

Is Iran's Approach to Missile Technology a Deterrent Mechanism or a Severe Threat to Regional and Supra-Regional Security?

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Abstract

Maintaining security, dealing with threats, and having military power to realize these things are the main concerns of countries that have security concerns. Therefore, strengthening internal power and improving the level of defense is one of the basic priorities of the government's policies. As a country with geostrategic, geopolitical and geoeconomic positions, Iran is facing important security challenges at the national, regional, and transnational levels, especially after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The country has been at the heart of US political considerations due to Iran's political approach as a regional power in the Middle East. Iran has continuously faced serious challenges, especially from the US and Israel, and as a result, it has paid special attention to preventing possible threats from overcoming the dangers. For the national security of the country, Iranian policy makers have identified threats to national security and are trying to take measures to avoid risks. The development of military technology is defined as a key deterrent mechanism against security threats.

This article analyzes the impact of the evolution of missile technology on Iran's defense-security strategy. The descriptive and analytical method is used in this article and the geopolitical and geostrategic threats against Iran are discussed. Next, Iran's defense strategy and defense policy are analyzed, then defense diplomacy and deterrence strategy are examined. The main purpose of the article is to explain Iran's goals in developing missile technology. This technology aims to create a deterrent mechanism against threats to regional and extra-regional security.

Keywords: Iran, Supra-Regional Security, Deterrent Mechanism, Defense-Military Strategy, Security Threats, Missile Technology, Security Challenges.

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1. Introduction

In the international system's anarchic atmosphere, security, preservation of states' territorial integrity and interests are among the policymakers' most critical concerns. Iran is not an exception. Iran, especially in the era after the Islamic Revolution, as a country with geostrategic, geopolitical, and geoeconomic importance in the Middle East, has been exposed to numerous threats, such as the war between Iran and Iraq, economic sanctions, and political pressures. The country also influences regional and international political equations. However, after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, relying on the ideas derived from the spirit of the revolution process, it conflicted with the goals and political interests of America and Israel .

Iran had a strategic alliance with the United States until the 1970s. Since then, Iran has been accused of preparing the ground for a revolution in other Islamic countries and presented as a challenge for the Arab and Islamic countries. In other words, Iran is accused by the U.S., Israel, and many European countries, and particularly by the Arab states in the Persian Gulf, of "exporting the Islamic Revolution" to the regional countries. Because of this main reason, it is continuously exposed to various threats.

Iran has encountered various crises since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), enduring economic-political sanctions since 1979, the internal problems and threats from separatist groups, and civil protests have led Iranian policymakers to believe that their security and national interests are at stake.

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Since the most essential security, concern of Iran is the defense of its territorial integrity and political independence, maintaining territorial integrity against security threats is considered one of the main goals of the

country's defense-military policy. To achieve this goal, the strategy of deterrence in developing missile technology and having military-defense capabilities has been defined as the most effective mechanism (Arghavani and Pirankhou,2016:51-74). Based on this hypothesis - the threat to the country's territorial integrity and damage to the system - the increase in missile power in terms of accuracy and range has changed Iran's defense strategy from border and territorial deterrence to cross-border deterrence (Cordesman,2014:4-242). In other words, the development of military technology has been defined as the key deterrent mechanism against security threats.

Referring to the mentioned points, this article analyzes the impact of the development of missile technology on Iran's defense-security strategy. The geopolitical and geostrategic threats against Iran are initially discussed using analytical and descriptive research methods. This is followed by an analysis of Iran's defense strategy and policy. This is followed by examining Iran's defense diplomacy and deterrence strategy. Deriving from the arguments carried out in the earlier sections, the final part focuses on missile technology as a deterrent mechanism for Iran. The article's primary purpose is to determine whether Iran's goal of developing missile technology is to create a deterrent mechanism against threats or whether it is a threat to regional and supra-regional security.

2. The Geopolitical and Geostrategic Threats against Iran

The issue of security is considered one of the principles raised in international relations theories, especially in realism and neo-realism theories, and one of the main issues in political science. Therefore, the security factor is one of the priorities for a political system. It is a qualitative phenomenon that can be described based on subjective ratings and is often defined without risks and dangers (Enegerer,2009:7). Concern for providing security and dealing with peripheral threats to survive has become a determining policy area in many countries, including Iran. In the contemporary era, a complex combination of hard and soft challenges has emerged with the emergence of new patterns and tools of confrontation and threat and the increase of variables affecting the military-security arena. This leads to a complex environment in defense and security for countries.

Iran is in one of the most sensitive geopolitical situations in the world. It covers active geopolitical areas with extensive and numerous functions

around it. Iran's geopolitical region creates both opportunities and challenges, and the country is not unaware of it (Eisenstadt,2011:35-62). Iran has geopolitical and geographical advantages because it provides the corridor, the communication route, and access to the world's free waters, which is considered a superior region in terms of political economy. Iran's access to open waters through the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman and its maritime border with Central Asian countries and Russia in the Caspian Sea has put Iran on a particular north-south route. Moreover, Iran's access to Eurasia through its connection with the Caucasus region and Anatolia has made the country in the Trans-Caucasus and Silk Road's geostrategic coordinates.

Iran's route is the most economical, safest, and shortest energy route in the region in terms of railway connection. According to the opinion of the vice president of operation and progress of railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran's route is the most economical, safest, and shortest energy route in the region regarding rail connection. Iran's rail network can transit more than 40 million tons of goods annually, and upgrading it to 70 million tons is possible¹. Furthermore, Iran also plays a vital role in the region's existing highways, namely the Silk Road, the Asian Railway, the Traceca Corridor (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia), and the North-South Corridor. (Jahanshahi and et al,2019:87-124) Most importantly, Iran has approximately 10% of the world's total proven petroleum reserves and around 18% of the world's total proven natural gas reserves (U.S. Energy Information Administration (2018).

In summary, Iran has a geopolitical position with the potential for strategic economic, political, security, and even cultural policies. Sharing sea and land borders with the economically and politically significant countries in the region also made the country one of the world's geopolitical areas. In an era of fierce competition for hydrocarbon resources and energy transit, the Strait Hormuz in the Persian Gulf also has doubled Iran's importance.

In addition to natural sources and geographical location, demographics regarding ethnic and religious diversity have revealed Iran's particular importance and sensitivity. This fact is not far from the view of regional and

1. Interview of Ebrahim Mohammadi, Vice President of Operation, Progress and Movement of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with IRIB news unit on August 6, 2017. Link: <https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/1750901/>

supra-regional powers (Taghavi Asl,2000:704). Before 1979, Iran was recognized as one of the U.S.'s primary and most powerful allies in the Middle East. Its economic, military, and political superiority made Iran a regional gendarme, moving in parallel with U.S. policies.

In the first years of the formation of the Islamic Revolution and the mischief of the United States against Iran, were cut diplomatic relations with the United States. Subsequently, the occupation of the United States embassy in Tehran by students following the Peyrow khatt-e Imam (line of the Imam) on November 4, 1979, known as the hostage crisis, created a wall of hostility and mistrust between Iran and the United States. Following this hostility, vital events such as the Tabas incident, known as Operation Eagle Claw (April 1980) aimed at freeing American hostages, the failed operation of the Noujeh coup (the Niqab coup) with the slogan of rescuing Greater Iran from the rule of the clergy by some of Air Force officers that took place in July 1980, deeply damaged relations between Iran and the United States.

The views of the hardline and fundamentalist faction in Iran have generally been based on distrust of the U.S. The main reason for this belief is the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War that took place in 1980. According to this perception, the U.S. intends to change the Islamic Republic regime at every opportunity. Therefore, it does not need to negotiate and resolve a common crisis.

Iran, which has had a bitter experience during the Iran-Iraq War, was deprived of the necessary defense capabilities to defend its territorial integrity. Because of this reason, now the country considers itself legitimate in implementing strategic policies to develop military technology. On the other hand, the vastness of water and land borders are also considered among the threatening factors.

Moreover, there are domestic problems in the country. Lack of armed forces facilities, lack of equipment and intelligent control systems in border systems in the face of threats, unemployment, growing poverty due to U.S. economic sanctions against Iran in recent years, terrorist operations by separatist groups, stimulating and encouraging of the opposition to rise against the government, the occurrence of widespread protests due to lack of civil liberties, high prices, lack of implementation of democratic principles can be mentioned as the most important ones. Cyberwarfare, media warfare, and propaganda against the Iranian Revolution's ideals are other threats that have added to the Islamic Republic's concerns.

Therefore, Iran considers itself exposed to all kinds of threats. The country's security and the establishment and enjoyment of the Islamic Republic's political, economic, military, safety, and territorial integrity are considered under threat. Particularly, Iran's security strategy against the U.S. geopolitical moves in West Asia has become more important than other parameters.

Of course, Iran's strategy to deal with security threats previously included the development of the air force, the strengthening of the ground force, and the development of the navy. However, all the mentioned factors pushed Iran towards a new security approach after the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Iran's new strategy has strengthened its defense infrastructure, developed military technology using nuclear capability, and improved the quantitative and qualitative production levels of short-range, medium-range, and long-range missiles. It is even necessary to pay attention to the production of ballistic missiles in this axis to understand the purpose of Iran's military strategy. These plans affect the country's domestic, regional, and international dimensions (Araghchi and Beik,2018: 99-124).

3. Iran's Defense Strategy and Defense Policy

The defense strategy is a reaction that results from the confrontation of the components of power, politics, and security. The defense strategy mobilizes national power to control the other side to the desired extent, using the armed forces' threat, indirect political pressure, and other conceivable means. In this way, it provides macro interests and goals for national security. Therefore, any national ability and capacity to defend the country must be considered in the context of defense strategy (Zohdi,2007:1-25).

In parallel with the defense strategy, defense policy states that military activities include developing and implementing necessary military programs and methods (Lider,1983:347). Defense policy results from military guidelines, military strategy, security policy, organizational policy, personnel policy, budget policy, disarmament and arms control policy, civil defense policy, and the military-non-military relationship (Murray and Viotti,1994:253).

Defense policy at the national level outlines the country's primary, key actions and military activities and is a framework that shapes the military strategy at the national level. Defense policy is designed and developed based on policies, processes, and programs. New military technology, the military's core mission, and traditional defense policy are three critical

components in coordinating defense policy. It informs the citizens about the change in the strategic environment and the emergence of a new threat to the country's security and draws a clear solution (McAllister Linn,2001:7).

In this connection, the understanding of Iran's defense strategy and defense policy requires a complex network of understanding external and internal factors, military and defense relations, issues related to military services, the impact of technology, and Iran's defense economy by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei that was approved in Defense- Military strategy vision document.

Although Iran has been subjected to the most severe sanctions and isolationist policies of the United States and its allies for many years, Iran's military-defense capabilities have been developing in recent years. Today, one of the essential features of Iran is its military capability. Armed Forces of the Republic of Iran include the army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the Iranian police. In the 1990s, the Iranian Ministry of Defense strength the helicopter, aircraft, and military industries and turned the country into one of the region's arms manufacturing hubs over the years. Consequently, now the Iranian Armed Forces are meeting all its needs ranging from mortar shells to heavy cannons, personnel carriers, tanks, and even airplanes and helicopters made in Iran.

Furthermore, Iran's military industry has reached a level of capability to produce guided missiles and various electronic equipment. In the last decade, Iran has made significant progress in the production of missiles with different ranges (Olson,2016:63-94).

4. Iran's Defense Diplomacy and Deterrence Strategy

Defense diplomacy in any country is based on the political and strategic traditions of that country. In the pre-World War II era, the diplomatic and strategic spheres were separate, and each complex had a specific task. This situation has changed in the new generation. On the one hand, the military plays a role in the political sphere. On the other hand, we see political groups, researchers, and academics in defense and strategic planning. Cooperation in these areas shows signs of organized interference. In other words, the spheres of protection can be considered as a reflection of the apparent link between the spheres of defense and diplomacy for security (Motaghi,2006:35-44).

Defense diplomacy promotes structural capabilities to achieve goals that create the necessary conditions for exercising power in an anarchic environment. Such a process should be considered part of the need to generate power in an environment that focuses on applying various institutional, strategic, and functional tools. Therefore, for defense diplomacy, there must first be power and then the ability to use force to influence the environment and the behavior of different actors in a compromise situation. Iran uses this method to advance its defense goals and develop its military infrastructure (Azghandi,2016:77).

Deterrence is a set of actions taken by one or a group of governments to protect strategic goals, interests, and values by preventing enemies or dissenters from harmful activities. This strategy requires the design of a comprehensive punishment system and the threat of using it in the event of a confrontation. In such a way, the cost of any offensive military action of the enemy increases their cost (Collins,1973:38).

5. In General, four Practical Models of Deterrence can be identified

A) Deterrence based on defense strategy. This model is only to defend and preserve the territorial integrity of the country. Military confrontation with the enemy is considered only in space-based or on territorial borders.

B) Deterrence based on the offensive strategy that this method tries to move mainly the playing field and the battlefield with the enemies to long distances from the territorial borders. Preventive operations are carried out to eliminate potential threats and, in some cases, military campaigns to overthrow incompatible political regimes.

C) Integrated deterrence, which results from a combination of attack and defense centered on offensive strategy. In this case, the country leaves the passive state of the first type. It conducts several cross-border operations outside its territory and intends to counter threatening elements. This method is not implemented directly and by attacking the military forces, but proxy forces are used.

D) Deterrence is an integral part of the defense strategy. In this case, the basis of deterrence is based on defense, and only occasional encounters take place outside the territorial boundaries against threatening elements.

For example, Japan's defense policy can be considered the first type. The George W. Bush administration's defense policy, especially after 9/11, can be regarded as the second type. The Democratic Party's strategy during the presidency of Obama or the policy of Iran using proxy forces in Syria, Iraq,

Yemen, etc., can be considered in the framework of the third type. Recent developments in the region and the activities of some armed groups with extremist ideologies and the emergence of terrorist groups such as ISIS, and the spread of offensive actions in cyberspace are among the issues that can be considered in the fourth type.

Iran also has considered this type of deterrence. The country has a tense atmosphere around it and has gained historical experiences from wars and conflicts with regional and trans-regional countries. The geopolitical and geostrategic situation, regional and trans-regional threats also led the Iranian political elite to feel that the regime's stability is under threat. Consequently, the country has adopted the fourth type of deterrence strategy and put it on its schedule (Gheysari and Khezri,2016:57-74).

Therefore, Iran's politico-military strategists have concluded that military power must be exercised to avert any potential and actual threats. Military force can control actors' behavior in both regional and extra-regional environments. Thus, despite the existence of the various U.S. military bases in Iran's neighboring countries, having a military force and a capability is itself a factor in Iran's approach to the nuclear and missile development system. Iran's decision-makers have reached the conclusion that the country can provide the necessary diplomacy for political, military, security, and even economic maneuvers by having military capability and defense power. Over more than 40 years of its political existence, the Islamic Republic of Iran still faces various political, economic, security and military threats and has been subject to economic sanctions or isolation in multiple periods. This fact leads to mistrust and seldom engagement among Iranian policymakers in optimistic political diplomacy in its relations with Western countries, especially with the U.S. and European countries. Iranian political officials believe that they have always felt exposed to severe internal and external threats. Some U.S. political officials' comments on the requirement of Iran's regime change have led to the reaction of high-ranking political leaders of Iran in the executive, judiciary, and legislature. These officials favor formulating strategic policies to defend the external and internal threats and dangers.

Iran's military and defense policy has been approved due to its geopolitical and geostrategic conditions along with the political system's values, historical tradition, international security environment, type of threats, the power structure in domestic politics, and military technology's possibilities

and potential. It was also approved by responsible institutions such as the Supreme National Security Council and Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran.

The 20-year vision document is another primary source of Iran's defense policy. The third paragraph of the vision document emphasizes that in 2025 Iran will be a secure, independent, rugged country with a defense system based on comprehensive deterrence. Therefore, it will not be wrong to argue that the perspective of Iran on the military-defense issue is based on the policy of deterrence. Deterrence can be described as the backbone and central focus of the Islamic Republic of Iran's defense policy (Eisenstadt, 2015:10). The defense clause in the strategic document of the 20-year vision focuses on the centrality of the concept of deterrence. Achieving extended deterrence requires the adoption of multifaceted and diverse models in the face of various threats (Negha-e Irani,2003).

6. Iran's Missile Technology as a Deterrent Mechanism

Iran's deterrence characteristics can be divided into two parts: a) traditional military deterrence b) missile deterrence. Conventional military deterrence includes flat defense (mosaic) options, using strategic allies' help, threatening the security of energy supply, asymmetric warfare, and suicide operations.

Iran's main priority has focused on conventional ballistic and naval missile capabilities as a regional power demonstration tool in recent years (Haghshenass,2008). Iran's missile programs' roots traced back to Iran's missile needs in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988. When Iraq attacked Iran with rockets, Iran could not be able to respond to these attacks due to global sanctions against the country. In consequence, the country secretly purchased the Scud missiles from Syria, North Korea, and Libya in an attempt to use them in the war and give a start to produce them (Mistry, 2007).

The point to be made about missile deterrence is that military weapons, especially ballistic missiles, have more of a psychological effect than a military one. Such equipment is considered to balance power with psychological damage and create a feeling of insecurity and horror on the other side. Iran's main strategy for developing missile technology and weapons is to access frightening weapons rather than deadly ones. In other words, Iran sees these weapons not as a means of aggression but as a tool of

deterrence to prevent others from any ill-considered action (Bagheri Dolatabadi,2013:37-87).

Iran launched several severe missile program projects in the late 1990s. For instance, strengthening the range and warhead of the Shahab 3 and Shahab 4 missiles is related to the satellite launch industry. The Shahab 3 missile range is between 1300 to 2000, and the Ashura missile is more than 2000 km (Mistry,2007). At present, with the acquisition of the Ashura missile, Iran has broadened its range almost to the Middle East from the Turkish Incirlik Air Base to Diego Garcia Air Base in the Indian Ocean, from Tel Aviv to the U.S. military bases in the Red Sea. On the other hand, although Iran has extensive experience in the missile industry, the country needs financial resources and time. Stating in different words, the country needs technology that requires foreign support.

By withdrawing from the so-called JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) nuclear deal, the Donald Trump administration pursued a significant goal in controlling Iran's missile technology. Trump described the talks on limiting Iran's missile activities as the primary condition for returning to the JCPOA agreement and lifting economic sanctions against Iran. Therefore, from the perspective of the U.S and Israel, the type of missile warhead structure made by Iran and their range in terms of distance is a serious threat to the U.S. allies' security in the region. In other words, the U.S. and its allies consider Iran's missile activities detrimental to regional and trans-regional security.

As a power in the current world hegemonic cycle, the U.S. has the most extensive military bases in the world. The U.S. military bases in Iran's vicinity are the visual axis of the U.S. military presence in the region, most of which reflect a credible understanding of geography's role and importance in the U.S. strategic discourse. The new security policies necessitated a comprehensive review of the U.S. military missions and tasks, especially in the face of threats to dissenting states and powers in areas and conflicts. The war on terror and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the aftermath of 9/11 resulted from the U.S. approach to the Middle East base-building process to protect and advance U.S. interests (Cox,2002:261-276).

On the other hand, Iran considers the U.S. military bases as the most important means of threatening itself and considers them a potential element in its national security instability. Therefore, in Iran's strategic field,

confronting the U.S. threats, the importance of developing military power and missile technology is considered inevitable. The U.S. military bases in the region can be a serious threat to Iran. For this reason, Iran considers the vulnerability of military bases as an element of the deterrence model.

Due to these reasons, Iran is growing steadily for improved missile guidance systems, strengthening its conventional warheads' lethality, and armed its missiles with nuclear warheads. Iran's family of artillery rockets and shorter-range missiles give Iran a broad mix of capabilities. Iran's shorter-range systems include a family of artillery rockets that supplement its tube artillery forces and provide a significant increase in area fire capability in range and fire volume. They could also compensate for Iran's limited close air support capability, particularly in a defensive mode. Furthermore, Iran is developing the ability to use GPS guidance for more extensive and long-range plans, significantly increasing its lethality.

Iran has shown that even short-range artillery rockets can have a strategic impact and be used in irregular warfare and indirect forms of power projection. For instance, Iran has played a significant role in helping Hamas. Also, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad creates a large pool of steadily improving rockets to conceal, disperse and fire against Israel. Israel cannot readily seek out the destruction of these missiles, even in the case of the land invasion. Instead, Israel has responded with defensive systems like Iron Dome and is developing strategies to deal with larger and longer-range rockets like David's Sling and improved Arrow versions. It has also steadily improved its IS & R capability, tactics, and training to use airstrikes and land raids to attack launch sites and missile storage facilities (Cordesman and et al, 2014).

Another concern for regional, European, and U.S. countries is the fear of a conflict between Iran and Israel. In its foreign policy, Iran has still not considered Israel a legitimate state. Instead, it is considered as an occupier and enemy of Muslims, especially the Palestinians. Since the beginning of the occupation of Palestine, Iran has been the major supporter of the Palestinian people.

Although both countries were strong allies during the Shah era, Iran and Israel now see each other as rivals for power and influence in the region. The Iranian regime sees Israel as a regional rival tending to weaken Iran's revolutionary system. On the other hand, Israel similarly sees Iran as its predominant security challenge, posing serious strategic and ideological

challenges to the Jewish state. Israel's concerns that Arab uprisings may be in Iran's favor and increase its regional influence have deepened Israel's warning, even if the reality of Iran's growing influence is widely questioned in the contemporary era.

The emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran in the future could increase the prospect of a direct-armed conflict between the two nations. Even if Iran does not intend to use nuclear weapons against Israel, miscalculation is possible with the escalation of regional crises. The lack of direct communication between the two countries could potentially lead to misinterpretation of signals and confusion about each actor's goals and red lines. Even those who are optimistic about Israel and Iran's ability to build a lasting nuclear deterrent may recognize that it is time-consuming to establish and stabilize such a relationship. Needless to say, that this transition period can be hazardous (Dalia and et al,2011).

The Islamic Republic's threat perception of Israel has been historically determined not through the direct rivalry between the two countries but by the enmity between Iran and the U.S. The regime views U.S. and Israeli interests in the Middle East, particularly regarding Iran, as nearly identical especially given the perception of Israel's influence in U.S. decision-making. The regime's conspiratorial and often anti-Semitic views of how the world works are primarily responsible for this perception (Sadjadpour, 2008). For instance, in his speeches, Ayatollah Khamenei conflates U.S. and Israeli interests regarding Iran and claims that the two are opposed to the "essence" of the Islamic Republic as a political system. He also claims that "Zionist think tanks" control U.S. policy toward Iran (Menashri,2007:153-167).

Moreover, the regime's top echelon, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, government elites, and senior Revolutionary Guards officers, believe that the U. S. is aiming to engage in "total" warfare against the Islamic Republic. Thus, it is believed that any U.S. policy towards Iran seeks to undermine Iran's revolution, the Islamic Republic's progress, and its resistance to U.S. domination of the Middle East. Unable to achieve regime change through military force alone, Iranian leaders view the U.S. as engaged in a velvet revolution to overthrow the regime. The perceived U.S. strategy includes sanctions, psychological and cultural warfare, and the fomenting of internal instability in Iran.

If the Iranian scenario of deterrence demonstrates its nuclear weapons capability, then Israel will face increasing pressure to move away from its ambiguous atomic position. For some, this shift to open nuclear doctrine is necessary to strengthen its deterrent credibility (Louis Rene Beres,2018:24-31).

In this respect, "The Dangers of a Nuclear Iran" indicates that the early stages of the Iran-Israel nuclear rivalry will be unstable (eia and Administration,2018). That is why Israeli and American military strategists ask what should be the reaction if Iran reacts and becomes nuclear? Insecurity from a nuclear Iran may raise fears in Israel. This is simply because a nuclear Iran, by crossing "red lines" in Israel's strategic psyche, is likely to undermine Israel's self-confidence. Iran's growing arsenal poses an existential threat to Israel (Maher,2020:1-20). In this respect, Israeli strategists may look to an apocalypse nuclear Iran. Furthermore, many Israelis believe that the end of Israel's atomic monopoly will end the country's final insurance policy and fundamentally weaken Israel's general deterrent status (Adamsky and et al,2011).

In addition to these issues, Iran's shift to missile development and the use of advanced capabilities have led the Israeli lobby, along with opponents of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the U.S. and Europe, to provide the basis for Iranophobia. They think and believe that Iran seeks to destabilize the region and the world toward nuclear and missile energy. That mainly the Persian Gulf's marginalized states are among the prominent supporters of Iranophobia in the field of nuclear and missiles due to their fear of the ideological effects of the Iranian revolution. As a result, international pressure on Iran to restrict arms activities and implement fragile and erosive sanctions has increased in recent years.

Although the U.S. and the E.U.'s economic and political sanctions since 2012, along with sanctions approved by the U.N. Security Council, have bent Iran's economy, Iran continues to develop its military weapons. During Donald Trump's presidency, the most stringent sanctions were imposed on Iran. The U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal "JCPOA" signed in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 group created challenging economic, political, and social conditions for Iran. Also, it paved the way for public protests in Iran against Hassan Rouhani's government (İşıksal and Golkarian,2019:416-432). Nevertheless, the Iranian government has not backed down from its decision, and it has even enriched uranium above

20% to force the U.S. to return to a nuclear deal. Iran's expectation from the Joe Biden government is that the U.S. will return to the nuclear deal, lift sanctions, and end the mistrust between Iran and the U.S., so that Iran can live up to its commitments.

Having said this, Iran has always claimed that it has the right to use and develop military weapons like other countries in the world. From Iran's perspective, nuclear development aims to enjoy its facilities and technology in the scientific and technical fields. Nevertheless, as have discussed in depth above, the main aim of the missile capability is based on a deterrent strategy of the country.

7. Conclusion

At the core of Iran's nuclear and missile, programs are the U.S. and Iran's irreconcilable interests in the Middle East. Over the past four decades, US-Iranian relations' diverse and problematic features show that a high wall of mistrust has been created between the two countries, and resolving the issue does not seem promising.

Although it is not clear to what extent Iran will achieve its goals by developing its missile technology, this need stems from Iran's need for security, strengthening the regime's legitimacy within the country, and increasing its influence in the region. Unless Iran finds itself immune to threats and ensures that the various U.S. governments do not seek regime change in Iran, it is unlikely that it will stop developing its missile capabilities.

On the other hand, the U.S. administration puts forward that putting pressure and isolation on Iran for energy security, terrorism prevention, proliferation, and Israel security is essential to maintain the security of the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East.

Iran's approach to nuclear negotiations from 2003 until today and the statements of Iranian officials during the transition period from Donald Trump to Joe Biden show that Iran's ultimate goal is not to produce nuclear weapons or missiles. Instead, Iran has decided to achieve the technical capability to produce fissile material for missiles. This strategy is considered as bargaining and consolidating power in political-security equations, as well as promoting hegemony and ending international isolation against the country. In this way, Iran can be an important player in the balance of power in the region and influence the developments beyond the region.

Iran's current efforts to develop nuclear and missile technology have balanced Iran's role in the Middle East and put the country into a more secure environment against external threats. In this way, Iranian policymakers hope that they can bring the U.S. back to the negotiation table. The Obama administration had assured the Islamic Republic of Iran that it had no intention of regime change and that this advantageous position needed to be maintained during Biden's presidency. This is also could lead Iran to cooperate with the international community.

Arguably, enmity with Iran over four decades has proven that external pressures not weakened but increase the solidarity around the regime in the country. In this connection, Iran is an essential country for maintaining sustainable peace in the region. Therefore, the attempts to isolate the country or change the regime may be backfired to further political crises instead of resolving them.

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