

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

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Abstract

U.S foreign policy towards Iran has been so uncertain and variable since the beginning of this relation, but alongside of the fluctuation, some kind of consistency is distinguishable. Until the 1979, Islamic revolution Iranian people played a major role in the American anti-communism strategy in the Middle East. The U.S. grand strategy was based on its confrontation with the USSR, and Iran was the key for controlling the Middle East. The process of underpinning Iran's power as a liberal alliance in the region was the core idea in American consideration towards Iran. After the 1979 revolution, -Iran as a regional actor, had changed its priority and no longer identified itself in the western coalition, based on American foreign policy. On the other hand, America also changed its identification of Iran as a friend and started to demonize Iran's role in the Middle East and the world. Envisaging these trends, this very fundamental and important question will appear in the minds that: Did America have a turning point in its foreign policy towards Iran after the 1979 revolution, or was the principle of its foreign policy steady or tactical change occurred? In order to answer this question, this article going to examine the history of the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran, particularly during the post-revolutionary period. This analysis will be carried out according to the Copenhagen school definition of security and securitization. This theoretical framework brought us a comprehensive understanding of security and also a relative, useful categorization of security strategy in foreign policy. Different methodological manners could be used in this framework, but in this research I have used the discourse analysis method to explore the subject of research. The conclusion of the research shows us that the American strategy towards Iran contains both permanent and variable factors, but the permanent element was the key and variable change just occurred on the tactical level. The U.S foreign policy basically was oriented to securitize Iran, but the world system, regional phenomenon and national incident made it vibrant. It means that after the Islamic revolution of Iran, America continuously tried persuading to securitize

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Iran, but before the Cold War its securitization was low-securitization and after the Cold War it became the hyper-securitization

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

1. Introduction

Foreign policy is one of the most controversial issues in international relations and political science. Understanding the main goal and true strategy of foreign policy of each country, despite the different declarations of their official and ostensible goals that they claim as the main purpose of the political schools including political science, international relations, geopolitics and etc. America, like other countries could be seen as an actor of international relations that targets various objects in its foreign policy in each administration, but always identifies a grand national interest for itself which almost shapes its grand strategy towards key issues.

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

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

As a matter of fact, Iran-U.S. relations is a two side issue, but in this research, the American side of this relation will only be explored. Hence, in this survey of U.S. foreign policy we should conduct the research with a

theory, which can simultaneously cover foreign policy and international relations. Different epistemological schools appeared at the end of the 20th century that had brought the discussion of research methodology into a pluralistic sphere. Security was no longer just a military or a political concept based on the "Balance of powers", "Deterrence", "peaceful coexistence" and "collective security", but has entered a comprehensive scale (UN Report for Secretary General, 1986: 4-14). Among the theories of security, some of the realist and a small part of liberal theories or a range of post-structural theories could be used for the research title, but they are not suitable to explain the procedure of securitizing Iran in U.S. foreign policy because of two reasons. First, most of these theories are just based on their positivistic presupposition and look at the concept of security as simply a high politics subject, which limits the security to the military affairs, but the Copenhagen School is a branch of security studies, which defines security as the multidimensional concept between sub-national, national and international levels. These post-Cold War theorists of international relations used the structural theories to define the concept of security and merge them with the international need to a new definition of security after the Cold War, and created the concept of "societal security".(Lippmann, 1943: 51 Cited in Ayoob,1977:127)

The second reason that makes the Copenhagen School views appropriate for this research is that securitization is neither a structural view to the concept of security nor a post-structural understanding of security, but rather a combination of both together, nor the use of both as an advantage. The Copenhagen School and its understanding of security is based on the constructivist epistemology where different elements of structural analysis will appear in its conceptualization. Concepts like idea, identity, linguistic move, speech acts are the key factors for framing security. At the epistemological level, this school will look at security as a subjective concept, and then it will focus on people's minds and the way that they

formulate main concepts of security. In order to do this important job, Copenhagen School scholars not only use the nation-state level but they also use both domestic level and international level. The following graph will explain this idea and the layers of securitization (Buzan,1998:21).

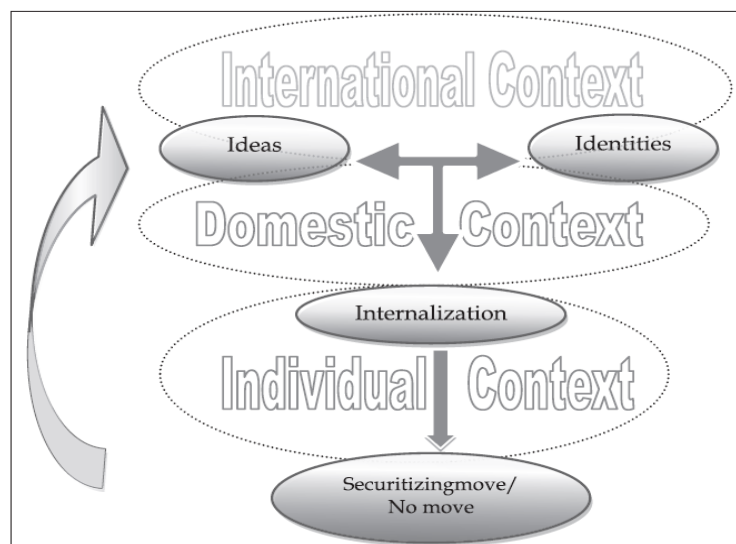


Figure 1. Threat construction framework.

Because of these, it seems that securitization in the most proper theoretical framework to understanding the American foreign policy toward the Iran since the 1979 to the 2015. Because during this period of time both the international system and the American government administration experienced change, but the process of securitization was consistent. Here the theoretical scope of the securitization and the research methodology that has been used will be explained. Then the application of the theory on this period of time will be discussed. Ultimately, a new model for analysis of American foreign policy towards Iran in the post 1979 revolution era will be proposed.

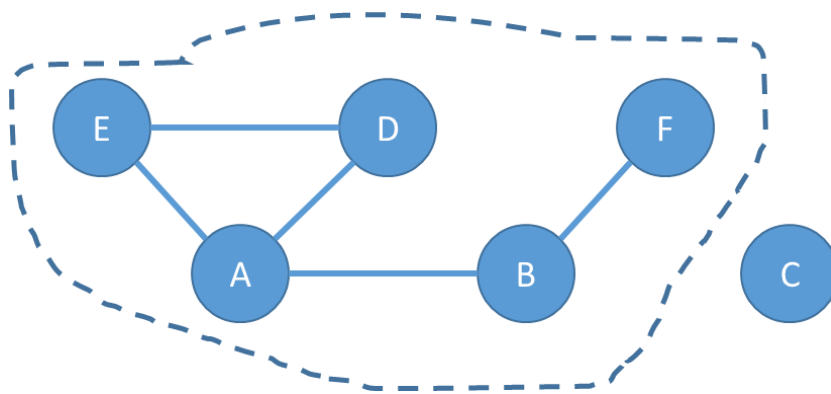
2. Methodology

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

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

In addition to the theoretical level, discourse analysis could be seen as a research method, so this research method will be used for analysis as well as for looking at securitization as discourse. In this research method, a focal point with a different signifier shapes the discourse as the meaning system in which all phenomena are considered as signs and all signs simply demonstrate the main focal point. In discourse analysis, truth or false of the

focal point is not an issue, the important matter is forming a system of meaning. The following picture will show how the relation between E and D is supported by linkage between A, B, and F as a signifier and a meaning system is created, and C has been neglected.



3. Theoretical Framework

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

3-1. Beginning of Copenhagen School

Bill McSweeney titled Buzan and Waever's work as the Copenhagen School. They had been working on a new model of security studies at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) in the 1980s. During that time, they shifted away from post structuralism and began their attempt to introduce a new framework for international relations, so they started to

work on security as the main concept of international relations. Especially after the Cold War, this issue became one of the most challenging concerns; the fact that they should be loyal to the structural definition of security in the post-Cold War era.

3-2. Comprehensive security

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

In continuation of Buzan’s comprehensive security, Waever argued that security is not an existing reality in the real world, and that this concept is constructed by elites in international politics. He believes that articulation of security into the political institutions is a way through which elites can have influence in world politics (Buzan, 1995:7).

Waever borrowed comprehensive security from Buzan’s works and linked it to the linguistic game, which plays a major role in the securitization. At the academic level, Waever created a link between comprehensive security and social discourse. He looks at the new framework of security through the discursive lens.

3-3. Securitization

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

In Copenhagen School words, securitization is the illocutionary speech act that makes something a security issue by uttering it or what Waever argued:

“It is by labelling something a security issue that it becomes one” (Wæver 2004: 13). After the creation of a threat, the securitizing actor will request an extraordinary instrument to deal with the constructed threat. In fact, the main goal of Copenhagen School is about the exaggeration of a threat to survival level. By envisaging these, securitization process includes three main steps.

(1) Identification of existential threats.

(2) Emergency action.

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

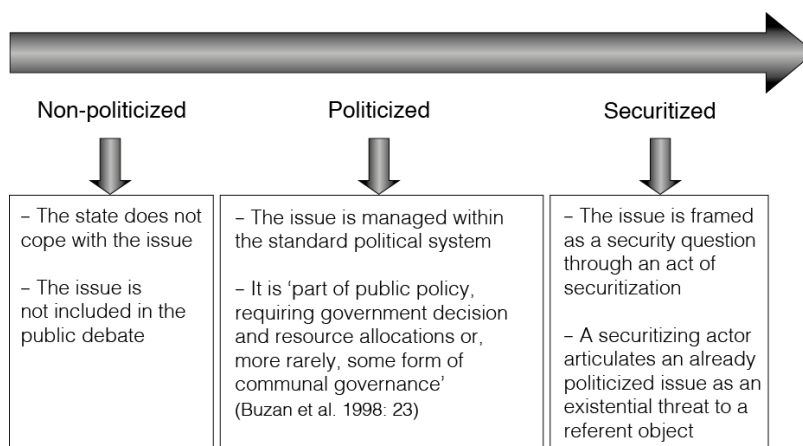
The Speech Act and illocutionary action that the Copenhagen School and mainly Wæver argued for is intertwined with all steps especially with the first step. In fact, identification of a threat is the essence of making a politicized condition from a normal situation. In the first step, perhaps something implied to the threat but the existential level of threat is constructed by the speech acts. Then we can name the first step of securitization as the most important and basic level of the whole process of securitization, because the other steps of securitization is based on the understanding of an existential threat. If such threat exists, no emergency action is needed.

To do this important job in the securitization process according to the speech act theory, facilitating conditions prepares the context for different audiences to accept the particular threat as the existential threat. Mechanism for facilitating conditions may change in different cases, but normally it includes the style of speech act that the actor uses, historical background of the “threat” and the level of credibility of the speaker. At the end of this level, different audiences should accept the threat as a threat to survival to move the subject to the realm of emergency act. The second level of this process is related to the manner that international actors should adapt to deal with the “existential” threat. If the first step is carried out successfully,

international actors will be faced with a survival threat. Then no ordinary action will be enough to keep those threats a far, Hence an emergency act will plan an emergency condition to react to the constructed threat. In many analyses, reaction in emergency condition is tightly linked with the preparation of military action to prevent the existential threat. This step and the next step of securitization process is inspired by Schmitt’s “The Political”.

The third step of successful securitization is almost the conclusion of the two previous steps. After those levels including the finalization and implementation of emergency action, the last move take place as normal regulation of international relations will be neglected and the exceptional conditions implemented (Aradau 2001).

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



4. Finding

In order to understand how the theory and research method have been applied to the U.S foreign policy since 1979, we have to know when did the focal point of U.S. foreign policy towards Iran change. So a very brief background of Iran-U. S relations is needed to find out when and why did Iran's role in America's grand strategy change and when did the securitization of Iran become the American foreign policy agenda. In fact, securitization just targets the enemies and securitization of friends or rival is meaningless, so for understanding the process of U.S. foreign policy about Iran, history of the relationship is important.

4-1. Context of securitization

4-1-1. Beginning till the 1953

When looking at the relation between Iran and the United States of America, it seems that the first diplomatic, formal contact between the two countries was shaped in 1856 by the treaty of "friendship and commerce", when Samuel Benjamin was selected as the first American ambassador to Tehran and as Haj Hussein Qoli Khan became the first Iranian official in Washington 5 years later. In that period of time, Iran looked at the United States as the foreign power that can balance against the British and Ottoman Empires. The subject of the first agreement between the two countries shows us that Iranians had been seeking a new window through the United States to the "New World". Because Iran had no colonial experience with U.S, the primary view of the US was positive. This image was consolidated by the death of Howard Baskerville who was a teacher in Tabriz. During the internal conflicts between the constitutionalists and royalists in Iran, he played as a constitutionalist and was killed by Mohammad Ali Shah's forces. This death made him a hero for Iranian democracy. But the trajectory of relations didn't continue down this road and the future actions of the U.S changed the rules (Bernstein,2007).

During the two World Wars, the U.S and Iran had never been closer to each other, but the honeymoon between them soon came to an end when the United State undermined Iranian independent democracy by conducting a coup against

Mohammad Mossadegh, the democratic elected Prime Minister of Iran. The first crisis in Iran-U.S. relations began with the Iranian oil crisis and the U.S role in the coup (Behestani and Shahidani, 2015: 2-3).

4-1-2. 1953 till the 1979

After the coup and the restoration of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's dictatorship, Iran-U.S. relations flourished in the different political, military and economical fields. In this period of time, the U.S looked at Iran as the most important non-Arab alliance in the Middle East, and perhaps the most important partner in the Middle East. On the other hand, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi considered America as the most important international supporter of his rule. Perhaps Britain was the key for the 1953 coup, but the United State was the winner in Iran and little by little, it replaced British. Between 1953-1979 Iran was a unique partner for the United States of America and played a major role in America's Middle Eastern foreign policy. First in the 1955, Iran joined the military-economic treaty called CENTO, which was one of the West's provisions for containing the USSR (Presidential Research etc, 2003: 6-25).

American foreign policy toward Iran between 1953 and 1979 was part of its grand strategy across the world, which was the "containment policy" and Iran was a regional player for that grand strategy in the Middle East. Hence, America looked at Iran as the most important country block the interpretation of communism in this region. This was the U.S. policy towards Iran during the Kennedy and Johnson era. When Kennedy became president, he introduced himself as a proponent of liberty and human rights, two traits the shah of Iran clearly did not have (Donan, 1974: 84). "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty" (Kennedy, 1961) Hence, based on such language, it seemed that Iran-U.S relation should have deteriorated but they didn't

4-1-3. Carter before the revolution

Conveys sent from Tehran to Washington can be the best way to understanding

the importance of Iran for the U.S. In this analysis, Iran's six main benefits for United States of America are listed:

1. Iran could be a responsible ally in the Middle East and it has the ability and willingness.
2. Iran's ties with the U.S. were warm, friendly and deep-rooted.
3. Iran was a stable and important source of energy especially oil resources.
4. Iran had a growing market for American goods and services in both the civilian and military aspect.
5. Iran is an essential air corridor between Europe and the South and East Asia (Murrey,2010:18-20).

Iran allowed U.S. intelligence to use its territory for operations and facilitates the way for special communication between the two countries. The Pre-Carter history of Iran-U.S relation could be seen as the peak of this relationship, which includes American concern about Iran, its stability, friendship and its role in the region. If there is one reason for U.S concern it was that the Shah had a great amount of petro dollar and felt more independent of America: The world petroleum story is one of the most inhumane stories known to man: in it, moral and social elementary principles are jeered at. If powerful oil trusts no longer plunder and humiliate our country, it is not because these predators have become human, but because we have won a hard-fought battle, which has been going on since the beginning of the century. If you remain our friends, obviously you will enjoy all the power and prestige of my country. But if you try to take an unfriendly attitude toward my country, we can hurt you as badly if not more so than you can hurt us. Not just through oil - we can create trouble for you in the region. If you force us to change our friendly attitude, the repercussions will be immeasurable.(Pahlavi, 1980: 59)

Carter also kept the previous agenda for the sale of military weapons to Iran and encouraged the Shah to continue arm purchases from his country. This part of Carter's policy towards Iran was an internal matter for the U.S, because after the end of the Vietnam War and signing the SALT treaty with the Soviet Union, a

large number of American Jobs were lost. Around 700,000 people were involved in the arms industry and half of them were somehow related to Iran's purchases. Through a Keynesian political economy perspective, arms sales to Iran were necessary for America, and this trend continued. American investment in the oil industry was also so important and beneficiary for the U.S America's oil companies gained 100% profit in exchange for investment in the Iran oil industry (Behestani & Shahidani, 2015:8-12).

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

4-2. Securitization of Iran

As I mentioned in the theoretical framework, all of the securitization process is an attempt to simulate the enemy as an existential threat for its own people and other nations. During the process, the securitizing actors Speech Acts to make its target a security issue. In fact, securitization is largely a discourse of threats not a real threat and the focal point in the securitization of Iran is that "Iran is a threat for america and the world".

4-2-1. Carter and hostage crisis

In the last year of Carter's era, a very important incident changed the direction of American foreign policy towards Iran from friendship to enmity, and that was the hostage crisis. After the crisis, American policy towards Iran was neither friendly like in the past nor neutral, and a paradigm shift had happen in the Iran-U.S. relations.

Political and military securitization: Carter ran the Rose Garden strategy to handle the crisis for America. In this strategy, Carter simultaneously put limitation on travel to Iran, sent an envoy to Iran and proposed negotiations with the Iranian revolutionary leader, blocked Iran's foreign assets and even threatened Iran with bombing. This was the beginning of the new American policy towards Iran, and a clear face of securitization. In this discourse, Iran became a symbol of threat. "I guarantee that if asked the people of plains what I should do, every last one of them would say "BOOMB IRAN".....I've got to keep a lid on their emotion....if they can perceive me as firm and though in voicing their rage, maybe we'll be able to control this thing" (Murray, 2010:25).

Alongside the diplomatic pressure, Carter conducted a program to control the news of the hostages in the media. As a last effort, he launched operation Eagle Claw, to rescue the hostages through the Delta Force unit in April 1980. However, the operation failed because of a sandstorm. The crisis lasted until the 1981, when Reagan become as the U.S president.

The following statement by Carter showed how the language had changed since the crisis: 50 Americans are still held captive, innocent victims of terrorism and anarchy. to enlist the help of other nations in condemning this act of violence, which is shocking and violates the moral and the legal standards of a civilized world; and also to convince and to persuade the Iranian leaders that the real danger to their nation lies in the north, in the Soviet Union and from the Soviet troops now in Afghanistan, and that the unwarranted Iranian quarrel with the United States hampers their response to this far greater danger to them (Carter,1980).

Economical securitization: On the other hand, Carter put sanctions on all goods

except food and medicine to Iran, during his presidency (Executive order 12211, 1980). In fact, Carter's reaction to the hostage crises was relatively passive because first of all, Washington was shocked by Iran's revolution and the crisis. Secondly, Carter believed that any significant military action against Iran could endanger American grand interests in the region because of Communism. Back there, Iran had long borders with the USSR, not to mention that the USSR invaded Afghanistan. So Carter thought that the cost of every military action against Iran would be high and would bolster Iranian communism, which would turn Iran to the USSR and that would be a greater loss for America.

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

When Reagan took office, his foreign policy was firmly based on Cold War conditions and his view of Iran was influenced by the Cold War. In the first days of Reagan's presidency, Iran released the American hostages. Therefore, the U.S. in Reagan's era had no excuse to be hostile toward Iran and on the other hand, he needed to work with Iran because of the Cold War necessities. But according to evidences, he continued the discourse of securitization of Iran while he negotiated with this country. In fact, Reagan's team for foreign policy envisaged two regional and international factors in the securitization of Iran (Scott, 1996:19). Political and military securitization: In the Reagan era, the U.S. administration continued the Carter policy to securitize Iran and feared Iran's revolutionary role in the Middle East. Accordingly, Reagan continued to threaten Iran even while negotiating with this country. The process of securitization of Iran also persuaded by process of weakening Iran. In this manner, the American State Department removed Iraq from its list of terrorism sponsors in 1982. It also nominated Iran as the sponsor of terrorism in the incident of American hostages in Beirut. The Reagan administration also linked the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut to Hezbollah and Iran. In addition to these facts, Reagan linked the bombing of the Marines barracks in Beirut to Iran and Hezbollah (Levit, 2013). During Reagan's presidency, international arms embargo on Iran was continued and documented and it put Iran on the list of sponsors of terrorism. Another reason for the

embargo was that the U.S. Feared the threat of Iran permitting Kuwaiti ships to re-flag and actively retaliate to the threat imposed on Iran and near itself to the Iran-Iraq war. In the Reagan era, even America was ready to attack Iran with arms and even targeted Iranian airplane and killed about 300 passengers as proof of its strategy in the Middle East (Murray, 2010:69).

Economical securitization: Reagan securitization was not seen only in the political or military affairs, but also in the economic matters. In 1988, Reagan signed the executive order number 12613 and prohibited all imports from Iran, adding 14 broad categories of dual-used items to the list of proscribed exports. In addition to this, Reagan approved all of the previous sanctions that Carter had imposed on Iran (Executive order 12613, 1988).

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

During the Bush (the senior) presidency, U.S. relations with Iran were facing two main issues. The first issue was related to the end of the Cold war and the collapse of the USSR, while the second issue concerning U.S. foreign policy was about waging a war against Iraq and launching the Desert Storm Operation to remove Iraq from Kuwait. These international and regional factors deeply affected U.S foreign policy towards Iran, but facts show a continuity in the process of securitizing Iran. The Bush policy of securitizing Iran faced an intervening variable, which brought about a change in its implementation.

Political and military securitization: When Bush took office, the United States was faced with the hostage crisis in Lebanon; this led Bush to turn to Iran to solve the problem. Consequently, the first position of Bush towards Iran was positive. There are today Americans who are held against their will in foreign lands, and Americans who are unaccounted for. "Assistance can be shown here, and will be long remembered. Good will begets good will. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on". (Bush, 1989)

Yet this phenomenon did not change the grand strategy of securitization of Iran; even during the process of easing relations with Iran, the key phrase of the Bush administration was Iran is a "threat". Bush, Scowcroft and Baker sought to set a

policy to control the Iranian threat towards U.S interests in the Middle East, in addition to liberating their hostages in Lebanon. (Murray, 2010:75). At the time, the U.S. unfroze just 567 million dollars of Iranian foreign assets as an incentive for the freedom of Americans in Lebanon (Friedman,1983). Analysts believe that the U.S. foreign policy in that period of time was based on the assumption that Iran had the key to releasing Americans in Lebanon.

Less than six months after the freedom of American hostages in Lebanon, the U.S. rapidly went back to the process of securitizing Iran. In October 1991, the National Intelligence Community argued that Iran was loyal to its revolutionary values, which makes this country ambitious and in contrary to American values in the Middle East. This report concludes that Iran will not be reliable and ready to have relations with the U.S. and that it is still considered as a threat for the American national interests in the Middle East. It also considered Iran as the main supporter of terrorism and anti-Israeli groups in the Middle East; and that it was a conflict with, which will violate human rights in the future. (National Intelligence Community Report on Iran, 1991: 20-24)

This report played a major role in bringing back the old method of securitization as Iran lost its strategic position for the U.S within the context of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, other fields of securitization were created for Iran. In 1992, the CIA director told Congress that Iran was trying to purchase nuclear and missile technologies and equipment from the republics of the former Soviet and was also seeking to establish links with the source of nuclear and missile power in Asia(China and North Korea).(Gates,1992: 12-13)

At other levels, Americans had a bad feeling about the six Muslim republic states that are close to Iran's borders. The U.S. feared that Iran's revolutionary values would gain a foothold in these countries so an ideological threat was assigned to Iran. On the other hand, Iran enhanced its nuclear relations with Russia, and this made the U.S. very sensitive about the Iran (Gates, 1992: 12-19). In 1992, Iran was accused of assassinating separatist Kurdish militants in Berlin and the

U.S. responded with an international campaign against Iran by banning the sale of dual-use items to the country. In this context, U.S officials argued that Iran posed a clear and present threat to regional security as well as to their shared political and strategic interests. The U.S. accused Iran of having seized (illegally) three islands in the Persian Gulf and to have helped the Bosnian Muslims and considered these as signs of Iranian ambitions and its revolutionary mood. (Murray, 2010: 87-88). During the Bush period, Iran was also securitized with “human rights”. Imam Khomeini’s Fatwa about killing Salman Rushdie, Iranian human rights conditions and a host of other human rights issues like women’s rights, minority rights, etc. were the subject for American securitization.

Economic securitization: Beside these, in 1992, the U.S Congress passed the most restrictive economic legislation against Iran under the subject of the Iran-Iraq Non-Proliferation Act and also supported the terrorist group called the Mujahedeen Khalgh. During this period, the U.S. government also confirmed previous economic and political laws and presidential executive orders. In fact, America looked at economic sanctions as a preventive mechanism for Iranian economy and all of these actions were based on the grand concept of Iran being a threat to the United States of America. (Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act, 1992).

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

There are two levels for the securitization of Iran in U.S. foreign policy. The first level is the period of time from 1979 till 1992, while the second level of securitization of Iran began from 1992 until 2013. According to the categorization of this research, under Clinton’s presidency “high securitization” begins due to the lack of an international variable (collapse of USSR presence) and with the new international order based on U.S hegemony. Besides, the trend in which the Middle East was becoming more and more important, Iran became the target of the strongest efforts for securitization than ever before. Here, we can identify political, military and economic securitization as the most important trends the U.S. pursued under the Clinton, Bush (the junior) and Obama

administrations. With these considerations for U.S foreign policy, Clinton administrates the Dual containment policy which was aimed at imposing a new degree of limitations on Iran as a perceived threat for U.S. interests in the Middle East. (Indyk, 1993)

Political and Military securitization: The Clinton Doctrine for foreign policy in both, the eastern and western part of this region (Israel and Arab peace talks), are tightly linked with Iran. Iran during Clinton's presidency was a big problem for U.S. interests in the region. In addition to these direct foreign policy interests, because of Clinton's grand strategy to boost the U.S economy, the U.S. benefited by introducing Iran as a regional threat in order to sell arms to the countries in the region. As a first step, Warren Christopher, the Secretary of State branded Iran as an "Out Law" country that tried to block the peace process and wanted to drive Americans out of the Persian Gulf. In addition to this, different reports began to label Iran as a country that imports missiles from North Korea, Block neighbors, seeks WMDs and breaches the UN sanctions. (Jehl,1993)

It's clear that the U.S began a new level of securitization of Iran following the Dual Containment policy as mentioned earlier. The Scenario of securitizing Iran had been deeply upgraded and the American administration argued that Iran should be contained for a host of reasons, and that the comprehensive sanctions and arms embargo must be supported by the use of force if needed.(Pollack,2004: 263-269)

Bruce O. Riedel believed that Clinton did nothing about Iran despite the positive atmosphere in Iran after Khatami's presidency he continued to repeat unproved suspicions that heavily affected his policy towards Iran. In 1993, William Jefferson Clinton inherited almost 15 years of troubled relations with Iran, impeded by the lack of diplomatic ties, deep animosity on both sides and layers of sanctions. He left office in 2001 with no breakthrough in relation. This shift happened despite Iran's suspected involvement in the 1996 attack on the U.S. barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. But the terror attack heavily influenced U.S. policy towards Iran in the Clinton years. (Riedel,2010: 139)

In 1998, the U.S. claimed that they obtained “evidence” that revealed Iran’s “proxy”, Hezbollah, responsible for the Khobar bombing, but evidence was never published or proved by U.S officials and even Clinton asked Khatami for an investigation on the attack. During the Khatami presidency, Clinton had a weak intention to hold talks with Iran, but it never became a serious plan. Even his secretary of State, Albright, who prepared a roadmap to rebuild relations with Iran, called the country a “rogue state”. She argued that cooperation with rogue states is one of the greatest challenges for the U.S., and she believed that such states work to destroy the international order. She stressed that Iran is a prime example of a rogue state.(Albright,1997)

During this period, U.S. officials also continued to accuse Iran of possessing a WMD program and reported that Iran has gathered enough material to build a missile system, which would target U.S. soil. (Risen,2000). Hence during the Clinton’s presidency the process of political and military securitization of Iran was not only heightened, but also the U.S. focused on new areas of conflict that had not been seriously p before.

Economic securitization: In the field of economic sanctions, Clinton did much more than the three previous presidents. In 1995, Clinton signed the most important Executive Order for economic sanctions that the United States had ever imposed on Iran and blocked the Conoco-Iran oil deal which was worth about one billion dollars. Subsequently, Clinton imposed another comprehensive investment and trade embargo on Iran, which was unprecedented in U.S foreign policy towards Iran. In 1998, Clinton initiated another set of sanctions against Gazprom and Petronas companies for dealing with Iran, and argued that for the sake of fighting against funding of terrorism, Iran should be economically contained (Clinton, 1995) In fact, the game of sanctioning Iran during the Clinton administration was a form of competition between U.S. Congressmen and Clinton to win AIPAC’s support. After the Cold War, the U.S. had no systematic considerations for containing Iran, and AIPAC realized this very well and seized the opportunity to undermine Iran. In response to Iran’s stepped up nuclear

program and its alleged support for so called terrorist organizations such as Hizbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, president Clinton issued Executive Order 12959 (on May 6, 1995), banning U.S. investment in Iran and trade with it (Katzman,2007: 2). In the economic field, Clinton began a trend of using sanctions as a means for the securitization of Iran, and made a link between the Iranian economy and terrorism. In fact, in this, Clinton opened a new chapter in U.S foreign policy towards Iran.

4-2-5. Bush and axis of evil

In political literature, George W Bush is well known as the model of neo-conservatism in foreign policy, which is heavily based on real-politick and the use of power in promoting liberal values. Bush's foreign diplomacy was also accepted as a heroic part of American foreign policy, which performed unilateralism. With these features of neo-conservatism, Bush took office and after the sept.11 2000 began to wage two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the two neighbors of Iran, and planned to wage the third war against Iran. Securitization under the Bush presidency was a continuation of Clinton's efforts but with more reliance on military threats and multilateral means.

Political and military securitization: In the first years of the Bush presidency, Richard Hass became the person who planned for Iran. He argued that the sanctions regime should continue and the U.S. should help reformists in Iran. But after 9/11, the another face of American foreign policy was revealed. (Frum, 2003:238). After the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. started dealing with Iran differently American foreign policy (wars) in the Middle East shaped the new U.S. relations with Iran. Iran was seen as a rogue state and a supporter of terrorism, and the new title for American foreign policy was War on Terror. (Bush, 2001). From 2001 to 2006, Iran was not top priority for the U.S in the Middle East and Iran had some capabilities that could potentially help the U.S. fight the Taliban and in Iraq. But after that Iran became the subject of a bureaucratic challenge within the Bush administration, which led Bush to call Iran a central component of an "Axis of Evil".

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

In this speech, Bush had mainly targeted Iraq but Iran was also included and was considered a sponsor of terrorism and part of the Axis of Evil. Bush argued that Iran is the biggest threat for world peace and encouraged the world to accept this perception. Despite Iran's cooperation in the war against the Taliban, it became a high profile enemy for the United States. Iran's nuclear energy program was another part of the U.S. securitization effort and the U.S. thought that Iran's help in Afghanistan and Iraq was leverage for the nuclear talks and didn't consider it as a sign of cooperation.

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

As with previous American administrations, Iran rejected this claim and declared that it is ready to talk about its nuclear issue. It accepted to voluntarily execute the Additional Protocol and suspend its nuclear enrichment. But after the presidential elections of 2004 in Iran and in protest to the concession given in the previous talks, Iran started to enrich uranium which put it back into the process of future securitization. In 2004, Rice argued that Iran passed the phase of being an authoritarian regime and had become a totalitarian regime (Hiro, 2005:367). The U.S. desperately needed information about Iran to understand the Iranian WMD

capability, but it did not possess such information. Reports implied that Iran needed a decade to produce nuclear weapons but not real evidence existed. Never the less U.S concerns about Iran's nuclear activity remained. After the war in Iraq, the U.S. used economic sanctions as a means to demonize Iran's nuclear activity.

Support for terrorism had always been a subject of securitization of Iran and under the Bush presidency, this means was still being used. In fact after the Iraq war, the U.S. claimed that Iran gave Iraqi tribes [both Sunni and Shia] IEDs¹ to kill American soldiers and it also denounced the Hezbollah's 2006 war with Israel. It was very critical of what Iran did to help Hezbollah or to "trigger" the war, but no fact or verified reports were published. In this context, most of the Bush administration team believed that no contact should take place between the U.S. and Iran, because Iran's "terrorist network", which extends from Iran and Syria to Lebanon and Palestine was threatening U.S. interests in the Middle East as well as world peace. Bush argued that nations across the world have to take an "unequivocal moral stand" against "terrorism"; he said that UN members too often decried terrorist actions right after they took place, instead of preventing them from happening in the first place. While a few "regimes" like Syria and Iran continued to sponsor terror, they were growing more isolated, he claimed. (Bush, 2008)

Economic securitization: this part of securitization also played a major role in the process of the securitization of Iran, but because of the wide extent of military and political securitization, it seemed to be less important. The foundation for the crippling sanctions Obama imposed on Iran were built by the Bush administration since 2006. In fact, after the failure of the nuclear talks with Iran, Bush planned to use sanctions as a means to pressure Iran. UN Security Council resolutions number 1696(2006),1737(2006),1747(2007), 1835(2008) were part of the Bush plan for the securitization of Iran which mainly focused on the suspension of nuclear enrichment. After 2008, Obama, continued to build the

¹ Improvised Explosive Device

sanctions regime against Iran.

During this period, economic sanctions were still being imposed on Iran; the similar to previous administrations. Iran was associated with terror, destabilization, and attempt to obtain weapons of mass destruction. Under President George W. Bush, the United States repeatedly froze assets of people, groups, or businesses identified as helping Iran sponsoring “terrorism”, “destabilizing” Iraq, or working on weapons programs. The U.S. also froze the assets of foreign entities believed to be helping Iran in those areas.(Jones,2012)

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

Obama’s foreign policy towards Iran has been controversial since 2008. First, he stated that his administration is ready to talk to Iran, but despite the rhetoric, he continued to focused on all securitization fields that the United States had previously used and strengthened the discourse of Iran as a threat. It can be argued that his attempt at securitization were more effective than what other presidents had done. Indeed, Obama’s foreign policy towards Iran could be understood as an example of the usage of Smart Power in securitization; he simultaneously used both hard and soft power against Iran. It seems that Obama’s “change” in U.S foreign policy was not a change in the principles of U.S foreign policy but it was a change in the instruments and tactics.

Political and Military securitization: After the elections, Obama in his presentations focused on accusations, which every U.S president had made against Iran after the revolution but with softer words. He praised Iranians and their civilization and then focused on the same issue that the previous U.S administration had focused upon. This includes accusations that Iran’s actions over many years were unhelpful when it come to promoting peace and prosperity both in the region and around the world. Iran financing of “terrorist” organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas, the “bellicose” language that Iranian have used regarding Israel, their alleged attempt to development of a nuclear weapons. All things create the possibility for destabilizing the region and are not only contrary to our interests, but I think are contrary to the interests of

international peace (Obama,2009).

Obama constantly repeated all of these topics to present Iran as a threat to the United States and all of the world between 2008 and 2014. During his presidency, U.S defense minister Gates also implicitly threatened to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities (Gates,2014). According to this perspective, Obama's foreign policy towards Iran has been similar to that of previous presidents and attempted to securitize Iran. One difference was that Obama focused on create international consensuses, which made his efforts more effective. In fact, Obama used multilateralism with greater effect in securitizing Iran's nuclear issue. He learned the lesson from previous unilateralism and changed the method for an effective securitization." Keep in mind unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran had been in place for decades, but had failed to pressure Iran to the negotiating table" (Obama, 2015). Iran always stressed that it have sought to gain nuclear weapons, but in every speech he made on Iran, Obama stressed the nuclear talks were a way to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. On the issue of terrorism, Obama also followed previous administrations and promoted Iran as a sponsor of terrorism, even after the nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1. "Iran clearly engages in a dangerous and destabilizing behavior in different countries across the region. Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. It helps prop up the Assad regime in Syria. It supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It aids the Houthi rebels in Yemen." (Earle, 2015).Economical securitization: Obama's economic securitization was unique in terms of the number of sanctions and measures. The crippling sanctions were initiated under Obama's administration especially the embargo on oil exports and the money transfer had a major impact on Iran and its international trade. The U.S treasury department active engagement in the implementation of sanctions, among other efforts by the allies, was effective in limiting Iran's economic capabilities. (Luab,2015). There were over 10 executive orders and the UN Security Council's resolutions against Iran that were initiated during Obama's presidency. This, of course, majorly deals with the period before the JCPOA (Treasury Department, 2015).

5. Analyses and conclusion

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

With this framework, Iran had been subject of securitization throughout 1979-2013. During this period of time, three types of securitization were mainly directed by different U.S. administrations. Political and military securitizations include all attempts that Carter initiated to demonstrate Iran as a political problem for the world and the region. He also tried to illustrate this perspective through the hostage crisis. Reagan also continued this trend by accusing Iran of sponsoring terrorist groups in Lebanon. This is the policy that Bush (the father) continued claiming that Iran was playing a destabilizing role in the Middle East. During this period of time, because of the Cold War and U.S. government considerations along with the fear of losing Iran to the Communist world, further pressure was not imposed on Iran. At the end of the Cold War, Clinton's presidency headed for more

securitization of Iran as an alleged supporter of terrorism. Under this label, the attempts attributed to Iran for gaining nuclear weapons and missile technology became the main subject of securitization of Iran. During his presidency, the new literature of securitization of Iran emerged and Iran was branded as an “outlaw” and a “rogue state”.

During Clinton’s presidency and with lack of a USSR presence in the Middle East, Iran was regarded as the biggest problem for U.S. foreign policy. As a result, the securitization against this country was upgraded in scope. Bush’s (the son) foreign policy targeted the Middle East and he waged two wars in the region, and despite help from Iran in Afghanistan he labeled Iran as part of the “Axis of Evil”. During his presidency, Iran was not only securitized by terrorism, nuclear weapons and Ballistic missiles but alleged by the American government was contemplating through narratives of military attack against Iran.

The Obama administration [before the 2013 JPOA primary agreement] was behaving in this way within the framework of political and military subjects and presented Iran as the major security threat for the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East as well as for world peace. Like other presidents of the United States, after 1979, he claimed that Iran is a sponsor of terrorist groups, an anti-peace country looking for acquiring WMDs, nuclear bombs and Ballistic missiles.

Securitization in the political, economic and military areas was ongoing. Securitization works when the economy of a country becomes the subject of security threats for another country. The first economic limitation on Iran was imposed by Carter, and in continuation of the trend of economic securitization, Reagan persuade another kind of economic securitization. Bush the father approved the pervious sanctions on Iran. All of these attempts for putting sanctions were initiated because of Iran’s alleged destructive activities in the region, these were somehow related to the

² Weapon of Mass Destruction

securitization of Iran.

The Clinton's presidency was a transitional phase in the use of economic means against Iran. During Clinton's administration, the U.S. put more severe economic actions that had never been imposed on Iran and Bush (the son) followed the Clinton path in the use of economic sanctions to securitize Iran. In fact, after 2006 Bush created the foundation for crippling sanctions that Obama used against Iran. Based on the previously constructed foundations against Iran, Obama imposed the harshest economic sanctions in world history against Iran and recorded a new level in the use of economy for the securitization of a country. Obama managed to make sanctions efficient through multilateralism that forced up to 66 countries to sanction Iran and persuaded other countries to accept U.S. economic sanctions and participate in the executive initiation of sanctioning Iran.

Based on this conclusion, it seems clear that since 1979, Iran has been subject to U.S. securitization but after the Cold War, the U.S. broadened its securitization attempts against the country and made it more radical. There seems to be two phases of securitization; the first one was the time of the Cold War, which we can call "Low Securitization" and the second one took place after the Cold war until 2013, which we can label as "High Securitization".

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