this study will be discussed. The second chapter, which aims to give historical perspective to the readers about Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, will examine the historical backgrounds of relations of Iran and Afghanistan since the term of Safavid Dynasty. Then, in the third chapter, the motives behind the Islamic Revolution and how Khomeini's ideological foreign policy rhetoric influenced on Iran's foreign policy after the Shah's realist and pragmatic foreign policy will be analyzed. Third chapter aims to shed light on ideological foreign policy rhetoric of Khomeini through which readers will see how ethnic factors and ideological ambitions of the Islamic Revolution put in practise in Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. The fourth chapter will discuss pragmatic foreign policy concept which is explicitly observed in the Iran's foreign policy and Iran's pragmatic foreign policy stance against the Afghan civil war. The fourth chapter also aims to uncover the Taliban's influence on Afghanistan. The fifth chapter scrutinizes the effects of the 9/11 on Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan and in this chapter the readers will also find Iran's using of her soft power elements (social, religious and economic) on Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1.Introduction

In this thesis, I generally used the concepts frequently used in the research of realist theories, thus, the mainstay of arguments of my thesis relating to foreign policy decisions of Iranian leaders is generally concepts of realist theory. However, this thesis is not a research of realist theory, or not a research of the international relations theories which is likely to affect Iran's foreign policy but a study of political history of Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Anyone who studies the subject of Iran's foreign policy, some concepts related to international relations and frequently used the studies of foreign policies should be known by the readers. To be understood of the research by the readers, in this chapter, I described the meaning of some concepts that I used in my thesis, some of which are generally used in the study of international relations.

1.2. Foreign Policy and Realism

Foreign policy refers to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of external choices within one country, viewed from the perspective of that country.¹³ In making foreign policy, one of the theories of international relations holds a central position, which is Realism or Realpolitik. Realism (or political realism) dominated the study of international relations in the USA from 1940s to the 1960s. Much of realist theories are a critique of idealism. Idealism emphasizes the possibility of transforming the nation-state system through international law and organization, while realism posits that the prospects for affecting changes in the international system are not great. Unlike idealists, realists assume that there is no essential harmony of interests among nations. Instead they posit that nation-states often have conflicting national objectives, some of which lead to war. Morgenthau asserted that states act,

¹³ James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations, A comprehensive Survey*, 2.Eds. (Newyork:Harper&Row, 1981), 19.

as they must, in view of their interests as they see them.¹⁴ He asserted the national interest as objective and subject to discovery by realist analysis. According to Morgenthau the objective of foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest and must be supported with adequate power.¹⁵

Especially after the World War II, almost all countries in the world, including Iran, make their foreign policy decisions in the frame of the general terms of realism, like power, security and national interest. Realism explains international relations in terms of power.¹⁶ Morgenthau argued that international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.¹⁷ The International politics Holsti defines power as the general capacity of a state to control the behavior of others.¹⁸ Realist theory generally based its arguments on power of states. According to realists, when a disagreement arises between states, which can not be solved by international law and organizations, the term of balance of power intercedes. However it has too many meanings, one of the purposes of balance of power is confronting an aggressor with the likelihood that a policy of expansionism would meet with the formation of countercoalition.¹⁹

Morgenthau asserted the objectives of an economic, financial, territorial, or military policy must be judged primarily from the point of view of their contribution to national power.²⁰ Realists have developed frameworks for classifying the elements of national power. National power consists of tangible elements like military power, levels of technology, population, natural resources, geographical factors, oceans, rivers, mountains and intangible elements like form of government, political leader-

¹⁴ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 84.

¹⁵ Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2.Eds. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf., 1949), 440.

¹⁶ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 10.Eds. (USA: Pearson, 2013), 43.

¹⁷ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 13.

¹⁸ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 89.

¹⁹ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 25.

²⁰ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 15.

ship, and ideology.²¹ Thus, since Khomeini's ideological rhetorics produced great effects on Muslim countries and especially on Shiite population in the Middle East region, ideological elements must be taken into consideration by anyone who calculates Iran's national power. The thought of Ayatollah Khomeini, who is the leader of Islamic Revolution of Iran, includes both Islamic and moralistic values. However, realists argue that moralistic values do not play a key role in foreign policies of states. According to George F. Kennan the pursuit of moralistic principles is incompatible with the pursuit of essentially limited foreign policy objectives. In foreign policy, public opinion cannot play a role similar to its role in national politics since international affairs are after all a matter of relations between governments not peoples.²² Hans J. Morgenthau argues that to confuse an individual's morality with a state's morality is to court national disaster. Because the primary official responsibility of statesman is the survival of the nation state.²³

In the twentieth century, especially nations have substituted global objectives for more limited goals that constitute the essence of national interest. However, realists seek to reconcile national interest with supranational ideals. Supranational ideals of states can be described as an idea that in order to keep peace and to prevent conflicts, nation states partly give their authority in some fields like economy, foreign policy etc. to supranational organization.²⁴ After the World War II, in the guise of extending communism or making the world safe for democracy, nations intervene in the affairs of regions not vital to their security.²⁵ Putting the power and national interest in a central position of foreign policy, Morgenthau argued that the foreign policy of a nation must consider survival as their minimum requirement. All nations are compelled to protect their physical, political, and cultural identity against encroachments by other nations. Morgenthau assumes that nations ignore the national interest

²¹ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 85

²² Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 105.

²³ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 100.

²⁴ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 86.

²⁵ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 101.

only at the risk of destruction or danger of its national security. According to Arnold Wolfers, security is a value some countries prize to a greater extent than others. The level of security sought by states is not always identical. Decision makers are constantly confronted with difficult choices in which they are unable to separate interest from morality.²⁶ As a structural realist, Kenneth Waltz, who is a central position in neorealism, views international politics as a domain of anarchic political structures. He argues that each state is a separate, autonomous, and formally equal political unit that must count ultimately on its own resources to realize its interests.²⁷

States sometimes try to create an influence on other states in order to reach their foreign policy objectives. The concept of influence is described by Klaus Knorr as the capacity to affect the decisions of others.²⁸ According to Klaus Knorr, the concepts of power, influence and interdependence are inextricably related. Two states can be in conflict over some issues while cooperating on others. When they cooperate they benefit from the creation of new values, material or nonmaterial. When they are in conflict, they attempt to gain values at each other's expense. In either case, they are interdependent. Power becomes important in conflictual situations whereas influence is central both in circumstances of conflict and incooperative relationships. Knorr prefers to use the term power to designate only the exercise of coercive influence. If the interdependence is mutual, each could damage the other, and itself, by severing the relationship that exists between them.²⁹

1.3. Foreign Policy Making Process

Foreign policy process is a process of decision making.³⁰ In a foreign policy process individual decision makers whose decisions are based on rationality, are the persons who have differing values, belief, personal experiences, and intellectual capa-

²⁶ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 109.

²⁷ Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, 17.

²⁸ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 87.

²⁹ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 88.

³⁰ Goldstein and Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 127.

bilities. However, sometimes states check up the irrational foreign policy decisions of individuals in order to reach to rational conclusion. Realists argue that decision of both states and individuals are rational and that interests of states correlate with those leaders' decision.³¹

Except from ordinary decision making process of foreign policy, sometimes the decisions of foreign policy is made in time of a crisis. But, as decision makers is under the time pressure, decision-making might be harder to understand and to predict than is normal foreign policy making.³² Both in crises and ordinary foreign policy process individual decision makers do not operate the process of foreign policy alone. Foreign policy also shaped by substate actors such as government agencies, political interest groups and industries. For example, in the hostage crisis in Iran, on November 4, 1979, even though Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan's announcement for calm, political pressure of Iranian radical students from whom Khomeini took support for his ideological view, prolonged the releasing process.³³ On the other side, military and CIA officials pushed the US president Jimmy Carter to attempt a military rescue, while the US State Department harshly opposed such a mission that would be failed.³⁴

One of the elements that affected foreign policy process is ethnic groups who are within one state often become interest groups concerned about their ancestral nation outside that state. Members of the ethnic groups have close relations with their relatives living in other states and they feel strong emotional ties to them. Such ethnic ties are emerging as powerful foreign policy influence in various ethnic conflicts in poor regions. Especially, Shiite minority living in Hazarajat region in Afghanistan are close linguistic, religious and ethnic ties with Iran. Shia minority has become one of the most important foreign policy elements that affected relations between Iran and Afghanistan for many years.

³¹ Goldstein and Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 129.

³² Goldstein and Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 134.

³³ Goldstein and Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 135.

³⁴ Goldstein and Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 137.

As a complex process, foreign policy is sum of the outcomes of the struggle of competing themes, competing domestic interests, and competing government agencies. However, foreign policy does achieve a certain overall coherence. Foreign policy of a country may be on an issue or toward a region and decisions may change form time to time.³⁵

1.4. The Term of “Rhetoric” and Khomeini’s Rhetoric

Foreign policy decisions have to take public support, even it is authoritarian governments, thus, almost every government makes an effort to take support for their foreign policies by making propaganda or use various rhetorics to affect the public opinion. Rhetoric is language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience; the art of writing or speaking effectively. Sometimes it is considered an art of persuasion of people. In his ideological rhetorics that were based on Islam, Khomeini tried to influence people’s emotions like sympathy, embarrassment, anger, excitement through using emotional words and examples that encourage them to feel something.³⁶

Khomeini’s ideological rhetorics were influenced by Iranian intellectuals, Ali Shari’ati and Jalal Al-i Ahmad. Especially, Khomeini based his rhetorics on the Jalal Al-i Ahmad’s concept of *gharbzadegi*– which has been translated as Westoxication. This concept was concretized as the abandonment of Iranian cultural identity and as the blind imitation of all things Western.³⁷ Al-i Ahmad believed that Iran had suffered a cultural, political, and economic invasion which made it subservient to the Western powers. Khomeini said that “all the misfortunes of the Muslims, inculcating and suggesting to them that they are the servants of the superpowers in the region are

³⁵ Goldstein and Prevehouse, *International Relations*, 147.

³⁶ Marilee Sprenger, *Teaching the Critical Vocabulary of the Common Core : 55 Words That Make or Break Student Understanding*, (Minnesota: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2013), 163, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁷ Dustin J. Byrd, *Ayatollah Khomeini and the Anatomy of the Islamic Revolution in Iran: Toward a Theory of Prophetic Charisma* (USA: University Press of America, 2011), 89-90.

caused by the superpowers, and as long as they are not free from their clutches, misfortunes are not eradicated .³⁸

Khomeini viewed that politics is meant to guide people and take into account all interests of the society and man. He said that “this is the politics of the Prophets which others are unable to implement”.³⁹ Thus, in order to influence an audience, he frequently used ideological rhetoric which depends on values of Islamic Revolution and Prophet Mohammad. He used ideological rhetoric to reach Iran’s pragmatic foreign policy objectives, in this way, he took support from large masses.

1.5. Foreign Policy and Pragmatism

The pragmatism, which is a philosophical concept that began to be used in USA during 1870s, is to try to interpret each notion in some cases by tracing its respective practical consequences. Pragmatism looks towards last things and facts. A pragmatist turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from fixed principles, closed systems. However, a pragmatist person turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power. Pragmatism is against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth.⁴⁰ Thus, pragmatic behaviour is acting on the basis of consequences of any event, not acting on the basis of ideals.

The concept of pragmatism, is also used in international relations. In world politics, each state has its own national interests and there is a competition between them. In a pragmatic foreign policy of a state, whether foreign policy concept is real-

³⁸ “All the misfortunes of the Muslims inculcating and suggesting to them...”, accessed on July 07, 2019, <http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n31629/All-the-misfortunes-of-the-Muslims-inculcating-and-suggesting-to-them-that-they-are-the-se>

³⁹ “Imam Khomeini does not construe politics as a science of power”, accessed on July 07, 2019, <http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n28945/Imam-Khomeini-does-not-construe-politics-as-a-science-of-power>

⁴⁰ William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, (South Australia: The University of Adelaide Library, 2014), eBooks@Adelaide.

ist or ideological, pragmatic statesman is inclined not to use moral principles, he shapes foreign policy in the frame of achievements of state, he focus to national interest and he tries to establish alignments with other states. However, pragmatic approach to foreign policy resembles to thoughts of school of realism, in world affairs pragmatism attaches moral principles only to responsible action that pragmatically adapts policy circumstances.⁴¹ Thus, for the pragmatists an ideology or moral principles are true if actions are resulted successfully. However, for the realists moral principles is not important for statesman but reality of circumstances. While pragmatism is a practical approach to international problems and affairs, realism concerns for fact or reality in international relations.

Contrary to realist foreign policy concept of Shah, since the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy discourse has determined by Khomeini's ideological ambitions that were based on Islamic principles. However, external developments during 1980s such as the prolonged war with Iraq that shattered Iran's economy, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the US embargo led Iran to concern for both economic interests and national security. Khomeini could not ignore Iran's devastated infrastructure and military requirements due to Iraq war. Thus, despite his ideological rhetoric based on ambitions of Islamic Revolution, Khomeini sometimes had to adopt pragmatic foreign policy that prioritized Iran's national interests. In order to achieve Iran's strategic foreign policy objectives which was described in the Islamic Constitution, Khomeini harmonized his ideological rhetoric with Iran's pragmatic calculations. One of the foreign policy mottos of Islamic Revolution, "Neither east, nor the West" was referring to ideological struggle with dominant powers in the world politics like the USA and the Soviet Union. However, relating to Afghanistan issue, on the one hand he condemned the Soviet occupation, on the other hand, he made great effort not to cut ties with the Soviet Union due to deteriorated relations with USA. Pragmatically, he considered to use two super powers to balance each other in order to protect Iran's national interests. However, after Khomeini died, Iranian

⁴¹ Molly Cochran, *Pragmatism and International Relations: A Story of Closure and Opening*, *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, Vol. 4, No.1 (2012).

politicians did not use ideological rhetoric as much as Khomeini's period in international relations.

After the Khomeini's death, pragmatism explicitly showed itself in foreign policy of Iran. Since the first years of the 1990s, pragmatic foreign policy became more influential on Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan than Khomeini's period. During the Afghan civil war in the 1990s, Iran supported Shiite Mujahideen groups and Rabbani government. However, when Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, Iran did not refrain from establishing dialogue with Sunni Taliban against the US policies in Afghanistan region. In the process of struggle with Taliban, Iran supported the US operations against Sunni Taliban and after the toppling of Taliban Iran began to use her soft power elements to reach pragmatic calculations of Iran's foreign policy ambitions.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN

2.1. Introduction

Since at least 800 B.C., Aryan people from the Fars/Pars tribe lived in the region now called Iran. Long known as Persia, this land was ruled by a succession of Aryan, Greek, Arab, Mongol, and Turkic families. The region of South Asia witnessed many wars between these civilizations for centuries. Afghanistan, specifically, was an area of conflict between Persians and Arabs. On the background of Sunni and Shiite disputes, the two groups had subjugated each other. In 1501, Shah Ismail of Safavid dynasty turned Iran into the first and only Shiite state in the Islamic world. Both Persians and Arabs had ruled over Central Asia and Afghanistan, although Persian rule and its culture and language were much more longstanding and left a permanent mark.⁴² In the mid-eighteenth century, the Turkic Safavid dynasty was toppled. After the Turkic Safavids, the powerful Russian and Ottoman empires planned to divide the region and annex its territories.⁴³

The Ghilzai, an Afghan tribe, had appeared on the Safavid eastern border and they were aggressive and fanatically Sunni. The Ghilzai had occupied the same provinces of the Safavids in the sixteenth century. Although puppets Safavid Shahs were maintained in various parts of Persia until 1773, the Ghilzai invasion had effectively ended Safavid rule. The Afghan hold on Iran was very tedious, and it was not long before power began to shift back to the qizilbash tribes. A number of Qajar and Afshar tribesmen had been relocated to defend the borders of Khorasan and Gorgan, and these rallied to the support of the Safavid pretender in northern Iran, Tahmasp II. The remarkable general of Tahmasp, Nader Kahn, routed the Ghilzai

⁴² Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 197.

⁴³ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 218.

army in Khorasan, and recovered Herat from the Abdali Afghans in 1732.⁴⁴ Nader Khan declared himself Shah and to consolidate Iran's power he campaigned against the Afghans, Ottomans, Mughals, and Uzbeks.⁴⁵

Nader Shah composed an army with tribal units under their own chiefs. But, when Nadir Shah died, his commanders wanted their own states.⁴⁶ In 1747, Ahmed Shah, an Afghan general of the Iranian king, established a kingdom in Afghanistan, as we know today, based in Kandahar. Under his rule Baluchistan, Kashmir, and Punjab were united by him. Under his successors the capital was moved to Kabul and the frontiers of the state shrank. Indian provinces were lost and eventually became absorbed by the expanding British Empire. Britain's interest in Afghanistan was based on strategic considerations. Hindu Kush mountains were very important for the geopolitical importance of Afghanistan, which passes from the northeast to the southwest through the whole length of the country. Hindu Kush was the watershed of the two rivers systems, the Indus and the Oxus (Amu Daria), and the only natural frontier of India in the northwest. Britain had a vital interest in preventing any hostile power from dominating this great barrier. In contrast to the situation in neighboring Iran, it was Britain who was on the offensive in Afghanistan, while Russia either stood apart or, at most, tried to use the Iranians as her spearhead. In 1809 the British entered into the first agreements with Afghanistan in order to enlist her support against possible French or Iranian invasion of India.⁴⁷

At the end of the eighteenth century the Qajar dynasty came to power in Iran. The rise of the Qajar dynasty, founded by Agah Mohammad Shah in 1794,

⁴⁴ Elton L. Daniel, *History of Iran* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 93-94, Proquest Ebook Center.

⁴⁵ Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 29, Proquest Ebook Central.

⁴⁶ Laura S. Etheredge, *Iran* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2011), 122, Proquest Ebook Central.

⁴⁷ George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 4th Eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 230.

corresponded with the emergence of modern nationalism. The Iranian empire was ruled by the Qajar for over 125 years but it finally became a modern nation-state.⁴⁸ After a series of wars with neighbors during Qajar dynasty, the Golestan (in 1813) and Turkmanchay (in 1828) treaties were signed. In the end, Iran lost the Caucasus to Russia. The Turkmanchay treaty granted Russian commercial and consular agent's access to Iran. Turkmanchay treaty caused a rivalry on Iran between Russia and Britain. Eventually, Russia and Britain signed the Anglo-Russian Convention. This convention gave both sides a fair share of area of influence in Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet.⁴⁹

Mohammad Shah marched on the city of Herat in 1837, asserting Iran's claim to Herat in what is now Afghanistan. However, Caucasus was as important to Russia for geostrategical region, as Afghanistan was to British.⁵⁰ From a British imperial point of view, stability and integrity in Afghanistan was imperative to the interests of British in India and its security. Alexander the Great could invade India through Afghanistan, then, so too could Russia. Iran was a wildcard. British had invaded Afghanistan in 1839. Shah never accepted that Iran's claim to Herat had lapsed. For Iran, Herat was the key to Khurasan. Iranian troops seized Herat in 1856, however, British occupied Bushehr. With Treaty of Paris in 1857, the Shah gave up all claims to Afghanistan and, in turn, the British forces withdrew.⁵¹

During the Qajar period, Iran's territory had shrunk. Constant military confrontation with Europe during the 19th century was the main factor to Iran's territorial shrinkage. Initially, western Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and other parts of Georgia were part of Iran.⁵² Until the beginning of World War I, Russia

⁴⁸Clawson and Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*, 31.

⁴⁹ Etheredge, *Iran*, 125.

⁵⁰Clawson and Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*, 34.

⁵¹Clawson and Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*, 36-37.

⁵² Clawson and Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*, 31.

effectively ruled the North of the Iran. The Afghan-Iranian border, which is approximately 550-mile-long, was defined under British supervision after 1857, when the Shah in Tehran renounced Persian claims to what were then identified separately as Herat and Afghanistan. Even whereas Naseruddin Shah (1848–1896) acknowledged the independence of Afghanistan in 1857, border disputes between Kabul and Tehran continued until the 1930s.⁵³

2.2. Iran's Quest for Regional Security After the World War I

At the beginning of the 19th, Iran was a small and weak country where the Qajar kingdom was continuing. Thus, during World War I, Iran preferred to be non-aligned. As a small nation that had almost miraculously retained her threatened sovereignty in 1919, Iran was essentially a status quo power, unwilling and unable to pursue active expansionist policies.⁵⁴ Because of its strategic importance and coveted petroleum reserves, the Allied (Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan and the USA) and the Central powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) battled for position within Iran in World War I. After the war, Persian delegations were excluded from the Paris Peace Conference. In an effort to discourage Iran from becoming a nation-state, British officials drafted the Anglo-Iranian Treaty, basically making the Qajar kingdom a protectorate.⁵⁵ Iran and Afghanistan (also Turkey) concluded treaties of friendship, in 1921.⁵⁶

Embittered by Britain's persistent imperial presence, the Majlis of Iran and other nationalists looked to expel the weak Qajar monarchy. To avoid violence, London pulled back from the direct controls afforded by the Anglo-Iranian Treaty. In 1921, military leader Reza Khan conquered the Persian capital, establishing a new

⁵³ Etheredge, *Iran*, 130.

⁵⁴ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 174.

⁵⁵ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 218-219.

⁵⁶ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 233.

government with himself as war minister and eventually, prime minister. When Shah Ahmad Mirza was deposed in 1925, Turkic Qajar rule ended. Reza Khan became shah and associating himself with ancient Achaemenian kings, the new Shah adopted the name Pahlavi. Like the other leaders of his time, Reza Shah Pahlavi worked to promote a clear national identity. As a way of celebrating the region's rich pre-Islamic and non-Arab heritage, Pahlavi changed Persia's name to Iran, in reference to its ancient Aryan peoples. In the period of Safavids, Shiite Islam, which was the state religion, remained intimately involved in the kingdom's administrative affairs. However, under the Pahlavi monarchy, clerics were expected to stay out of politics and Iran was more secular. In the inter-war period, though Pahlavi tried to emulate the West in his modernization efforts, his nationalist agendas brought Iran closer to true independence. Soon after becoming Shah, Reza negotiated the withdrawal of Russian and British troops that were deployed in Iran since the beginning of World War I. In addition, Pahlavi abolished the special economic rights that had allowed foreigners to exploit Iran for more than 100 years. As part of his anti-colonialist efforts, Reza Shah established friendly relations and nationalism.⁵⁷ As concerns of regional security, Iran sought peace and friendship with her neighbours, as well as Afghanistan. However, there had long been enmity between Iran and Afghanistan. On April 22, 1926, with the encouragement of the Soviet Union, Iran and Afghanistan (and Turkey) concluded a treaty of friendship.⁵⁸

As Iran's quest for regional security was continuing, the bells of the World War II began to ring in continental Europe. After the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, it was crucial to establish a defence system against the Italian danger coming from the East Mediterranean Sea towards the Middle East. As Europe entered the Post-Weimar period, international position on Iran and Afghanistan began to change. The Third Reich planned to create a coalition with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan in order

⁵⁷ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 219-220.

⁵⁸ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 174.

to challenge British supremacy in the region.⁵⁹ During the inter-war period in 1937, Iran joined in Sadabad Pact with Afghanistan, which consisted of Iraq and Turkey. The Sadabad Pact was the final outcome of the peaceful relationship between Iran and her neighbours.⁶⁰ The pact provided for non-aggression, consultation, and mutual cooperation in stamping out subversive activities among the signatory states. Iran tried to ensure its regional security against global powers through the regional alliances. However, Russia perceived it as a threat to her national security.⁶¹

The leaders of Iran and Afghanistan decided to maintain peaceful relations between the two countries throughout the inter-war period. Especially, the forthcoming of a war between the dominant powers and regional security concerns of the two small nations necessitated an accord in their problems. One of these was the water of Helmand River, which was a problem continuing for many years. The problem of sharing the waters of Helmand River was considered to have been solved in a peaceful way. A treaty, relating to Helmand River problem, was signed between Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1939. However, despite the fact that the treaty was signed, the disputes over the waters of Helmand River retained the potential for causing future trouble between Afghanistan and Iran.⁶² Upon the outbreak of World War II, in 1939, even if Iran proclaimed neutrality, Iranian ruling circles were mostly pro-German, and traded with Germany.⁶³ Thus, Iran had close relationship with Hitler's Germany and the Axis Powers, provoking Britain and Russia to invade Iran in 1941.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan :A History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 108, Proquest Ebook Central.

⁶⁰ Daniel, *History of Iran*, 140.

⁶¹ Daniel, *History of Iran*, 175.

⁶² Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, Expanded Edition (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1985), 11.

⁶³ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 178.

⁶⁴ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 215.

Iran was occupied by Allied troops, then, Reza was forced to turn the kingdom over to his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In 1943, Iran hosted the Tehran Conference, in which the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill discussed their wartime partnership and post-war plans. The Allies assured Iran relating to post-war independence and financial aid. Immediately after the war, the USA used its influence to pressure the Soviet Union out of north-western Iran. Despite the fact that Hitler was no longer a common enemy, the USA/Soviet Union/UK, “Grand Alliance” quickly deteriorated, as the Soviet Union squared off against the USA and UK.⁶⁵

2.3. The Cold War Period and Iran’s Fall Under the Influence of the USA

After World War II, the end of British colonial rule across the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and the beginning of the Cold War created a struggle for influence on the South Asia region. The departure of the UK resulted in the creation of the two hostile independent states of predominantly Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Furthermore, when the British withdrew from the region, a power vacuum was created which was not in any way ignored by Western countries and the Soviet Union. The USA, the new super power of the world after World War II, moved swiftly to fill the gap.⁶⁶

The Cold war with the Soviet Union started and US foreign policy viewed South Asia and the Middle East region, as a buffer zone against Soviet expansionism. Thus, the USA forged close political, economic and military ties with Iran (also Pakistan and Turkey). Consequently, this close relationship with the USA led to Iran joining into pro-western alliances, such as Baghdad Pact in 1955 and its successor CENTO in 1958. In the process, the USA gained wider influence over the oil riches of the Gulf. Washington seemed determined to extend its policy of containment to West Asia. The objective was to deny the Soviet Union any opportunity to take

⁶⁵ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 220-221.

⁶⁶ Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 118.

advantage of the end of British colonial rule to gain a strategic and subversive foothold in the region. Stalin's reluctance to end its wartime occupation of northern Iran created a perception that the Soviet Union were keen to expand in the direction of the Persian Gulf.⁶⁷

Expansionism of Soviet Communism created great concerns to Shah Reza Pahlavi, who was supported by the USA and anti-communist western countries. Shah Reza took action against communist expansionism in the framework of realist foreign policy which asserted that states should only undertake actions that were clearly in their national interest.⁶⁸ Thus, from the early years of the Cold War, Shah Pahlavi established the Iran foreign policy on the basis of Iran's national interests. Preventing the expansionism of the Soviet Union in South Asia region was common goal of Iran and the USA. Due to security concerns and protect its national interests, Shah considered that an alliance with the USA was a way of checking Soviet expansionism, while for the USA; Iran was a strategic base of operations in Moscow's backyard. In addition, the region was a golden opportunity for the American oil companies.⁶⁹

Partnership with Tehran could have opened the way for American companies to develop the full potential of Iran's vast oil fields. As Washington and Moscow battled for international influence, the USA secured its position in Iran by covertly assisting Shah, who up to this point had been subservient to the prime minister. Through an apparent partnership between the UK and the US intelligence agencies, an angry mob was paid to topple Iran's anti-Pahlavi Prime Minister Muhammad Musaddiq's removal in 1953, and subsequently the US-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to establish absolute control. For decades to come, Iranians questioned his foreign connections. Through the latter half of the 1950s, the Middle East became a political battleground for US and Soviet ideologies. Throughout the late 1950s and

⁶⁷ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 118

⁶⁸ Sr. Williams Michael, *Realism Reconsidered : The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, 1.Eds. (New York:Oxford University Press, 2007), 67.

⁶⁹ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 222.

early 1960s, Tehran and Washington continued to develop strong ties, as demonstrated by the 1959 American-Iranian Defence Agreement and the US aid received by Shah.⁷⁰

Essentially, with the Truman Doctrine, the USA constructed its political framework of foreign policy toward Iran in the 1950s. The Truman Doctrine outlined the basis for the US help to Greece and Turkey. It helped these governments in the face of any possible emergence of communism in South Eastern Europe. For the USA, Iran was the shield state between the Middle East and the Soviet Union. Therefore, giving assistance to these states could hinder the Soviet access to the Middle East in which the USA had vital energy resources and communications routes.⁷¹ By the end of World War II, President Truman has asked the Soviet Union to remove her military presence in Iran and the USA supported Iran both economically and politically. Although this upturn generated new wealth, most Iranians saw the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The social unrest in Iran was increasing. Eventually, Shah Reza Pahlavi put into some political regulations, named White Revolution, in 1963. This regulations forced Iranian owners of large estates to sell portions of their land to the government. The lands were divided into small farms and distributed to the less fortunate. In addition, Shah introduced Western-inspired reforms that affected Iran's education system and promoted women's rights. Iran's mullahs denounced the Shah because Shah had dissolved estates that were religiously endowed and he also challenged long-standing traditions. Many viewed the Shah as an anti-Islamic. One of them was the Ayatollah Sayyid Ruhollah al-Musavi al-Khomeini, a cleric. In 1964, due to his anti-Pahlavi rhetoric, Shah deported Khomeini. While in exile he was able to inspire an Iranian revolution.⁷²

⁷⁰ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 221-222.

⁷¹ Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick, eds., *Iran, Iraq and the Legacies of War* (Gordonsville:Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 194, Proquest Ebook Central.

⁷² Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 222-223.

As prioritizing Iran's national interests in the region, Shah Reza Pahlavi considered to keep close relations with Afghanistan despite the disturbance of the Helmand River project, which was backed by the USA. In early September 1953, Mahmud Shah Khan resigned as prime minister after seven years in office in Afghanistan. He replaced General Mohammed Daoud Khan. During Daoud's tenure, Afghanistan had close relationship with the Soviet Union, such that economic and technical aid from Soviet Union exceeded \$250 million by 1960. Despite close relationship with the Soviet Union, Daoud was also willing to receive American technical and economic aid. American aid was channelled primarily towards the development of the valley of the Helmand River.⁷³ But, the Helmand River project gave rise to a quarrel with Iran, in whose territory the Helmand empties. Iran feared that the damming of the river would divert much-needed waters from the Iranian Seistan oasis.⁷⁴ Thus, Afghan and Iranian delegations travelled to Washington in 1959 to discuss the issue but the discussions were unsuccessful.⁷⁵

Adopting realist foreign policy, Shah Reza Pahlavi aimed to implement pragmatic foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Since Shah Reza Pahlavi had security concerns as well as ambitions of becoming a leader in the region, he acted rationally and tried to calm down the tensions with Afghanistan. Moreover, he considered to play a mediating role in the disagreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan which occurred due to Pushtinistan problem. Shah of Iran visited Kabul and Karachi in the summer of 1961, but his mission had failed given the personal feud between Ayub Khan and Mohammad Daoud and their extreme obduracy. The Shah of Iran renewed his attempts brokering a settlement of Pushtinistan issue. Iran collected Afghan and Pakistani delegations for meeting in Tehran, and they reached an agreement to normalise the relations.⁷⁶

⁷³Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 247.

⁷⁴Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 240-241.

⁷⁵ Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 135.

⁷⁶ Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 135.

The mishandling of the Pushtunistan issue was the immediate cause of Daoud's downfall as prime minister in 1963. Towards the end of the 1960s when the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA was fading away, aid to Afghanistan was also significantly reduced. By the early 1970's the country was clearly in throes of a political and economic crisis.⁷⁷ Iran and Afghanistan resumed to negotiate the water flow of Helmand River in 1969. Kabul agreed to ensure water flow to Iran on condition of some economic assistance and access to Iranian ports. Eventually, Iran and Afghanistan signed an agreement in 1973. The agreement outlined how much water should flow into Iran, which was 26 cubic meters of water per second.⁷⁸

2.4. Road to The Islamic Revolution

As one of the most important allies of the USA, the close relations between Shah Reza Pahlavi and the USA continued in the 1970s, the years which Iran was still an important strategic partner for the South Asia and the Middle East policies of USA. During the early 1970s, the USA was formulating its "Twin Pillar Policy" after the Vietnam War, which would have ruled out future direct military intervention in its spheres of interest, in this case, West Asia. Nixon based Twin Pillar Policy on cooperation with monarchies, Iran and Saudi Arabia.⁷⁹ The USA considered that arming both Iran and Saudi Arabia would contribute to its regional defence and security by relying on Iran's Shah to guarantee security and on the Saudis to preserve oil flow. In those years, due to interruption in oil flows to developed countries, oil prices hiked. The period was not only characterized by the nationalization of oil production in the Middle East and North Africa but also the signalling of the importance of OPEC members in support of the Arab cause in the war against Israel in

⁷⁷Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 251.

⁷⁸ Samii, "For Century-Old Water Dispute"

⁷⁹ "Lessons of the Iraq-Iran War", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.17, No.30 (1982): 1190. Accessed on March 23, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4371150>.

1973.⁸⁰

Even as close relations with the USA was continuing, Shah considered to implementing pragmatic foreign policy perspective in which foreign policy behavior of a state is defined within the frame of national interests. Pragmatic foreign policy perspective of Iran showed itself especially in relations with the Soviet Union. Despite Iran's close relationship with the USA, in the early 1970s, the Soviet Union was the largest aid donor of Iran as well as a major trade partner. Moscow bought all of Tehran's surplus natural gas which was piped at the rate of 22.6 million cubic metres per day. There was a Soviet aided steel mill functioning in Iran whose capacity had been expanded from 1.5 to 4.5 million tons. The Soviet Union assisted Iran in building hydro-electric projects as well as developing its communications and mineral resources. Relations between the two governments seemed to have reached an all time high in 1972, when Shah visited Moscow and the Iranian government acknowledged that relations between Iran and the Soviet Union had never been that better. Shah Reza considered that the stability in the region was very important for the national interests of Iran. He aimed to keep good relations with its neighbors. Thus, Iran closely followed the developments which occurred in Afghanistan. Iran took it as a sign of disquieting instability in the region when the royalist government of Afghanistan was overthrown by the rebellious officers, and a republic was proclaimed in Kabul in 1973.⁸¹

The Iranians were looking with apprehension for possible sign of collusion between the new government of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. To their relief, Afghanistan maintained its independent and neutral posture, which in due course permitted Iran to enter into closer relations with the Afghan rulers and even to extend economic assistance.⁸² However, in July 1973, former Premier Mohammed Daoud, aided by elements of the Afghan army loyal to him, executed a coup and deposed King Zahir. In the second part of his proclamation Daoud focused on foreign affairs.

⁸⁰ Potter and Sick, *Iran, Iraq and the Legacies of War*, 196.

⁸¹ Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 219.

⁸² Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 219.

According to him, Afghanistan's foreign policy would have been based on neutrality, nonalignment in military blocs.⁸³ Daoud's perspective was that the king did not consider the interest of the Afghan people when signed an agreement that gave Iran too much access to the Helmand River even though there was drought in Afghanistan. At the same time, there was serious anger within the Pushtun ethnic group on the king's inability to strike back the suppression of Pushtun minorities in Pakistan.⁸⁴

With the return of Daoud to power, fears were expressed in Iran (and also the West and neighbouring countries like Pakistan) if Afghanistan would return to its pro-Soviet Union tendency or not. Although during Daoud's era, between 1953 and 1963, was characterized by drift toward the Soviet Union, the subsequent constitutional decade by contrast was viewed as restoring a greater even handedness or perhaps even a slight tilt toward the USA. Iran was apprehensive lest the Soviet-trained officer who supported Daoud's revolution displays a pro-Soviet orientation in their policy and even perhaps become tools of the Soviet penetration inside Afghanistan.⁸⁵ But, Iran appeared reassured that the new regime in Afghanistan was not about to become a Soviet satellite and thus, it did not contribute to the Communist encirclement of Iran. There was some apprehension in Iran as to whether an agreement concluded with the Afghan constitutional government in March 1973, which settled the Helmand waters dispute, would be honoured by the government of President Daoud. To Iran's relief, Daoud's government fully confirmed the Helmand water agreement in July 1974. Furthermore, Iran entered into negotiations with Kabul to conclude various aid and agreements. Because the spectacular rise in oil prices in 1974 placed Iran in a position to extend financial and economic assistance to a number of countries, it availed itself of this ability to pledge major amounts of

⁸³ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World*, 253.

⁸⁴ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan* (Cary: Oxford University Press US, 1995), 14, Proquest Ebook Central.

⁸⁵ Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World*, 256-257.

aid to Afghanistan.⁸⁶

When oil prices rose in the 1970s, and in order to create a modern version of the ancient Persian Empire, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi considered reversing Soviet influence in neighbouring countries. Thus, Shah launched a determined effort to draw Kabul into a Western-tilted, Tehran-centred regional economic and security sphere embracing India, Pakistan, and the Persian Gulf states. In order to replace the Soviet Union as Kabul's biggest aid donor, Shah considered linking Afghanistan to Iranian ports by railways and highways. In this way, Shah aimed to prevent Afghan dependence on Soviet Union trade and transport outlets. An informal co-prosperity sphere began to develop, with Afghan workers moving freely back and forth across the border to work in Iranian development projects. Tehran Radio stepped up its broadcasts in Dari, the Afghan variant of Persian, and Iranian publications flooded the Afghan market.⁸⁷

By mid-1974 intensive talks were underway between Kabul and Tehran on economic development plans. Oil-poor Afghanistan was also talking to the Saudis, Iraqis, Kuwaitis and other oil-rich Muslim nations; Iran was not the only non-Soviet alternative. Daoud had held up approval of Helmand waters settlement with Iran – a decision criticized by some parties in Afghanistan, such as Parcham, Khalq and Maiwand. Despite this, Afghan-Iranian relations blossomed. In October 1974 Iran gave Afghanistan aid for feasibility studies on a number of projects, including construction of the country's first railroad. When Daoud visited Tehran in April 1975, Shah agreed to lend \$400 million on easy terms for a variety of small industrial projects, transportation, and the Helmand Valley projects. At the time, the cost of linking Iranian, Pakistani and the Soviet rail systems through Afghanistan was estimated to cost \$ 1.1 billion. The railroad estimate later rose to \$1.7 billion, but by then the illusion was beginning to dissipate.⁸⁸ In 1975, an Iranian-Afghan agreement

⁸⁶ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 15.

⁸⁷ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 16.

⁸⁸ Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 61-62.

was reached providing for major extension of Iranian assistance up to \$2 billion for a variety of Afghan development projects.⁸⁹

Generously, in line with pragmatic foreign policy, Shah used his influence in Kabul to tame down the Pushtunistan dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Soviet support was reportedly behind Afghan backing for Baluch autonomous movement in 1974. The situation had become agitated enough by that autumn for Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to talk of possible war with a trouble-making Afghanistan. Daoud's government was diverted by a revolt north of Kabul, stirred up by Pakistan as a counter-irritant. The situation gradually cooled off with Iranian and US diplomatic efforts and as well as and other advices to both sides. Pakistan made a gesture of sending relief supplies after an Afghan provincial disaster.⁹⁰

Iran's new economic capabilities meant that one would not have to exclusively depend on the Soviet Union. British Ambassador to Afghanistan Roy Crook said "Our historical relations with Iran were unpleasant, but we must adapt to the new realities".⁹¹ Told of this conversation, a veteran Afghan specialist predicted that "if it goes too far and too fast, Tehran's diplomacy will surely upset the Russians and produce a reaction".⁹² The Soviet Union were beginning to give significant help to the Afghan Communists, he said, in order to keep Daoud in line and to prepare for an increasingly uncertain future. But they were still generally satisfied with the degree of influence they have, provided that the drift to the right would not go too much further. They did not really want a confrontation with Iran because they feared that Shah might seek to break up the country. They thought in terms of history, that the Persians would like to re-annex the areas they ruled until the eighteenth century.⁹³

⁸⁹Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World*, 256-257.

⁹⁰Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World*, 62-63.

⁹¹ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 19.

⁹²Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 19.

⁹³ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 20.

On one hand, Iran was unable to finance Shah's ambitions and regional military dominance combined with domestic economic growth and on the other hand, Afghanistan lacked the talents to spend wisely all the money originally discussed. Shah had to announce a cutback of foreign aid after magnificently promising up to \$10 billion. By 1977, numerous consultations on specific projects had exposed the tiny reality behind talk of Iran's becoming the dominant benefactor in Afghanistan. While Afghan migrant labourers who use to go to Pakistan for jobs were drawn in increasing numbers to Iran by Shah's development programs, and the remittances they sent home became an important source of foreign exchange for Kabul, economic relations cooled. Irritated Afghan officials offered to release Iran from all its promises, but the proud Shah insisted he would go ahead with some aid. His political standing in Kabul had clearly diminished well before what could later be seen as the possible preliminaries to the April 1978 overthrow of Daoud.⁹⁴

2.5. Conclusion

After the withdrawal of the UK from India, the USA and the Soviet Union tried to fill the gap created in the region. During the first years of the Cold War, both the USA and the Soviet Union were seeking superiority in the Middle East and South Asia region. However, Iran and Afghanistan tried to follow a moderate foreign policy towards both super powers due to establish a balance between them. Iran was under the influence of the USA, while Afghanistan was under the Soviet Union. During the post-World War II period, Shah Reza Pahlavi based Iran's foreign policy on realist perspective and he prioritized Iran's national interests and considered peaceful relations between Iran and Afghanistan; however, minor problems such as the Helmand water crisis existed. Additionally, Iran tried to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan with regards to disputes over Pushtinistan.

There was a close relationship between Iran and the USA after the beginning

⁹⁴Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 62.

of the Cold War. This cordial relation resulted in the signing of the US-Iran defence agreement, in 1959. Within the framework of combating the spread of Soviet communism, the USA supported Iran both militarily and economically. During the 1960s, uneasiness increased among the Iranian people because of the uneven distribution of income, which Iranians considered as Shah Reza Pahlavi's politics of diseconomy. Moreover, according to conservative clerics Shah was anti-Islamic. Among the clerics, the primary opponent was Ayatollah Khomeini, who was forced into exile owing to his anti-Shah rhetoric.

In 1973, the royalist government of Afghanistan was toppled by rebels but irrespective of this, Iran continued to strengthen relations with Afghanistan. Shah implemented pragmatic foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Daoud was considered as an aggressive Afghan leader. Aiming at increasing her power in the region, Iran considered developing its economic relations with Afghanistan. Iran supported Afghanistan by giving her money as well as aiding in development projects. Within the context of oil flow, Iran wanted countries within the region, such as Afghanistan, to take her as an alternative to the Soviet Union. However, Shah's policies continued to create unrest within the Iranian people, especially among the clerics who supported Khomeini.

CHAPTER 3

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN IN THE 1980s

3.1. Introduction

Realist and pragmatic foreign policy concept of Shah, led Iran to pro-western foreign policy, implemented at the expense of Iran's nationalist hero, was rebuffed by nationalists and pro-Soviet leftist opposition. Thus, Shah relied on the Americans to consolidate his power which in line with the Nixon's twin pillars policy, a bulwark against the Soviet Union and the Gulf.⁹⁵

Aware of his subjects' growing dissatisfaction, Shah used secret police (known as SAVAK) to hunt opposition leaders. While Savak agents were catching some dissidents through the early and mid-1970s, Shah's dictatorial and anti-Islamic actions led many Iranians to look for a saviour. By the late 1970s, many Iranians had adopted the teachings of Khomeini, believing him as a savior. For students of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, salvation would have been founded in a pure Islamic state, led by Shiite jurists, guided by God.⁹⁶

3.2. The Islamic Revolution of Iran

In 1963, Shah Reza Pahlavi's reform movement, named White Revolution, aimed to modernize and Westernize Iran. Iran's oil-fuelled economy boomed in 1960s and busted 1970s. However, economic fluctuations in Iran's economy caused social inequity and discontent among the low-income earners. State spending and corruptions enriched bourgeoisie. Increasing public expenditure lead to inflation and eroded fixed incomes. Rising frustration coupled with growing inequality stimulated revolutionary sentiments preached by both Marxists and oppositionist Islamic clerics. Islamic clerics considered that the Westernisation of Iran was risky to the integrity of

⁹⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, *International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2003), 188, Proquest Ebook Central.

⁹⁶ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 223.

Islamic values and culture. Because the clergy were of the urban slums, their mobilisation of the urban plebian strata shifted the balance of power from the secular nationalists to Islamic leaders. Demonstrations were directed from abroad by Ayatollah Rouallah Khomeini. He was the Imam and disseminated an Islamic ideology that was mixed with nationalism. He also preached the hatred of the USA. Demonstrations started in September 1978. Strikes in the oil fields, caused a spectacular drop in oil production and precipitated an economic problem. Shah's image was depicted as a foreign puppet who served the West at the expense of Iran.⁹⁷

Escalating demonstrations lead Shah to declare martial law. The army massacred hundreds of demonstrators in Tehran. Shah then appointed a military government. The crisis came to its apex during the Islamic holy month on Moharam, in December 1978. There were mass demonstrations in Tehran and other parts of the country. Amid the growing chaos the Shah left from Iran, which meant the end of his regime. Soonafter he left, in February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran from exile. He was welcomed home by millions of people. Immediately he appointed an interim government headed by Mehdi Bazargan.⁹⁸

Charismatic authority in place of neo-patrimonial legitimacy was brought about by the Islamic Revolution. After Shah, Khoemini's charismatic authority emerged.⁹⁹ Contrary to realist foreign policy concept of Reza Shah, which gave priority to national power, economic interests and rational foreign policy minimizing risks and maximizing benefits, Khomeini based the new republic's foreign policy on ideological mottos. One of the most important slogans of "Neither East, Nor West but the Islamic Republic" soon emerged. The revolution was against the Western culture and new regime was based on Islamic rules. The other slogan of Khomeini was "Export of the Revolution", meaning that the Iranian revolution was model for

⁹⁷ Hinnebusch, *International Politics of the Middle East*, 189.

⁹⁸ Hinnebusch, *International Politics of the Middle East*, 191.

⁹⁹ Ali Saeidi, "Charismatic Political Authority and Populist Economics in Post-Revolutionary Iran", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.22, No.2 (2001):219-326.

the other Middle East countries. Khomeini aimed to support revolutions in other Muslim countries. According to Khomeini, he was acting on behalf of the entire Islamic community.¹⁰⁰

Khomeini's Islamic rhetoric began to take effects on Iran's foreign policy since the first days of the Islamic Revolution. In the term of Shah Reza Pahlavi, Iran's foreign policy had been based on national interests and security. Thus, Iran was close strategic relationship with the USA and also close economic relationship with the Soviet Union. In an interview on December 1, 1973, Shah stated that "the USA understands us best for the simple reason they have many interests here. As for the Soviet Union he said that we have good diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union. We sell our gas to the Soviet Union. We have Soviet technicians here. And the Cold War is over. Iran is the key, or one of the keys, of the world."¹⁰¹ Contrary to Shah's realist foreign policy view, Khomeini considered that Iran's foreign policy should not be based on close relations with the USA and other western powers but on idealist perspectives formulated by his Islamic ideology. Khomeini stated that "foreign policy should be based on ideology; that is, foreign policy means external policy of Muslim countries in the face of countries which are located beyond borders of the Islamic country."¹⁰² He saw the USA and the Soviet Union as satanic powers which occupied the entire world. Especially, he harshly condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Within the scope of ideological political views, he withdrew Iran from CENTO and joined the non-aligned movement. Realist foreign policy approach of Shah Pahlavi prioritizing regional interests was replaced by Khomeini's ideological actions. He had also disputed relations with Israel and gave their embassy over to the PLO. After the Islamic Revolution, Iran aimed to reduce

¹⁰⁰ Eva Patricia Rakel, "Iranian Foreign Policy Since the Iranian Islamic Revolution: 1979-2006", *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 6, no.1 (June 2007):159-187.

¹⁰¹ "The Shah of Iran: An Interview with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ", Accessed on May 13, 2019, <https://newrepublic.com/article/92745/shah-iran-mohammad-reza-pahlavi-oriana-fallaci>

¹⁰² "Iran's foreign policy follows Islamic values and ideals of Imam Khomeini". Accessed on March 23, 2019, http://en.imamkhomeini.ir/en/n25239/Iran%E2%80%99s_foreign_policy_follows_Islamic_values_and_ideals_of_Imam_Khomeini

his economic and political dependency on West and continue a sustainable economic development in the framework of self-sufficiency. Khomeini's perspective was that western powers hated Islam and they always want to repress the weak. Thus, Khomeini emphasized to stand up against western arrogance.¹⁰³

The Islamic Revolution of Iran resulted in the collapse of the "Twin Pillar Policy" of the USA, which perceived Shah Pahlavi's Iran and Saudi Arabia as a local supporter of US regional interests. The conservative regime changed Iran's foreign policy by cutting cooperation with western powers, especially the USA, as well as non-muslim governments.¹⁰⁴ By the way, anti-American demonstrations were rising in Iranian streets. Khomeini-supported students conducted the first (one-day) seizure of the American embassy and its staff, including US Ambassador to Tehran, on February 14, 1979. That same day, four gunmen from a small Marxist Shiite group snatched the American ambassador to Afghanistan. They demanded the release of their leader, a Shiite cleric. The Tehran embassy staff was released the next day, only to be kidnapped again nine months later.¹⁰⁵ Radical transformation of Iran's foreign policy from the pro-Western under Shah to anti-Western under Khomeini demonstrated that domestic politics influenced international policy.¹⁰⁶ However, Iran was not a country that could produce weapons, such as war planes and war tanks. The reason for Khomeini's harsh foreign policy rhetoric towards the West, was that Iran was the most important oil producing country in the world.¹⁰⁷ With the turn of events, the USA called on all its allies to end diplomatic relations with Iran and implement economic embargo on Iran¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Hinnebusch, *International Politics of the Middle East*, 192-193.

¹⁰⁴ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 225.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2013), 124-125, Proquest Ebook Central.

¹⁰⁶ Hinnebusch, *International Politics of the Middle East*, 188.

¹⁰⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *Tarihin Sonu ve Son İnsan*, trans. Zülfü Dicleli, 6.Eds. (İstanbul: Profil Yayıncılık, 2012), 114.

¹⁰⁸ Faruk Sönmezoğlu, *Türk Dış Politikası: II. Dünya Savaşından Günümüze*, 1 Eds. (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2006), 370.

Even though the Islamic Revolution came along with harsh decision which triggered concerns to the USA, diplomatic and economic relations continued until November 1979. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was allowed into the USA and given refuge. Some Iranians feared Washington was planning to reinstate him as Iran's leader.¹⁰⁹ Anti-American anxiety led radical students to seize the US Embassy, in Tehran, on November 4, 1979.¹¹⁰ Mehdi Bazargan made an announcement for calm, but he resigned when Ayatollah Khomeini supported the students who seized the US embassy, in which 52 Americans remained hostages until January 1981.¹¹¹

With the hostage crisis, the USA imposed economic embargo on Iran which led Iran to international isolation. However, relations between Iran and the Soviet Union got better but Iran did not hesitate to reject a Soviet Union offer of protection. Tehran was anxious to be a Cold War battleground between the USA and the Soviet Union. When Soviet Union troops occupied Afghanistan Iran condemned the Soviet Union¹¹² and Khomeini warned Vladimir Vinagrodov, the Soviet Ambassador to Iran, about the intervention in Afghanistan and that they have created unrest in the Kurdish and Balochi region of Iran. After this, the Soviet Union presence in Afghanistan became the most important issues between the two countries. However, the Soviet Union declared that the hostage crisis was entirely a result of misguided policies followed by the USA in the world and in the Middle East, Iranian public opinion did not alter its negative stance on approaching the Soviet Union presence in Afghanistan.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 225.

¹¹⁰ Michael Eisenstadt, "Iran's Islamic Revolution: Lessons for the Arab Spring of 2011?", *Strategic Forum*, (April 2011). Accessed on March 23, 2019, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/Eisenstadt201104.pdf>.

¹¹¹ "Mehdi Bazargan, Former Iran Premier, Dies". Accessed on March 23, 2019, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/21/obituaries/mehdi-bazargan-former-iran-premier-dies.html>.

¹¹² Hinnebusch, *International Politics of the Middle East*, 193.

¹¹³ Barış Adıbelli, *Doğu Batı Yol Ayrımında İran-İdeoloji, Devlet ve Dış Politika*, 1.Eds., (İstanbul: Bilim Gönül Yayınları, 2012), 154-156.

3.3. The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan

Shah was supporting anti-communist groups in Afghanistan both politically and economically by the mid-1970s. Although he offered Afghanistan \$2 billion and wanted to visit to Kabul in 1978, political developments in favour of the communists would not allow him.¹¹⁴ The political developments in Afghanistan caused great anxiety in Iran. Afghan Marxists led by Nur Mohammad Taraki, overthrew the nationalist government of President Mohammad Daud Khan and established Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. However, due to internal turmoil stemming from the Islamic Revolution, Shah could not focus on Afghanistan. Taraki, who had very close relations with the Soviet Union, signed a friendship and cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union on 5 December, 1978, which became the basis of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.¹¹⁵

The Taraki regime declared its programs containing social rights, administrative regulations and economic measures in order to decrease the political tension. However, Afghan nationalists (Mujaheddin) were against the Soviet-backed communist government. This unrests lead to an armed revolt, which was called the Afghan Jihad Movement, by anti-communist Islamic traditionalists and ethnic leaders. By the summer of 1979, Pakistan backed-Afghan Mujahideen was able to control much of Afghanistan's territory. Moreover, President Taraki's and Foreign Minister Amin's belligerent policies towards Afghanistan's three non-Soviet neighbours, China, Iran and Pakistan exacerbated the regime's beleaguered condition. More than 2,000 miles of Afghanistan's porous borders abutted China, Iran, and Pakistan. Yet, the potential for Afghanistan's neighbours to assist the growing anti-communist insurgency inside Afghanistan did not impress Taraki and

¹¹⁴ Adam Tarock, "The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict", *Third World Quarterly* 20, no.4 (1999):801-820.

¹¹⁵ Fahir Armaoğlu, *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi 1914-1915*, 1-2 Vol., 11. Eds., (Ankara: Alkım Yayınevi, 1999), 762.

Amin. Early on, Taraki announced Afghanistan's unqualified support for Moscow's anti-Chinese Asian Collective Security Plan. Taraki rebuffed Soviet Union's ambassador Puzanov's advice to elevate the damaged Afghan-Pakistani dialogue and to take a friendly step in relations with Iran. Instead, Amin publicly disassociated Afghanistan from the Afghan-Iranian Helmand River Treaty signed by Zahir Shah and strengthened during Daoud's last full year in power.¹¹⁶ Taraki and Amin had long ignored the Soviet Union advice to improve ties with Iran and Pakistan. After Taraki was deposed (then killed in September 1979), Hafizullah Amin, deputy of Taraki, became president. But, continuing revolt weakened the Amin's government.¹¹⁷

The tension in Afghanistan had begun to increase when relations between Iran and the USA had seriously strained as a result of the hostage crisis. Iranians had to deal with US threats, on the other hand they had concerns of national security against the Soviet presence on its borders. However, for the Soviet Union, Muslim Afghanistan was the only friendly country for herself along the long southern frontier. But, the revolt of anti-PDPA Islamic groups was intensifying in Afghanistan, the Iranian hostage crisis and the attack on the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamic dissidents demonstrated the rising threat of militant Islamism in the broader region.¹¹⁸ As concerned that the communist government in Kabul was losing ground¹¹⁹, the Soviet Union sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan, on 25 December 1979, and assumed control of Kabul and large portions of the country.¹²⁰ The Soviet Union claimed to be responding to urgent requests for help from Kabul. But what soon became known as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan created serious problems for Moscow both in its relations with the USA and its relations with the

¹¹⁶ Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 135.

¹¹⁷ "Afghanistan & United Nations". Accessed on December 23, 2017, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/un-afghan-history.shtml>

¹¹⁸ Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 162.

¹¹⁹ Hiram Ruiz and Margaret Emery, "Afghanistan's Refugee Crisis", *Middle East Report Online*, September 24, 2001, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero092401>.

¹²⁰ "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. Response 1979-1980". Accessed on December 23, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan>

Muslim world.¹²¹ Whereas the Soviet Union's influence in the region gradually diminished because of China and India, the USA did not prevent the Soviet Union from occupying Afghanistan – a situation which would create hostility among Muslims towards the Soviet Union elsewhere in the world.¹²²

Just about one month after the American hostages were taken in Tehran, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late December 1979. Khomeini did not want any presence of Western power on his borders. According to Khomeini, the West was the enemy of the Muslim countries. He said that “its our duty to stand up to the superpowers and we have the ability to stand up against them, provided that our intellectuals give up their fascinations with Westernization or Easternization and follow the straight path of Islam and nationalism.”¹²³ The Muslim character of the population and its proximity to the Persian Gulf meant that the Soviet invasion would be a major impact on Middle East politics; however, Cold War rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union further complicated the matter of Afghanistan. So, the Islamic Republic of Iran found herself precariously situated between the two superpowers. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan coincided with the US hostage crisis in Iran, which caused the deterioration of the close relationship between Islamic Republic of Iran and the USA. The diplomatic accord with the two states relating to the regional problems gave place to a long-term hostility.¹²⁴ Since Washington thought that Soviet leaders were planning to seize Iran's oil reserves, they issued the 1980 Carter Doctrine, warning that any outside attempt to control the Persian Gulf would be viewed as an assault on US interest and would be met with military force. Whether or not the Soviet Union was planning to occupy Iran, Soviet

¹²¹ Robert O. Freedman, “Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since the Invasion of Afghanistan”, *Journal of International Affairs* 34, no.2 (Fall 1980-Winter 1981):283-291.

¹²² Paul Kennedy, *Büyük Güçlerin Yükseliş ve Çöküşleri*, trans.Birtane Karanakçı, 6.Eds. (Ankara: T.İşbankası Kültür Yayınları, 1996), 601.

¹²³ “Khomeini: We Shall Confront the World with Our Ideology”. Accessed on March 10, 2018, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer88/khomeini-we-shall-confront-world-our-ideology>

¹²⁴ Mohsen M. Milani, “Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan”, *Middle East Journal* 60, no.2 (Spring 2006):237

forces were in Afghanistan for about 10 years.¹²⁵ In January 1980, the USA announced its action against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and provided military equipment and other assistance to Pakistan to help the Afghan anti-communist Mujahedeen groups fighting the Soviet Union.¹²⁶

Despite his ideological foreign policy rhetoric, Khomeini was in a conundrum on the first days of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹²⁷ Contiguous to the Soviet Union, the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and Iran, Afghanistan was the logical point of entry into Gulf politics. Isolated, militarily weak and protected by no foreign patron or constituency, Iran was vulnerable to Soviet military power on the two borders. Thus, anti-communist Khomeini responded to the invasion lethargically, allowing six weeks to pass without comment.¹²⁸ He finally commented by calling the Soviet Union as looters and occupiers that threatened Iran. He called on the Muslim world to form a coalition in order to free Afghanistan from Soviet occupation.¹²⁹ In his speech Khomeini said that “I strongly condemn the dastardly occupation of Afghanistan by plunderers and occupiers of aggressive East.”¹³⁰ Bani Sadr, the first elected president in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran, stated that Soviet occupation was unacceptable and insisted on the unconditional withdrawal of the Soviet Union. In reaction to Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Khomeini decided to boycott the Moscow Olympics.¹³¹ Because of concerns about occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, Iran announced to give support to the Afghan

¹²⁵ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 225-226.

¹²⁶ M.Saleem Kidwai, *US Policy Towards the Muslim World: Focus on Post 9/11 Period*, (New York: UPA 2010), 250, Proquest Ebook Central.

¹²⁷ Mohsen M. Milani, “Iran’s Policy Towards Afghanistan”, 237.

¹²⁸ Shahram Chubin, “The Soviet Union and Iran”, *Foreign Affairs* 61, no.4 (Spring 1983).

¹²⁹ Dr. Zahid Ali Khan and Dr. Shabir Ahmad, “Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan: From Soviet Intervention to the Fall of Taliban”. Accessed on March 20, 2019, <http://www.asccentralasia.edu.pk>.

¹³⁰ “Khomeini: We Shall Confront the World with Our Ideology”. Accessed on March 10, 2018, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer88/khomeini-we-shall-confront-world-our-ideology>

¹³¹ Adibelli, *Doğu Batı Yol Ayrımında İran-İdeoloji, Devlet ve Dış Politika*, 154-156.

Mujahideen.¹³² The war in Afghanistan was potentially dangerous for the Soviet Union as Central Asia became vulnerable to external intervention and had a destabilizing effect on the shaky equilibrium of the region.¹³³ Also geopolitical pressures which were a barrier to the Soviet Union, coupled with strategic mistakes, would result in their withdrawal from Afghanistan.¹³⁴

Although Iran had used harsh terms about occupation of Afghanistan, Khomeini did not conceive cutting relations with the Soviet Union completely. This was because, Iran was isolated by the USA from the world due to the hostage crisis. This dilemma sometimes led Iran to adopt pragmatic foreign policy. Despite Khomeini's ideological rhetoric on foreign policy towards Afghanistan, in practice, he prioritized Iran's national interests and had to approach the Soviet Union against the US threat. One of the aims of Iran was to limit the Soviet arms aid to Saddam's Iraq.¹³⁵ Moreover, the Soviet Union was enthusiastic to keep good relations with Iran against the USA. Furthermore, the Soviet Union sometimes gave support to Iran at the international arena despite Khomeini's reaction against the Soviet Union due to the occupation of Afghanistan. Not only did the Soviet Union veto a US-sponsored U.N. Security Council resolution calling for economic sanctions against Iran, it strongly reiterated its warning against any US military intervention in Iran. While the Soviet Union sought to project itself as the protector of Iran, it also sought to temper Iranian criticism of the Afghan invasion by having Babrak Karmal, the new Soviet-installed leader of Afghanistan, write to the Ayatollah Khomeini with an appeal for a common front against the US imperialism. To further placate Ayatollah, his picture was published in two Kabul news papers. All these efforts, however, came to naughts. The two leading candidates for the Iranian presidency, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, both attacked the Soviet Union in

¹³² Khan and Ahmad, "Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan".

¹³³ Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier, "The Afghan War and Soviet Central Asia", *METU Asian-African Research Group*, no.30 (1986).

¹³⁴ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik, Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, 46. Eds. (İstanbul :Küre Yayınları, Şubat 2010), 155.

¹³⁵ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan", 237.

campaign speeches in late January 1980, with Bani-Sadr accusing Moscow of wanting to divide Iran and push to the Indian Ocean. At the Islamic Conference in January 1980, Iran joined in the general denunciation of Soviet Union's policy and urged the conference to demand the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, although they also demanded that the conference condemn the US economic blockade of Iran and act to eliminate US imperialist influence in Islamic countries.¹³⁶

The ideological ambitions of the Islamic Revolution coincided with Iran's regional security concerns due to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which put Iran in a dilemma. Actually, although Iran and Soviet Union were inclined to continue their good relations, both Iran's attack on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and termination of natural gas deliveries to the Soviet Union due to dispute over price signalled a deterioration of the Iran-Soviet relations. Fortunately for Moscow, by this time the Carter administration had lost patience on the hostage issue, and Iranian diplomats were expelled from the USA. The USA announced the imposition of economic sanctions, while urging its NATO allies to do likewise. Seizing the opportunity presented by the American actions, Moscow offered Iran land transit facilities to circumvent a potential American naval blockade, and most of Moscow's East European allies were concerned about the Soviet Union's future inability to supply them with sufficient fuel, journeyed to Tehran to try to arrange barter deals where they would obtain Iranian oil for the food and manufactured goods that might be embargoed by the West. As the US-Iranian tension again raised, Afghan leader Babrak Karmal, almost certainly acting on the Soviet Union's instructions, made another demarche to Tehran, to normalize relations with Iran.¹³⁷

Despite a gesture by the Karmal government, in which the Soviet-installed Afghan President invited Iran and Pakistan to participate in talks aiming at arranging the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Iran severely denounced the Soviet Union at the 11th Islamic Conference which was held in Pakistan, in 17-22 May 1980, and

¹³⁶ Freedman, "Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since the Invasion of Afghanistan ", 283.

¹³⁷ Freedman, "Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since the Invasion of Afghanistan ", 291.

went so far as to include, as official members of its own delegation, eight Afghan Mujaheddin leaders. Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh led the Iranian delegation and denounced the Soviet Union and the USA in equally harsh terms. He condemned the Soviet occupation, which was against Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He also stated, in an obvious effort to prevent the conference from being diverted to Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He said that liberation of Afghanistan was not less important than the liberation of Palestine and called for unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan. It also set up a three-man committee, composed of Ghotbzadeh, Agha Shahi the foreign minister of Pakistan and Habib Chatti, the Islamic Conference secretary general, to seek a solution to the Afghan problem. Despite the Islamic Conference's numerous criticism of the USA, the meeting in May must be considered another diplomatic defeat to the Soviet Union, which rejected the Conference's Afghan Committee Plan, and denounced representatives of reactionary Muslem quarters who succeeded in pushing through a resolution on the Afghan question couched in terms hostile to the people and government of Afghanistan.¹³⁸

The ties of the Soviet Union with the other countries were cutting off due to severe negative reactions it had received from the Afghanistan occupation.¹³⁹ Reactions from all across the world against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan rose exponentially. Immediately after the occupation, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia appealed to the UN and the Organization of Islamic Conference, calling for the elimination of developments in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. China also appealed to the UN and demanded Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. When the occupation began, the USA gave up on the SALT-II Agreement and supported the Afghan Mujahideen. Even when the UN Security Council met in early January 1980 to discuss the Soviet invasion, a draft resolution condemning it could not be passed. However, the matter was taken up in the UN General Assembly. The UN General Assembly adopted the first of a series of Situation in Afghanistan

¹³⁸ Freedman, "Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since the Invasion of Afghanistan ", 293.

¹³⁹ Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik, Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, 352.

resolutions (resolution ES-6/2). The resolution included military intervention, humanitarian assistance and called for the removal of all foreign troops in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁰

While political pressure by the international community was going on for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the presidency of Carter ended under the cloud of the hostage crises in Iran.¹⁴¹ After the Carter's period, Ronald Reagan took office in 1980. Reagan's presidency coincided with the end of the hostage crisis in Iran. Considering strategic threats to the USA, Reagan focused on Iran and the Soviet Union. Reagan named the the Soviet Union as "the evil empire" and instigated the idea of a strategic defence, popularly known as "Star Wars." If the idea was successful, it would have made the East-West arms control treaty and deterrence doctrine null and void. While in Latin America, Reagan supported dubious regimes that were fighting left-wing insurgencies, for example the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, who were in conflict with a left-wing government. In Afghanistan, the Americans were helping the insurgents Mujahideen with arms and training.¹⁴²

3.3.1. The Resistance of Afghan Mujahideen

Due to deteriorating diplomatic relations with the USA and embargo, Iran needed the Soviet Union as a trading partner. Iran's foreign policy had not only been centered on concerns about Khomeini's ideological world view, which had religious motives, but also had to base on Iran's national interests. Actually, Iran considered that the Middle East, Palestine and Lebanon were more important than

¹⁴⁰“Afghanistan&United Nations”, Accessed on December 12, 2017, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/un-afghan-history.shtml>.

¹⁴¹ Potter and Sick, *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War*, 197.

¹⁴² Aylin Ünver Noi, “Iran and The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Is It Possible For Iran To Become Full Member Of The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Under Pressure Of Nuclear Issue? ”, *Perceptions* (2006):79-103.

Afghanistan.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the Iran-Iraq war, which began on 22 September 1980 due to the aspirations of Saddam Hussein's regional leadership, caused destruction of Iran's economy.¹⁴⁴

Throughout the 1980s, Iran found it impossible to support the Afghan conflict either financially and politically. However, Khomeini was against any communist government next to its borders. He said that "we are fighting against international communism to the same degree that we are fighting against the Western world - devourers led by America, Israel and Zionism. My dear friends, you should know that the danger from the communist powers is not less than America and the danger of America is such that if we show the slightest negligence we shall be destroyed."¹⁴⁵ Since the Soviet Union threatened its eastern territory, Iran had to continue to support to Afghan Mujahideen fighting against communist Afghan government and the Soviet Union. As the assistance of Saudi Arabia and the USA to the Sunni Afghan Mujahideen increased for counterbalancing the Sunni Mujahideen, Khomeini supported Shiite resistance groups.¹⁴⁶ Khomeini considered Wahabism of Saudi as US Islam. Thus, according to Iranian leaders, propagation of movements of Wahabism among the refugees in Iran, which was composed of Pakistanis and Afghans, was one of the main problems for the Iran foreign policy towards Afghanistan. So, the foreign policy view of Khomeini towards Afghanistan focused on "creating an ideological sphere of influence" through close economic and social relationship with Shiite minority in Hazarajat region.¹⁴⁷

Iranian leaders considered that close ethnic and ideological relations between

¹⁴³ Andreas Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus: Structural Patterns of Iran's Policy in Afghanistan", *Internationales Asienforum* 40, no.1-2 (2009):11–38.

¹⁴⁴ Lessons of the Iraq-Iran War, *Economic and Political Weekly* 17, no.30 (1982):1190.

¹⁴⁵ "Khomeini: We Shall Confront the World with Our Ideology", Accessed on March 10, 2018, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer88/khomeini-we-shall-confront-world-our-ideology>

¹⁴⁶ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 19.

¹⁴⁷ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan", 237.

Shiite minority in Afghanistan, led them to support the Iranian strategic moves in the Afghan region. However, among Muslim countries, there were opposite views about how the resistance was supported, considering the ethnic structure of Afghanistan. For example, although Iran and Saudi Arabia were against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, they supported the opposing factions of the Mujaheddin. However, Khoemini based Iran's foreign policy on ideological mottos, Shah's pragmatic foreign policy was continuing. Iran never severed its diplomatic links with the Kabul regime. Saudi Arabia, the USA and Pakistan supported the radical Sunni Pashtun groups by providing weapons.¹⁴⁸

The Mujahideen comprised of two groups in itself. While one of these groups was named external front, the other group was named internal front. The former was formed by urban and educated people, who had linguistic, ethnical and religious relationship with the Afghan population. Generally, members of the external front were interested in politics formerly and all of them were in a position of refugee in Iran and Pakistan following the military coup in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁹ Owing to the continuing war against the Soviet Union, the external front recruited new members and warriors through their offices in Iran. The latter, the internal front was formed by different fighters around the region with the leadership of local commanders. In fact, one of the basic factors in defeat of the Soviet army and PDPA in the civil war in Afghanistan was the support of the internal front. The members of the internal front were in close relationship with political groups that were based in Iran and Pakistan. However, there were also other groups fighting against the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁰

There existed six effective groups of Mujahideen who cooperated with the CIA through the ISI against the Soviet occupation. They were Hizbi- Islami, Jamiat-I-Islami, Younus Khalis Group, Harakati-Islami, Milli Islami Mahaz-i-Afghanistan, and Jabha Nijat-i Milli Afghanistan. Beside these organized groups, there were a

¹⁴⁸ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 197.

¹⁴⁹ Neamatollah Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 85, Proquest Ebook Central.

¹⁵⁰ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 89.

large number of unorganized groups divided in as many as 200 small groups within their county where they faced a common enemy.¹⁵¹ For the Shiite Muslim minority in Afghanistan, the SIEIA and HIA were the most important organizations of the Afghan Mujahideen. SIEIA, the leaders of which were Seyyid Ali Bahisti and Sayid Jagran, dominated region of Hazarajat. HIA, the leader of which was Shaikh Mohammed Assaf Mohseni, was mostly known by the Shiite and Sunni Muslims living in different regions of the Afghanistan.¹⁵² In addition to HIA and SIEIA, several political Afghan groups appeared in Iran, which were supported by Iranian government financially and militarily. Furthermore, Western aids to Shiite Mujahideen could not reach effectively in Afghanistan, because of deteriorating relations between Iran and the USA. Inefficiency of international assistance to Shiite Mujahideen led to increase in the support of the Iranian government to Mujahideen leaders in Afghanistan as well as causing division of the Shiite groups as the independent groups and the groups loyal to religious and political views of the leaders of Islamic Republic of Iran. This unfavourable situation among the Shiite groups in Afghanistan diminished the militarily as well as financially capability of the SIEIA and HIA to struggle against the Soviet Union in the coming years.¹⁵³

The leaders of the Mujahideen in the activities of external front had been mostly influenced by the thoughts of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and of ideology of Islamic Republic Party in Iran, the leader of which was Said Ali Bahasti. The other factors that influenced the thought of members of the external front were the social structures and political developments occurring in the different regions of Afghanistan. The Mujahideen groups in Pakistan (HIH) lead by Gulbadin Hikmetyar and JIA, lead by Burhaneddin Rabbani were influenced by the ideologies of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. As regards with the political parties in Iran, NASR and the Victor Organization leading by Husein Sadegi and members of Sapahe Pasdaran Inghalab Islami Afghanistan adopted the political views of the Islamic

¹⁵¹ Kidwai, "US Policy Towards the Muslim World".

¹⁵² Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 99.

¹⁵³ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 100.

Republic Party in Iran.¹⁵⁴

Some of the Mujahideen parties such as NASR were influenced by the ideology of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution. The Maktabis, the educated believers, who were followers of the political thoughts and the leadership of Islamic Revolution of Iran, considered that by means of Islamic ideology expressed in the speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini, their members were loyal to the activity of the party rather than ethnic or linguistic elements. The Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan mostly followed ideology of these political groups, and also, they were the most organized groups among Afghan refugees. Afghan followers of HIH and NASR had close relations with the governments of hosting countries. Besides, these governments supplied further military and financial aid to these groups in proportion to other political groups.¹⁵⁵

The harsh ideology, strict discipline and activities of the group in politics has made it very difficult for new members to enter this group. Leaving the group is perhaps even more difficult than entering. Members who have decided to leave are often abused severely. In the Hazarajat region of Afghanistan, the leaders of NASR party, who was supported militarily and logistically by the Iranians, was determined to topple all of the military and social institutions setting up independently by Sayyed Ali Behesti and Sayyed Jagran. Among the Afghan Mujahideen groups in Iran, the movement of NASR was the most organized political group. Second group was HWIA, the party which was composed by Shiites and supported by Iranian government. Since they did not join the HWIA, Hezb-e Harkat-e Islami and SIEIA were expelled from Iran. Expulsion of Hezb-e Harkat-e Islami and SIEIA led them to establish close relations with Pakistan. They were also supported militarily and financially by Mujahideen groups which had moderate political tendency.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 101.

¹⁵⁵ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 102.

¹⁵⁶ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 103.

In his speech Khomeini showed his support to Afghan Mujaheddin groups. He said that “I hope that the Muslim and noble people of Afghanistan will as soon as possible achieve true victory and independence”.¹⁵⁷ Islamic rebellion against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was encouraged by Iranian leaders. Iran’s encouragement influenced especially Afghan Shiites. They supported the Islamic rebellion through the Hizb al-Wahdat militia. In those years when Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union, there were nine major Iranian backing Shiite groups that joined the anti-government resistance in Afghanistan including Harakat-e Islami Afghanistan, Shuray-e Ittefaq-e Enqalab-e Islami Afghanistan, Sazman-e Nasr-e Afghanistan, Pasdaran-e Jihad-e Islami Afghanistan, Hezbollah, Nahzat-e Islami Afghanistan, Jabhe Muttahad-e Inqalab-e Islami Afghanistan, Hezb-e Dawat-e Ittihad-i Islami Afghanistan, Sazman-e Nairoy-e Islami Afghanistan. All but one of these groups had been established in Iran, the exception being Shuray-e Ittefaq, which was formed in Afghanistan. The composition of these groups was mostly on ethnic lines. They were mostly Hazara with some Shiite minorities. A good chunk of these groups followed Ayatollah Khomeini’s version of political Islam excepting the Pasdaran-e Jihad-e Islami and Sazman-e Nasr.¹⁵⁸

The conflict between the Soviet Union and Afghan Mujahedden groups continued in full swing and it kept the Soviet Union occupied with insurgents in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, attack on Iran in the nearby Shiite areas had been bothering Iran. One of these was when a Soviet offensive in Farah province in Afghanistan led to an incursion into Iran, the bombing of a town, and a resultant loss of fifty Afghan lives, news of the episode was sparse and the Iranians were apparently satisfied with the Soviet Union’s immediate apology for the error. Statements by Soviet officials that appeared menacing towards Iran were also ignored. Iran refused to allow a radio station in its territory for the Afghan resistance. Iranian direct assistance as well as a

¹⁵⁷“Khomeini: We Shall Confront the World with Our ideology”, Accessed on March 10, 2018 <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer88/khomeini-we-shall-confront-world-our-ideology>

¹⁵⁸Bruce Koepke, “Iran’s Policy on Afghanistan: The Evolution of Strategic Pragmatism”, *SIPRI*, (2013):4, Accessed on March 13, 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/misc/SIPRI13wcaBK.pdf>.

conduit for aid to Pakistan also declined. This may have been due to Soviet pressure, if Soviet-bloc arms for the war with Iraq had made conditional on such limitations. Another indicator of a less than total commitment to nonalignment was the establishment of a listening station in Baluchistan with the Soviet Union, thus enabling the Soviet Union to assess activities on the Pakistan-Afghan border.¹⁵⁹

While the battle between the Soviet army and Afghan insurgents was going on, Iran was at war with Iraq. Although Khomeini based Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan on religious motives, while fighting with Iraq in the 1980s, he sometimes had to adopt pragmatic manner in Iran's foreign policy. In mid-1981, Khomeini agreed to accept Soviet security assistance for war with Iraq. Soviet assistance was not unconditional. One of the conditions of Soviet assistance was the limitation of Iranian support to Afghan resistance movements. The Soviet Union had reportedly gained access to the radar-signal processing system of the F-14 in exchange for its assistance. Iran's military weakness did not hurt the Soviet Union, either. Unable to detect or deter Soviet air or even land incursions, the Iranians were in no position to stop the Soviet Union from crossing their territory en route to Afghanistan.¹⁶⁰ Actually, during 1980s, as a result of considering the Soviet Union as a counterweight to US influence in the region, Iran was cautious not to antagonize Soviet Union. Thus, Iran was unwilling to be a buffer zone against the Soviet occupation. Tehran did not join the "Washington-Islamabad-Riyadh" axis which financed and managed the Afghan resistance movement.¹⁶¹

The Soviet army and Afghan government forces massively and widely attacked Mujahideen groups in many essential parts of Afghanistan in the early years of the 1980s. Soviet army's intensive military activities during 1981-1984 enormously damaged Afghanistan's economy. The battle with the Soviet Union and

¹⁵⁹ Chubin, "The Soviet Union and Iran".

¹⁶⁰ Chubin, "The Soviet Union and Iran".

¹⁶¹ Mohsen Milani, "Iran and Afghanistan", Accessed on November 10, 2017, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-afghanistan>.

Mujahideen devastated a lot of villages and millions of Afghan people had to migrate to neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan. Although the campaign continued until 1984, the Soviet Union and Afghan government forces got no results and, by the way, leaders of Afghan Mujahideen find out how to use tactics in the battle with the Soviet army. Developments on the battleground of Afghanistan were not in favour of the Soviet army. The operations of the Soviet army and Afghan government forces could not halt the attacks of the Afghan Mujahideen. The struggle of Afghan Mujahideen against Soviet army led them to get support from Afghanistan and the international arena. Moreover, Afghan Mujahideen released a lot of region in Afghanistan, thus, the war against the Soviet Union entered a new phase.¹⁶²

Khomeini's attitude towards Afghanistan was relatively more pragmatic in the following years. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan happened when Iran was in an extremely weak period. Turbulence in its territory because of the Islamic Revolution and deteriorating relations with the USA had begun to dispose Iran from the international community. This provided opportunities for the Soviet Union to have access to the Persian Gulf, Middle East oil and the Indian Ocean. Thus, Western countries and oil producing Middle Eastern countries became uncomfortable.¹⁶³ The war against Iraq forced Khomeini to give priority to the regional security concerns of Iran. Thus, Iran focused more on Iraq war than Afghanistan in 1980s. On the other hand, despite her ideological rhetorics on Afghanistan, Iran often used religious and ethnic factors to formulate its pragmatic foreign policy approach towards Afghanistan. For the Iranian foreign policy makers gaining a strategic advantage in Afghanistan and their close relations with the Afghan Mujahedin were crucial for the prevention of the Soviet military aid which was composed of arm supply, to Iraq army. Furthermore, according to Iranian politicians, advantages on Afghanistan could make it easier to struggle against the US regional threat and could enable Iran to prevent the activities of Tudeh party which had close relationship with Soviet politicians as well as consolidating power of Khomeinists in Iran's internal

¹⁶² Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 98.

¹⁶³ Armaoğlu, *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi 1914-1915*, 762.

politics.¹⁶⁴

3.4. Conclusion

Khomeini's ideological foreign policy of supporting all Shiite groups around the world, became one of the main targets of the foreign policy of Iran since the Islamic Revolution.¹⁶⁵ Its linguistic and cultural ties, especially with the people of Hazarajat, led Iran to keep a close eye on developments in Afghanistan. Uneasiness created by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the hostility towards the USA might have forced Iran to make a choice between the two super powers; the USA and the Soviet Union. Thus, Iran found herself in a conundrum when Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan.¹⁶⁶

The Soviet Union encountered strong resistance during the invasion of Afghanistan which continued for about ten years. Then, Soviet army retreated from Afghanistan. The results of the war were total destruction of Afghanistan. It was estimated that about one and a half million people had died, many others disabled, yet others made orphans. Much of the infrastructure of Afghanistan was destroyed.¹⁶⁷ The interference of Afghanistan's neighbouring governments, particularly Iran and Pakistan, in the affairs of Mujahideen groups was considered one of the main reasons of continuing invasion of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghans, escaping from Soviet communism, took asylum in Iran and Pakistan. The refugees who came to Iran alone were about 500.000¹⁶⁸ since the beginning of combat with the Soviet Union army and PDPA regime forces. Besides, for the top leaders of Afghan Mujahideen groups, the grounds of Iran and Pakistan became a head office to

¹⁶⁴ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan", 237.

¹⁶⁵ Özgür Çınarlı, "İran'ın Afganistan'daki İç Savaşa Yönelik Dış Politikası", *Aksaray Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 8, no.2 (2016): 75-84.

¹⁶⁶ Eisenstadt, "Iran's Islamic Revolution".

¹⁶⁷ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 97.

¹⁶⁸ Armaoğlu, *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi*, 69.

conduct the operations against the Soviet Union. As the Afghan war continued, the balances were changing in the region. Thus, regional developments and instability in Afghanistan resulted to US military and logistical support to Afghan Mujahideen.¹⁶⁹

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan caused Iranian security concerns in her eastern border. However, Iran had ideological advantages on Afghanistan. Iranian government supported the Shiite groups, mostly Hazaras, in the years of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Tehran provided technical and financial support. The Islamic Revolution in Iran not only increases tensions in diplomatic relations with the USA, but also hinders aids from Western countries to Shiite Mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan. Because of its regional security concerns, the main objective of Iranian leaders relating to the war in Afghanistan was to keep communist threat out of its borders. But, close ethnical and linguistic relations with Shiite Mujahideen in Afghanistan caused Iranian leaders mostly to deal with the process of influencing leadership of Shiite Mujahideen in compliance with the regional interests and religious ambitions of Iran. The Afghan Mujahideen fighters under the leadership of Ismail Khan, were one of the most organized and self-dedicated group among the Mujahideen groups. But, the combants of Ahmed Shah Mesud, based in Panshir, were the most well-disciplined and military trained group among the Afghan Mujahideen. Revolutionary guard of Iran began to manage the relations with Afghan Mujahideen, when the coup of PDPA in 1978 and occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979.¹⁷⁰

Although Afghan war was very crucial for the Islamic regime in Iran, Iranian leaders essentially focused on the war with Iraq. Even if Iran's support for Afghan Mujahideen was limited due to the war with Iraq, during the 1980s, Iran considered making new alliances and new networks with Shiite and Persian- and Dari-speaking minorities.¹⁷¹ Iran has no other options but to offer refuge to those fleeing

¹⁶⁹ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 98-99.

¹⁷⁰ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 64.

¹⁷¹ Mohsen M. Milani, "Teheran's Take: Understanding Iran's U.S. Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, (2009).

persecution on the basis of Islamic solidarity.¹⁷² Afghanistan became one of the most important battlegrounds of Saudi-Iranian competition after 1979. In the 1980s, however, the rivalry was still rather subdued. Iran's revolutionaries, like the Saudis, were vehemently against having a communist neighbour on their east. However, Iran's support to Afghan Mujahideen was limited due to war with Iraq and did not cut ties with the Soviet Union in diplomatic relations. In the 1980s, despite his ideological foreign policy rhetoric, in practice, Khomeini rather established Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan on pragmatic approach that prioritized Iran's regional interests.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Koepke, "Iran's Policy on Afghanistan", 1.

¹⁷³ Henner Furtig, "Afghanistan in the Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern Countries", *Asian Perspective* 38, no.4 (2014).

CHAPTER 4

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN IN THE 1990s

4.1. Introduction

While the resistance movement continued in Afghanistan, the devastating war with Iraq was slowly coming to an end. About a year after the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq, Imam Khomeini died in June 1989. After eight years of hardship and the war with Iraq, Iran's economy was in ruins. Hundreds of thousands were dead, and nearly a million others were wounded. While Ali Khomeini became the new Ayatollah, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani became the new president. Beginning a new period in the Iranian foreign policy, Iran had to revise its foreign policy priorities after the destructive war with Iraq. Iran had been devastated in all areas and a significant development and economic recovery was more important than anything. Tehran had to overview its foreign policy and in order to reconstruct the country, and to increase oil income, Iran needed to cooperate with other states. During the Rafsanjani period, Iran's foreign policy was a more pragmatic than Khomeini's period in economy and security-related issues.¹⁷⁴

Rafsanjani was a merchant president with a strong populist streak, and he sought to drive reconstruction by cultivating the interest and expanding the opportunities for the mercantile bourgeoisie. In fact, Rafsanjani's administration arguably heralded a return to high realpolitik in its understanding of international relations (although his administration singularly refused to recognize the reality of Iran's modest position within the international system), and a number of international relations institutes were inaugurated and staffed with eager academics, most of whom had been educated in the USA and were devotees of the school of pragmatism. Rafsanjani actively played the patriotic and, above all, to attract investment- not only from the business elites within the country, but especially from the many thousands who had left the country. Regional changes were also forcing a preconception of

¹⁷⁴ Abdullah Yeğin, "The Iranian Foreign Policy After Imam Khomeini: The Period of Softening and Economic Development", *SETA Perspective*, no.4 (2014):1-5.

policy, especially when the collapse of the Soviet Union reignited the “Great Game” in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Afghanistan.¹⁷⁵

At the beginning of 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan. The withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and failing of the policy of Glasnost was considered by the USA as a victory. Everything happening so fast; the Berlin Wall was dismantled, the death of President Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania and the collapse of pro-Soviet regimes in the Central and Eastern Europe, culminated to the end of the Cold War. The collapse of pro-Soviet regimes in its former satellite states, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the demise of President Ceausescu brought the Cold War to an end, and once underway, it came at a breathtaking speed.¹⁷⁶ Iran’s relations with the USA improved slightly during the early years of Rafsanjani’s presidency; notwithstanding, when news of Iranian nuclear arms came out during mid-1990s, the relations crumbled again.¹⁷⁷

Since the end of the war with Iraq, Iran shifted its foreign policy perspective from exportation of revolutionary Islam to internal political consolidation and economic reconstruction through pragmatic relations with the other countries. The war with Iraq was very destructive for Iran’s economy, thus, Khomeini’s successors considered to base Iran’s foreign policy on realist views rather than ideological. In the 1990s, the developments in both southern frontier, including commencement of the Gulf War and northern frontier, including disintegration of the Soviet Union caused unstable conditions that posed a threat to Iran’s security. Iran was the largest country between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf. The unravelling of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Najibullah-led government in Afghanistan in April 1992, the starting of the Afghan Civil War, and the rise of the anti-Iran Taliban in Afghanistan, caused

¹⁷⁵ Brenda Shaffer, *Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006) 251-252, Proquest Ebook Central.

¹⁷⁶ Potter and Sick, *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War*, 199.

¹⁷⁷ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 228.

new security-related challenges for Iran in the east.¹⁷⁸

Tehran took a more solid step in order to balance deterrence and detente in a strategy to achieve its long term security interests during the post-Cold War period. Other external developments, such as the Karabagh conflict in the early 1990s, the 1991 Iraq-Kuwait War and Washington's policy of dual containment of Iraq and Iran posed a variety of threats around Iran's borders. The Afghanistan war also helped Iran to adjust her foreign policy by promoting regional peace and stability. Washington was tirelessly working to isolate Iran, and repelling this effort was a strategic objective for Iran. A smart way for Iran to handle this situation was to accentuate more on self-reliance in security. Another problem that Tehran had to deal with was her negative image abroad (support for radical and revolutionary groups in the world).¹⁷⁹

4.2. The Afghan Civil War

The Afghan war was a very depressing experience for the Soviet Union. The Soviet occupation had involved over a 100,000 troops and they lost more than 15,000 of them during the occupation of Afghanistan.¹⁸⁰ The removal of Soviet forces in Afghanistan was facilitated by the Geneva Accord of 1988. The Accord spelled out the timetable of the withdrawal. According to the Geneva Accord, the withdrawal was to begin on 15 May 1988 and end on 15 February 1989. With the USA and the Soviet Union acting as guarantors, Pakistan and Afghanistan signed a set of agreements for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. The Afghan Mujahideen refused the agreement, because it was not part of its formulation

¹⁷⁸ Shireen Hunter, "Iran's Pragmatic Regional Policy", *Journal of International Affairs* 56, no.2 (Spring 2003):133.

¹⁷⁹ Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, *Central Asian Security: The New International Context* (Washington: Brooking Institution Press, 2001):171-172, Proquest Ebook Central.

¹⁸⁰ Sankaran Krishna, "An Inarticulate Imperialism: Dubya, Afghanistan and the American Century", *Alternatives : Turkish Journal Of International Relations* 1, No.2 (2002):69-80.

process.¹⁸¹

After the Geneva Accord, Soviet army began to withdraw from Afghanistan. Afghanistan and the Soviet Union continued the good relations and vowed to continue their support to the Najibullah government, who replaced Babrak Karmal as president in 1986 while Afghan Jihad resistance movement was continuing.¹⁸² After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, the USA and the Soviet Union guaranteed not to intervene in Afghanistan. The decision was made when the Cold War was about to end and this turned the war-ravaged Afghanistan into a battlefield for regional powers. For Iranians, Pakistanis and Saudis, Afghanistan was a region where they could wage their “proxy war”. In order to spread its version of Islam throughout Central Asia, the Saudis considered using Afghanistan as a springboard. According to Saudis, this foreign policy perspective would neutralize Islamic Revolution of Iran. Seeking to gain strategic advantage against its regional rival India, Pakistan considered supporting a Pushtun-dominated government in Afghanistan. Iran wanted friendly government in Kabul, one that shows ethnic diversity. Tehran pushed for the formation of a united front.¹⁸³

Withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan finished in February 1989. When Soviet forces left from Afghanistan, there came a power struggle between Mujahedeen groups which turned into a short-lived civil war.¹⁸⁴ Iran and Pakistan filled the vacuum and they acquired considerable influence in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Iranian-Saudi rivalry escalated. While Saudis supported Sunni Pashtun groups, Iran preferred close relationship with the Kabul regime after the

¹⁸¹“Agreement on Afghanistan”, Accessed on October 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/04/15/agreement-on-afghanistan-signed-in-geneva>

¹⁸² “Najibullah: President of Afghanistan”, Accessed on December 23, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mohammad-Najibullah>.

¹⁸³ Mohsen Milani, “Iran and Afghanistan”, Accessed on November 10, 2017, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-afghanistan>.

¹⁸⁴ A.Sait Sönmez, “The Effects of Security Problems on the USA- Uzbekistan Relations”, *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations* 11, no.3 (2012):3.

withdrawal of the Soviet Union. According to Iranian leaders, only the Kabul regime could withstand Sunni Pashtun takeover of Afghanistan.¹⁸⁵

Iran changed her foreign policy concept during the post-Cold War era and abandoned its offensive ambition and adopted a doctrine of deterrence. Iranian leaders emphasized its adherence to defence, though it did not abandon its self-perceptions as a power and natural leader in the region.¹⁸⁶ Thus, Iran made some new adjustments on her foreign policy strategy towards Afghanistan. These adjustments were not only influenced by changes in domestic affairs but also by altered external circumstances. Towards the end of 1980s, the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan was completed and the end of the war against Iraq freed Iran from considerable pressure such that Tehran was able to turn its attention to Afghanistan. Under President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan became more pragmatic than previous terms. Additionally, relating to Afghanistan, Iran was more cohesive to axis of the influence of Saudi-Pakistan on the Afghan Mujahideen. Immediately after end of the Cold War, Iran shifted her foreign policy towards Afghanistan by supporting the establishment of a multi-ethnic government comprising both Sunni and Shiite representatives.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, moderate elites began to consolidate their powers in domestic politics after Khomeini's death and the election of Rafsanjani as the new president. Influence of moderate elites increased; however, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was still determined by the fear that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia could dominate the Afghan Mujahideen. Regional interests of Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were the same in the 1990s.¹⁸⁸

Structural changes in international political system in the 1990s, like the end of the Cold War, led Iranian leaders to seek more pragmatic movements in Iran's

¹⁸⁵ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 199.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Czulda, "The Defensive Dimension of Iran's Military Doctrine: How Would They Fight?," *Middle East Policy* 23, no.1(Spring 2016):94.

¹⁸⁷ Koepke, "Iran's Policy on Afghanistan", 35.

¹⁸⁸ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 5.

foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Soon after the end of the Cold War, the foreign policy concept of the Islamic Republic of Iran had already changed significantly in comparison with early years after the Islamic Revolution. The end of the Cold War and independence of the Central Asian states accelerated this political change. Iranians no longer used ideological rhetoric of Islamic Revolution on foreign policy as in Khomeini's period. The experience of the Iraq War and the struggle for survival triggered issues of national interest in the heart of Tehran. It also helped Tehran to understand how to use the international system to guarantee her national interest. The war with Iraq damaged Iranian infrastructure and caused economic downturn. Reconstruction of the country and development of the economy led Iranians to focus more on pragmatic acquirements than ideological ambitions. This new foreign relations concept of Iran, which was expressed in an emphasis on trade, attracted investment. Domestic political developments, symbolized by the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and the presidency of Rafsanjani, further reinforced pragmatic foreign policy trend.¹⁸⁹

Pragmatic trend was also reflected in Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, due to concerns about US and Saudi influence on Afghan Mujahideen groups which were based in Pakistan, Iran began to normalize its relations with the Najibullah government in Kabul. Since then, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan transformed into merging different Shiite Mujahideen groups under a single roof and forming an organizational mechanism which was later named as Hezb-e-Wahdat. The most important factor behind Iran's foreign policy change towards Afghanistan was that Iranian government wanted to hinder US and Saudi influence on the Mujahideen government. Iran was of the opinion to establish a government which consisted of Afghan Mujahideen leaders. Then, Iran backed the Rabbani-led government.¹⁹⁰

Despite its new foreign policy view which was establishing pragmatic

¹⁸⁹ Allison and Jonson, *Central Asian Security*, 172.

¹⁹⁰ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 187.

relations with the other countries to diminish its diplomatic and economic isolation at international arena and to establish a close relations with both its neighbors and the Western countries, Iran's foreign policy toward Afghanistan became more proactive after the eight years war with Iraq.¹⁹¹ Iran considered making tripartite conference with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Due to Pakistan and Iran were the key players in Afghanistan, a trilateral conference was planned between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. All resistance commanders in the Mujahideen groups, as well as tribal and religious leaders rejected the trilateral conference. However, the conference was held. Iran put forward leaders from the Mujahideen group it had created in 1990, the Hezb-i Wahdat. Pakistan chose four of its seven party leaders— Rabbani, Mojaddedi, Gailani, and Nabi— to head up the Mujahideen contingent. The first tripartite conference was held in Islamabad on 29-30 July 1990. Zaki led the Pakistani delegation, while Iranian foreign minister Abbas Magnum Velayati headed the Iranian delegation. The concluding Joint Declaration stressed the pursuit of a just peaceful settlement of the Afghanistan problem, which should lead to the replacement of the present illegal government in Kabul and the establishment of an elected government.¹⁹²

Iran's target was to establish a Shiite-dominated government in Afghanistan. Actually, since the Islamic Revolution, Iran's influence in Afghanistan as well as other regional countries was increasingly over Shiite ethnicity. Iranians conceived that close religious and ethnic relations with Shiite groups in Afghanistan could be enabled to increase Iran's influence on the region. However, ethnic and political structures were very complex in Afghanistan. 99% of the Afghan population are Muslim, and 80% of which are Sunni. While the Shiites were in minority, Hizb-e Wahdat, the main Shiite party, is the most important political party in Afghanistan and most of its supporters were the Shiite Hazaras. The party was established in 1989. As other major mujahideen groups in Afghanistan, the roots of Hizb-e Wahdat were the anti-Soviet resistance movements in the 1980s. The group was formed to

¹⁹¹ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Taliban", 239.

¹⁹² Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 436.

unify other groups that differentiated in terms of ideology. By means of the anti-Soviet jihad, Hizb-e Wahdat raised money for its political ambitions among Afghanistan's Hazaras. Conceivably, Hizb-e Wahdat money could have been spent in the establishment of long-lasting political institutions in Afghanistan.¹⁹³ The political aim of Iran with regard to Afghanistan was gathering all Shiite groups under a single roof. Thus, Iran decided to support Hizb-e Wahdat in Afghanistan as a strategy to curb Pakistani and Saudi interest.¹⁹⁴

Iran's initial support to Mujahideen since the Islamic Revolution only went to the Afghan Shiites, Hazaras in particular. During this period, Iran funded many Shiite groups in many parts of the world including Pakistan and Lebanon. The funds and influence encouraged a younger generation of radical Hazaras who were trained in Iran. The young generation wanted to dispose the initial traditional leader during the Soviet occupation. Afterwards, Iran gave official status to some Afghan Shiite groups, in Tehran. However, Iran's military and financial support to them was insufficient. As a result the Hazaras became less important in the conflict and they ended up fight amongst themselves. By 1988, when Soviet withdrawal was imminent, Iran decided that the Hazaras must be strengthened and as such they managed to unite them in one group – the Hizb-e Wahadat party. Tehran lobbied for the Hizb-e Wahadat party to be included in the new government. Initially she asked that the Hizb-e Wahadat party should have 50% but later settled for 25%.¹⁹⁵ After the Soviet army withdrew from Afghanistan, the Mujahideen began to fight against the Najibullah government. When communist Najibullah government fell down, Sebgatullah Mujadidi had served as interim Afghan president until June 1992. Burhanuddin Rabbani was later appointed as his successor. After a long period of negotiations, Iran's efforts were rewarded. The Hizb-e Wahadat group was offered a place in the leadership council of the new government. This was a plus for Iran's

¹⁹³ "Details Hizb-e Wahdat", Accessed on March 19, 2015, <http://electionsmeter.com/detail/Hizb-e-Wahdat-id3698>

¹⁹⁴ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 21.

¹⁹⁵ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 198.

foreign policy.¹⁹⁶

Resistance movement against the Soviet invasion had largely based on groups, which were composed of Pakistani based Sunnis and Iranian based Shiites. The United Front was composed of Tajiks (Sunni Persian-speakers), the Shiite Hazaras and the Uzbeks. With the participation of Wahdat group in new government, for the first time, non-Pashtun groups had been able to militarily and politically assert themselves. None of them claimed independence or unification with another bordering state. However, the Hazaras were claiming territorial autonomy, but not independence to Iran. Also Pashtuns did not want the establishment of Pashtunistan on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. However, ethnic and religious solidarity was working in Afghanistan. There was close relationship between Shah Masood, Tajik leader, and the political groups of Tajikistan, which was former Soviet republic. The Hazara Shiites opposition was based in Tehran and Iran supported them both politically and materialistically. Notwithstanding, deep rifts among parties emerged soon.¹⁹⁷

Conflicts among Mujahideen groups caused Afghanistan to fall into civil war in 1992. Iran backed Shiite Hizb-e Wahdat group which was one of the major actors in the civil war. Thus, the rivalry with Iran and Saudi Arabia deepened simultaneously. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran deepened simultaneously due to the Afghan civil war. The Saudis together with Pakistan made several endeavours to bring the splinter groups together, but at the same time they kept Iran and the Shiite Hazara groups away. Iran and Hazaras were sidelined from the 1992 Peshawar Accord, which Pakistan and Saudi Arabia negotiated between the Mujaheddin on how to share power in Kabul, and in the subsequent, but abortive, 1993 Islamabad and Jalalabad Accords to end the civil war. The exclusion of Iran by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the 1990s was similar to how the USA treated Iran in

¹⁹⁶ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 198.

¹⁹⁷ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 198.

the 1980s.¹⁹⁸

Despite efforts to establish reconciliation, the struggle between former Mujahideen groups was continuing in Afghanistan. Pushtun leader Gulbadin Hekmatyar and Abdul Rab-e Rasul Sayaf, who had very close relations with Saudi Arabia, faced with political and military intervention in 1992. In response, Hekmatyar cooperated with the Hezbe-Wahdat and Sayaf and was associated with groups of Rabbani and Massoud. Since Hezb-e Wahdat was an Iranian backed political party, the Saudi Arabia considered that alliance of Wahdat and Hekmatyar targeted the regional interests of Saudi Arabia in the region. Thus, it means that members of Hekmatyar and Sayaf groups spent Saudis money to fight each other, thus, according to Saudi Arabia, this struggle was in compliance with interests of Iran which was Saudi Arabia's most important rival in the region.¹⁹⁹

4.2.1. The Emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan

After Khomeini, his successors began to approach international developments through not only Islamic Revolutions's ideological point of view but also pragmatic perspective. The fall of the Soviet Union and the opening up of Central Asia had given Iran a new impetus to end its international isolation. Iran took an opportunity to maximize its regional interests in the region. In the framework of pragmatic foreign policy perspective, Iran moved into Central Asia in a path-breaking trip by Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati in November 1991. The foreign ministers' trip resulted in the signing of an agreement to build a railway line between Turkmenistan and Iran. Iran and the CARs shared a deep suspicion of Afghan-Pashtun fundamentalism and the support it received from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Consequently, there was a coalition between CARs, Russia and Iran to help non-Pashtun groups prior to the emergence of Taliban.²⁰⁰ During the Afghan civil war,

¹⁹⁸ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 199.

¹⁹⁹ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 189.

²⁰⁰ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 200.

ethnicity played a leading role in the claim for legitimacy to rule. Each ethnic group, the Pashtun and Hazara in particular thought they had the birthright to rule Kabul.²⁰¹

Iran supported the Rabbani administration among other groups in Afghanistan. Between 1992 and 1996, there was a destructive fighting, leading to a civil war, between the Rabbani administration and the former resistance groups. However, among this harsh and grim struggle between groups in Afghanistan,²⁰² the Taliban emerged in 1994-95. The emergence of the Taliban in war-ravaged Afghanistan was a clear indication of the long-standing problem of rural petty bourgeoisie. Backed by Pakistan, the Taliban defeated a lot of the former resistance leaders and had about 90% of Afghanistan under their watch. Moreover, militants from the Islamic countries and such as Kashmir, Central Asia and Arab countries were fighting in the Taliban areas. Only the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood, a former mujahideen leader fighting against Soviet occupation, resisted the Taliban. Ahmad Shah Masood was supported by Iran, Russia and Tajikistan.²⁰³

Iran was concerned about the emergence of a government in Afghanistan, which was dominated by Taliban forces. However, Pakistan had become the most influential external power in Afghanistan. Islamabad understood that in order to achieve her foreign policy objectives in Kabul, Taliban was her best shot and as such, she was willing to pay whatever the price it was. Pakistan gave military support to Taliban. Also, the soldiers of Pakistan deployed in many regions of Afghanistan. Iranian elites believed that the interest of Afghan Shiites will be compromised by a Taliban government. Thus, Tehran supported Ahmad Shah Masood militarily and financially. Iranian support to this group did not make much difference. Actually, disagreement between Iran and Pakistan was one of the main factors that facilitated

²⁰¹ Sven Gunnar Simonsen, "Ethnicising Afghanistan?: Inclusion and Exclusion in Post-Bonn Institution Building", *Third World Quarterly* 25, no.4, (2004):707-729.

²⁰² Koepke, "Iran's Policy on Afghanistan", 5.

²⁰³ Umashankar, "Strategic Significance of Afghanistan After the Cold War", *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 6, no.1 (2002):56-77.

the continuation of the Afghan conflict. When the Soviet soldiers withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989, the USA began to depart from Afghan region. US departure led to a harsh civil war, which was also a proxy war between Iran and Pakistan. As soon as the Soviet-backed government crumbled, the country was in flames. There was acute anarchy, in that a war began on the basis of ethnic and sectarian lines. The result was a civil war spreading all the regions of Afghanistan.²⁰⁴

In the 1990s, Iran was concerned about Sunni Taliban in Afghanistan, because of not only ethnical reasons but also regional security and its national interests. Whereas Iran had no intentions of ruling Kabul, she saw it as a straight path to Central Asia, and thus Iran wanted a government in Kabul that was friendly to Tehran. Iran refused to accept that the Taliban was in charge of the bigger chunk of Afghanistan. Because of the geo-political importance of the Caspian Sea region, Iran was against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. According to Iran, there was an alliance between the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan in Afghanistan and this alliance was supporting Taliban forces. Iranians viewed that the US-backed Taliban would gain control of all the regions of Afghanistan.²⁰⁵ Taliban's hatred towards the Shiites was a great concern to Tehran.²⁰⁶ On the one side, the Saudi Arabia and Pakistan supported the Taliban and on the other side, the Iranians supported the Northern Alliance.²⁰⁷

After the assassination of the Abdul Ali – the Hizb-e Wahadat leader – the rivalry between Iran and the Taliban built up again. This event increased concerns regarding Taliban. Iran began to consider that the Taliban not only as a threat to her regional interests, but also as an instrument used by the USA to weaken Iran's regional position in Afghanistan against other regional actors including Pakistan and

²⁰⁴M. Nazif Shahrani, "Resisted The Taliban and The Talibanism:Legacies Of A Century of Internal Colonialism and Cold War Politics in A Buffer State", *Perceptions* 5, (2001).

²⁰⁵ Khan and Ahmad, "Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan"

²⁰⁶ Koepke, "Iran's Policy on Afghanistan", 6.

²⁰⁷ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Taliban", 242.

Saudi Arabia.²⁰⁸ With the seizing of Herat by Taliban, in 1995, Iran's support to Rabbani government increased significantly. By the end of 1996, Taliban captured about 75% of Afghanistan, consisting of some highways enabling the members of Taliban group to link with their supporters in Pakistan and other region of the continent. However, the fight between Taliban militants and the opposition groups was occurring in an area which was fifty miles from the north of Kabul and around Herat province. The opposition groups were resisting Taliban attacks. Iranian backed Ismail Khan, who was in exile in Iran, recruited his army forces and established a network between western and northern regions of Afghanistan to disconnect the Taliban and its supporter links. When Ismail Khan went into Afghanistan, with the support of Abdul Rashid Dostam, an Uzbek, who was the leader of National Islamic Front, he passed through the Herat province which was in the full control of Taliban. After this strategic movement, the fighters of Ismail Khan faced the Taliban forces in the front line of Faryab region.²⁰⁹

Diplomatic tensions between Iran and the USA began to escalate since the Taliban group emerged in Afghanistan. While Iranians accused the USA of supporting Taliban activities in Afghanistan, the USA was denouncing Iran for trying to increase her nuclear weapon capability. Thus, the US president Bill Clinton cut all ties with Iran in 1995, on the basis that Iran was creating WMDs. The following year, a US sponsored trade embargo made it illegal for any company (American or others) operating in the USA to do business with Iran. Despite the embargo, Russia agreed to build a nuclear power plant in south-western Iran.²¹⁰

The sanctions imposed by the USA on Iran were continuing in international arena, presidential elections were held in Iran in 1997. Mohammad Khatami, the candidate of the reformists, won the elections. He continued softening and reconciliatory approach in Iran's foreign policy towards the world as did Rafsanjani.

²⁰⁸ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 25.

²⁰⁹ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 228.

²¹⁰ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East.*, 228.

Rafsanjani's era was characterised by attempts for economic and political development, however, during Khatami's era the foreign policy of Iran was based on cohabitation and intercivilisation dialogue.²¹¹ President Khatami introduced the concept of a dialogue of civilizations, during a speech at the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Tehran in December 1997. He said that "instead of speaking to each other with the language of force, we speak with the language of reason: opening dialogue between civilizations, dialogue between religions, dialogue".²¹² The speech was more than a diplomatic response to Samuel Huntington's thesis of Clash of Civilizations. It reflected more than a decade of intellectual inquiry within Iran on the nature of politics, its extension into the international arena, and represented a serious and genuine attempt to bridge the cultural gap. For a dialogue to be productive, it had to take place between intellectual equals, and it seemed as if Khatami felt that by 1998, Iranian intellectual life had developed enough to make this a realist possibility. The most intriguing aspect of this intellectual dialogue was the search for cultural common ground between the USA and Iran, and it was found in the most unlikely of places: the relationship between religion and democracy.²¹³

Unlike previous Iranian leaders Khatami's foreign policy rhetoric had some peaceful concepts, like dialogue, cohabitation etc. He decided to keep Iran in the pragmatic foreign policy approach and he continued Rafsanjani's efforts to strengthen relations between Iran and various Arab and Islamic countries. Khatami repeatedly stated that the elimination of tension and promotion of peace and stability were the foundation of his policy.²¹⁴

Afghanistan, which was under the Taliban rule, was to become the most important issue for close relations between Iran and other countries. When Khatami visited Kabul in April 1998, US ambassador Bill Richardson had already hinted in

²¹¹ Yeğin, "The Iranian Foreign Policy After Imam Khomeini".

²¹² "News conference given by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on December 14, 1997, Accessed on April 15, 2018, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/monitoring/39530.stm>

²¹³ Shaffer, *Limits of Culture*, 257-258.

²¹⁴ Daniel, *History of Iran*, 248.

his speech that the USA considered Iran as a dialogue partner to help resolve the Afghan crisis. Iran was also talking to an old foe, Saudi Arabia. However, new government of Iran were cautious about the Taliban, for Iran's economic development and political stabilization they had to be pragmatic in foreign relations. They already realized that peace in Afghanistan was necessary. Stability in their neighbourhood was also going to end Iran's international isolation.²¹⁵ However, as the origins of Taliban was in the radical Sunni seminaries of Pakistan and its close relationship with Pakistan military and intelligence services, Iranian leaders were always suspicious of Taliban movement since its emergence. Iranian leaders considered the Taliban as group of low-level peasants tarnishing the image of Islam. This was evident in the Taliban's inability to control drug trafficking, and also its inability to stabilise Afghanistan. Iranians argue that Taliban hates Shiite Muslim and thus they are often threatened by the Taliban.²¹⁶

Pakistani and Saudi military and financial support to Taliban led the Iranians to establish an alliance with anti-Taliban groups. Moreover, the seizing of Mazari Sharif by Taliban militants and killing of Iranian diplomats in 1998, and the seizure of truck drivers, increased the tensions between the two enemies, Iran and Taliban. Iran sent forces to invade Afghanistan. In accordance with his pragmatic foreign policy, Iran's moderate leader Mohammed Khatami reduced the tensions with Afghanistan through preventing the Iranian soldiers from crossing the Afghan border. Through the efforts of the UN, Taliban leaders both accepted to release the Iranian truck drivers who were seized in Mazar-e Sharif and also they accepted return the corpses of the killed diplomats.²¹⁷

As Iran and the western countries perceived Taliban as a common enemy, the

²¹⁵ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 196-197.

²¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert M. Gates, Suzanne Maloney, "Iran: Time for a New Approach Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations", Accessed on March 28, 2019, http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/p/2005/counc_foreign_rel/Iran_TF.pdf.

²¹⁷ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 187.

Khatami administration considered that this was a perfect start to get along with the USA. Although, Iran's foreign policy was formulated by Islamic Revolution's ideological views, Khatami was approaching to Iran's foreign policy within the frame of pragmatic concept, which focused on Iran's national interests. The USA was pleased with the common intelligence activity with the Iranian government and crucial support of Northern Alliance, which was the US ally in Afghanistan.²¹⁸ The Clinton administration was eager to keep close relations with Khatami's Iran. This shift in the US foreign policy was highlighted in a speech made by the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. She said that a road map leading to normal relations and subsequently acknowledged the US involvement in the overthrow of Mossadeq and the US share of responsibility for problems in the bilateral relationship.²¹⁹

Khatami was bringing new initiatives for Iran's foreign policy. After about 30 years, in May 1999, President Khatami paid a visit to Saudi Arabia in order to reduce the diplomatic tensions. Iranian leader assured Saudi Arabia that there was no threat to the Saudi security in the region. With regards to the USA, Khatami established a dialogue between the civilizations. Khatami also considered establishing close economic relations with regional states. But, there was a rivalry between Iran and Pakistan for economic and political influence in Central Asia. This struggle for influence in the region between two states was over the pipeline projects. For this purpose, Iran tried to persuade the Clinton administration to give the green light to the international financial institution and the oil companies to run Caspian oil and natural gas through Iran to the Persian Gulf as well as to Pakistan.²²⁰

Ensuring stability in Afghanistan was important for the Iranians due to economic interests and regional security. The Mujahideen regime, in Afghanistan, had seized Kabul for four years even before the Taliban captured the capital in 1996.

²¹⁸ Maysam Behravesht, "Iran's Reform Movement: The Enduring Relevance of an Alternative Discourse", *Digest of Middle East Studies* 23, no.2 (2014): 262-278.

²¹⁹ Potter and Sick, *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War*, 201.

²²⁰ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 187.

Iran planned to establish two corridors for influence in Afghanistan via the military and logistic support to the Shiite groups by providing them with weapons and aid material. Iran decided to establish two ways one from the Iranian border through the central Hazarajat to Shiite-dominated west Kabul, the second along Afghanistan's northern tier via Shiite-populated Mazar-e Sharif and across the Amu Darya into the Central Asian republics. However, Iran's foreign policy strategy failed because Taliban had conquered the land.²²¹

In 1996, Taliban seized Kabul from Sunni dominated-Mujahideen without fight. Iran reacted strongly to the Taliban's takeover of Kabul. Iran was concerned about the safety of the Shiite population in Afghanistan, even more, about the threat of being hemmed in by the USA and Saudi Arabia which were perceived to be supporting Taliban.²²² Iranian leaders realized that military and political support of the USA and Saudis for the Taliban and intensification of this support in the 1980s was a policy of containment of Iran with hostile forces and isolating it. Iran considered that the USA had a new foreign policy strategy to promote oil and gas pipeline from Central Asia which would bypass Iran. Iran conceived that the capturing of Kabul by Taliban was a part of US foreign policy strategy toward Iran and this strategy was financed by Saudis and logistically supported by Pakistan.²²³

After the Taliban captured Kabul, Iran tried to influence Shiites and non-Pushtun groups in Afghanistan. Iran-backed Hekmatyar transported his command centre to Iran in 1996. Despite the risk, the Pashtun leader Hekmatyar moved from Pakistan to Iran. This movement of Hekmatyar could have led to lose his reputation among the Arab Muslim people who stood aloof from the Iranian government. The Maktabis and HIH groups, who shared the same political ideology with Iran, tried to penetrate the regions, especially, in Mazar-e Sherif, which were seized by the

²²¹Peter Tomsen, "Geopolitics of An Afghan Settlement", *Perceptions* 5, no.4 (2001).

²²² Musa Khan Jalalzai, *Afghanistan, Central Asia, Pakistan and United States*, (Lahore:Bookbiz, 2003), Proquest Ebook Central.

²²³ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 202

Northern Alliance. They also wanted to forge close ties with the population living in this region.²²⁴

One of the political parties trying to promulgate their ideology among Afghans was the JIP. Particularly, the Afzali faction of JIP focused on expanding the thoughts of their groups among the Afghan refugees so that they returned to Afghanistan. The most important transition linking the north and central regions of Afghanistan was the areas which were under the control of the fighters of General Dostam. Hekmetyar also conducted his operations in this area. In order to bring political balance with Massoud's group, together with Hezb-e Wahdat party, Dostam tried to gain Hekmetyar's support. As Hekmetyar considered obtaining a new role in the northern alliance, former supporters of his party could be composed a new military movement in Afghanistan. Hekmetyar also tried to minimise the influence of Massoud and strengthen his party the Northern Alliance in order to gain political support of Iran. The JIA maktabis which were based in Iran, HIIH party and Hezb-e Wahdat set a political strategy that was based on incorporating with foreign policy ambitions of Iran towards Afghanistan. In order to increase its influence in Afghanistan, the Iranian government's envoy to Afghanistan, Alluadin Brojerdi, went to Mazar-e Sharif to negotiate with Pakistan about the problem of Afghanistan in June 1998. From the view of the NIFDA, Iranian special envoy, Brojerdi, tried to adopt NIFDA to collaborate with Hekmetyar in the struggle against Taliban.²²⁵

Iran faced the Sunni Taliban a few times. The first time was when Taliban seized Herat, in September 1995, and the second time was in August 1998, when the Taliban executed 11 Iranian diplomats in Mazar-e Sharif after capturing the city.²²⁶ One of the disputes between Iran and Taliban occurred during a severe drought in 1998. Both sides revived the old dispute over the Helmand river water. At the local level there was limited cooperation on the water issue between the Taliban and

²²⁴ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 165.

²²⁵ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 165.

²²⁶ Ishtiaq Ahmad, "Containing The Taliban :Path To Peace In Afghanistan", *Perceptions* 4, (2001):67-86.

Iran.²²⁷ In November 1999, a slight thaw between Iran and the Taliban regime occurred when Iran reopened border post, which had been closed after the Mazar-e Sharif incident, near Herat to allow trade between the two countries. In January 2000, when Iran was the chair of the OIC, talks with the Taliban continued. Things took a turn in March 2000, when Ismail Khan, who was a widely known Afghan warlord and opposition to Taliban, broke out of prison and ran to Iran. He was rearmed by Tehran on his return to Afghanistan in 2001.²²⁸

Under the Taliban rule, non-Pashtun groups in Afghanistan suffered a lot. Iran had close relations with these non-Pashtun groups in northern Afghanistan which shared the same cultural and linguistic characteristics with Iran. Tehran had always complained about the cruelty metted out by the Afghan, Arab and Pakistani forces on the Shiite minority. However, with Taliban in power, Iran had concerns not only about ideological motives of Islamic Revolution, but also her regional security and economic interests. With the Taliban spreading her influence into Central Asia, Iran had worries that this was going to block her influence in the Caspian Basin. Iran argued that a moderate government in Afghanistan composing all the ethnic groups was the ideal solution to the problem. By this way the government would not be Saudi or Pakistani controlled, but it would be more accommodating to the Shiite minority.²²⁹ Moreover, the collapse of Afghanistan could have created a security gap in Iran's borders and could have faced Iran with a massive influx of drugs and weapons. Afghanistan's ethnic conflict may have spillover effects in Iran coupled with an economic refugee crisis, most of whom are not welcomed by Iranians. Another economic problem aside from the refugee crisis is the smuggling across the border to Afghanistan. This creates a loss of revenue for Iran. Sadly, it happened at a moment when Iran was struggling to rebuild her economy because of a drop in oil prices.²³⁰

²²⁷ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 26.

²²⁸ Sharp, *Everything Guide To The Middle East*, 228.

²²⁹ Tomsen, "Geopolitics of An Afghan Settlement".

²³⁰ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 203.

The military success of the Afghans against Russians was not only the result of their determination but the amount of support of the jihadi movement and the contribution of other countries. When Taliban emerged in Afghanistan, balance of relations between regional states changed and Taliban influenced the relationship between states. In that it created rivalry between Pakistan and Iran.²³¹ Since Taliban captured Kabul, Iran had constantly negotiated for a fair share for the Shiite. These vigorous efforts of Iran failed when Taliban seized Mazar-e Sharif in northern Afghanistan. Iranian diplomats were deliberately exterminated together with many other Shiites in 1998. After this sad event, Tehran secretly supported Masood, for any future influence on Afghan politics.²³² There was a great rivalry between Iran and Pakistan in terms of growing sphere of influence in Afghanistan, supporting opposing factions. Tehran perceived Pakistan's sponsorship of Taliban, and with the support of Saudi Arabia, as a coordinated attempt to isolate Iran. Meanwhile, Saudis continued to support the Afghan Sunni groups and Arab extremists fighting in Afghanistan. Saudis were giving weapon and cash to these groups through ISI and Saudi-based Muslim aid institutions.²³³ Pakistan's support to the Taliban enabled them to have an influence on Pakistani state institutions.²³⁴

The Taliban had become a security issue for the Iranians. The Taliban secretly supported anti-Iranian regime groups in 1996, which led Iranians to a greater concern about her regional security. Taliban provided a safe heaven for Ahl-e Sunnah Wal Jamaat – an anti-Iranian Sunni group. The Ahl-e Sunnah Wal Jamaat group, which was composed of Iran's Turkmen, Baluchi and Afghan minorities, asserted to oust the Shiite regime in Tehran and impose a Taliban style Sunni regime. This was a bizarre aspiration given that over 90 % of Iran's population was Shiite, although it presumably helped to bolster support from Taliban and the Iranians were convinced

²³¹ Khan and Ahmad, "Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan".

²³² Tomsen, "Geopolitics of An Afghan Settlement".

²³³ Ahmad, "Containing The Taliban".

²³⁴ Ahmad, "Containing The Taliban".

that Pakistanis were also sponsoring them. On the accusation that the Tehran wanted to compromise the peace and stability enjoyed by Afghans, Taliban closed down the Iranian embassy in Afghanistan in June 1997. Iran continued to support anti-Taliban groups, irrespective of these developments. When Kabul was captured in 1996 and Mazar in 1998 by Taliban forces, which were the strategic areas of Afghanistan, the military and logistic support of Iran to anti-Taliban groups increased. However, since Iran had no border with the alliance, she had to use either rail or air transport to supply Ahmed Shah Masud's forces. Iranian intelligence smuggled arms for the Masud in Tajikistan. The danger which the Iranian supply line faced was highlighted when Kyrgyzstan's security forces stopped a train. The train contained 16 railcars loaded with 700 tons of arms and ammunition. It was travelling from Iran to Tajikistan with the weapons disguised as humanitarian aid.²³⁵

International initiatives were going on to defuse the tension in Afghanistan between regional states. A UN group was set up in 1997 called the 6+2 Group which consisted of the six neighbouring states-Iran, Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan-plus Russia and the USA. The objectives of the group were to trigger discussion between Iran and Pakistan and to get an arms embargo on Afghanistan, thus forcing them to negotiate.²³⁶ While Iran actively aided the anti-Taliban forces, it simultaneously supported the UN efforts to negotiate a settlement through the 6+2 group and also mooted a role for the OIC in mediating an end to the conflict.²³⁷ In those meetings, Uzbek politicians proposed to compose a contact group for peaceful negotiations between neighboring countries of Afghanistan and the fighting groups. After this proposal, Iran organized a conference for creating a conducive environment for peaceful communication between the rival groups in Afghanistan. During the negotiations which were held in the Isfahan, Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharazi, stated that they would support to establish a coalition

²³⁵ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords*, 203.

²³⁶ Tomsen, "Geopolitics of An Afghan Settlement".

²³⁷ Allison and Jonson, *Central Asian Security*, 19.

government in Afghanistan. However, the leaders of Taliban did not participate in the conference and condemned the decisions taken during the negotiations. Taliban leaders stated that they did not change their position towards the establishment of a government under their leadership and they continued current military and political activities in Afghanistan.²³⁸

One of the most important formations about the resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan, was the 6+2 Conference, which was held in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan in 1999. The participants of the conference were six neighboring countries of Afghanistan: China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, delegates of Russia, the USA and UN. In addition to them, Taliban and United Front groups in Afghanistan actively participated in the conference. The decisions taken in the 6+2 Conference aimed to stop the conflicts among different groups in Afghanistan and to reduce tensions between rivals through establishing a broad-based government which was composed of representatives coming from all parts of the country. In the conference, the participant countries also declared their anxiety about narcotic traffick along the borderline of Afghanistan and agreed on cooperation to struggle with the rise of any fanaticism all over the region.²³⁹

A few years later the aims of 6+2 were not achieved despite the vigorous efforts of regional powers. The proxy war in Afghanistan between Iran and Pakistan continued, but US foreign policy makers focused on the Bin Laden affair in Afghanistan. The USA launched a missile attack on Afghanistan in 1998. The arms embargo on Afghanistan was not seriously implemented by the group and eventually became medium for the foreign ministers to converse. The superiority of the Taliban made all efforts for peace null and void.²⁴⁰

Relating to Afghanistan issue, Iranian foreign policy makers considered to be

²³⁸ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 202.

²³⁹ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 203.

²⁴⁰ Tomsen, "Geopolitics of An Afghan Settlement".

a more aloof posture as they had setbacks in Afghanistan. Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was more pragmatic than the early years of Islamic Revolution in which Khomeini's ideological rhetoric was dominant concept in Iran's foreign policy. Iranian leaders preferred not to comment or support any fighting Afghan groups. Furthermore, Iranians had some degree of dialogue with Taliban, even though they secretly supported Masood's anti-Taliban United Front. Despite Khomeini's opposite views for the monarchies, Iran sent a representative to meet King Zahir Shah's delegation in Rome. Another conference relating to Afghanistan problem was arranged by Afghans in Bonn, Germany, in 1998. In the conference, many Afghan people consisting of scholars and politicians set up contact committees for resolving Afghan problem and they projected further negotiations. The meetings in Bonn encouraged the King Zahir. Zahir announced the necessity of a gathering with the participation of prominent Afghan people living inside and outside of Afghanistan. Then, meetings between prominent Afghan people were held in Rome and many contact committees were established at the meetings of Afghans in Rome. Receiving the support of the UN and other countries in the world, the committee which was formed in Rome by prominent Afghans all over the world to plan Afghanistan's future, sent many delegations to Iran, Pakistan, the USA and Germany.²⁴¹

4.3. Conclusion

During the 1990s, Iranian leaders based foreign policy of Iran not only on Khomeini's ideological rhetoric, but also on pragmatic approach. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, Iran felt that there was a power vacuum in Afghanistan. The USA and its allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were trying to fill this power vacuum. So, Iran considered that it had to support the opponent groups against these countries in Afghanistan. If US backed-groups were to dominate Afghanistan, serious security concerns could arise for Iran.²⁴² The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan enabled to exert influence on its Afghani Mujahideen

²⁴¹ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 205.

²⁴² Çınarlı, "İran'ın Afganistan'daki İç Savaşa Yönelik Dış Politikası", 75-84.

allies to look for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Hashemi Rafsanjani and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati attempted to arrange a peaceful transfer of power from the Soviet-installed government to a Mujahideen -dominated government of national unity as early as January 1989.²⁴³

After the destructive Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Afghans viewed that the political environment began to normalize, however, the civil war in Afghanistan and the rivalry of Iran and Pakistan in the struggle of some groups caused an ambiguous atmosphere in Afghanistan. This uncertain political atmosphere forced many to think that the former Soviet-backed leader, Najibullah, was indeed a better option especially after the increasing countrywide violence and crimes against civilians. Additionally, radical Islamic groups that had resisted the communist coup and Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan were perceived by Russia as enemies.²⁴⁴ When Taliban seized Kabul, regional states, Iran, India and Russia, increased their aid to anti-taliban groups. All of these states were concerned about the consolidation of Taliban power all around Afghanistan. Thus, they supported Northern Alliance against Taliban. Iran sent military specialists and instructors to Afghanistan together with members of Wahdat party and Shah Masud, to train Northern Alliance forces. Iran provided a lot of weapons and military materials. During the Afghan civil war, Iran was the most important military supporter of the United Front, which continued until 2002.²⁴⁵

During the 1990s, Iran's foreign policy concept was more pragmatic compared to Khomeini's era. During Khatemi's era, foreign policy makers in Iran endeavoured to establish close relationship with western countries. Iran viewed the Afghanistan trouble as a matter which they were able to resolve by making an agreement with the USA and other regional powers. In general- 6+2 meetings, which

²⁴³ Anoushivaran Ehteshami, *After Khomeini* (London: Routledge, 1995), 148, Proquest Ebook Central.

²⁴⁴ Nojumi, *Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 193.

²⁴⁵ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan", 245.

continued from 1997 to 2001, were professional but not harmonious. In the 6+2 negotiations, Iran stipulated conditions relating to support to the Northern Alliance. However, the USA and Iran did not make an agreement related to the Northern Alliance. Actually, the foreign policy makers in the USA were unwilling to interfere with tangled Afghan civil war.²⁴⁶ One will assume that what Afghanistan had gone through since the 1970s, it would not go through that again in terms of wars. As we entered into the twenty-first century, it all started again, this time at a global level. It is called the war against global terrorism, and Afghanistan became the center since it is the home of the Al-Qaeda, the 9/11 attackers.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Mir H.Sadat, James P.Hughes, “U.S.-Iran Engagement Through Afghanistan”, *Middle East Policy* 17, no.1 (2010).

²⁴⁷ Haldun Yalçınkaya, “NATO Peacekeeping in Afghanistan:Expanding the Role to Countersurgency or Limiting it to Security Assistance”, *Defence Against Terrorism Review* 2, no.2 (2009): 59-81.

CHAPTER 5

IRAN'S QUEST FOR INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN IN THE POST-9/11 ERA

5.1. Introduction

While the turbulence among different states and ethnic groups continued in Afghanistan, there was a terrorist attack on the USA by Al-Qaeda, a group that had very close relationship with Taliban in Afghanistan, on September 11, 2001. Responding to this event, the US President George W. Bush told his forces to a schedule for attacking the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. About a month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the first attacks were launched to Afghanistan by the US forces.²⁴⁸ Removing the Taliban establishment and Al-Qaeda and wiping out terrorist networks were the main goals of the intervention. Cooperating with Pakistan for this operation was crucial for the USA. Likewise, according to the US Administration, the support of Iran for the operation was also crucial, because Iran would help to structure the next government. Nevertheless, the US policy makers at that time considered any agreement with Iran as odd. Washington was frustrated by the fact that Iran was helping allies in northern Afghanistan. Although the USA pointed an accusing finger at Tehran for aiding Al-Qaeda member's escape through Iranian borders, Tehran did not accept such accusations.²⁴⁹

Iran and other countries got their share of the reactions from the USA for the 9/11 Attacks. Bush claimed that North Korea and Iraq, together with Iran are all evil states. Iran was also accused of meddling in the domestic affairs of Afghanistan and that she was also working on building WMDs. The deployment of the US forces in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan resulted in great anxiety in Iran, because, Iranians believed that the US presence beyond its borders meant strategic

²⁴⁸ Heinrich Kreft, "Foreign Policy of George W. Bush: More of The Same" in the Second Term, *Perceptions*, (Spring 2005):63-78.

²⁴⁹ Potter and Sick, *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War*, 201.

encirclement of Iran.²⁵⁰ However, long before President Bush, Iran strongly believed that the only way to break the pressure exerted by the USA and its allies was building a nuclear capability. In the foreign policy doctrine of the Islamic Republic, nuclear weapons would not be just for their deterrent effect, “but rather to pursue ideological goals.”²⁵¹ For Iranians, nuclear program was not only about its regional security, but also a matter of honour.²⁵² In an interview Hashemi Rafsanjani stated that “Our basic doctrine was always a peaceful nuclear application, but it never left our mind that if one day we should be threatened and it was imperative, we should be able to go down the other path”.²⁵³

5.2. Iran’s Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan After The Toppling of Taliban

Following the 9/11, there was substantial support for US military operations in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime, which harboured Osama bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda leaders.²⁵⁴ Nearly all the world, Middle East countries, the Arab and Islamic countries as well as western countries declared their condemnation against Al-Qaeda attacks. More than half of the countries in the world promised to give military, political, economic support to the USA in its fight against international terrorism.²⁵⁵ Iran did not remain unresponsive to the 9/11 attacks. In an interview Khatami said that “the 9/11 terrorist attack was the ugliest form of terrorism ever

²⁵⁰ Ahmad, “Containing The Taliban”.

²⁵¹ Michael Rubin, “Iran’s Burgeoning WMD Programs”, Accessed on March 7, 2019, <https://www.iranwatch.org/library/private-viewpoints/irans-burgeoning-wmd-programs>,

²⁵² Robert Kagan, *Tarihin Geri Dönüşü ve Rüyaların Sonu*, trans. Birol Akgün and Nezir Akyeşilmen, 1 Eds., (Ankara:Orion Kitabevi, 2008), 71-72.

²⁵³ “Iran considered nuclear weapons during 1980s Iraq war, ex-president says”, Accessed on <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-rafsanjani/iran-considered-nuclear-weapons-during-1980s-iraq-war-ex-president-says-idUSKCN0SN0E720151029>

²⁵⁴ Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, “Afghanistan After the Drawdown”, *Council Special Report*, no.67, (November 2013).

²⁵⁵ Hatice Altun, “US Public Diplomacy in the Modern Era: A Review of Battles to Bridges”, *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 4, no. 2 (2015):53 – 62.

seen.”²⁵⁶ As one of the leaders who condemned the 9/11 Attacks to the USA, Iranian president Khatami, stated that the attacks were not Islamic. Seeing the attacks were barbarous, Khatami mainly focused on Iranian foreign policy in the framework of his dialogue among civilizations. Thus, he considered to develop close relations with the USA. This complicated event created an opportunity for Iran to struggle with her enemy, the Taliban. Iran became a crucial state to overthrow Taliban.²⁵⁷ It was clear from the beginning that the US troops would be heavily dependent on local foot soldiers to defeat Taliban. Therefore, Iran arranged contacts and meetings with the Northern Alliance and with Hazara leader Ahmad Khan. Since Iranian military advisers and Revolutionary Guards were embedded with Northern Alliance units, Tehran even became a direct participant in the military efforts to overthrow the Taliban regime.²⁵⁸

Iran was purposing to take step in the frame of pragmatic foreign policy concept in its foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Despite diplomatic disagreements between Tehran and Washington, they agreed on a common action to get rid of the Taliban.²⁵⁹ Iranians supported the US operations toward Afghanistan. She provided information about Taliban and extradited many Al-Queda fighters that fled to Tehran. Iran also gave support to wounded members of the US airforce and allowed for humanitarian supplies to be docked at her ports. The most important support of Iran to the US operations was that Iran facilitated the first link between the USA and the Northern Alliance.²⁶⁰

Actually, Iran was in a difficult situation in the international arena as the turbulence which occurred immediately after the 9/11 Attacks. Tehran was faced with

²⁵⁶ “Iranian President Condemns September 11 Attacks,” Accessed on March 7, 2019, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/meast/11/12/khatami.interview.cnn/>.

²⁵⁷ Milani, “Iran’s Policy Towards Afghanistan”, 247.

²⁵⁸ Furtig, Afghanistan in the Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern Countries.

²⁵⁹ Dina Esfandiary and Ariane Tabatabai, “Iran’s ISIS Policy”, *The Royal Institute of International Affairs* 91, no.1(2015):1-15.

²⁶⁰ Sadat and Hughes, “U.S.-Iran Engagement Through Afghanistan”.

domestic security threats relative to instability in Kabul and Bagdad.²⁶¹ After the 9/11 Attacks, the USA invaded Iraq alleging Saddam's research on nuclear weapons and then indicated Iran and Syria would be the new targets. Together with North Korea, Iran had been named by the USA as "rogue states." A statement by Russia that Iran's nuclearisation was for energy purpose and the verification of the IAEA on Iran's nuclear program did not clear suspicions on the part of the USA. For Bush, the only alternatives were economic sanctions, military action or regime change.²⁶² Despite this fact, Iran supported the US military efforts in Afghanistan. Certainly Iran got the biggest prize for the US strategies in the Middle East in the post-9/11 era. In that, two of Iran's worst enemies, Taliban and Iraq, which had posed a threat to Iran's regional interests, were eliminated by the USA.²⁶³

After the 9/11, the overthrow of Taliban and subsequently the Saddam Hussain regime made Iran a prominent player in Central Asia and the Middle East.²⁶⁴ Thus, on 27 November 2001, Iran participated actively in the Bonn Conference held for stability in Afghanistan. The conference was also attended by opposition groups in Afghanistan under the UN's watch. The outcome of the meeting was an "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions." The Bonn Agreement, which designed the post-war political map of Afghanistan, was approved by the UNSC resolution 1383. The plan of the agreement was to reconstruct the country, make political reforms and secure the environment.²⁶⁵ The agreement laid the bedding for a better Afghanistan without Taliban following 23 chaotic years.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations", *Perceptions*, (2014):103-117.

²⁶² Noi, "Iran and The Shanghai Cooperation Organization".

²⁶³ Brzezinski, "Iran: Time for a New Approach".

²⁶⁴ Koepke, "Iran's Policy on Afghanistan", 10.

²⁶⁵ Yalçinkaya, "NATO Peacekeeping in Afghanistan".

²⁶⁶ Astri Suhrke, Kristian Berg Harpviken & Arne Strand, "After Bonn: Conflictual Peace Building",

During the operation against Taliban, intelligence and logistic support of Iran facilitated the US victory over Taliban.²⁶⁷ The USA was supporting Hamid Karzai's government in Afghanistan and the USA considered that under the central government of Hamid Karzai, it was essential to establish an organization to empower the authority all over Afghanistan, and to encourage Afghanistan reforms. The US observers forecasted that some of the Afghans were concerned about weak and corrupt government in their country and this situation could make them favour the Taliban as a credible alternative. Karzai's government was the first fully elected government in Afghan history. Karzai was the interim leader of the government prior to his election. Iran supported an interim government under the watch of Rabbani, however she decided to favour Hamid Karzai, who was backed by the USA. Iranians expressed their support for Hamid Karzai and they persuaded Ismail Khan to support him. Iran decided to base its foreign policy towards Afghanistan on four main principles: to cooperate with the Karzai government providing to proceed its logistic aid to other allies of Iran in Afghanistan, to form an "economic sphere of influence" to deal further relating to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and create a buffer zone transform in Herat region, to evade locking horns with the USA by condition Afghanistan is minimise US influence, and to prevent the trade in drugs from Afghanistan into Iran.²⁶⁸ Through the UN, political reconstruction and security was made available.²⁶⁹

The Bonn agreement gave a fresh start to Afghanistan, which was in a continuous state of war since the 1979 Soviet invasion.²⁷⁰ In this peaceful atmosphere, however, Iran had great concerns about presence of the USA and its allies in Afghanistan. In the late 1990s, when Taliban captured Kabul, Iran considered it as a threat to

Third World Quarterly 23, no.5 (2002):875-891.

²⁶⁷ Brzezinski, "Iran:Time for a New Approach".

²⁶⁸ Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan", 249

²⁶⁹ Yalçinkaya, "NATO Peacekeeping in Afghanistan".

²⁷⁰ Ahmad Shah, "The Post 9/11 Democratization in Afghanistan: Challenges and Expectations" , *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies* 4, no.1(2012):19-32

her regional security and backed anti-Taliban forces. Iran cooperated with the USA and its allies to overthrow Taliban, but soon after she changed her position, considering the presence of the USA and allies in Afghanistan as a bigger threat than Taliban. According to Tehran, the political conditions changed in Afghanistan and Iran found itself in a greater danger than the Taliban. The USA and her allies were trying to reorganize post-Taliban Afghanistan. However, from Iran's perspective, the presence of the USA in Afghanistan was a threat to her regional security. Thus, in the post-9/11 period, in order to compete with other regional and international powers, Iran's new foreign policy towards Afghanistan was based on the search to increase her influence on Afghanistan, especially using elements of soft power.²⁷¹ Described by Joseph Nye as "to achieve what you want through attraction rather than through coercion or reward", soft power is referred to capabilities and resources of a country such as culture, ideology or ethical values, which indirectly affect the interests or behaviors of other countries. Some of the tools of soft power are media, music, literature, establishment of cultural centers in abroad, schools, tourism, values and beliefs. Due to shiite population in Hazarajat region of Afghanistan, Islamic values that is based on Khomeini's ideological views is began to use as a soft power element in Iran's pragmatic foreign policy calculations related to Afghanistan.²⁷²

Within the framework of using soft power elements in its foreign policy, Iran's new strategy with regards to Afghanistan focused not only military measures on the Afghan borders but also on economic and political influence. A change in the foreign policy approach of Tehran was triggered by the prospects for new markets in Afghanistan and also the possibility of exploiting her natural endowments. As one of the most generous donor to Afghanistan, Iran's foreign policy strategy towards Afghanistan mainly focused on improving Kabul's infrastructure and the establishment of a trans-regional cooperation with Central Asia. Tehran strove to depict herself as a model in the region. This was a strategy to outweigh the US

²⁷¹ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 29.

²⁷² Hamed Mohagheghnia, Hadi Sharafi, Bijan Rabiee, "The Role of Islamic Republic of Irans' Soft Power in the Middle East, *International Journal of Scientific Study*, Vol 5, No.4 (July 2017)

influence in Kabul.²⁷³ Tehran promised, at the 2002 donor conference in Tokyo, to help Kabul with an amount of \$560 million for reconstruction. The said amount is 12% of what the whole world promised to Kabul.²⁷⁴ This aid made Iran one of the most generous donors at the Tokyo Conference to coordinate international assistance. Trade agreements between Iran and Afghanistan were signed in January 2003, including plans to replace Karachi with the Iranian port of Chahbahar as Afghanistan's new principal trade outlet. Economic aid continued during the next few years. The aid was not altruistic. Iran aimed to keep Afghanistan unified and relatively stable, to minimize the influence of Taliban, and to keep the Afghan government interested in doing business with Iran rather than with the USA²⁷⁵

Table 1: Donor Pledges for Afghanistan in Tokyo Conference (2002)

Country	Commitment \$(million)
Australia	17
EU	500
India	100
Iran	560
Japan	500
Norway	40
Pakistan	100
Saudi Arabia	220
Switzerland	18,1
Turkey	5
United Arab Emirates	36
US	296
World Bank	500

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-donors-pledge-45-billion-tokyo>

As a soft power, Iran opened Imam Khomeini Relief Committee offices in Kabul. Also, there were branches of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in the other

²⁷³ Wilde, "Continuity and Hiatus", 29.

²⁷⁴ Milani, "Tehran's Take: Understanding Iran's U.S. Policy".

²⁷⁵ Furtig, "Afghanistan in the Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern Countries".

parts of Afghanistan where the population was mostly comprised of Shiites.²⁷⁶ For the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Iran promised an annual contribution of \$50 million in aid, \$50 million in credit, and an additional donation of \$10 million.²⁷⁷ Many private Iranian firms operated in western Afghanistan, especially in Herat. Iran looked at Afghanistan as an entrance to Greater Central Asia. Iranian elites understood that in order to connect Tehran to Central Asian republics, stability in Kabul was important.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, Iran continued to support 15% of the Afghan population through the Haraza, Shiite and Qizilbash ethnic groups. To strengthen this new foreign policy vision, Khatami visited Kabul in the summer of 2002 - the most prominent diplomatic visit in forty years. He mainly discussed the repatriation of Afghan refugees. Tehran wanted to fasten the process as many refugees have found too much comfort in Iran. That December Iran and Afghanistan signed a Good Neighbour Declaration in which very much to the satisfaction of the latter Iran declared it would fully respect Afghanistan's territorial integrity.²⁷⁹

5.2.1. Ahmedinejad's Era

The US war on terror in Afghanistan contributed to Iran's status as a powerful regional power that provided Iran with an opportunity to gain regional and international status.²⁸⁰ However, when the nuclear program of Iran which was conducted secretly in the Natanz region, was revealed, tensions with USA increased again.²⁸¹ Since the death of Khomeini, who based Iran's foreign policy on ideology

²⁷⁶ Mirwais K. Balkhi, "Iran's Afghanistan Policy: Post-Taliban Evolution", *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 15, no.1-2 (2011):140-151.

²⁷⁷ "Iran: Khatami calls for continued aid for Afghanistan", Accessed on March 8, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/iran-khatami-calls-continued-aid-afghanistan>

²⁷⁸ Daniel Wagner, "The Paradoxical Afghan/Iranian Alliance", Accessed on March 25, 2019, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-wagner/the-paradoxical-afghanira_b_4277936.html.

²⁷⁹ Furtig, "Afghanistan in the Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern Countries".

²⁸⁰ Firas Elias, "The Future of Iran's Influence in The Middle East", *Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi, Hibrit Savaş Özel Sayısı* 1, no.2 (2017):102 – 150.

²⁸¹ Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, "The Future of U.S.-Iranian Relations", *Middle East Policy*

of Islamic Revolution, Iranian leadership preferred to base Iran's foreign policy not only on religion and ideology but also on pragmatic concept that focused only on national interests. After the 9/11 Attacks, concerns of regional security led the Iranians to cooperate with the USA against Taliban. Nevertheless relations between the USA and Iran became complicated due to the existence of nuclear facilities under construction at Natanz and Arak. Even when Iran announced that nuclear program would not be used for the purpose of weapons, the Bush administration preferred to cut ties with Tehran relating with diplomatic efforts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan unless Iran changed its attitude towards nuclear development. Despite accommodationist strategy in Khatami's foreign policy, Iran's relations with the World, especially with Western countries, became much worse.²⁸²

Accusing Iran of that her nuclear program was not peaceful purposes; atmosphere became strained in relations between Iran and international community. However, the most important rivals of Islamic regime of Iran, Taliban, in the east and Iraq, in the west, were defeated respectively by the USA and its allies. The Taliban in 2002 and then Saddam Hussein in 2003 were toppled by the US operations; however, the outcomes of these operations resulted in encirclement of Iran by the US military forces on three front. As the number of American troops increased in Afghanistan, Iran's concerns about her regional security raised. Additionally, energy and military agreements between the USA and Central Asian states further discomforted Tehran.²⁸³

Phase 1 of the war of terror in Afghanistan was supported by the UK and Australian troops. The USA accepted help from other countries when it appeared in phase 2 that her strategy had failed. Later on, NATO took command of the ISAF in

16, no.1 (2009).

²⁸² Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, "Iran's Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation", *Turkish Journal of International Relations* 9, no.2, (2010).

²⁸³ Yeğin, "The Iranian Foreign Policy After Imam Khomeini".

2003, which was formed in Bonn Conference in December 2001.²⁸⁴ It was first deployed on the basis of a request for assistance by the Afghan authorities and a UNSC mandate. ISAF's mandate was to enable the Afghan authorities to build the capacity of the Afghan national security forces to provide effective security, for ensuring that Afghanistan would never again be a safe haven for terrorists. At its height, the force was more than 130.000 troops, 90% was from NATO countries and %10 was NATO partner countries. The ISAF mission was completed at the end of 2014 and a smaller non-combat mission ("Resolute Support") was launched on 1 January 2015 to provide further training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions. As of December 2018, the number of ISAF force in Afghanistan was 16.919, half of which were US soldiers.²⁸⁵

While troops of the USA and its allies firmly established in Afghanistan by the early 2005, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, the candidate of the conservatives, won the presidential elections in Iran. As Khomeini's harsh speeches relating to USA and Western countries, Ahmedinejad's was the same. In the Sixtieth Session UN General Assembly on September 17, 2005, he stated that "to establish peace and security in the region, foreign occupation forces must leave from Afghanistan and Iraq."²⁸⁶ As a bordering state to Afghanistan, Ahmedinejad considered that foreign policy of Iran based on cooperation and close relationship with the Western countries was not compatible with regional interests of Iran. Political tensions with the USA rather rose with Ahmedinejad at the helm of power in which Iran's rhetoric of foreign policy hardened. Due to harsh statements of Ahmedinejad and Iran's determination of conducting nuclear program, George W. Bush was exhibiting tense and aggressive behaviours containing isolation policy towards Iran and not to continue substantive

²⁸⁴ Yeğin, "The Iranian Foreign Policy After Imam Khomeini".

²⁸⁵ "ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014)", Accessed on March 15,2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm

²⁸⁶ Adress by Dr. Mahmood Ahmedinejad before the Sixtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, 17 September 2005, Accessed on March 23, 2019. <http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/60/statements/iran050917eng.pdf>.

diplomatic relations.²⁸⁷

Distrust of Iran to the USA and to Western countries due to their operations in Afghanistan began to push Iran into efforts geared towards the creation of regional cooperation organizations. One of the most important regional organizations for the Iranians was the SCO. Establishment of the SCO, which was a permanent intergovernmental organisation, was accomplished on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai by six countries in the region; Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The main goals of the SCO were; “strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighbourly relations among the member countries, promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture as well as education, energy, transportation, tourism, environmental protection and other fields, and making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region, moving towards the establishment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order.”²⁸⁸

The SCO requested the US-led coalition forces to announce a withdrawal schedule from Afghanistan. Uzbekistan also requested the USA to discontinue using the K-2 air base. All these developments played important roles in making the SCO eye-catching security cooperation for the neighbouring states – most of whom were bothered by the US military stationed in the region. Iran along with other two countries, namely Pakistan and India, obtained observer status in the SCO in Astana Summit held on 5 July 2005.²⁸⁹

Through regional cooperations, Iran considered taking vital support for its regional security against Western powers and continuing its nuclear research program. Ever since the Iranian nuclear crisis began, Iran announced that the nuclear program

²⁸⁷ Haji-Yousefi, “Iran’s Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad”.

²⁸⁸ “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, Accessed on March 15 2019, http://eng.sectsc.org/about_sco/.

²⁸⁹ Noi, “Iran and The Shanghai Cooperation Organization”.

was for peaceful purposes. But, Ahmadinejad's policy pronouncements about nuclear program disturbed Western countries and again raised suspicions of Iran's strategic objectives in the region. In his speech on 12 November 2007, at the Iran University of Science and Technology, Ahmadinejad said that "Iran's nuclear victory should not be neglected as it has reached a sensitive point today. Iran's peaceful nuclear program is a key issue. Comparing nuclear program with the nationalization of Iran's oil industry in 1951 he said "Iran's nuclear issue is 100 times as important as oil nationalization and we should not neglect it until we reach the final conclusion".²⁹⁰

With the Ahmedinejad, Iran's foreign policy was based on balancing the USA in the region and supporting opponents of the USA in Afghanistan. Immediately after the 9/11 Attacks, Iran's message of sympathy to the USA and the post-Taliban construction of Afghanistan had created an important opportunity in correcting the relations between the two countries. Nonetheless, the hard-line policies of the Bush administration for the Middle East and the demonstration of a threatening approach targeting Iran during the post-9/11 era, created disappointments in Iran and led the Tehran government to move more steadily and more rapidly on its nuclear program. Although Iran's nuclear program had already begun during the past years, it became a serious threat to the USA during the period of Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad tried to make his country's access to nuclear technology an issue of national pride by adopting a nationalist rhetoric of the nuclear issue and demonstrating an uncompromising attitude to the West.²⁹¹

The Ahmadinejad administration was against the presence of the USA and multinational troops in the region. According to Ahmadinejad's foreign policy view, the main reason of instability in Afghanistan was the presence of foreign troops. Besides, he was concerned that Iran's reconstruction projects may have been impeded

²⁹⁰ Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, "Nuclear victory should not be neglected". Accessed on March 23, 2019, <http://en.mfa.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=3&pageid=1997&newsview=266205>

²⁹¹ Gökhan Telatar, "Barack Obama Yönetiminin İran'ın Nükleer Faaliyetlerine Yönelik Politikası", *Akademik ORTADOĞU* 7, no.1 (2012):54-78.

due to the presence of Iran's enemy near her borders.²⁹² Furthermore, as of his presidency, Hamid Karzai based his policy in Afghanistan on the framework of Pushtunization and centralization of the authority. But, both his Pushtunization policy and his political views to decrease the influence of Iran-backed ethnic groups by centralizing the authority had caused great uncertainty in Iran-Afghan relations. Nevertheless, Iran continued to give financial aid to Afghanistan for the reconstruction projects. At the Tokyo Conference in 2002, Iran was the fifth country in rankings, which gave financial promises to Afghanistan. During Ahmedinejad's era, at the London Conference in 2006, Iran also pledged \$100 million as supplement to previously promised aid. Iran was trying to balance the adverse effects of the US presence in Afghanistan by establishing close relations with Afghanistan and other regional countries.²⁹³

On 14-15 June 2006, there was another SCO summit in Shanghai, China. Iran attended this summit in an observer status. Although western countries were preparing to impose sanctions against the nuclear activities of Iran, Russia and China supported Iran in the summit but this situation got a reaction from the USA and the EU and thus, the cooperation of Russia and China started to affect global balance in the framework of the SCO.²⁹⁴ As the membership of the SCO grew with more countries in the region getting interested, the West became more attentive to the organisation.²⁹⁵ In reaction to Kabul's agreement for the US troops to stay in Afghanistan, Iran increased its support to Taliban to counterbalance the presence of the USA. Although Iran gave help to Afghanistan, at the same time she suffocated Kabul over Afghan refugees and migrant workers in Iran. Actually, Tehran wanted to

²⁹² Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan", 249-250.

²⁹³ Bilgehan Alagöz and Ekber Kandemir, "11 Eylül Sonrası dönemde Bölgesel Güvenlik ve İran'ın Afghanistan Siyaseti", *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi* 2, no.2 (2015):109-140.

²⁹⁴ Selçuk Denek, "Balance Of Power in Central Asia Afte USA-Led Intervention in Afghanistan 2001", *Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Özel sayı (Aralık 2016).

²⁹⁵ Ezeli Azarkan, "The Relations between Central Asian States and United States, China and Russian within the Framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", *Alternatives :Turkish Journal Of International Relations* 8, no.3 (Fall 2009).

undermine the government of Hamid Karzai. It was apparent that Iran wanted to frustrate any effort of progress in Kabul.²⁹⁶

Iran had no choice but to become a member of the SCO against the presence of the USA in Afghanistan. So, Iran applied for full membership of the SCO on 24 March 2008. The support of Russia and China for her nuclear program influenced her decision to join the SCO. Chinese and Russian support was not entirely out of good will. Iran was reliable market for Russia to sell weapons and nuclear reactors. China on the other hand needed to have oil flowing from Tehran to Beijing at a very low cost. China considered that Afghanistan was one of the land gateways through which China could have access to Iran and West Asia.²⁹⁷

Regional countries viewed Afghanistan as a strategic gateway to new markets in the region, thus, they were trying to be part of new order which was planned by international community to provide stability in Afghanistan and help global efforts to restructure Afghanistan. One of the global efforts was the London Conference which was held on January 28, 2010. The aim of the conference was not only to lay out a security plan for Afghanistan but also to lure countries that surround Kabul to offer more assistance to her. Discussions on such issues had already transpired in Istanbul at the meeting that named “Friendship and Cooperation Summit in the Heart of Asia”, in January 26, 2010. Sixty-six countries attended the London conference but Iran decided to stay away from going to London arguing that there was too much emphasis on a military solution.²⁹⁸ Moreover, Iran accused the UK of fomenting a political unrest in Tehran. Besides, Iranians asserted that the USA and the UK were hindering the research of Iran nuclear program. However, Iran attended to a meeting

²⁹⁶ Frederick W.Kagan; Kimberly Kagan; Danielle Pletka, “Iranian Influence In The Levant ,Iraq and Afghanistan”. Accessed on January 20, 2015, http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/-iranian-influence-in-the-levant-egypt-iraq-and-afghanistan_171235465754.pdf.

²⁹⁷ Zhao Huasheng, “Afghanistan and China’s New Neighbourhood Diplomacy”, *Internatioanal Affairs* 92, no.4 (2016): 891-908.

²⁹⁸ “Aims of the London conference on Afghanistan, Accessed on March 29, 2019, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8480368.stm.

in Istanbul two days before the London Conference. The Istanbul meeting, in January 26, 2010, was also attended by the USA, the UK and the EU. The purpose of the meeting was to have a “single voice” before the London Conference. Even though Tehran stated its regional security concerns due to ongoing US military operations and increasing number of troops in Afghanistan, Tehran did not interrupt diplomatic relations with the USA and other countries.²⁹⁹

On March 10, 2010, Iranian President Ahmedinejad visited Kabul after the Afghan president, Karzai, had undertaken a spate of trips to Iran, China, and India to demonstrate that he possessed strategic alternatives to the USA. In his Afghanistan trip, Ahmedinejad strongly emphasized that Iran was anxious about the presence of NATO troops in Afghanistan. He argued that the presence of NATO troops in Kabul was detrimental to regional peace.³⁰⁰ Standing next to Karzai at a Kabul news conference transmitted to television audiences in the USA, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad condemned the USA for creating terrorists. Karzai nodded approvingly at Ahmadinejad’s side as the Iranian president spoke. The US administration was outraged and Karzai was widely criticized by American public opinion. Western news headlines highlighted Karzai’s defiance of Washington. Karzai was improving relations with Iran, India, and China, partly to balance relations with the United States and partly as a hedge against a Pakistani decision to intensify Islamabad’s proxy war in Afghanistan after the American coalition withdrawals.³⁰¹ In October 2010, financial aid by Iranian politicians to Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan, by non-diplomatic means, sparked the discussion on Iran’s role in arming and giving economic assistance to Kabul.³⁰²

Using her religious and ethnic ties with Shiite minority living in Afghanistan,

²⁹⁹ Sadat and Hughes, “U.S.-Iran Engagement Through Afghanistan”.

³⁰⁰ Balkhi, “Iran’s Afghanistan Policy”.

³⁰¹ Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 454.

³⁰² Balkhi, “Iran’s Afghanistan Policy”.

Iran was trying to create a sphere of influence in the region. The Obama administrations' announcement in mid-2011 of plans for a formal exit from Afghanistan in 2014 kicked Iran's efforts to gain a sphere of influence into high gear. Obama's strategy of withdrawing the US troops from Afghanistan³⁰³ was evidence of the retrenchment approach.³⁰⁴ Thus, Iran increased her support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan by funding aid projects and expanding intelligence networks across Afghanistan in anticipation of coalition withdrawal, using proxies such as the Imam Khomeini Relief committee as agents of influence. It offered economic aid in the form of loans, stipends, and medical supplies in exchange for loyalty and actionable intelligence on coalition activities.³⁰⁵ Iran has various relations with Afghanistan in the form of ethnic and religious backgrounds, at the same time she has significant security grounding in the western provinces of Afghanistan for example Herat, Farah, and Nimruz. These provinces were naturally the safest place in Afghanistan and they also received the largest chunk of Iranian investment in infrastructure and security. They also got most of their electricity needs from Iran. Using her close relations with Shiite minority in Afghanistan, Iranians considered taking economic advantages for delivering its products to new markets.³⁰⁶

Ranked first in the world with proven natural gas reserves and ranked third in terms of oil reserves, Iran was also working to develop close relations with its neighbours for energy security. For Iran, Afghanistan was not only a neighbouring country to which Iran sells energy but also a key country in the pipeline route through which Iran plans to pass her natural resources to South and Central Asia. Iran needed to follow a route through Pakistan or Afghanistan in order to reach the major energy markets like China and India with direct energy lines. For this reason,

³⁰³ M. Turgut Demirtepe and İbrahim Erdoğan, "Obama's Afghanistan Strategy: Continuity and Change Security", *Journal of Security Strategies* 9, no.17(2013):49-83.

³⁰⁴ Kevin J. Lasher and Christine Sixta Rinehart, "The Shadowboxer: The Obama Administration and Foreign Policy Grand Strategy", *Politics&Policy* 44, no.5 (2016): 850-888.

³⁰⁵ Ilan Berman, *Iran's Deadly Ambition* (New York:Encounter Books, 2015), Proquest Ebook Central.

³⁰⁶ Reza Sanati, "Transitioning Afghanistan in the Post-Withdrawal Era: Setting the Stage for a Stable Political Order", *Alternatives :Turkish Journal Of International Relations* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2011).

stability in Afghanistan was of great importance for Iran. As one of the most important energy suppliers of Afghanistan, Iran agreed to export one million tonnes of oil product per year to Afghanistan, which consisted of diesel, gasoline and jet fuel with the agreement signed in December 2011.³⁰⁷

The strenuous relations between Kabul and Tehran were dragged to regional meetings. Efforts to strengthen joint venture in supporting peace and prosperity in Kabul were further discussed at the 5th Regional and Economic Cooperation Conference in Tajikistan in 2012. At the conference, the seventeen regional investment and policy priority projects were proposed for Afghanistan and other regional countries, including railways, highways, energy, trade, labour market and also regional fibre optic connectivity etc. The trade volume of Iran and Afghanistan reached to \$2 billion in 2012, which was \$60 million in 2001.³⁰⁸ However, his harsh foreign policy views, Ahmedinejad continued to keep Iran in pragmatic foreign policy concept. As a result of trade and economic ties, relations between Afghanistan and Iran improved during Ahmedinejad's era. However, in Iran, radical conservatives started to lose grip on the government. The international crisis over Iran's nuclear programme and economic difficulties due to sanctions and social turmoil resulted in the election of Rouhani to power in 2013.³⁰⁹

5.2.2. The Softened Foreign Policy of Rouhani

In June 2013, in the presidential elections Hassan Rouhani was elected as new president of Iran. As a pragmatic and moderate conservative leader, Rouhani promised the maintenance of whatever damage has been inflicted on Tehran's

³⁰⁷ Alagöz and Kandemir, "11 Eylül Sonrası dönemde Bölgesel Güvenlik ve İran' ın Afganistan Siyaseti."

³⁰⁸ Alagöz and Kandemir, "11 Eylül Sonrası dönemde Bölgesel Güvenlik ve İran' ın Afganistan Siyaseti."

³⁰⁹ Sezgin Kaya and Zeynep Şartepe, "Contentious Politics in Iran: Factions, Foreign Policy and the Nuclear Deal", *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations* 14, No.3 (Fall 2015):1-12.

diplomatic ties due to antagonistic policies of Mahmoud Ahmedinejad.³¹⁰ Rather than ideological foreign policy views, Rouhani decided to pursue a centrist-pragmatic agenda that prioritized Iran's national interests in the region. As reflected in his political campaign platform, Rouhani had such a vision that "Tehran should focus more on minimizing regional conflicts, revamping her economy and putting the well-being of her citizens above the nuclear program, as well as conducting dialogue with the West."³¹¹

The foreign policy views of Hassan Rouhani, seems to be in a stronger position than Ahmadinejad to engage more constructively on international relations, with the potential to increase pragmatic engagement in the region and to pursue cooperation with the USA on converging interests such as regional security. In a public speech after his presidential election victory, Rouhani emphasized that the key foreign policy priority of Iran under his presidency will be, "the expansion of ties with neighbouring countries and the strengthening of regional cooperation in order to maintain peace and provide the interests of countries in the region". The diplomatic atmosphere improved and he stated hopes of ending the disagreement over Iran's nuclear program. Rouhani gave to world the signal that he would be in a reconciliatory manner in Iran's foreign policy.³¹²

The Obama administration's announcement of withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan was an indication that Iran began to reap the fruit of her effort. In August 2013, the two countries signed the Afghanistan-Iran Strategic Cooperation Agreement. The agreement with Afghanistan was concluded during Karzai's visit to Afghanistan to grace the inauguration of Rouhani. The agreement had been drafted in mid-2012. Prior to the signing of the agreement, the deputy ministers of both states made a declaration in 2013. In the treaty, both states agreed on not interfering in

³¹⁰ Thomas Juneu, "Iran under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World", *Middle East Policy* 21, No.4, (2014):92-104.

³¹¹ Mahmood Monshipouri and Manochehr Dorraj, "Iran's Foreign Policy: a Shifting Strategic Landscape", *Middle East Policy*, Vol.XX, No.4 (Winter 2013).

³¹² Muhammad Ismail, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Regional Implications and Possible Outcomes", *Asian Politics & Policy*, Volume 7, Number 2 (2015): 245-263.

each others domestic issues but to collaborate on security. Military, economic and intelligence collaboration were also agreed on. The agreement was mainly a security agreement.³¹³ At the SCO Summit, heads of member countries underlined the significance of economic development and security collaboration. At the heart of the summits agenda was the situation in Kabul. The leaders of Iran and Tajikistan emphasised that Kabul desires the help of the SCO's assistance.³¹⁴

The US economic pressure and international isolation, which was rising especially during Ahmedinejad period when Iran increased her nuclear research program, resulted in an economic crisis in Iran and devastation of Iranian economy. This led Iranians to adopt a more pragmatic foreign policy concept and to seek peaceful relations with other countries in the region. Since Iran's economy was worsened due to international sanctions, Rouhani declared that the economic recovery of Iran could only succeed through the easing of international sanctions. Thus, he strongly campaigned on ending Iran's international isolation. He saw that strong economy was the master piece in taking full advantage of Iranian national power and that nuclear negotiations were key in resolving the isolation of Iran at the international scene. During Ahmedinejad's era, nuclear talks between Iran and Western countries had failed tremendously. In late 2013, Iran reinitiated talks on her nuclear program with the P5+1 (the USA, the UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany—collectively known as the P5+1). The negotiations took weeks before Iran's nuclear program was bartered for a sanctions-relief package worth \$6-7 billion.³¹⁵ This was the first time Tehran and Washington had a direct and public negotiations, the outcome of which were a formal accord to resolve an important component of their overall dispute. After the Ahmedinejad, Rouhani administration

³¹³ Sudhanshu Verma, "Can Kabul Carry Two Melons in One Hand? Afghanistan and Iran sign strategic cooperation document", Accessed on March 3, 2019, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/can-kabul-carry-two-melons-in-one-hand-afghanistan-and-iran-sign-strategic-cooperation-document/>.

³¹⁴ Çagla Gül Yesevi, "Security Threats in Central Asia", *International Journal on Social Sciences and Huminty Studies*, Vol 5, No 2 (2013):26-38.

³¹⁵ Juneu, "Iran under Rouhani".

began to recover Iran's problematic relations with other countries in the frame of good relations.³¹⁶

Good bilateral relations that began after the fall of Taliban in 2001, between Iran and Afghanistan continued during Hassan Rouhani's era. The quadrilateral summit was held in Kabul on 27 March 2014 between Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The four presidents celebrated Nowruz together at Kabul. The presidents unanimously agreed that regional collaboration was important in promoting peace and stability including economic and social development. They also saw a need in the fortification of regional connectivity through roads and railways. The leaders agreed that peace and stability in Kabul means peace and stability in the region. At the SCO summit, which was held in Dushanbe on 12 September 2014, Hassan Rouhani discussed bilateral ties and regional and international developments with Hamid Karzai. Member states of the SCO addressed that the SCO was not indifferent to the problems of Afghanistan and tried to contribute to the stability and socio-economic revival of the country.³¹⁷

While Iran and member states of the SCO considered establishing close relations with Afghanistan, the USA tried to keep its political influence and military presence in Afghanistan. In June 2014, chaotic presidential elections were held in Afghanistan and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai emerged as the new president in the late September 2014. A controversial agreement with the USA, named as the BSA was at the heart of the election campaign. This agreement would exempt the US and NATO troops from local prosecution. President Hamid Karzai stated his concerns for the BSA and certainly refused to sign it, however, the rival candidates in the elections promised to sign it if they would be elected. After the elections, the newly elected President Ghani's administration signed the BSA in September 2014. This agreement permitted 9,800 more US troops to stay in Afghanistan and help in the fight against

³¹⁶ Mohammad Soltaninejad, "Iran and the United States: A Conflict Resolution Perspective", *Asian Politics&Policy*, Vol 7, No.3 (2015): 455-575.

³¹⁷"SCO Summit Kicks Off in Dushanbe", Accessed on March 19, 2017, <http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930621000547>

Taliban. The agreement further allowed for the launching of counterterrorism operations.³¹⁸

Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai had become new president of Afghanistan, however, Iran wanted a pro-Iranian government in Kabul, which would distance itself from the the USA and not dominated by Taliban or its proxies. Iran considered international military operations in Afghanistan as a threat for her regional security. Tehran viewed that a gradual withdrawal of NATO and international troops was crucial for her investments along the borders of Western Afghanistan. Iran wanted the US presence in Kabul to end as soon as possible; however, the problem was that the USA would not withdraw so long as they considered Taliban as a threat. Iran was aiming to sustain its spehere of influence in Afghanistan by assisting to development of economy and infrastructure of Afghanistan. As one of the most crucial donors in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Iran did a series of infrastructural ventures to enhance the links between them. Iran also supported Afghanistan financially and gave more than \$50 million annually to Afghan anti-narcotic efforts since 2009. Kabul, Tehran and Islamabad did an anti-narcotic operation under the watch of the UN.³¹⁹

On 17 February 2015, Iran and Afghanistan set up a joint cooperation commission, in Kabul. The commission worked to consolidate relations in the fields of preventing different forms of terrorism, fighting against drug trafficking, economic and transit cooperation, increasing trade, solving immigrant problems and cooperation about water resources. The president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani said that his foreign policy intended to have good relations with Iran and all other states. Economic relations between the two countries continued to develop in an increasing speed. As of 2015, Iran's merchandise export to Afghanistan stood at \$3 billion, comprising 40% of Afghanistan's total import. While Iran exports consumer goods, food, fuel, drugs, etc. to Afghanistan, on the other hand, Afghanistan exports fresh

³¹⁸ John R.Evans, "Bilateral Security Agreement: A New Era of Afghan-U.S. Cooperation" Accessed on March 23, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/09/30/bilateral-security-agreement-a-new-era-of-afghan-u-s-cooperation/>.

³¹⁹ Sadat and Hughes, "U.S.-Iran Engagement Through Afghanistan".

and dried fruits, herbals, and saffron. Soon after, the Afghan government started to give customs exemption for Iranian businessmen who invest in Afghanistan and move their production lines to Afghanistan. Energy trade between Iran and Afghanistan was mostly based on Iran's exports of oil products to Afghanistan. Afghanistan's annual oil import from Iran stood at 200,000 tons and Afghan government were willing to import LPG from Iran.³²⁰

Iran and Afghanistan wanted to enhance trade and transit ties with each other. However, international sanctions on Iran were obstacle for Afghanistan. For developing commercial relations with Iran, Afghanistan wished that peaceful process about Iran's nuclear research should come to end. Since the beginning of the nuclear negotiations between P5+1 and Iran, Afghan government supported the multilateral negotiations process. Afghanistan welcomed the pragmatic efforts of the President Hassan Rouhani as he was certain to capitalize on the nuclear deal to enhance regional security and economic cooperation.³²¹ Negotiations between Iran and P5+1 countries (China, France, Russia, the UK, the USA and Germany) relating to Iran's nuclear research had come to an end with a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, on July 14, 2015, in Vienna. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action required constraints that seek to ensure that Iran's nuclear program can be used for purely peaceful purposes in exchange for a broad lifting of the US, the EU, and the UN sanctions on Iran. As a result of the accord with P5+1, the anxiety of Iran's neighbours diminished because they no longer see any further threat of the nuclearisation of the Middle East.³²²

Nuclear deal with P5+1 countries had created positive atmosphere in relations

³²⁰ "Afghanistan willing to boost gas oil imports from Iran: Zanganeh", Accessed on March 29, 2019, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/252062/Afghanistan-willing-to-boost-gas-oil-imports-from-Iran-Zanganeh>.

³²¹ "Afghanistan After the US-Iran Nuclear Deal", Accessed on November 15, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/11/afghanistan-after-the-us-iran-nuclear-deal/>.

³²² Paul Kerr and Kenneth Katzman, "Iran Nuclear Agreement and US Exit, Congressional Research Service". accessed June 15, 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43333.pdf>.

with regional countries. From the point of view of Rouhani, Iran's foreign policy should be based on not only ideological ambitions of Islamic Revolution, but also pragmatic approach prioritizing Iran's national interests. In the frame of this foreign policy concept, Iran decided to create an international transit route with Afghanistan and India, the so-called the Chabahar transit corridor.³²³ The agreement was signed, in Tehran, on May 23, 2016, by Iran's president Hassan Rouhani, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Chabahar Agreement would connect Central Asia with South Asia. With this agreement India pledged to invest \$500 million for the development and related infrastructure of the Chabahar port. From the Indian point of view, Chabahar port would be an alternative and reliable access route into Afghanistan and more direct sea-road access route into the Central Asian Region, which would bypass the route through Pakistan.³²⁴

For the close relations between Iran and India, the finalization of the Chabahar agreement was important and it also indicated that New Delhi was ready to do as promised to Afghanistan. The Chabahar port would have increased connectivity between the countries of region and the port could allow Afghan exports cheaper access to markets in India and other countries. However, the port could influence the goods negatively, sending through Karachi, by the way of which an overwhelming amount of Afghan manufactured goods travel. In February 2016, Afghan officials said that Afghan exports through Karachi had declined 40 % amid political tensions between Kabul and Islamabad.³²⁵

While Iran was trying to calm down the tensions with regional players and develop close relations with Afghanistan, there was a crisis between Tehran and

³²³ Khalid Kazimov, "Afghanistan's chief executive officer arrives in Tehran". Accessed on March 29, 2019, <https://en.trend.az/iran/politics/2476627.html>,

³²⁴ Taylan Özgür Kaya and Fatih Kılınç, "Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region", *The Journal of Humanity and Society* 7, no.2 (2017): 155-172. Accessed on March 13, 2019, <https://insanvetoplum.org/content/6-sayilar/14-7-2/7-m0223/kaya-kilic.pdf>.

³²⁵ Ankit Panda, "India, Iran, Afghanistan Finalize Chabahar Port Agreement", Accessed on March 20, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/india-iran-afghanistan-finalize-chabahar-port-agreement/>.

Riyadh. The Saudis in 2016 tried a Shiite cleric and found him guilty, and as such he was executed. Nimr Al- Nimr was tried on terrorism charges execution made tremendous impact on Iranians. As in reaction, protesters in the streets of Iran set the Saudi embassy ablaze. Besides, Iranians in the other regional and Middle East countries, such as Pakistan, Bahrain, and even Indian Kashmir people protested the execution of Nimr. The Saudis blamed the Iranian government for demonstrations and declared that they would cut-off diplomatic relations. Afghanistan was in good relation with both Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both Riyadh and Tehran were strongly participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Kabul wanted to utilize Chabahar Port as a substitute for trading to Gwadar port. Furthermore, Iran participated in building numerous roads, school buildings and other structures in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia financed the building of religious centres and masjids. Consequently, Afghanistan was concerned about the escalating tensions and stated that the increased tensions would harm Afghanistan. This was because Afghanistan was split into two spheres – Iran and Saudi Arabia. Afghanistan had a 10-15% Shiite minority population that have been given close attention by Iran.³²⁶

Shiite minority, who was a tool frequently used in pragmatic foreign policy of Iran, was the most important element of Iran's foreign policy for protecting her regional interests. Thus, Iranian leaders were aiming to maintain close relationship with Afghanistan. Looking into the future, Iran adopted a multi-dimensional approach to guaranteeing her influence in Kabul and also to push forward her geopolitical agenda in south and Central Asia. Notwithstanding, the Afghan government asserted that Iran and Pakistan were still giving support to Taliban. According to Iran, Afghanistan continued to face major security and political challenges. Iran's low-level support to Taliban was intended to weaken the US military presence. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was toppled by the US military operation in 2001, but after the operation, violence increased in Afghan streets and the security situation deteriorated across the country. Meanwhile, Taliban was

³²⁶ "Saudi-Iranian tensions concerning to Afghanistan". Accessed on March 20, 2019, <http://www.aopnews.com/aop-reports/saudi-iran-tensions-concerning-to-afghanistan/>.

gaining power again in Afghanistan. Iran considered Taliban as a counter balance to Daesh militants in Afghanistan.³²⁷ In June 2016, a bomb attacks by Daesh militants killed at least 22 people in Kabul and the northern province of Badakhshan. Iran had concerns about the growth of Daesh in Afghanistan as it meant more future troubles for Afghanistan. Rouhani stated that terrorist and extremist groups were a danger not only for the friendly and neighbouring countries of Afghanistan but also for the entire region.³²⁸

For Iran, the terrorist groups, like Daesh, in the Afghanistan was one of the most important security challenges for her territory. During a meeting with his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani, Rouhani congratulated Afghan government on fighting terrorism and said: “There is no doubt that the people and government of Afghanistan will be the final victors in the fight against terrorism”.³²⁹ Iran considered the development of economic and political cooperation with Afghanistan a preamble toward peace and security in the Central Asian countries. But when it comes to refugees, Iran had a rigid policy. During the Soviet occupation, about 4 million Afghan people took refuge in Iran and Pakistan. Transition of the refugees to Iran weakened the security of the Iranian-Afghan border. Iran faced many problems with the one and half million refugees in her territory. One of these problems was the relations between Afghan Sunnis and other Iranian Sunni groups and also some refugees that began spreading the Taliban’s ideology into Iran. Gradually starting in 2001, Iran sent about 900,000 refugees back to Afghanistan during Ahmedinejad’s era. Now, more than two million Afghans are living in Iran, most of whom have resettled. About 950,000 have been confirmed as refugees. Iran planned to deport nearly 600,000 undocumented Afghan refugees by the end of 2017. The large numbers of deportees from Iran coupled with high unemployment in Afghanistan has triggered

³²⁷ “Iran’s Game Plan in Afghanistan”. Accessed on November 10, 2017, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2017/01/17/Analysis-iran-s-game-plan-in-Afghanistan.html>.

³²⁸ “Saudi-Iranian tensions concening to Afghanistan”. Accessed on March 20, 2019, <http://www.aopnews.com/aop-reports/saudi-iran-tensions-concerning-to-afghanistan/>.

³²⁹ “President describes JCPOA as vital to all countries of the region”, Accessed on March 28, 2019, <http://president.ir/en/91353>.

concerns that some of these young people may join Taliban or other militant groups. According to a UN assessment, 3.3 million people will need lifesaving assistance in 2018.³³⁰

Associated with the refugee issue, Iran became one of the most popular drug transit routes in the world. In order to overcome this problem, Iran had to provide security for over the 900 km border she shares with Afghanistan. In the past thirty years, some 3,700 security guards were killed and more than 12,000 people injured. In order to combat this problem, Iran was aware that a stable Afghanistan, should be established and that a power with effective control throughout the country would prevent drug production.³³¹ For security reasons, Iran took a drastic step to prevent Afghan migrants from illegally entering. A 15-foot-high wall that constructed in 2010, now runs along the Afghanistan border.³³²

5.3. Conclusion

Irrespective of the fact that Khatami was one of the first world leaders to condemn the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks and Iran supported military operations against Taliban, President Bush accused Iran of being part of an “axis of evil”. To defeat the Taliban, the USA had to depend on local foot soldiers. Thus, Iran arranged meetings between the Northern Alliance and the USA. Moreover, Iran gave military and intelligence support to the USA in its efforts for the toppling of Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which have helped Iran to get rid of two of her most dangerous neighbours. Sooner rather than later, Iran realised that she was in more trouble than ever before with the Taliban or Saddam Hussein regime.

Since the Rafsanjani’s period, Iran’s foreign policy rather based on pragmatic

³³⁰Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018. Accessed on March 26, 2019, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/afg_2018_humanitarian_needs_overview_0.pdf.

³³¹ Alagöz and Kandemir, “11 Eylül Sonrası Dönemde Bölgesel Güvenlik ve İran’ ın Afganistan Siyaseti”.

³³² Sune Engel Rasmussen, “On the Edge of Afghanistan”, *Foreign Policy*, (Sept/Oct 2017). Accessed on March 30, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/12/on-the-edge-of-afghanistan-taliban-iran-war-united-states/>

approach that prioritized Iran's national interests. Tehran became concerned about regional security due to the presence of the USA and its allies in Afghanistan. Thus, Iran followed a foreign policy strategy to protect stability in Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era. Playing an active role in the Bonn process that produced a new central government in post-conflict Afghanistan, Iran supported international efforts towards the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Iran's relations with Western countries deteriorated after the conservative candidate Mahmoud Ahmedinajad won the presidential elections in June 2005. Ahmadinejad's statements, which looked to be Khomeini's ideological rhetoric, about nuclear program disturbed the USA and its allies and raised suspicions about Iran's strategic objectives in the region. Tensions with the USA caused anxiety in Iran's foreign policy and owing to its concerns about its regional security, Iran applied for membership in the SCO on 24 March 2008. The deteriorating relations with the USA and western countries led Iran to seek regional alliances and close relationships with her neighbours. Iran's nuclear research was partially encouraged by Russia and China's support from the beginning. Surprisingly the two countries hardly opposed the implementation of any kind of sanctions on Iran. However, Iran's support to protect stability and reconstruction in the Afghanistan continued.

Under Rouhani, it was expected that Iran would continue to support the stabilization of Afghanistan because any security failure in Afghanistan might lead to the re-emergence of anti-Shiite radical insurgents. Such radicals may also be anti-Iranian. The Iranian leaders would undoubtedly oppose the resurgence of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, but it has been interested in creating a major headache in Afghanistan for the USA. Rouhani's foreign policy view resembles with Khatami's policies of *détente*. In a speech on 25 January 2015, he said that "the contemporary world is not scene for challenges and the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to resolve issues through logic, rationality and negotiations." ³³³

³³³ "All countries should strongly deal with violence and terrorism ". Accessed on March 25, 2019, <http://www.president.ir/en/Archive?t=1&y=2015&m=1&t=1&c=0>.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Iran and Afghanistan have close historical and cultural ties with each other. Due to Shiite minority living in Afghanistan's Hazarajat region, Iranians follow closely the issues relating to Afghanistan. Establishing close relations with Afghanistan since when the Pahlavi monarchy came to power in 1925, Pahlavi monarchy has realist foreign policy approach. After the World War II, ambitions of Shah Reza Pahlavi to become the leader of region led him to implement pragmatic foreign policy that focused on only Iran's national interests. Thus, Shah continued having close relations with Afghanistan until Islamic Revolution, in February 1979. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iranian leaders based their foreign policy on the supreme law of the country which included ideological notions. The objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran were her independence, territorial integrity, national security, and economic growth.³³⁴ In the framework of the objectives and ideals of Iranian foreign policy which were emphasized in the new constitution, Islamic Republic of Iran saw the USA as an enemy surrounding her. Khomeini's ideological foreign policy based on Islamic Revolution's ambitions and Islamic expansionist foreign policy created distrust and discontent with American side which led to deterioration of relations between both sides. Deteriorating relations with the USA which hit the top with the Hostage Crisis, resulted in Iran's facing of serious threats in international relations with other countries such as blockade, containment and isolation.

The sanctions that were posed by the USA and other western countries continued throughout the years and damaged Iranian economy as well as diplomatic ties with the other countries. Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan towards the end of 1979. On top of it, the war with Iraq began in 1980 which continued eight years. In the Afghan war, Iran aimed to support the Afghan Mujahideen resistance struggling against the Soviet Union. But, due to Iran-Iraq war, which caused widespread

³³⁴ Mohammad Javad Zarif, "What Iran Really wants: Iranian Foreign Policy in the Rouhani Era", *Foreign Affairs*, (May-June 2014).

devastation for both side, it was impossible for Iran to sufficiently support the Afghan resistance during the Soviet invasion. Although Khomeini's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was based on ideological ambitions of Islamic Revolution, due to concerns about devastating economy and national security, Iran did not want to disrupt the relations with the Soviet Union. Thus, Khomeini sometimes had to adopt pragmatic foreign policy that focused on national interests towards both Afghanistan and super powers rather than only ideological ambitions of the Islamic Revolution. Moreover, when the war with Iraq broke out, Iran's all resources were spent on the war. In the face of a possible US economic embargo, Iran decided to conduct trade with the world through the Soviet Union. In the same way, the Soviet Union prevented American attempts to put embargo on Iran using her veto right at the UN.

The struggle between the Soviet Union and Afghan Mujahideen was continued during 1980s. In the last decade of the Cold War, Khomeini's rhetoric – neither east, nor west, it is only Islam - gained a special meaning for Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Iran supported Afghan mujahideen groups together with the USA, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan against the Soviet Union. Khomeini's Islamic expansionist foreign policy towards Afghanistan was based on using religious and sectarian motifs, especially, in the Shiite Hazarajat region in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Iran tried to keep good relations with the Soviet Union against the US embargo. However, the war with Iraq and embargo posed by the USA devastated Iran's economy and infrastructure, Khomeini sometimes had to implement pragmatic foreign policy towards Afghanistan. During the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, Khomeini had to prioritize Iran's regional interests by keeping Iran away from the superpower rivalry, thus, Iran created a balance between the two superpowers. Iran tried to use the two superpowers to balance each other against negative effects of the Cold War. Due to concerns over her regional security, Iran did not effectively react to the Soviet occupation of Muslim Afghanistan. Thus, during the Khomeini's era, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was based not only on religion and ideology but also on pragmatic concept which prioritized Iran's national interests.

The 1980s turned out to be a disaster for Iran both domestically and internationally. Aside from the war against Iraq, the US embargo, motivated by the occupation of the US embassy, set the stage for the isolation and weakening of Iran's economy.³³⁵ When Imam Khomeini died on June 3, 1989, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani came to power as the new President, and a new period in Iran foreign policy began. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Iran continued its foreign policy in the framework of pragmatic approach towards Afghanistan. As a result of the US policy of dual containment of Iraq and Iran, and the civil war in Afghanistan, Iran increased her efforts to promote regional peace and stability. There was a vacuum in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. Iran was concerned that Sunni Pakistan and Saudi Arabia would endeavour to fill the vacuum. Thus, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan was to support the establishment of a multi-ethnic government comprising both Sunni and Shiite groups. However, Iran considered to use religious and ethnic ties with Mujahideen groups, to keep her national interests in the region. In 1990s, Iran adopted more pragmatic manner in foreign policy towards Afghanistan than Khomeini's era. Iran's objective was based on the establishment of a trade and energy bridge between Central Asia and Afghanistan. In accordance with pragmatic foreign policy of the 1990s, Iran considered the establishment of a friendly Afghan government on its borders in its own interests. Thus, not only ideological motives but also regional interests played again an important role in the perspective of Iranian foreign policy towards Afghanistan.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the USA agreed with the Soviet Union not to interfere in Afghanistan. This situation paved the way for Afghanistan to become a battlefield of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Tehran encouraged the ideal of a united front. The Afghan resistance groups went to war against the Najibullah Government. Communist Najibullah's government fell and Burhaneddin Rabbani, backed by Iran, became new president of Afghanistan. However, during the Rabbani administration, 1992–96, former Afghan resistance

³³⁵ "Petroleum and Energy Policy in Iran", *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no.1 (2009):19-23.

groups, who were fighting against the Soviet Union, began to struggle with each other, leading to civil war in Afghanistan. Thus, in this tumultuous situation, the Sunni Taliban emerged in 1995. Iran did not want Taliban to be in power. During the Afghan civil war in the early 1990s, Iran backed the Shiite Hizb-e Wahdat group. In the 1990s, Iran was indirectly involved in the conflict through its support for the Shiite minority in Hazarajat region of central Afghanistan and for a variety of other Afghan groups and warlords.³³⁶

In 1997, the new elections were held in Iran and Khatemi became Iran's new leader after Rafsanjani. Iran's pragmatic foreign policy towards Afghanistan continued. Iran viewed Sunni Taliban, which was one of the Islamic groups in Afghanistan, as a danger to her regional security as well as her political and economic interests. When Taliban emerged, Iran supported the Shiite Afghan groups. When Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan in 1996, Iran began to establish dialogue with Taliban government in the framework of pragmatic foreign policy. However, the extermination of Iranian diplomats worsened relations between Iran and the Taliban. Despite Khatami's peaceful rhetorics on Iran's foreign policy that includes the terms of dialogue and peace between civilizations, due to Iran's concerns about her regional security and in need of a strategy to balance western countries and to limit Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, Iran found herself in a search for a regional alliance such as the SCO. Russia and China were the members of the SCO and this gave Iran some relief in her foreign policy. Despite western sanctions imposed on her, Iran was decisive to keep her pragmatic foreign policy, thus, she was eager to cooperate with the USA to topple Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

Iran did not want a powerful Taliban in her eastern borders. In the post- 9/11 period, the war on terror against Al-Qaeda was a significant challenge to Iran's existence. The USA conducted its Afghanistan operation with the support of Iran-backed Northern Alliance, which helped to succeed in overthrowing Taliban. In the frame of pragmatic foreign policy calculations towards Afghanistan, Iran persuaded

³³⁶ Allison and Jonson, "Central Asian Security", 186.

the Northern Alliance to support Sunni Pashtun Hamid Karzai as the new leader of Afghanistan. The toppling of Taliban gave Iran an opportunity to expand her influence in Afghanistan. However, soon after, Iran became concerned about the increasing the number of military presence of the USA and her western allies in Afghanistan. Concerns for regional security motivated the Iranian leadership to foster regional cooperation with other countries and use her soft-power elements in Afghanistan. Due to Afghanistan does not have a direct access to open sea, she was compelled to rely on her neighbours. Since 2001, Iranian products have found a market in Afghanistan³³⁷ and Iran contributed significantly to the reconstruction of Afghanistan in millions of dollars.

The US–Iran cooperation slowly began to weaken after they had succeeded in overthrowing Taliban. Iran’s relations with Western countries became pretty much poor because of her nuclearization process and the harsh foreign policy rhetoric of Ahmedinejad. However, cordial relations have continued between Iran and Afghanistan since 2001. Iran’s assistance for the reconstruction projects in Afghanistan have continued, as well. Furthermore, Hamid Karzai was eager to improve relations with Iran. Both sides tried to develop a close bilateral relationship. Iran gave economic, social, and cultural assistance to Afghanistan. Ahmedinejad considered the presence of the multinational forces as a possible source of instability in Afghanistan and a threat to regional security. Moreover, Iran was disturbed by the partnership agreement, BSA, between Afghanistan and the USA in 2007 due to security concerns for the US presence near her borders. The treaty, BSA, permits American troops to stay in Afghanistan.

During the Ahmedinejad’s term, Iran’s pragmatic foreign policy continued. Following the Obama administration’s announcement in mid-2011 of plans for a formal exit from Afghanistan in 2014, using her soft power elements, Iran increased its pragmatic efforts in Afghanistan in terms of national interests. Iran’s support to Afghanistan was economic aid that was in the form of loans, reconstruction projects, medical supplies and building of pro-Iranian schools and mosques. Through its

³³⁷Balkhi, “Iran’s Afghanistan Policy”.

religious and cultural ties with Afghanistan, Iran increased her influence in Afghanistan. After Ahmedinejad, Hassan Rouhani, who was more constructive on international relations than Ahmedinejad, came to power in 2013. Blissful relations between Iran and Afghanistan, which began after the fall of the Taliban, continued during Hassan Rouhani's era. After the nuclear agreement, the economic sanctions on Iran were abated. Moreover, the nuclear agreement lessened the concerns of Afghanistan about Iran. Afghanistan supported the nuclear talks from the beginning. However, when the US President Donald Trump in May 2018 declared the US withdrawal from JCPOA, tension between Iran and USA again raised.

Iran is an influential regional power in Afghanistan due to religious and cultural ties with the Shiite groups in Afghanistan. Furthermore, there are strong economic relations between the two countries. About half million documented Afghan refugees are still living in Iran. Iran is very much concerned about the influence of other states on Afghanistan, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and also the USA. Iran does not want any group supported by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or the USA to gain power in Afghanistan. According to Khomeini, Iran's foreign policy, which had an Islamic mission, was founded on spreading the Islamic Revolution. Khomeini and his successors saw Iran as a focal point of the new Islamic order of the world. However, their foreign policy implementation was the same as the leaders before the Islamic Revolution. Before the Islamic Revolution, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who had developed close relations with USA, was concerned about the spread of communism in Afghanistan. Shah aimed to become leader of the region and he continued close relations with Afghanistan. Thus, Pahlavi implemented pragmatic foreign policy towards Afghanistan by supporting various Afghan groups and providing economic aid to Afghanistan.

While Reza Pahlavi tried to show Iran as a secular model, post-revolutionary leaders tried to show Iran as an Islamic model. All of them tried to show Iran as a model country for societies in the Middle East and Arabic world. However, after the Islamic Revolution, they used Islamic rhetoric as a means of achieving its national interests. Under both Shah and the leaders in power since the Islamic Revolution, Iran demonstrated its concerns about Afghanistan in the framework of national

interests. Consequently, Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan from the beginning of Khomeini's Islamic Revolution was based on not only ideological motives of Islamic Revolution but also pragmatic concept that focused on regional security and national interests, the same as those before the Islamic Revolution of Iran.



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