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ROLE OF THREAT PERCEPTION ON ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN'S DEFENSE SECURITY POLICY AFTER THE VICTORY OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The security and defense approaches of every nation-state in world politics are derived from its perception of the threat posed to it from peripheral and international environment. The perceptions and misunderstandings of governments are the embodiment of their security behaviors and actions in international relations. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of perception of threat and its effect on dominant Iranian security behavior in the Middle East. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, many regional governments have taken an aggressive and non-peaceful approach to the government of Iran and have perceived it as a government disrupting accepted rules of the game and also their internal stability and security. The question is "How the perception of the threat has formed the security behavior and policy of the government of the Islamic republic of Iran after the victory of the Islamic revolution?" The answer to this question, applying the theory of defensive realism, argues that threat perception by the Islamic Republic of Iran has mainly shaped its security and defensive policies in an intrinsic and unilateral threat balance in the Middle East. In this paper, the research methodology is descriptive-analytical and data collection method is library-based.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem:

Governments live in a world that is full of threats. They often tend to maximize their power in order to keep their survival. Security and survival are the primary purposes of governments in the international system. In anarchic international system, governments perceive each other as a potential threat, so they rely on their own internal capabilities to maintain and secure their security or survival, or be "self-reliant" as Waltz asserts. Threats and perceptions of governments from political, economic,

and especially military threats are the basis of their actions, interactions and foreign policy in the world of international relations. Most states that preserve the status quo see a revolutionary state as a disruptive element of internationally and regionally accepted rules and base their security policies and behaviors on this misunderstanding. This misunderstanding is much more severe in the case of governments living in the neighborhood of each other; in such a way that the overflow of threats or misunderstandings imposes huge costs on the security and economic burdens of governments. Misunderstanding can continue the cycle of hostility in a region such as the Middle East, exacerbate regional tensions between neighbors and lead to crisis and eventually war in the region- like what happened after the victory of the Islamic revolution Iraq's invasion to Iran. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, most regional governments based their perception of Iran as a Shi'ite revolutionary state and exporter of the Shiite Islamic Revolution- in spite of the fact that one of the firm goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been to avoid tensions with its neighbors and to develop peaceful relations with all regional governments except Israel. This misunderstanding has continued forty years after the Islamic Revolution and has cast a heavy shadow on the security policies and practices of these governments towards Iran. This has made regional governments more dependent on the military power of trans-regional governments, especially the United States. There are also some sub-questions: "What are the most important security threats facing the Islamic Republic of Iran at the regional level? and "What has been the threat perception of security actions and policies of the Islamic Republic Iran?" The main answer to this question is that the perception of threat by Iran after the victory of the Islamic Revolution has shaped its security and defense policies and approaches intrinsically and in a way to balance the threat in the region. The result of the research is that the Islamic Republic of Iran's unilateral and intrinsic threat balance has led to increased security costs and a strong security dependency of regional governments on world powers, especially the United States, and their military presence in the region. Therefore, it would seem more appropriate to establish a more intrinsic and extrinsic threat balance and to create regional and trans-regional alliances and coalitions to achieve Iran's security goals in the turbulent Middle East.

Review of the Related Literature

Numerous articles have been written in Farsi and English on the subject of Iran's national security; each author has analyzed the security policies and issues of Iran's national security from his/her own perspective. For example, Mahmoud Sariolghalam in an article entitled " Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Changeability" uses some examples belonging to various countries of the world to answer whether it is viable to change the foreign policy of Iran or not. The author states that this change is quite difficult and cites the following reasons for his claim: non-attachment of foreign policy to the economic system, ideological nature of power in the system and the linking of legitimacy and national security to foreign policy.

In an article, entitled " Foreign Policy Discourse of the Fourth Decade of the Islamic Revolution (Interactivist and Anti-hegemonic) from the Structural Theory Perspective", Ebrahim Mottaghi and Ali Azarmi have studied the interactivist and anti-hegemonic policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran since 2009. In this study, the security dimension of the country is practically highlighted, emphasizing the resistance of the world's most powerful countries. "The Position of the Security Complex of the Resistance Front in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran", by Ali Adami and Elham Keshavarz, explores Iran's geopolitical status and capacity and considers Iran's national security under the influence of this concept and overshadowed by the turbulent and insecure environment of the Middle East. They also claim that formation of a Sunni coalition, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia, and an Iran-led Shia coalition, has led the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards a security-based approach. There is also another article under the name of " The Prominence of Security and Development-centeredness in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran since 2000s", authored by Pirooz Hashempour", studying the foreign and security policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in two periods of principlism and moderation in which the author compares the foreign and security policy in two different periods of the 9th/10th and 11th governments of Iran and finally concludes that Iran's foreign and security policy was aggressive in the era of principlism while the policy of the 11th government has been defensive, based on détente and seeking collaboration in the region and international arena. Reza Khalili's article entitled "Explaining the Security Developments of the Islamic Republic of Iran: In Search of an Analytical Framework" divides the Iranian security studies into three periods based on three discourses prevailed in the life of the Islamic Revolution: discourse of expansion, discourse of preservation and growth and traditional and modern discourse. The author deals with the characteristics of each period of the revolution and its security discourses and finally concludes that the security policy of Iran is based on the existing discourses.

Daniel Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anushirvan Ehteshami and Jerrold Green, in " Iran's Security Policy in the Post-revolutionary Era", point out that to understand Iran's goals and tactics in its relations with regional and international governments, it is necessary to understand the region in which Iran is located, Iranian nationalism, Iranian ethnicities, Iranian economics and geopolitics, and in particular, its security aspirations and goals. Therefore, the authors examine the security institutions, decision-making system and the type of Iran's relations with regional governments to understand Iran's security policies. They see Iraq as a known threat to Iran and refer to Afghanistan as an emerging threat. The authors finally consider that the sources of Iran's security policy is based on two key factors: Islam and nationalism. By the way, they refer to the key role of geopolitics and economy. F Gregory Gause's article entitled " Revolution and threat perception: Iran and the Middle East" addresses the perceptions of the leaders of the Middle East governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran Revolution. The author points out that it is the Arab leaders' perception of the Iranian revolutionary government that determines their security and defense policies, not what the Islamic Republic of Iran actually does in its

foreign and defense policy. Their misunderstanding of Iran has so far been steady. Studies show that few articles have addressed the issue of perception of threat in Iran,; thus, this study aims to enrich the discussion to show the role of perception of threat in behavior and its security pattern.

Theoretical Framework: Neoclassical Realism

Neoclassical realism is the title given by Gideon Rose to a series of works in international relations that use many insights on realism in explaining foreign policy and beyond, in explaining international relations. Neoclassicists also believe that the ambition of a country's foreign policy is primarily due to its position in the international system, and in particular its capability in the field of military power. But they emphasize that "the impact of these capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because the pressure of the system must be translated through intermediary variables at the unit level. That is why they are neoclassical." The classical neo-realists are more concerned with power than anything else, and they define power, as neo-realists, based on empowerment. The neoclassicists, unlike the neo-realists, do not focus solely on the system-level factors. Rather, they argue that the mental conceptions and internal structure of governments are also important. They somehow emphasize the need for different levels of analysis. While neoclassical realists regard anarchism important like realists, they also emphasize the insights of classical realism and that is why they are called neoclassical (Moshirzadeh, 2005: 129). The neoclassicists can be divided into offensive and defensive categories based on Jack Snyder's division of realism.

- **Defensive Realism Theory:**

Defensive realists also look at the relationship between anarchy and international implications, on the one hand, and the behavior of governments, on the other; however, they find the relationship more complex. The assumption of defensive realism is that international anarchy is usually benign, meaning security is not scarce but abundant. Governments that realize this fact do not behave aggressively and only react to it when they feel there is a threat, and this reaction is often only at the level of balancing and deterring the threat (Moshirzadeh, 2005 : 133). Stephen Walt, the designer of the balance of threat theory, has proposed a new formulation of Waltz's power balance theory. Walt begins by asking 'What security should be? He believes that security is more about threat than about power. Walt's reckons that threat, not power, is at the heart of governments' security concerns, and that governments are not necessarily afraid of the most powerful ones, but rather of governments that appear more threatening than others. Threats in themselves are a function of geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, aggressive intentions and power of a states. It is difficult to understand the true intentions of governments; in addition intentions may change. (Walt, 1987, 28). Geographical proximity has a decisive role in threatening and "threat perception" of countries; countries fear and feel threatened by their powerful neighbors more than powerful countries far away. Ukraine, for example, feels more threatened by Russia than Italy (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2015: 234). Governments generally face two major strategies when faced

with a major threat, either choosing a balance-of-power strategy or inevitably pursue an allegiance strategy. Balance means alliance with others against threats, and following-up means joining of the threatened state to the most dangerous or threatening one. Walt says alliances and coalitions are formal or informal commitments to security cooperation between two or more states that are created to enhance the power and influence and ultimately security of member states. Although the basis of these patterns of cooperation rests on distinct arrangements, they all share a common essential element, namely a commitment to mutual support against some other actors in the international system (Walt, 2008, 9). Stephen Walt emphasizes the importance of threat balance, rather than balance of power. What matters for Walt in the relationship between states is their perception of each other as a threat, not merely the amount of power each of them possesses. States resort to power balance against those that pose an immediate threat to their existence or interests. In this discussion, Walt's emphasis is more on perception and on states' perceptions of each other. In Walt's view, what is important in the relationship between states is their perception of each other as a threat, not merely the power of each of them. Governments balance those states that pose an immediate threat to their existence or interests (Moshirzadeh, 2005: 135). Therefore, this theory seeks to explain why and under what circumstances the internal characteristics of countries, their ability to extract and mobilize the resources of political-military institutions, influence of domestic social actors and stakeholders, level and extent of government autonomy from society or the level of cohesion of political or social elites, perception of foreign policy makers of the international threats and opportunities of the policies they define and pursue, interfere and mediate. (Lobll, 2009: 15). From the perspective of neoclassical realism, understanding the relationship between the distribution of relative power and foreign policy requires examining both the domestic and international context in which foreign policy is formulated and implemented. Thus, the characteristics of countries and their decision-makers and views on how to use power, mediate structural constraints of foreign policy Actions. Therefore, the analysis of policymakers in the extraction of resources to pursue foreign policy goals should be considered (Elman, 2007: 16).

Thus, according to the theory of threat equilibrium, countries facing external threats generally balance against the threatening country or coalition. Despite the popularity of balancing over following, many weak countries may not have the option of fleeing from a powerful and developing countries; since grappling with them may come at the expense of their dissolution (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2015: 235).

Security Features of Middle Eastern States:

The most important political and security feature of the Arab world is its deep and structural dependence on the Western world, in particular, the United States. The security of the Arabian complex from southern Iraq to southern Saudi Arabia is protected by military umbrella and US security doctrine. The US military presence in the Gulf has doubled in the last thirty years and the military and security dependence of the Gulf States or the Gulf Cooperation Council on it, has increased significantly. There is

nothing more important than security among the national issues of these countries. The US military presence in the region naturally has a direct relationship with their security situation. Huge oil revenues have been used for providing gigantic military and security costs in the last three decades. Since the early 1990s and the gradual decline in oil prices, there has been a crisis in the areas of security and military spending. Many of these countries, especially Saudi Arabia, are seeking political means of securing their security. Future trends also bring about such a way of thinking. Although there is no significant movement in the societies of these countries to bring about change, there is a great deal of concern among the rulers about the continuity of the political and judicial traditions and systems (Sariolghalam, 2000: 72). The United States, as a power that is interested in maintaining the status quo, is not willing to change it; because it is uncertain of consequences and risks. The basis of US strategy in this region is to maintain the status quo and manage the crisis. The most unstable region in the world is the Middle East. In such an environment, Americans cannot prioritize transformation over their immense interests. Therefore, the security dependency and instability of the Middle East have imposed huge security costs on Iran.

Middle East Governments' Threat Perception of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the Victory of the Islamic Revolution:

If we look at Iran's relations with the Arabs, with the exception of Syria, which is a special case, Iran has no reliable relations with any Arab country. In the post-revolution period, Iran has had the most turbulent relations with Arab world and many of the past pessimisms and conceptions still prevail. Even if we look at the pre-revolutionary era, Iran-Arab relations got meaning in the American Middle East strategy. Iran feels alienated from the Arabs both politically and ethnically, and the crisis of legitimacy and security in the Arab world has contributed to this ongoing political and cultural divide. Iran's political identity, livelihood of the Iranian community and Iran's numerous geographical, historical, and social capabilities are second to none in the Arab world. The Arabs view Iran as an unreliable neighbor and as a suspected partner on the political spectrum – and as a foe in some cases. Iran's developments during the Islamic Revolution have deepened this historical gap.

The revolutionary Iran, from the viewpoint of regional leaders and governments, has posed five real and potential threats for their national security:

1- The first threat refers to the conventional military power of Iran. In spite of the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran has currently a limited power, it can turn into a very threatening power by applying some changes into its military policies- especially modernizing its military forces.

2- The second threat is an asymmetric threat, and rises when Iranian policymakers attempt to counter terrorism or resort to attack by using unconventional forces. Iranian authorities have acquired a combination of unusual forces, which could challenge neighbors in a wide range of asymmetric wars, including low-intensity attrition warfare.

3- The third threat is the developed version of the second one. Iran's asymmetric and unconventional capabilities allow it to use governmental and non-governmental representatives and partners. Iran's financial and spiritual support for Shiite militias in Iraq, its friendly relations with some of the activists in the Iraqi government, its cooperation with the Syrian government, and its close relationship with Hezbollah in Lebanon are prominent examples of such activists which can serve as security policy tools for defending Iran.

4- The next threat concerns the potential nuclear power and the availability of long-range missiles in the future. The plan to develop and manufacture long-range missiles is clearly part of Iran's proclaimed defense policy with the aim of deterring it.

5- Finally, Iran has been identified as a potential religious and ideological threat to the region and the Islamic world which is on the edge of sectarian divides. From the viewpoint of some Western theorists, the divisions between Islamic societies is far more dangerous than the clashes between Western and Islamic civilizations. The threat of a rift between Sunni and Shiite extremists could turn into a wider divide between Islamic nations, forcing Iran into aggressive religious and ideological struggles (Lotfian, 2011: 187). Regarding the perception of non-Arab states' threats to Iranian policies, it should be noted that in the two decades after the revolution, there were two major problems in bilateral relations between Iran and these governments: exporting Islamic Revolution to these countries and Iran's supporting of religious minorities in them.

Islamic Republic of Iran's Perception of Regional Security Threats after the Islamic Revolution Victory:

An important pillar of statehood has been the understanding of politics outside borders. The great statesmen of history have been those who have struck a balance between realities within the borders and developments outside. In his classic book, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Robert Jervis explores the belief system and learning methods. He states that people generally have a stable belief system. Any information and raw material that shakes this belief system does not enter the mind-processing process of many people. If we think that the Iraqi political system is a dictatorship, we will accept any kind of violent behavior and policy from that regime. Since our belief system about Iraq is formed, the raw materials that come from Iraq will be analyzed on the basis of that belief system. So the human mind does not generally work with multiple examples, but it tries the first one to reinforce the mentality and perceptions in the corridors of the mind. Humans are interested in quick making decisions and reaching a belief structure. Humans usually do not enter information that is inconsistent with their beliefs, and assumptions into the analytical part of their minds (Sariolghalam, 2000: 26). History shows that Iran, due to its distinctive cultural, geographical, and political characteristics, has failed to ally with its neighbors. Iran is a particular activist and many neighboring countries are inferior to it in terms of geopolitics. In the next 20 to 30 years, the general situation of these countries is unlikely to undergo a positive structural change. These countries are generally pessimistic about Iran and have consistently

opposed its glory in various political forms. Therefore, the immediate national security environment of Iran is insecure, and Iran has to spend a great deal of money on securing national security and addressing threats to its national and political security and identity. The methodology of the realization of many of the fixed goals and principles in foreign policy is the principle of coalition. Not only does the coalition provide confidence in cooperation, it also reduces threats to national security and increases national wealth (Sariolghalam, 2000: 38). Based on the perceptions of the leaders of the regional countries of domestic and foreign threats, they often do not see themselves as capable of playing a major security role, so they resort to a policy of alliance with transnational powers to secure their national and international security. Many governments in the region believe that the Islamic Republic of Iran is now a Middle East country whose power and influence is constantly increasing and is a long-term challenge to US interests in the region. The overthrow of Iran's great enemy, the regime of Saddam Hussein, allowed Iran to expand its influence to Iraq and beyond. In spite of the international sanctions, Iranian officials have continued their nuclear program; the acquisition of civilian nuclear capability could provide Iran with at least the ability to change suddenly (from the stage of near being near nuclear to being nuclear). A look at Iran's strategic culture shows that the elites of the Islamic Republic of Iran recognize it as a superior natural and necessary power in the Middle East and even in the Islamic world. It is the Iranians' perception of their country's unique centrality that has paved the way for fostering a strong sense of Iranian identity and self-awareness of the role of Iran as one of the historical powers of the region. Iran's sense of pride and importance is influenced by the sense of victimization, insecurity, and humiliation caused by the historical exploitation of Iran by foreign powers. The Iranian view of the United States as the British imperial successor was shaped by the 1953 coup designed by Britain and the United States to overthrow the government of Mohammad Mossadegh and to make Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi return to the throne of power. In the view of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States now is the major enemy and threat to the survival of it in the security environment of the world and acts against Iranian interests. The Iranian threat perception is drawn from the long history of triumphs and defeats; public perception looks at Iran as a country of great power but humiliated after being weakened by the West and the United States in particular. The Islamic Revolution helped reinforce Iran's sense of exceptionalism, and created a combination of religious ideology and strong nationalism. The Islamic Republic of Iran has the ability to work beyond the bounds of the revolution as a nation pursuing its own non-ideological interests. However, its attitudes and behaviors are still influenced by its historical experience and identity as a revolutionary country wanting to change the status quo (Lotfian, 2011: 181-182). In fact, Iranian statesmen's conception of current threats and future wars encompass a spectrum that includes asymmetric, unconventional, information, and conventional warfare. It is not unlikely that the future war of Iran would be against an organized guerrilla and network movement, a full-fledged attack by a regular army, a surprise attack, a seizure of the Iranian islands by a group of marines, an attack on oil rigs and naval bases or an attack by an

international coalition (Karami, 2005: 53). Given such a situation and a picture of threats, Iran's defense policy must be within the framework of a comprehensive deterrence and defense doctrine. This principle includes components that:

(a) The legitimacy and efficiency of the system in order to maintain popular support and regional and global credibility to prevent the idea of an attack on Iran.

B) Defense diplomacy in order to build trust, deterioration, and presence in regional institutions by using innovative ways to seize opportunities and reduce threats to the security environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

What is important in defense diplomacy is the detente of relations with regional countries, including the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab countries and Europe. This will make it possible to cooperate with other countries, institutions and communities, and even stop their anti-Iranian arrangements. Confidence-building can lead other actors to conclude that the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a threat to them and; urging them to reconsider anti-Iranian measures.

Security-defense policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the Victory of the Islamic Revolution:

Traditionally and in the context of the state-centered approach of realism, national security is defined as narrow, restrictive and one-dimensional. In this sense, national security is the absence of military threats against the survival of the state defined in terms of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Walter Lippmann puts it, a country has security when it does not have to sacrifice its values to avoid war or when it is able to protect its values in the event of war. In the context of the broad and multidimensional concept, the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran is: lack of objective and subjective threats to the obtained material and immaterial values and not having fear of being attacked. This dual (subjective and subjective) nature of national security ensures that Islamic republic of Iran is immune against military attack, insular and inviolable, credible and trustworthy, sure of not being conquered or surrendered, certain of not being endangered and not being afraid of. However, national security is not only a sense of freedom and security from threats, but also depends on the country's internal vulnerabilities. Therefore, Iran's national security has five dimensions: military, economic, political, cultural, social and environmental. Naturally, the extent to which each of these aspects of Iran's national security are affected by external threats and internal damages is different (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2008: 86).

Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, particularly during Iraq war against Iran, government officials have emphasized four defense objectives, namely defending territorial integrity, avoiding international isolation, trying to improve and expand investment and trade on the assumption that access to advanced technology is necessary for sustained development and emphasizing on the arms control in the region and the world. In pursuit of these goals, Iranian statesmen believe that national independence should not be sacrificed to a coalition of great

powers and that, as far as indigenous capabilities allow, they should try independently and unilaterally for national and regional security. The continued opposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the presence of foreign forces in the region, especially in the Persian Gulf, suggests that the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran are aware of the overt and covert intentions of the foreigners for political and economic infiltration to the region- namely easy and cheap access to strategic resources of energy and also determining the destiny of the people of the region (Lotfian, 2011: 193). Article 143 of the Constitution also specifies the most important duty of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army to safeguard the independence and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Imam Khomeini has also said: "Defending Islam and Iran is the most important religious obligation of all people." In general, the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran, like other countries, can be divided into two forms. First, due to the formation of separatist feelings and movements within the country and secondly as a result of a military attack or a foreign action to occupy or seize part of the Iranian soil. The Islamic Republic of Iran has experienced both kinds of these threats during its thirty-year life. The separatist movements in the border regions, especially Kurdistan, with the support of foreigners, are the most prominent examples of the first type of threats in the early years of the Islamic Revolution. The invasion of the Iraqi Baathist regime in September 1980 to seize parts of Iranian soil illustrates the second type of threat. The United Arab Emirates' claims to three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are another example of these external threats. The successful and comprehensive defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran of its territorial integrity indicates the priority and importance of this goal in its foreign policy (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2009: 150). The Islamic Republic of Iran, like other countries, strives to maximize its relative power; because the greater the power and capability of one country than others, the greater its national security factor.

- **Features of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Security Policy after the Islamic Revolution:**

Iran's security policy, based on the unique features of the Islamic Revolution, is based on the ideology of revolutionary Islam. Given the nature of the Islamic Revolution and the need to maintain it without losing the content of the revolution, the best possible way to preserve the existence of the revolution has been recognized as the revolutionary ideology, because the Iranian revolution is different from other revolutions, whether in the third world or in the large countries, because it emphasized on religious ideology. The philosophy of jihad and martyrdom, self-sacrifice, monotheism and resurrection, are all the driving and reinforcing factors that the Iranian youth have used in this decade to organize an unequal war. After the Islamic Revolution, Iran appeared as the mouthpiece of an aspiration. This ideal, derived from Shiite Islam, was also able to penetrate the Sunni nations and create a new pole called the Third Pole.

This revolutionary policy of Iran, on the one hand, became the basis of Islamist nations and groups, because they believed that the Islamic revolution had broken the conventional framework for the first time. On the

other hand, it made reactionary governments of the region and superpowers much worried about the promulgating of revolutionary Islam ideology; since the Islamic revolution not only did have specific state plans in the national domain, but also introduced certain thoughts and beliefs, based on the universality of Islam, which resulted in a world order in which unilateral dominance of great powers on Islamic countries was rejected. Therefore, Iran considered expanding its relations with Islamic states as one of its most important priorities for procuring its security (Mohammadi, 1998: 94). A key point in Iran's security policy during the first decade of the revolution was the fact that other sources of power (both material and non-material) were more in the service of ideology and its expansion, while many governments pursued ideology to serve nationalism. Therefore Iran considers itself as the flag-carrier of justice in that period; however this fact was not desirable and in accordance with the wishes of the world system. Hence, the survival of the revolution itself cannot depend on common principles and possible alliances. The Iranian revolution has a message in itself that, even if it does not attack a country (which it has not up to now), its existence and entity is in contrast with goals and interests of powerful states and their regional allies. Under these circumstances, Iran's leaders should either accept the status quo and join the current movement or make no objection, both of which conflicted with the goals of the revolution. Thus, with the onset of the Iraq war against Iran, a different approach was taken to defend Iran; it was based on the ideology of revolutionary Islam. This principle was, until the end of the war, the main base for defending the country. Ideology increased the martial value of the combat forces in various dimensions because one of the important characteristics of the fighting forces under the influence of ideology was the disregard for the material; they considered what they were doing as a duty and material demands ,based on instrumental rationality, did not come to their minds. The warriors of Islam have always been indebted to their ideal school and do not consider themselves independent of the leadership of the system. These forces did not act as a finite organ of the system, but as a pervasive organization that encompassed all segments of society. This type of combat organization called Basij was the backbone of Iran's defense policy at that time (Rahimi Roshan, 2009: 58). Iraq had complete superiority in terms of military equipment and even personnel in this war, but this supremacy was neutralized in the light of revolutionary ideology. So the main feature of Iran's security policy after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, especially with the beginning and end of the Iraq war against Iran, was ideological, and all other features and components of national power were at the service of Islamic ideology. The victory of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979 expanded the process of Islamism , religious attitudes and revolutionary movements with a taste of idealism. The ideological and idealistic atmosphere of 1979-1989, which was intensified by the outbreak of the imposed war, is not hidden from anyone. This young and revolutionary Iran, in addition to having internal effects, was also influential on regional and also international security environments; most of the internal tensions of Iran were a result of foreign issues; because, in principle, the security discourses that emerge in the context of any society are completely influenced by the data that the external and internal

environments impose on the system. Since environmental variables are based on a changing nature and do not accommodate a particular set of rules in the power game between themselves, the inputs to the system appear in different roles, functions and forms requiring overall structure and conformity of the system. From this perspective, security is fundamentally an age-old phenomenon affected by time and space. It was in such an atmosphere that the negative discourse was reinforced in the Iranian security environment and exacerbated by the pattern of military conflict (viewing security as a hardware) (Amanian, 2003: 214). But after the imposed war and the beginning of the construction era, the process of confidence building and detente began gradually in Iran's security policy. Iran's security challenges have been changing in the forty years since the victory of the Islamic Revolution along with domestic and environmental changes and developments. Thus, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution, collapse of the system of regional balance and the direct and military presence of the United States in the region, some changes in the Iranian security system occurred. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always opposed the presence of powers such as the US and USSR in the region and even worked to stabilize and secure the region during the Iran-Iraq war, despite the escalation of war and mining in the waters of the Persian Gulf. The Islamic Republic of Iran plays an important role in the security of the region due to its long border, strategic location and control over the Strait of Hormuz. The regional security system in the Persian Gulf is not possible without Iran; on the other hand, Iran cannot join it without effective participation. The Islamic Republic of Iran can eradicate many misunderstandings among regional governments through confidence-building measures and reduce or eliminate threats posed by these governments (Sotoudeh, 2001: 175).

In any case, the threats and challenges to Iran's security during this forty-year period are likely to be as follows:

- Ethnic riots and presence of political and counter-revolutionary groups inside Iranian soil
- Overthrowing the Islamic Revolution in the context of coup and military operations
- Military attack by the Iraqi Ba'athist government on the Islamic Republic of Iran
- The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the independence of its protectorates
- The US military presence in the region and the increasing number of its military bases
- Expanding cooperation between Arab countries and the Israeli regime and conducting joint military exercises between them
- The peaceful nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- The Syrian crisis and the increase of terrorist activities in the region
- Expanding defensive missile program

Iran's security environment and the perception of these security threats by the decision makers of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the victory of the Islamic revolution have shaped Iran's security and defense

policies in line with what is commonly accepted by governments at the international level.

CONCLUSION

In a situation where there is no systematic structure for security issues in the Middle East and the region's environment, affected by internal factors, interactions between governments and transnational factors, lies in a kind of anarchy, national defense and security policy of a country such as Iran cannot rely solely on the principle of self-reliance for preventing threats and creating deterrence in the turbulent and insecure Middle East region. One of Iran's major security problems in the Middle East is the lack of a strategic ally (other than Syria) both at the regional level and beyond. On the other hand, the chaotic environment of Middle East lacks an all-agreed-on security structure and arrangement in the region and different and sometimes conflicting arrangements have been formed in the absence of such a mechanisms. Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Guam Treaty and NATO and its subordinate arrangements in the region, and also bilateral agreements between regional and trans-regional countries, have created a dismal situation because Iran is not member of any of them. Therefore, the current security situation in the Middle East and the possible future situations present various threats to Iran. Iran must adapt its security and defense policies to this situation and respond to the threats posed by it. The nature of defensive realism theory is also based on trust; though its foundations are shaky. This theory has some capacity in terms of reducing the probability of war or defeat. In the first option, Iran seeks to build security confidence and reduce fears by adopting a defensive approach and trying to avoid offensive behavior. In the second option, it reduces the likelihood of defeat, by arming itself and enhancing defensive capabilities in the event of a war, thus allowing the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to reduce threats, increase the national security factor and eliminate mismanagement. Middle East governments should act to prevent tension and conflict of perceptions. The alliance and coalition strategy is also one of the foreign policy orientations of governments. When governments feel that they will not be able to counter foreign threats or defend national interests and pursue their foreign policy goals without accepting certain commitments, especially military ones, they resort to alliance. Defensive realism emphasizes on threat as a key factor in forming alliances. On the basis of the severity of external threats, the alliance will be more cohesive. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by adopting a realistic approach and a policy of de-escalation and confidence-building in the region, has had a profound effect on the region in some periods of its forty-year lifelong. The Islamic Republic of Iran could be one of the pillars of security in the region; as it managed to deflect ISIL's threats from its national borders, fight terrorists on the Syrian battlefield and multiply its national strength by adopting security policy of alliance and coalition with the legitimate government of Bashar-al-Assad. Many Western scholars believe that the Islamic Republic of Iran, after success in the Syrian international war, has been able to emerge as a regional hegemon, though it has faced serious challenges. Therefore, Stephan Walt's assumption based on changing the radical and revolutionary policies of

governments and adopting an alliance and coalition approach on the one hand and strengthening domestic military power on the other hand can strengthen intrinsic and extrinsic defensive approach. In addition, Islamic republic of Iran can turn threats into opportunities and also provide its security and survival in the best possible way by adopting threat balance strategy. Positive consequences of implementing threat balance strategy include: achieving sustainable security, shared identity of Islamic state governments, economic growth and regional development as a result of regional economic integration and exit from arms competition and turning it into cooperation with conservative Arab states.

One of the main assumptions of defensive realism is the formation of alliances and the extension and conclusion of defensive treaties. Since the Islamic Republic of Iran, because of its loneliness has a minimum capacity to defend and pursue its foreign policy and security goals in the current conditions of the Middle East, this can be a suitable option for increasing national security. Defensive treaties of Iran can be bilateral or multilateral. The history of Iran's defense cooperation shows that Iran's pre-revolutionary defense treaties were a function of international conditions and signs in the pre-revolutionary period. Jeffrey Camp also stresses the need to expand Iran's defense alliances in light of the region's insecure atmosphere: "Paying attention to Iran's security needs can help the Islamic Republic pursue more balanced goals in the region". Part of Iran's security concerns relates to the US and Israeli military capabilities which is Iran working to counter. Iran's view of regional issues that threaten national security - perhaps apart from US military presence in the region - will remain unchanged, regardless of who is in power in Iran. Today, Iran's security is almost a defensive strategy. Iran is facing serious problems in the region. It must deal with unrest and civil war in several neighboring countries, notably Afghanistan. It is also worried that Pakistan will become more unstable and be influenced by radical Sunni Muslims like the Taliban. These developments show that the region contains a variety of conflicts that have important military dimensions and remain unresolved. Iran's conventional military structure suffers from considerable weakness and is subject to various restrictions. Therefore, Iran has to overcome its security challenges. It can do this through self-help that is, tangibly upgrading its military power, or pursuing such a process through regional defense partnerships and cooperation. As such, Iran's defense and security needs emphasize any regional defense cooperation that is non-radical in nature. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that any regional defense cooperation in Iran will not only not radicalize the defense and security environment, but also will pave the way for a new wave of participatory development. The alliance and defense coalition approach is based on the use of cooperative and mutual security approaches through cooperation, balance and trust, which requires a type of diplomatic cooperation based on the policy of de-escalation. Integrated (introverted and extroverted) security and defense policy seeks to achieve a common understanding and a unified viewpoint on the various threats and dangers that endanger Iran's security environment. This can, in addition to unifying attitudes, homogenize approaches of addressing vulnerabilities and threats, and create

opportunities for multilateral economic, political, and especially military cooperation for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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