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**Comparative analysis of the United States foreign policy
towards Iranian nuclear program and its potential terrorist
implications during the presidencies of George W. Bush and
Barack Obama (2001-2005/2012-2017)**

Master's thesis

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In Prague on 31.07.2018.

Drozd Michal

Abstract

This thesis submits broader understanding of George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies in terms of their Middle Eastern policy, in particular the issue of Iranian nuclear policy. The main interest lies in an intention to conclude, which particular circumstances led the American governments to rethink their position towards the Iranian nuclear program, bearing in mind changes which took place in security, economic and foreign policy interests of the United States. The first chapter describes the theoretical framework upon which the entire thesis is based upon. The second chapter provides a short review on the MENA region, describing the most visible factors and issues from the very last years of the second administration of Barack Obama. The third chapter is based upon the research of the Iranian position in the MENA region, its potential, and what possibilities the U.S. government possesses in order to contain Iran from spreading its influence. The next chapter deals with an issue of nuclear terrorism and its connections towards Iran, evaluation of possible nuclear terrorist menace and possibilities of so called “Dirty Bombs” usage. The fifth chapter is based upon the research of the first presidency of George W. Bush and the policies which were implemented after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. The last chapter deals with the policy implemented by Barack Obama during his second presidency and examines its effect on the mutual U.S.-Iranian relations.

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zabývá širším pochopením prezidentství obou politiků vzhledem k jejich rozdílnému přístupu k Blízkovýchodní politice, konkrétně k problematice Íránu jakožto potenciální nukleární mocnosti. Hlavním zájmem diplomové práce je zjistit, které konkrétní okolnosti vedly Americkou vládu k přehodnocení její pozice v politice vůči Íránu, vzhledem ke změnám v oblasti bezpečnostních, ekonomických a zahraničně-politických zájmů Spojených Států. Bližší analýza ekonomických sankcí, válka v Sýrii a Iráku, změny politických elit v Íránu, hrozba izraelského útoku na klíčová Íránská nukleární zařízení vytvoří podporné argumenty na zodpovězení hlavní zkoumané otázky: Které aspekty a proč vedly ke změnám v Americké zahraniční politice vůči Íránskému nukleárnímu programu, v průběhu posledního desetiletí.

První kapitola popisuje teoretický přehled, na jehož základě je vystavěn zbytek práce. Druhá kapitola poskytuje zkrácený přehled regionu MENA, popisujíc nejviditelnější faktory a záležitosti, jež formovaly poslední léta druhé vlády Baracka Obamy. Třetí část se zabývá výzkumem Íránské

pozice v rámci regionu MENA, její potenciálem a skutečností, jaké konkrétní kroky a možnosti by umožnili Americké vládě zvrátit rozšiřování Íránského vlivu. Další kapitola se zabývá otázkou nukleárního terorismu a jeho možným napojením na Írán, zhodnocením možností a pravděpodobností nukleárního teroristického útoku a rovněž možností využití tzv. "Špinavé bomby". Pátá kapitola je založena na výzkumu vztahu prvního prezidentského období George W. Busha a konkrétních politických kroků, jenž byly implementovány po teroristických útocích dne 11 Zář 2001. Poslední kapitola se zabývá implementací odlišných politických kroků v době druhé vlády Baracka Obamy a vyhodnocováním jejich působení na vzájemné americko-íránské vztahy.

Keywords

George W. Bush, Barack Obama, American foreign policy, Iran, nuclear program, NSS 2001

Klíčová slova

George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Americká zahraniční politika, Írán, nukleární program, NSS2001

Title

Comparative analysis of the United States foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear program and its potential terrorist implications during the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama (2001-2005/2012-2017)

Název práce

Komparativní analýza zahraniční politiky Spojených Států vzhledem k Íránskému nukleárnímu programu a jeho potenciálního napojení na terorismus počas vlád Geoga W. Busha a Baracka Obamy (2001-2005/2012-2017)

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Introduction

The main objective of the master thesis is to analytically evaluate policies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama towards Iran in the context of their foreign policy and instruments both American presidents used in order to secure the U.S. interests in the MENA region. The evaluation thoroughly examines how far-reaching and important were geopolitical changes in the region itself, between the United States and Iran in the first two decades of the 21 century. There were three main historical events that shaped the U.S. foreign policy towards the MENA region and the Iranian Islamic Republic in the last 15 years. Firstly, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, secondly, the uprising in the majority of Arab countries in 2015, more commonly known as the Arab Spring and, thirdly, the foundation of the Islamic State and subsequent ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria. All of these events led to the deterioration and later, to the subsequent warming of relations between the American government and Iranian representatives.

This thesis operates almost exclusively with the term MENA. It is important to define this term more closely. The very concept of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) defines the geographically, culturally and socially interconnected region but it has several other definitions. According to the available information, not even all departments of the U.S. government use just one term to precisely define this region. For example, the State Department uses the term Near East (the including the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa), while the Office of the United States Trade Representative uses the term MENA for the same area. This term is nowadays widely used in the professional literature as the most appropriate name for this interconnected area which has experienced the revolutions of the Arab Spring that took place in almost every country of this region and has catastrophic results especially in Syria.

The theoretical approach of the thesis is based on the qualitative and comparative analysis with the help of the contextual logic. In order to answer the thesis research questions, I used the primary sources from the United States, such as statements of both President Bush and President Obama presented in the official documents of the White House. The main thesis question will be supported by secondary sources, based on professional journals, book titles and professional literature.

The entire thesis is divided into chapters, each one dealing with the specific issue which will ultimately lead to the conclusion over the main thesis question, whether the foreign policy approach of the 1st. government of George W. Bush towards Iran was more successful, than the foreign policy approach of the 2nd government of Barack Obama.

It is possible to state in general, that there are three possible ways how the United States could react on contemporary Iran. Two of them represent aggressive positions, the last one allows at least some kind of cooperation and compromise. In order to specify advantages and disadvantages of all three approaches it is necessary to closely examine every case separately in the thesis. It is further important to state that each president emphasized different approach, how to deal with the Iranian issue. The first government of George W. Bush under the influence of terrorist attacks from 11 September 2001 decided to conduct an aggressive policy against autocratic regimes, especially in the MENA region. So called "War on Terror", and "Regime change policy" were military-political, long-term plans, primarily focused on Iraq and Afghanistan, however, the existence of strong, Iranian opposition and its nuclear program, relatively quickly draw the attention of the American government towards this theocratic Republic.

The second presidency of Barack Obama was ultimately influenced by an attempt to ease tensions between the U.S. and Iran, focusing on an actively-positive approach. The main result which stemmed from this policy was the conclusion on the JCPOA agreement, which resulted into a significant postponing of the Iranian nuclear program, while both descriptions of those presidencies were complemented by the issue of possible terrorist implications.

It is important to state that, objectives and possible strategies of Iranian government towards the U.S. government were also described in order to comprehensively understand the complex issues of the MENA region.

The first chapter describes the theoretical framework upon which the entire thesis is based upon. The second chapter provides a short review on the MENA region, describing the most visible factors and issues form the very last years of the second administration of Barack Obama. The third chapter is based upon the research of the Iranian position in the MENA region, its potential, and what possibilities the U.S. government posses in order to contain Iran from spreading its influence. The next chapter deals with an issue of nuclear terrorism and its connections towards Iran, evaluation of possible nuclear terrorist menace and possibilities of so called "Dirty Bombs" usage. The fifth chapter is based upon the research of the first presidency of George W. Bush and the

policies which were implemented after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. The last chapter deals with the policy implemented by Barack Obama during his second presidency and examine its effect on the mutual U.S.-Iranian relations.

1. Theoretical framework

The main research question of this thesis could be described as follows: Was the confrontational foreign policy of George W. Bush towards Iran productive in terms to find solution to Iranian nuclear program and its possible terrorist implications, or was it rather the diplomatic approach of Barack Obama? It is important to bear in mind the possible threat of eruption of a new regional conflict and foregoing dissolution of an American effort for stable and peaceful MENA region. The answer to this question will be provided by the research of three crucial aspects: the *sui generis* Iranian notions and objectives in the MENA region with an evaluation of a possible implication by terrorist groups, objectives and policies during the first term of George W. Bush and the second term of Barack Obama.

The theoretical framework is based on the concept of *realpolitik*, in particular, on the basis of the work of Hans Morgenthau.¹ The main theoretical paradigm of his work is based on the balance of power theory. This framework has proved to be especially beneficial while analyzing individual alliances and potential threats in the MENA region. The realist theory framework is essentially based upon the past and the present; it describes and evaluates the events that already have happened, while rejecting any idealistic assumptions and resisting predictions of the future.

Morgenthau's publication *Politics Among Nations* is also based on the idea that the international system itself is centered around the balance of power which generates basic principles and the essential stability in the international community of sovereign national states. Individual events and the very evolution of the American and Iranian relations were applied to this theoretical framework.² This theoretical concept was used primarily for two reasons. Firstly, the influence of concepts and conclusions of this theory is visible from the long-term perspective. Secondly, the U.S. foreign policy towards the MENA region leans to realist political principles.

¹MORGENTHAU, Hans J. a THOMPSON, Kenneth W., ed. *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*.
² *ibid.*

The core principle of realism is based on the hypothesis that conflicts and competition between possible actors (only individual states, not international organizations or other non-state actors) is natural and fits into the political structure. The existence of a national state is vital to the principles of international politics.³

According to this theoretical concept, national states represent the cornerstone of international relations and operate in the variably anarchic and potentially dangerous environment caused by the security dilemma. All these aspects and concepts of the realist theory are largely applicable to the MENA region because of the existence of several powerful national states and the significant instability in this regional environment.

According to Morgenthau's theory, state interests are defined by a state power. This power was the most appropriately defined by Henry Kissinger, stating that it is in the very nature of every state to project its power and superiority either intentionally or unconsciously, which can cause justifiable/unjustifiable fear in other states.⁴ The concept of state interests is plausible under one logical circumstance: a particular national state is able to clearly define a national interest which does not depend on the current political representation and leadership.

This thesis is based on a possible prediction of future development in the MENA region in the case of the American-Iranian cooperation policy and the possible middle ground solution of the Iranian nuclear program. In this case, it would be possible to conclude or disagree with the possible development of a new regional alliance. This will be based upon the number of mutual benefits of such a cooperation and conflicts among national interests of these two countries.

The definition of possible sources of power by Morgenthau is based on eight points: geographical location, natural resources, industrial base, military preparedness, population, national character, determination and preservation of the nation and the quality of diplomacy. However, according to a neorealist author Kenneth Waltz, the power of a national state stems from the size of territory and population, resources, economic power, military force, political stability and authority.⁵

³ PŠEJA, Pavel. *Přehled teorií mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 18.

⁴ BARŠA, Pavel, ČÍSAŘ, Ondřej, *Anarchie a řád*, pg. 66; BUZAN, Barry, WÆVER, Ole, DE WILDE, Jaap, *Bezpečnost*, pg. 31.

⁵ WALTZ, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*, pg. 131.

Waltz is also an author of the classical theory of balance of power. In a possible scenario, if one country becomes more powerful, this situation will automatically provoke a response of other states or groups which may be prone to create a closer partnership. According to his theory, there are two basic structures of international relationship – multipolar and bipolar. Waltz argues that the bipolar international arrangement can provide more regular international environment than the multipolar structure. However, he claims that a principal objective of every country is not to increase its power indefinitely but to develop crucial assets to further strengthen its safety.⁶

Waltz's innovative concept and his theory of the balance of threats provides two possible scenarios how an independent state could secure its safety.⁷ According to this theory, powerful countries do not inevitably pose a potential threat. The term "threat" is crucial here because countries security apparatus in general considers this particular issue to be more important than the theoretical concept of power. Power represents a single standard of several possibilities by which countries determine whether their potential adversaries threaten them. The first potential scenario to secure a state's safety is the balance of power. It particularly applies in this case: the state which considers itself to be targeted or directly threatened one way or another is prone to cooperate with states in a similar position against the main source of danger. The second potential scenario to preserve country's security represents the term called band-wagoning, which was defined as an effort of a potentially endangered state to cooperate and affiliate with the state that symbolizes the greatest threat. This approach is in a strong opposition to the traditional Morgenthau's theory of the balance of power. Waltz is convinced, that powerful states possess an ability to draw other countries (positively or even negatively) and therefore create a possibility to establish closer relations or even alliances in the middle or even in the long-term perspective. An alternative approach of Waltz's theory of balancing threats towards Morgenthau's classical balance of power theory is more supportive in order to theoretically clarify practical issues of international relations between states. Another asset of Walt's theory is denial of problematic extent of power itself.⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ WALTZ, Stephen. *Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power*, pg. 3 –43.

⁸ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 61; BUZAN, Barry, de WILDE, Jaap, WAEVER, Ole. *Bezpečnost*, pg. 31.

2. Review on the recent development in the MENA region

During the first presidency of Barack Obama, the MENA region was affected by a wide range of turbulent events, and changes that also had a significant impact on the United States' position in the region. As a result of the Arab Spring, a power vacuum emerged in the area. It was possible for the regional powers, including Iran, to strengthen their position of power. The relative decline of the influence of the U.S.⁹ along with the abrupt rise of the radical Islamism (especially the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) resulted in a convergence of interests of the United States and Iran. On September 10, 2014, President Obama announced the strategy to “*degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL*”.¹⁰ Secretary of State John Kerry announced on September 19 in the UN that Iran can also contribute to the fight against the Islamic State (IS).¹¹ Similar objective in this matter was also presented by the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani.¹² Possible operation with Iran to solve major regional conflicts such as the war in Syria and Iran, logically leads to a strengthening of its position in the MENA region, because Iran has got an unique opportunity to promote some of their interests in other countries in the MENA region due to their cooperation with the United States.

The main political priorities in the beginning of Barack Obama second term were based on a primarily domestic, political, economic and social issues; however, the turbulent development in the Middle East forced him to evaluate his principles. The emergence of massive protest movements in almost all countries of the MENA region, known as the Arab Spring, initiated more diplomatic approach of the U.S. State Department. One of the results of this approach was a reduction of the U.S. military involvement [in particular the number of land troops] in the MENA region in comparison with the presidency of George W. Bush.¹³ In accordance with this situation, there have been many significant changes over the last decades. The majority of them is objectively irreversible, despite the U.S. will. The main issues in the MENA region represent the rise of the Shiite branch of Islam and empowerment of the Kurdish nation, especially in Iraq and Syria.

⁹ KINZER, Stephen. *Iran, the Saudis, and the new “Great Game”*.

¹⁰ OBAMA, Barack. *We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL*. 10 Sept. 2014. ISIL (IS) – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

¹¹ KERRY John. “*There is a role for nearly every country to play, including Iran.*”
URL<<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/kerry-buildsupport-at/1371824.html>>

¹² *Terrorism cannot be eradicated by military action*. Islamic Republic of Iran’s Presidency website. Sept 25, 2014.

¹³ LYNCH, Marc. *Obama and the Middle East: Rightsizing the U.S. Role*.
URL<<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/obama-and-middle-east>>

3. Iranian position in the MENA region

From the geopolitics point of view, Iran is one of the most important countries in the Middle East, capable to exert its influence through its regional allies, especially Syria and Hezbollah. However, the position of Iran as a regional power and its national interests are in a sharp contradiction with the interests of the United States. The most problematic issue in the last twenty years represents the existence of Iran's nuclear program and concerns of the international community about a possible development of nuclear weapons. That was the main reason for imposing several international sanctions. However, their desired effect – to force Iran to cancel the nuclear program – was false. The Iranian economy, science and research were able to successfully continue the national nuclear program and even improve its capabilities and capacities.

From a different point of view, during the last decade, a difficult geopolitical situation, especially the emergence of the Islamic State, the civil war in Syria, the emergence of other local conflicts such as the war in Yemen, have established a middle ground for a potential American-Iranian security cooperation and mutual concessions.

The diplomatic approach of President Obama and his pro-cooperation policy towards the MENA region was met with a powerful criticism both home and abroad. This situation raised concerns especially among the two most important MENA allies, i.e. Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Israeli policy towards Iran has always been in a conflict, because it considers the Iranian nuclear program to be an imminent threat to its very existence and thus it supports a forceful solution of the issue. The second U.S. ally, Saudi Arabia, has been fighting with Iran for the regional hegemony for a long time, while this conflict has been further intensified by religious issues between Shiite and Sunni branches of Islam. It is important to emphasize, that the improvement in the American-Iranian cooperation is in a direct conflict with Saudi regional interests, which is even more visible from the point of view of the civil war in Syria, the war against the Islamic state in both Syria and Iraq and the civil war in Yemen.

From the point of view of both Morgenthau and Waltz theories in the specific case of Iran in the MENA region, it is possible to state that this country has great potential to become a strong regional power. It unites overwhelming aspects of the advantageous geographical location (firstly, it creates a natural bridge between the western parts of the MENA region and Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, secondly, it is a barrier between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and lastly, in case of

emergency, Iran possesses military means to block off the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most important oil traffic global routes, for a potentially longer period of time), natural resources (Iran owns huge amounts of natural resources, especially oil and natural gas; however, these were banned from international markets in several rounds of sanctions over the last decades), and stability of the political environment, relevant to the regional situation. Still, the possibility of various inner political (“liberally” oriented politicians are in opposition to conservative and clerical political powers) or social (freedom-seeking youth opposes views and rules of traditionally oriented communities) conflicts is not marginal.

From the point of view of mutual animosities between states of the MENA region, Iran struggles for the regional supremacy with two important regional allies of the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia. These two countries are relatively limited in terms of freedom of their individual and independent actions towards the international community or regional actors. The national interests of the United States are the primary objective of the U.S. Department of State, which is capable to use its influence and soft power to alter the decision-making process in both countries to a limited level. Iran, however, at present does not have such a strong connection to any of the global powers (over the last couple of years, security observers and academic community concluded that Iran’s cooperation with the Russian Federation on the issue of nuclear research and gradually advancing military partnership may serve as a pretext for further strengthening of mutual relationships and even for the possible formation of a proto-alliance), similar to the dynamics between Israel or Saudi Arabia and the United States. This indicates that Iran’s dependency on the national interests of global powers is relatively weaker, and thus provides greater tactical and diplomatic opportunities to pursue its own interests in the MENA region.¹⁴

According to both Morgenthau’s and Waltz’s theories, it is possible to assume, that if Iran is capable to obtain more power in the medium - term and long-term prospect, this issue will become gradually more important and ultimately will be viewed as a potential threat for the both U.S. allies in the region – Israel and Saudi Arabia. At the present, these countries possess sufficient military and diplomatic means to deal with the Iranian issue without the close cooperation with the U.S., so the potential threat and, more importantly, their conflicting interests in the key areas is manageable. From the point of view of the both U.S. allies, the worst case scenario is a threat of dismantling of

¹⁴ HUBBARD, Ben. *Despite Displeasure With U.S., Saudis Face Long Dependency*.
URL<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/world/middleeast/persian-gulf-allies-confront-crisis-of-confidence-inus.html?_r=0>

the alliance with the United States in favor of closer cooperation with Iran in order to solve geopolitical or regional disputes and issues (the long-term Israel-Palestinian conflict, the civil war in Syria, sectarian violence in Iraq and Yemen, constant dissemination of the radical Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia to the entire region and consolidation of security situation in Afghanistan) more effectively. It is important to state, that both realist theories conclusions and references provide merely a coherent theoretical framework, therefore, it is not possible to use all notions and references on highly unstable and incoherent regional conditions of the MENA region that are influenced by a wide range of other aspects.

3.1 Iranian objectives and strategies

At the present, the world is full of countries that try to undermine the effort of the United States to create a planet with one dominant superpower which would not be challenged by any adversary. Intentions of these countries may vary, from the attempt to create a bipolar, possibly a tri-polar or multi-polar world. The majority of these countries prefer multi-polar arrangement with several leading regional powers. Today, Iran is slowly, but firmly getting closer and closer to become the ascending and leading power in the MENA region. It is questionable whether it will ever be able to gain such a position that would remind that the area of the Middle East is vital for the United States national interests (in the next couple of decades, the position of the most important global region would shift to the Indo-Pacific area). The United States is trying to put a stop to the Iranian attempt to gain a major influence in the region, mainly through developing its own nuclear bomb. Because of the fact that there is no certainty what an outcome of such a situation would be, it is important to focus on this topic and, if it is possible, to answer questions such as: What can be done (if anything) to persuade Iran to stop its journey towards the nuclear bomb? What are true intentions and nuances in the background of the Iranian government? What would the nuclear bomb in Iran's hands mean for the region, the United States and the rest of the world? It is crucial to evaluate the statement that there still exist a possibility to embrace Iran, persuade it to abandon the plan to manufacture its own nuclear bomb and accommodate it with a possible cooperation to stabilize the entire MENA region.

In order to comprehensively understand Iranian interests and notions, it is important to briefly analyze its inner political system and ideological roots which are based upon Shiite Islamic culture. According to Jacob Rigi, the Iranian regime is not similar to a classical centralized

dictatorship. It is an “*assemblage of multicentric despotic oligarchies*”¹⁵, which also incorporates theocratic Shiite principles. In general, the government and its officials act in the name of religion, but also actively participate in the political power competition among various oligarchic groups (Revolutionary brigades, etc.).

However the most influential political authority in Iran lies in the hands of the Supreme leader, a role established under *velayat-e-faqih* (rule by the jurist). He has got the power to shape general policies in the inner-political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he is also the supreme commander of the armed forces, he declares war or peace. The position originally created for Ayatollah Khomeini, subsequently, after his death, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei inherited the title.¹⁶

One of the most important aspects of to the perception of the Islamic Republic government, especially Khamenei, towards the United States is the notion that the ultimate goal of the American government is to replace the Iranian regime with a secular, pro-American one, while there is also a strong belief that the influence of the United States in Iran and broadly speaking in the MENA region is culturally indoctrinating and therefore harmful for the Iranian culture and religion. Due to the above-mentioned notions, it is understandable that Iran has become one of the most anti-American forces and the ultimate funding, advice and weapons source for various militant groups actively participating in the MENA region, especially in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.¹⁷

It is important to state, that there is also strong tie between Sunni community in Palestine, and Iranian supported Hezbollah (Shiite movement) movement in Lebanon, especially since Israeli-Lebanese War in 2006. During that time an old Arabic saying: "Me and my brother against my cousin, but me and my cousin against the outsider" became popular. This message, more than anything else represents the real position and notions of the Iranian government towards American closest ally in the region and uncovers true intentions towards MENA region.¹⁸

Subsequently, it is possible to assume that the basic Iranian national security strategy is to assure the very survival of the regime itself. American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, while overthrowing both Taliban and Saddam Hussein, shown Iranian regime its own possible future. The leadership felt an imminent danger and assumed that Iraq would serve as a base to invade Iran and

¹⁵ KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (2014), pg. 130.

¹⁶ CRANE, Keith; LAL, Rollie; MARTINI, Jeffrey. *Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities*. Rand Corporation, 2008,pg. 39

¹⁷ DOBBINS, James et al. *Coping with a nuclearising Iran*, pg. ix.

¹⁸ ROSTAMI-Povey, Elaheh. *Iran's influence*, Zed Books, 2010, pg. 85

dispose of the Islamic Republic, however since the destruction of Iraqi army, Iran consider its position as empowered.¹⁹

3.2 Iranian priorities and possibilities for an agreement with the U.S.

As every country, Iran also possesses several key elements involving its internal and foreign policy. As for the possibility of an engagement with the United States towards Iran, the main question is if these elements are in some way contradicting the United States long-term goals in the MENA region. In general, it is possible to state, that Iran, as the successor of the Persian Empire is willing to re-establish this empire in one way or another, in terms of gaining a major influence in the region and apparently becoming the main regional power. The most probable choice would be not to simply conquer these former Persian territories in a conflict but to establish a secured influence. In order to succeed, it is important to state several key elements:

1) The internal security of Iran itself – Iranian population consists of 89% Shiites and 9% of Sunnis. Iran will never tolerate any attempts to take advantage of its internal heterogeneity in order to spread chaos or violence. If any terrorist acts occur and it is obvious that it has a foreign background, Iran will retaliate with bomb attacks in Saudi Arabia and especially in Iraq. One of the most important things that the United States and the West must do in order to gain Iran's will to negotiate, is to cancel the support to three Iranian terrorist groups, responsible for killing the innocent – *Kurdistan Party for Independence* (which has found secured haven in the Northern Iraq), *Mujjahedin-e chalq* (stationed in Iraq) and *Dzund Allah* (a Balluchi organization associated with al-Qaeda). All three organizations are closely tied to the U.S. intelligence agencies. There is a possibility, that if the United States ended their support to these groups, Iran would halt its (limited) support of al-Qaeda (Shiite Iran does not have any good reason to help the Sunni's based organization)²⁰.

2) Probably the most important foreign policy goal is the end of violence in Iraq, which could possibly cross the borders and cause similar problems in Iran. Because of the significant Shiite population in the eastern and southern parts in Iraq, it is possible that Iran would be able to

¹⁹ DAVIS, Lynn E.; MARTINI Jeffrey; NADER, Alireza. *Iran's Nuclear Future*, Rand Corporation, 2011, pg. 9

²⁰ BAER, Robert. *Jak naložit s Ďáblem*, Volvox Globator, 2009, pg. 278

stop the violence at least in those areas if it was given a chance. (Subsequently, it is possible to assume that these areas would occur in the Iranian sphere of influence²¹.)

3) The stability in energy inputs. Iran wants better prizes for its oil, modern technology to make its drilling processes more effective and alternative sources of energy, for instance, a nuclear power plant. Iran had threatened to close the strait of Hormuz several times, but destabilization of the entire segment of market for a longer period of time, which could possibly lead to economic difficulties in Western countries, is not something the Iranian government would like to achieve. Iran needs a stable and clear situation on the oil markets, (the oil industry represented 25% of the entire Iranian GDP in 2012, i.e. 84% of their exported goods did have the petroleum or petrochemical origin).²²

4) Iran would never give up its influence in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and the Gaza Strip without serious counteraction. Even more importantly, it would proceed with its demand to become the main power in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region after the United States' withdrawal. Iran will remain to be a defender of the Shiite Muslims and Palestinians as well. It will not try to create the Shiite republic in any country of its sphere of influence because of the possible civil and ethnic war between Shiites and Sunnis²³.

5) The control of Mecca and Medina together with Saudi Arabia is the last Iranian foreign policy goal which would by all means catapult Iran into the position of the main leader in the entire Muslim world²⁴.

6) The acknowledgment and equality were denied to common Iranians/Persians for the last 1,300 years because of their different approach towards the basic Muslim traditions. They were treated like the second-rate believers. Iran also wants to be recognized for what it is in reality: a stable country, with borders which generally have not changed for thousands of years, the most powerful country in the Persian Gulf, the second biggest producer of oil within the OPEC, the regional economic power and the country with a crucial influence in the entire Muslim world. Iran wants to achieve a righteous international system. It asks questions like: Why the entire world ignores the United Nations Resolution 242 which calls for Israel's withdrawal from occupied

21 Ibid, pg 230

22 Iran Investment Monthly, *Turquoise Partners* (April 2012) - July 24, 2012,
URL<<http://www.turquoisepartners.com/iraninvestment/IIM-AprMay12.pdf>>

23 Ibid

24 Ibid

territories, but resolutions against Iran are widely recognized? Why IAEA is so focused on the Iranian nuclear program, but the same program in Israel does not concern it? ²⁵

From the Iranian point of view, all these points of internal/foreign policy elements seem legitimate. In the end, it is up to the United States to decide whether there exists a possibility that the U.S. would be willing to stand down and comfort Iran with several or even all its requests in exchange for something else (a sincere effort to stop its nuclear program for instance) and even consider carefully the possibility of a closer cooperation and stabilization of the region.

A possible agreement between the United States and Iran would have to be depicted as a long-term gradual process, where both sides would agree on several mutual admissions based on some crucial points, such as:²⁶

1) Iran's internal security guaranteed by the suspension of support to the anti-Iranian groups in Iraq, as a condition in order to cease the Iranian financial support and armament of subsidies to Hamas and Hezbollah.

2) Joint naval patrols in the Persian Gulf. It would be wise to create something similar as the hotline Washington-Moscow from the Cold War period and improve communication between both navies deployed in the Gulf. This would lead to the U.S. acknowledgment of Iran as powerful partner in the area. In this case, Iran would probably stop terrorizing American ships in the area.

3) Lifting of embargoes against Iran. Western oil-drilling companies should invest into Iranian oil fields which would have a positive impact both on the Iranian and the world economy and even permission of the Iranian import of civilian planes spare parts. On the contrary, Iran could end the support to Hezbollah.

4) Guarantee of a clearly defined security role of Iran in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran should be able to openly participate on the stabilization role of Basra and the southern Iraq (both are the home to the significant Shiite population), Iran could also help the United States in pacification of the Taliban forces. An actual cooperation between the American and Iranian forces against this militant organization had already been executed several years ago.

²⁵ BAER, Robert. *Jak naložit s Ďáblem*, Volvox Globator, 2009, pg.280

²⁶ Ibid, pg. 168

5) Enforcing the UN Resolution 242 according to which Israeli forces should withdraw to the legal boundaries of 1967. It would be the first step in ending the Iranian involvement in the Palestinian question. As a result, Iran could force Hamas and Islamic Jihad to cease fire.

6) Incorporation of Hezbollah forces into Lebanese army in case that Lebanon as an independent country would cease to exist. Hezbollah would most probably never give up; however, under the Iranian inspection it could be able to create peaceful solution.

7) Submission of all nuclear weapons (including Israeli and possible Iranian weapons as well) in the Middle East under international survey. By this step, it would be impossible for Iran to complain on double standards in the international affairs²⁷.

These assumptions are meant as possible and reasonable outcomes of the Western acknowledgment of Iran as an ascending power with a future key influence upon the Muslim world. Assuming that Iranian internal policy is logical and reasonable, a potential agreement between the West and Iran could possibly lead to cooperation, which would be as significant as the Sino-American one in the late 1970's.

It is important to state that during the first presidency of George W. Bush, any prospect of Israeli assault against Iran's nuclear installations created significant outrage for several reasons, such as, the U.S. would be automatically blamed for such action regardless of whether President Bush had given Israelis his support or not, subsequently American forces would be necessary to take out Iran's nuclear installations, which would create a major escalation of violence in the entire region, while creating vulnerable position for the American forces and interests in the region.²⁸

Subsequent Iranian retaliation would most probably be focused on its abilities such as: control of Lebanese Hezbollah, bombardment of Israeli Natural gas Sites with various missile strikes, escalating the situation for American forces both in Iraq and Afghanistan, promotion of general terrorism in the world, or creation of various insurgencies in the Persian Gulf.²⁹

One the most important issues concerning mutual national interests represents the situation in Afghanistan. In the future, American forces will withdraw from Afghanistan, which could lead to an increase activity of both Taliban forces and Al-Qaeda. Iran could use its cultural, political, and economic capabilities to prevent the country from falling apart and sink into the civil war. To

²⁷ BAER, Robert. *Jak naložit s Ďáblem*, Volvox Globator, 2009, pg. 291-295

²⁸ PARSI, Trita. *Treacherous Alliance*, Yale University Press, 2007, pg. 256

²⁹ GAY, Allen John; *War with Iran*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers INC., 2013, pg. 82-87

promote stability in Afghanistan, the U.S. should attempt to cooperate with Iran in countering narcotics and promote Afghan sovereignty.³⁰

3.3 Possibilities for Iranian containment

The possibility of Iran's containment would mean to maintain the U.S. soldiers both in Iraq and Afghanistan for a long period of time, probably for the next several decades. Both countries are unmanageable without the use of force. In order to stop the diffusion of the Iranian influence, it would be necessary to deploy approximately half a million soldiers along Iranian borders for an extended period of time. It would only bring a great financial burden upon the American taxpayers and reach a status quo. Another option would be a direct military campaign against Iran but according to the statement of former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates: "*Another war in the region is the last thing Middle East needs at this very moment*"³¹. The result of such an action would be catastrophic, regardless what the outcome would be like. From the military point of view, the invasion of Iran would be entirely different from the invasion of Iraq because of several reasons. Iranian army is frequently improving its asymmetric style of warfare and is still nourishing the cult of martyrdom. Possible occupation could easily turn into a nightmare with hundreds of thousands American casualties³².

The last possibility is to provoke the civil war between the Sunnites and Shiites, most probably in the area of Lebanon. Supplying Sunnis radicals with various armament and encouraging them to attack Hezbollah would, in a long run, probably lead to the end of conventional attacks of this terrorist organization against Israel because of the exhaustion of all force in the ongoing battles against the armed Sunni's forces. This situation would most probably force Iran to act on behalf of the Shiite forces, which would result into an open loss of the anti-colonial credit. In general, this approach is considered the most problematic because of the vast amount of uncertainties regarding what could happen, what the results could be while there is no guarantee that the situation would turn better than it had been before. Possible issues could in extreme cases cause the fall of six dysfunctional monarchies in the region – Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE –

³⁰ NADER, Alireza, SCOTTEN, Ali G.;RAHMANI, *Ahmad. Iran's Influence in Afghanistan*, RAND Corporation, 2014, pg. 58

³¹ URL<<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/10/magazine/10gates-t.html>>

³² BAER, Robert. *Jak naložit s Ďáblem*, Volvox Globator, 2009, pg.283

and subsequently erupt oil prizes and shrink of its amount on a global scale. Such a situation would not benefits neither the U.S. nor Iran.³³.

So far, the most convenient way how the U.S. could deal with Iran is to accommodate a mutually beneficial agreement based on shared responsibility for the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

The very notion of being proud of Iranian ancient history and cultural heritage has been an integral part of Iranian/Persian political ethos for centuries. For that particular reason, there is a high probability that those very sanctions, which were proposed by the international community on the Iranian economy during the last decades, united the Iranian public against the rest of the world, especially against the United States, and increased the domestic support for the enhancement of nuclear industry both for civilian and military purposes.

3.4 Iran, WMD and terrorist organizations

The most serious threat to the U.S. Middle East policy represents the possibility that Iranian regime would be able to manufacture its very own nuclear bomb. This act would pose such a danger for American interests in the disputed area, that in the eyes of the U.S. government it would be similar to the declaration of war. In order to prevent such scenario, the U.S. government decided to implement an old and successful policy from the Cold War, the deterrence. The question remains if such a step would bring any results. The Iranian situation is not even close, compared with the former USSR. It is possible to overview this question if Iran can be deterred, and if so, to what extent? In order to answer, it is inevitable to observe several situations in which Iran occurred throughout the last 30 years³⁴.

One of the most visible aspects according to the Iranian unwillingness to step back was the war with Iraq in the 1980's. Motivated by revolutionary and religious zeal, Iran was able to persist during the conflict by launching human wave attacks against better equipped and better trained Iraqi Army. Iran even used whole formations of children between twelve to fifteen years old to clear minefields to allow the Iranian army to advance. In addition, the notion of martyrdom of the Third Imam, Hussein was exploited to employ suicide bombers who marched against the Iraqi troops and

33 Ibid, pg 295

34 GOLD, Dore. *Rise of Nuclear Iran: How Tehran Continues to Defy the West*, Regnery Publishing, 2009 pg.24

blew themselves up. At the height of war, the number of child volunteers, known as the *Basij*, reached a number of 400,000. Iran continued in war, despite losing hundreds of thousands of its people. This military behavior was closely examined by a leading religious leader Dr. Hadi Modaressi who stated: “*We welcome military aggression against us because it strengthens the revolution and rallies the masses around it*”,³⁵ revealing a close philosophic-social-religious bond in the minds of Iranian military leaders (in a broader sense also among the general public or at least its majority) between war and spreading of Iranian revolutionary ideas. Other statements which can clearly provide certain overview concerning the Iranian notion of the national fate are: “*We uphold the worldwide Islamic movement. We believe the world order should change*”, or “*Where do we look in drawing up the National Security strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran? Do we look to preserve the integrity of our land, or do we look to its expansion? Do we look to bast (expansion) or to hefz (preservation)? We must definitely look to expansion. The Islamic Republic’s survival depends on the support of a global Islamic force*”³⁶.

Shortly after the election of president Mahmud Ahmadinejad in 2005, Iranian zeal to spread chaos in an anticipation to the arrival of a new era of divine revelation, and absolute lack of fear from anyone was emphasized. This pattern of behaviour can be comprehend after the examination of the doctrine of Mahdism, which clearly refers to the return of the Hidden Imam according to which only war would be able to deliver him to the earth.

Because of these reasons any threat of even massive retaliation against Iran (for repeatable actions to manufacture nuclear weapons for example) would most probably not deter Iranian government at all. More probably the vision of numerous civilian losses as a symbol of martyrdom and death would even play into regimes hands and strengthen its position among Iranian society (at least among significant part). There is a high probability that president Ahmadinejad together with several leading military and political officials adopted Madhist doctrine. In addition, Iranian elites firm commitment to export the Islamic Revolution and the notion to challenge the West directly makes Iran even less vulnerable to deterioration. Due to given information, it is highly unlikely that Iran would be willing to stop its nuclear program, reminding the fact, that United States, EU and the UN (to some extent) failed to back up their threats and to make enough and necessary acts to force Iran to cooperate³⁷.

35 Ibid, pg 28

36 Ibid, pg 32

37 GOLD, Dore. *Rise of Nuclear Iran: How Tehran Continues to Defy the West*, Regnery Publishing, 2009 pg. 31

Subsequently Iran uses its vast net of several terrorist organizations to project its power and to stay cloaked at the same time if such an organization, supported from Iranian funds, trained and equipped by Iranian military (Quads forces in particular) would succeed on its mission. It is problematic to prove such a connection between Iranian military officials and leaders of various terrorist organizations while Iran successfully continues in its pro-terrorist policy. From various groups (Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Iraq and Sunni Hamas, Taliban, Algerian GIA and Bosnian SDA) connected somehow to Iran all are provided with funding, training and weapons³⁸.

According to the American author Dennis Ross, President Obama made several points regarding the above mentioned Iranian notion on May 1, 2006: *“As for those who think that the nuclear deterrent rules that governed relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War will also apply in a nuclear Middle East: Don’t be so confident”* or *“With an Iranian president who sees himself as an instrument for accelerating the coming of the 12th Imam – which is preceded in the mythology by the equivalent Armageddon – one should not take comfort in thinking that Iran will act responsibly”*³⁹.

From information given above, it is clear, that with the high probability, Iran is unable to deter and more possibly, it welcomes the opportunity of war in a way that it will enable it to spread chaos and desperation throughout the entire region of the Middle East. It is questionable, whether any military operation against Iranian nuclear installations would meet with any successful results. There is, however a high probability that with the use of precise airstrikes and “smart bombs” the entire Iranian program could be possibly delayed for a several years, but ultimately, an objective to obtain a fully functional atomic bomb would be successful.

During the last two decades, security experts and political commentators are expressing serious concerns, about the possibility, that unspecified WMD could find its way from the official governments to the hands of various terrorist organizations. It is important to state that nowadays, the number of countries willing to commit such an act willingly, is increasing (problematic situation in Pakistan and the North Korea). Possibility, that any terrorist organization directly or indirectly supported by Iran would be able to acquire WMD, to commit terrorist action, for whatever possible reasons, is problematic to deal with. Among experts, this scenario is usually received with high degree of disbelief, arguing that terrorist organizations to manufacture such weapons are facing basic technical difficulties of having access to materials needed to manufacture WMD and scientific

38 Ibid pg. 291

39 Ibid pg. 124

and technological obstacles⁴⁰. Possibility of WMD's attack is among the "low probability, high consequence" cases. Even assuming that experts on the field of nuclear terrorism are correct, there still exists the inevitability to verify or disapprove such a statement.

In order to closely examine the connection between Iran, terrorist organizations and their possibilities to obtain WMD it is to focus on several aspects, such as particular attempts of terrorist organizations to obtain nuclear weapons. Due to the limited research of this paper, WMD are reduced on the single aspects of nuclear weapons, excluding other WMD, biological and chemical weapons in particular. Special importance will be focused on specific kind of nuclear device known as Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD), more commonly known as a "dirty bomb"⁴¹ which construction requirements are significantly lower compared with regular nuclear weapons.

4. Definition of the nuclear terrorism

At the present, there is no precedent of terrorist attack with the use of nuclear weapon, as well as no known purchase of nuclear explosive device or material to terrorist organization. If something like that occur, there will be an urgent need to seek and prosecute those responsible, while subsequently punish both, terrorist organization and the purchaser, whether it would be a single person, organization, or another country.

International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism defines this term as "*a use, an attempt or a threat to use in any way nuclear material or other radioactive substances or a device, or use or damage a nuclear facility in a manner which releases or risks the release of radioactive material with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or substantial damage to property or to the environment, or to compel someone to do or refrain from doing an act*"⁴².

In practical terms it is possible to define five different scenarios of nuclear terrorism: (1) explosion of ready-made nuclear weapon, (2) construction of an improvised nuclear weapon, (3) assembling of the Radiological Dispersion Device (RDD) (not necessarily containing nuclear material), (4) radioactive material can be used in inhalation, ingestion and immersion (I3) attacks, (5) attack on or sabotage of nuclear installation by a terrorist group⁴³

40 KLIBAROGLU, M. *Defence Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009 pg.3

41 EDWARDS, R. "Only a matter of time?", *New Scientist*, 182 (2450), pg. 8–9.

42 KLIBAROGLU, M. *Defence Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009 pg.127

43 *Ibid*, pg. 128

The fifth option is in general considered as probably the most plausible for terrorist groups to achieve (comparing with the other options). Cybernetic attacks committed by sophisticated terrorists onto the command and control centrals of countries armed with nuclear weapons is a significant threat in spite of the major effort of such countries to prevent such a scenario. In order to counter such a possibility, the UN General Assembly approved and created an international panel of experts in December 2008. According to their research, these cybernetic attacks may most probably include faking of a nuclear attack, faking a command signal to launch an attack, posting false claims of responsibility on government websites. In addition, if the nuclear warhead actually hit the target, massive disruption of disaster relief operations would be another point of this type of terrorist attack⁴⁴.

The reaction of international community to nuclear terrorism was declared in 2010 in Paris. Launched “Global Zero” initiative announced a short-term plan for the phased, verified elimination of all nuclear weapons. The plan started with deep reductions in the U.S. and Russian arsenals, followed by multilateral negotiations among all nuclear powers in order to accomplish the objective of nuclear global zero initiative. It was obvious, that the elimination of all nuclear weapons would take quite a long time, short-term effort needs to focus to achieve the objective of non-legitimacy of nuclear weapons in general⁴⁵.

4.1 Considerations regarding the usage of nuclear weapons by terrorist organizations

In general, there are no serious disputes about determination of various terrorist groups to possess nuclear device. They have clearly stated it in word and print and there are also documented evidences of their attempts to do so. While there is not a general characteristic that may be applied to all terrorist groups in the world, some of them stated their intentions openly⁴⁶. Especially number of statement were made by al Qaeda, (The base) founded 1988 indicating high intention to acquire such a capability in order to achieve their political goal of a pan-Islamic caliphate and a castigated western world. This jihadist - Salafi fundamentalist organization founded by Osama bin-Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri has proclaimed itself as the preeminent Islamic terrorist organization, drawing

44 VOICA, D.-R. KIBAROGLU, M. *Response to Nuclear and Radiological Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2011 pg.119

45 Ibid, pg. 121

46 KIBAROGLU, M. *Defence Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009 pg.45

support from numerous other Islamic groups. Since 1998 fatwa by Osama and Zawahri declared that it was the duty of Muslims to kill Americans wherever they could be found. According to an interview with *Time Magazine* in 1998 Osama bin-Laden asserted, that acquiring WMD was a religious duty for all Muslims and was fully in accordance with Islamic precepts as defined by Allah⁴⁷. There is no doubt that nuclear attack on the area of (primarily) United States would vastly serve *al-Qaeda's* primary goal: mass casualties murder, creation of wide economic, social and maybe also political disruption and most importantly, psychological extinguishment of a civilian population⁴⁸.

In 2003 a young Saudi cleric issued a *fatwa* arguing, that the actual usage of nuclear weapons did not contradict Quran and quite in oppose, it was acceptable and compatible, if it led to the defeat of the enemy⁴⁹

Probably the most significant evidence that *al Qaeda* seeks the opportunity to gain access to nuclear capability was a September 2006 call from the leader *Abu Ayyub al-Masri* seeking “*people of distinguished skills and high levels of expertise... particularly... nuclear scientists and explosives engineers*” to work with *al Qaeda-in-Iraq*”⁵⁰.

Additionally, according to some statements, al-Qaeda had operatives actively tried to obtain WMD material. In 1993 or 1994 bin-Lade himself was attempting to buy an unknown quantity of uranium from Sudan. Then again in 1996, he continued doing so in Afghanistan when he consulted with Pakistani nuclear scientists. Late in 2001 after the fall of Taliban, various technical manuals about nuclear weapons were found in the city of Khost and Kabul, which revealed close contacts with Pakistani scientists.⁵¹

According to the information provided by intelligence services and also by numerous statements provided by terrorists themselves, in a hypothetical case when obtaining any kind of WMD material (not strictly only nuclear) there would be no doubt, that these weapons would be used against United States (primarily) and its allies in order to inflict as much damage and casualties as possible. The above-mentioned evaluation is applicable to any Iranian supported group, as well, while these

47 Ibid pg. 47

48 Ibid pg. 10

49 Ibid pg. 28

50 Ibid pg. 12

51 Ibidpg 49

are nowadays suspected by various politicians, and security experts to represent the main terrorist threats.

4.2 Evaluation of a possible nuclear terrorist menace

It is widely believed among experts in the field of non-proliferation that it is rather matter of “when” than “if” the threat of nuclear weapons armed terrorist groups will become reality. It is the task of these experts to provide their governments with necessary information about the ways and means of solving this problem, so as to delay this event into the future as much as possible and also to develop necessary scientific, technological know-how that would be able to minimize the effects of an attack by nuclear weapons. On the other hand, Dr. Lewis Dunn speculates on whether there is in fact a debate within al-Qaeda about the ethics of killing indiscriminately as for the very ability to build such a weapon. Dr. Dunn quoted: *“For those who think it is hard to make a nuclear weapon, it is easier than you think. For those who think it is easy to make a nuclear weapon, it is harder than you think”*⁵².

In order to evaluate possible terrorist usage of nuclear weapons it is necessary to state several ways how a terrorist group could specifically operate and what kind of nuclear attack could be committed: 1. Use of a “dirty bomb” (Radioactive Dispersal Device – RDD). This weapon is able to spread highly toxic radioactive material which can cause mass death and injury. 2. Sabotage against facilities, locations, transports in order to cause release of highly radioactive debris to create a radiological hazard. 3. Nuclear device/material theft. This theft of an intact nuclear device would be extremely difficult, but not impossible. 4. Generate electromagnetic pulse. Terrorists could use nuclear material in order to generate EMP, which could destroy or at least damage most electrical circuits and electrical items⁵³.

The second point is probably the most worrisome because it is known that nuclear infrastructure of non-nuclear weapons countries is in some cases more vulnerable than of the nuclear weapons states. These issues exist in wealthy countries because some of them have no armed guards at nuclear facilities, or only protect them against very modest threats. According to the third point, even if a terrorist group was able to steal a nuclear weapon, it would be in no use for them because of the inbuilt device code systems. Unfortunately, uranium mining companies are

52 AYTAC, O. KIBAROGLU, M. *Defence Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009 pg.7

53 VOICA, D.-R. KIBAROGLU, M. *Response to Nuclear and Radiological Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2011 pg. 67

stepping up uranium exploration and development in countries like Niger, Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mali without proper security management. The uncontrolled freelance mining in these areas has long worried international community that the raw materials for a bomb might fall into the wrong hands

Whether a terrorist organization like al-Qaeda obtain the ability to execute a nuclear attack is highly improbable. The group would need to acquire nuclear materials or a weapon itself, build a bomb or unlock the existing one and then move that weapon to its target and detonate it. Each step would require a high degree of skill, coordination and technical base. In addition, the size of most of nuclear weapons makes them hard to transport, especially undercover. Even more problematic would be the amount of unnecessary shielding protection in order to cloak the device against sophisticated detection devices, which would make it even harder to move. Although some public officials and journalists claim that nuclear device can be “built in a basement” evidence suggests that building device capable of causing mass casualties would require great expertise, time and money. The most problematic obstacles in order to build such a weapon requires access to fissile material and scientific expertise. As a fissile material in order the weapon to “work properly” one need either uranium-235 enriched well above 20% or any isotope of plutonium²³⁹ in a significant quantity, which varies at eight kilograms (critical mass) of Plutonium-239 (over 20%) due to IAEA. In opposition to this statement, the U.S. Department of Energy stated in 1994 that even four kilograms of plutonium are sufficient to create a nuclear weapon⁵⁴. Instead of plutonium, uranium enriched to 94% can be possibly used as well. The amount required for a 20-kiloton bomb would be from 5-6 kg of plutonium or 25 kg of uranium. Because of strict regulations and high security of all states stockpiles of Pu-239 and U-235, terrorists would most probably try to acquire Pu-240 (known as reactor-grade plutonium, because it is created in the nuclear reactor as one of the main byproducts of nuclear power generation) and also uranium enriched less than 94%. Because of less quality, the amount of from 7-15 kg of Pu-240 would be required to produce at least low-yield explosion which would cause significantly less damage⁵⁵.

Even in the situation when a terrorist group would be able to obtain the needed amount of this material it would still had to overcome great technical difficulties. Despite the leaks of scientific and technical information regarding the manufacture of nuclear weapon that appeared in the internet, due to the 2007 *Country Reports on Terrorism*, the U.S. Department of State stated that

54 AYTAC, O. KIBAROGLU, M. *Defence Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009 pg. 51

55 GURR, NADINE. *Changing Face of Terrorism: How Real is the Threat from Biological, Chemical and Nuclear Weapons?* (3rd Edition), I.B. Tauris, 2010 pg.38

“the complete production of a nuclear weapon likely remains beyond the reach of a terrorist for the foreseeable future”. Weapon’s design would require a team of highly knowledgeable and diverse subject matter experts. Al-Qaeda itself is simply not “sophisticated” that much, even with the help of some Pakistani scientists. The most powerful illustration of corrupted individual willing to sell his know-how about nuclear weapons construction is Abdul Qadeer Khan network⁵⁶. However, at nowadays, any Iranian supported terrorist group (Hezbollah – a Shiite Islamic terrorist group, Hamas – a Sunni Islamic terrorist group, etc.) which would gain sufficient support (official or non-official) from the Iranian government is seen as the most probable adversary in the field of nuclear weapons armed terrorist group.

As seen above, terrorist organization, which would like to facilitate any sophisticated or advanced nuclear material or weapon only by itself would face significant and almost impassable difficulties based on the lack of amount of convenient nuclear material, difficulties with transport and insufficient technical and technological know-how concerning the specific design of a nuclear weapon.

4.3 “Dirty bombs” and the consequences of a nuclear blast

It is commonly known fact that the nuclear research facilities or commercial nuclear power plants contain enormous quantities of radioactive material in spent fuel pools. These pools contain five times much radioactive materials as the reactor core and they are stored in simple steel buildings, which are even more vulnerable to attacks than the reactor containment buildings. The results of an attack on either a reactor or spent fuel pools could be equal or even easily exceed the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Speaking of radioactive material, terrorists could be able to create a “dirty bomb” by combining conventional explosive material with the radioactive one, which would disperse in the area when the bomb exploded⁵⁷.

A “dirty bomb” (RDD) combines variable radioactive material (Cesium-137, Strontium-90, Cobalt-60, Americium-241, Plutonium-239, Polonium-210 with conventional explosives, such as TNT. Explosion propels radioactive gas over an area beyond the explosion. It is important to emphasize the difference between nuclear bombs and dirty bombs, which are vastly different in their level of destruction and lethality. Nuclear bombs spread its highly radioactive material over

56 AYTAC, O. KIBAROGLU, M. *Defence Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009 pg. 59

57 VOICA, D.-R. KIBAROGLU, M. *Response to Nuclear and Radiological Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2011 pg. 79

tens to hundreds of square miles, while dirty bombs spread the small amount of radiation only over few blocks or miles from the explosion. It is logical that building such a device is not problematic. The only hard part is acquiring the radioactive material. It is generally believed among experts that it is not possible to predict, if terrorists could be able to detonate highly radioactive material without injuring themselves first. Fortunately, the explosion of RDD is not the nuclear blast, because material present in the bomb is “only” dispersed by the explosion and do not participate in the explosion itself⁵⁸.

General characteristics of RDD could be stated as dispersed radioactive material, which could cause increased cancer risk with high cost to clean up, using low technology and low cost to make, with wide range of usable materials, economic and mainly psychological impact, spreading fear among general public. It is believed that level of terrorists’ expertise in balancing the use of explosive with the nature and quantity of the radioactive material is vital due to the blast effect and further lethality of the bomb. Due to its ability to cause terror, fear, panic and disruption rather than ability to destroy, RDD is considered a Weapon of Mass Destruction but more often they are also referred as weapons of mass disruption⁵⁹.

It is certain, that the most harmful radioactive materials in order to build such a bomb are located in nuclear power plants, however security in those areas pose a significant (not in every case) threat to possible terrorist attempts to obtain it. There is a greater chance that RDD would use low-level radioactive materials, which could be found in hospitals, industrial or construction sites.

Even for sophisticated RDD, the number of deaths would most probably not reach three figures but mentioned psychological and financial shock would be much greater. Successful use of such RDD seems as the most likely scenario considering all the difficulties connected with manufacturing and transporting conventional nuclear weapon. The hard reality is that while the majority of terrorist organizations are incapable of this level of attack, it is possible, that one day technology and materials (which are present in our world in great amount) needed to construct such a device will be actually used in order to spread fear and terror among general public.

Nowadays, nuclear terrorism is the threat that should not be taken lightly. It is simplified as a tool, an attempt or a threat to use in any way, when nuclear material or other radioactive substances or a device with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or substantial damage

58 Ibid, pg. 80

59 Ibid, pg. 83

to property may be considered as serious threat, which is unlikely to happen, because of various reasons, but surely cannot be ignored. It is in general believe that terrorist will not be able to achieve needed skills and know-how to manufacture fully operational nuclear bomb. In the improbable case when terrorists would achieve nuclear weapon there are little doubts that this devise would be used primarily in order to spread panic and fear, and only secondary to kill a mass amount of people. More possible way to achieve this primary goal would be construction of a dirty bomb. United States as the main norm leader in the world is trying to achieve as much proliferation agenda as possible, however, non- sensitive nuclear cooperation may lead to the situation, when several countries will be able to manufacture their own nuclear weapons. However, in the case if a nuclear armed country (Iran, Pakistan) willingly or unwillingly hand over nuclear material, or even fully-functioning nuclear weapons to a terrorist group, above stated information and conclusions would become irrelevant.

It is important to state that if the U.S. would take preemptive military action against Iran, even without a fully functional nuclear bomb, the regime might consider the detonation of one, or more dirty bombs, or EMP attacks on U.S. soil using a ship-borne attack with either middle-range or short range ballistic missile. Another option would be to encourage Hezbollah to attack targets in Israel, or Western Europe. This kind of terrorist attack would most likely emerge as an important retaliation tool of an Iranian response to U.S. attack. The possibility of small-boat swarm attacks would also likely emerge, in order to conduct attacks against both Gulf shipping and American fleet stationed in the region.⁶⁰

5 The U.S. policy towards nuclear weapons and the Iranian nuclear program during the first term of George W. Bush

After the end of the Cold War, and during the last decade of the 20 century, new challenges and new questions appeared in front of the United States. Fall of the Soviet Union, geopolitical dominance of the U.S. and relative friendship among other global power centers such as China, India, Russia and the EU were giving hope into hearts and minds of common people that the 21st. century is going to be more tranquil and in general also more rightful than the century before. Existence of an authoritarian regime, poverty, ecological problems, humanitarian disasters and other atrocities were known, but the raising effort to solve these issues was evident. Problems like those

⁶⁰ DAVIS, Jacquelyn K; PFALTZGRAFF, Robert. *Anticipating a Nuclear Iran*, Columbia University Press, New York, pg .234

seemed like exceeded in the most advanced countries or regions in the world, especially in the U.S. and Europe.

It was because of this very reason why the attacks of 9/11 happened “out of the blue”. Frustration, hatred and desperation of ten unequipped and untrained terrorists towards the U.S. triggered what may be called “a game changer” which was directly responsible for the intensified effort to evaluate the threat twenty first century terrorism. Despite condemnation of these acts both by the U.S. and the EU (and also almost the entire world), responses to it were quite different and caused the most serious crisis between the Atlantic partners in the alliance in the entire history of its existence.

Particularly after 9/11, the Bush administration made important changes in national security strategy (NSS), including nuclear weapons policy. Firstly, it withdrew from the ABM Treaty in December 2001 and in October 2004 it began to deploy a national missile defense system⁶¹.

As the solitary global superpower after the end of the cold war, the United States occurred themselves in a position of a “norm leader” which means that its decisions may lead other governments to reconsider their own policies. The points of the U.S. nuclear weapons policy include: 1. Deterrence, preemptive attack and preventive war, 2. Nuclear non-proliferation regime, 3. Challenges to this regime, especially latent proliferation, and nuclear smuggling networks, 4. Appropriate response to possible adversaries (Iran, North Korea) and different cases (India, Israel, Pakistan)⁶².

The Bush administration released several statements that significantly shifted United States government thinking about nuclear weapons. The first one was the *Nuclear Posture Review* from December 31, 2001. Review itself is classified but experts detailed key aspects and pictured them to the general public. Firstly, U.S. would have to “...to dissuade states from undertaking political, military, or technical courses of action that would threaten U.S. and allied security.” It suggested that new capabilities will have to be developed in order to destroy those targets which are buried deeply into the ground, find and attack mobile targets, and defeat chemical and biological agents. Due to nuclear weapons it named specifically seven countries that could under certain

61 BUNN, George. *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy: Confronting Today's Threats*, Brookings Institution Press, pg. 86
2006 pg. 34

62 Ibid, pg. 20

circumstances became legitimate targets for nuclear strikes by the United States: North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, China and Russia⁶³.

The third document from December 2002 called *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* (NS-WMD) stated several improvements in order to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and counter-proliferation and improve consequence management in the case of an attack with WMD. This report specifically focused on terrorists, who would like to acquire such weapons, and on those countries, which would support them⁶⁴.

According to previous statements, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* from February 2003 is nonetheless important. It drew attention to the “*changing nature of terrorism*”, where powerful leader such as Osama bin-Laden consider “*the acquisition of WMD a religious duty*”.

According to general opinion, the most important document regarding the nuclear threat, and Iranian nuclear issue in general is a September 2002 document “*National Security Strategy*” (NSS) focused specifically on the threat from WMD in the hands of terrorists and “rogue states” such as Iran, including countries actively supporting terrorism. New priority became the preemption when dealing with rogue countries or terrorists, even under the condition when the U.S. would have to act on its own: “*We will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against ...terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country*”⁶⁵.

5.1 Theoretical bases of the NSS 2002

After the end of the WWII, a certain security culture of the U.S. has evolved. Main goals of the American foreign policy goals represent the long-term withdrawal from isolationism, active influence on security environment on the global level (world-scale milieu shaping) and also determination to have the strongest military in the world⁶⁶.

63 Ibid, pg. 35

64 Ibid, pg. 36

65 BUNN, George. *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy: Confronting Today's Threats*, Brookings Institution Press, 2006

66 EICHLER, Jan. *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA, EU a ČR*, Karolinum 2011 pg.62

After the end of the Cold War, in general, two main approaches how the U.S. as world's only remaining superpower should proceed towards the rest of the world. In 1992, approach demanding American hegemony, firstly occurred in the document "Defense Planning Guidance" (DPG) also known as the Wolfowitz Doctrine. Document focused on three long-term goals: (1) To avert the possibility of emerging of such a power, which could pose a threat similar to the former USSR, (2) To avert the possibility of overwhelming the important region by any power in order to become the superpower, (3) To avert the possibility of emerging of such a country, or alliance of countries, that would tie down free actions of the U.S. anywhere in the world⁶⁷.

Basic thoughts of this approach were born in heads of a particular political wing inside the American Republican Party. The program manifesto of the neoconservative wing represents the article of William Kristol and Robert Kagan from 1996 which is calling for the return to Reagan's foreign policy, particularly emphasizing hegemony and preventive attacks against rough states and terrorist organizations⁶⁸.

The most comprehensive synthesis of this approach, was called "Project for a New Century" (PNAC). Due to its conclusions, two main characters of the neoconservative movement, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz addressed a letter to the President of the United States in 1998, in which they recognized difficulties connected with Saddam Hussein overthrown, but concluded, that much worse scenario would be taking no action at all⁶⁹.

Attacks from 9/11 were the most important events for the neoconservative stream at all. They took an advantage of an enraged public opinion and took the dominant influence among the country's administration. It emerged from a dissident stream to the leading ideology exactly due to the attacks. Only three days later, an article called "The Right War" emphasized the liability of overthrowing Saddam Hussein, right after the defeat of Taliban forces in Afghanistan⁷⁰.

As a response to the attacks, main characters of neoconservative stream, personalized in three appointees: National security advisor Condoleezza Rice, Lewis Libby, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz altogether with the Vice President Cheney and the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld were able to resurrect the former glory of the NSC into its full extent. This

67 Ibid pg.64

68 Ibid pg.72

69 EICHLER, Jan. *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA, EU a ČR*, Karolinum 2011 pg.73

70 Ibid, pg. 72

company persuaded the President to act as the principal advocate of a drastically revised view of the U.S. role in the world⁷¹.

Additionally to the NSC, Vice President Cheney created the second council, consisted of twelve specialists, headed by his secretary Lewis Libby, and by that gained the pivotal role in the United States security policy after 9/11⁷². This particular council, altogether with other newly established groups, such as Policy Counter-terrorism Evaluation Group, or the Office of Special Plans worked under the political settings of the Bush administration, which marked all countries, aspiring to gain the nuclear potential, in the name of proliferators and divided them into two groups. The second group, composing of Iran, Iraq and North Korea was marked as enemy proliferators with aggressive pretensions against the U.S. Iraq, evaluated as the most dangerous, was inequitably, intentionally and systematically charged in favor of two main theses: (1) Iraq has got a strong arsenal of WMD and it is ready to use it against the U.S. and its allies, (2) Saddam Hussein is connected to al Qaeda and supported it in order to commit the terrorist attacks. The peak of this approach, mainly due to the inability to provide an undisputable proof of the existence of WMD in Iraq was Rumsfeld's statement from September 2003 that "the absence of evidence is not the same as the evidence of absence"⁷³. The main question, which stems from the entire NSS 2002 notion and conclusions is, why Iraq, not Iran, was considered the main threat. Iranian abilities, military, economy and political influence were on the slow but steady rise. The American invasion of Iraq changed the entire geopolitical system in the MENA region and shifted the balance of power immensely in Iran's favor.

George W. Bush's domestic advisors grabbed the opportunity of the 9/11 to claim the political high ground and "elevating a practically criminal attack into an allegorical declaration of war; they anointed the President with the status of a "wartime" commander-in-chief with an expanded executive authority. The endless war on terror thus became a domestic political tool as much as a foreign policy."⁷⁴

The most important theoretical source of NSS's 2002 conclusions is the sole approach of President Bush (influenced by his advisors and closest colleagues) towards the menace of global terrorism, known also as the Bush's doctrine. Best description of this theoretical approach is the

71 GARDNER, Hall. *American Global Strategy and the War on Terrorism*, ASHGATE, 2005 pg. 140

72 BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew: *Second Chance*, Basic Books, 2007, pg. 154

73 EICHLER, Jan. *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA, EU a ČR*, Karolinum 2011 pg.75

74 BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew: *Second Chance*, Basic Books, 2007, pg. 138

evaluation of Robert Jervis explained in four main principles. The first one is the concern about inner political order of certain countries. If one's regime is marked as dictatorship or simply uncooperative, can be also marked as security risk for the U.S. and overthrown by the use of force or replaced by another government, and particular country can be occupied for certain amount of time. The second one, is the determination to advocate new, vigorous policy. If "rough states" possess assets to jeopardize or directly assault the U.S., any military action against it would be preventive, not preemptive strike. Third one is the determination to act unilaterally. The fourth principle stated to maintain the U.S. hegemony on the global level. A conclusive statement of this approach is the intentional connection between preemptive strikes and spreading of democracy. The idea is generally considered an activist and idealistic approach⁷⁵.

5.2 National Security Strategy 2002

This document explains basic principles of the Bush administration, concerning aspects of both national and international security. It emphasizes the determination of this administration to "actively spread" hope, democracy, development, free market and free fair into all corners of the world. In general, due to the evaluation of security threats, three were emphasized as the most urgent. The first one is the terrorism, defined as politically motivated violence aimed against the innocent. The second one is the confidence, that nowadays world is more dangerous than it was during the Cold War. The third one is based on the evaluation that certain regimes, which do not promote basic standards of democracy and free trade, are alien to the United States and as such needed to be dealt with. The entire notion of NSS 2002 is applicable to the MENA region and especially to the case of Iran and the position of the United States foreign policy towards the issue which it represents⁷⁶.

From the point of the security and strategic culture NSS 2002 contains two main characteristic attributes: a shift towards militarism and unilateralism. The first attribute, militarism, is based on the emphasis of military force, on reassurance of the key position of the United States army, and determination of building up, strengthening, and maintain of striking power without the reach of any challenger. Additionally, NSS 2002 emphasizes that United States would not hesitate

⁷⁵EICHLER, Jan. *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA, EU a ČR*, Karolinum 2011 pg 77

⁷⁶ Ibid, pg. 78

to use its military power for preemptive strikes in order to protect the U.S., its navy abroad or its allies⁷⁷.

Due to a definition of implication of the military power, NSS 2002 emphasizes two attitudes typical for militarism. The first one is determination to preserve military dominance over the rest of the world during limitless period of time. The second one is the concentration on preemption, stating it should take place at two main scenarios: 1. Deterioration of extortion is not possible any longer, because it would have no effect at all. At this case scenario, particular non-governmental organizations or rough states declining the logic of deterioration would be targeted. 2. Security threats connected to a possible use of WMD would be too serious and eminent and would contain potential damages of boundless proportions⁷⁸.

The second characteristic attribute of NSS 2002 is emphasizing of a unilateralism. Compared to the previous documents of that kind, implication of multilateral approach in order to secure American security agenda is significantly slowed down. There is no significant role for the UN or its security council stated. Considering the allies, NSS 2002 recognizes the importance of NATO, but stating that “Alliance must be able to strike wherever our interests are endangered. It is explicitly stating tasks which NATO must achieve and adding what kind of improvements on the field of military cooperation American allies must ensure⁷⁹.”

5.3 Critical view at the NSS 2002

Under the pressure of President’s advisors and their mental models, mere criminal act of 9/11 was also presented as the new “crusade”, as “us versus them” concept which added a whole new dimension into the American response to the attacks and also significantly affected NSS 2002. “*This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while*”, „*If you are not with us, you are against us*“⁸⁰. This bellicose rhetoric, altogether with the “axis of evil” concept merged simplistic religious “good versus evil” dichotomies appeared as a simple tool to gain domestic popular support, also fabricated by the media – an idea of a great Islamic threat was also personified. Usama

77 Ibid, pg. 79

78 BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew: *Second Chance*, Basic Books, 2007, pg. 145

79 Ibid, pg. 145

80 BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew. *Second Chance*, Basic Books, 2007, pg. 153

bin Laden was permanently pictured as the symbol of evil, generalizing that Islam, Arabs and terrorism create one single organic entity.⁸¹

The catch phrase “war on terror” represents the perfect formula of the never-ending conflict with the term “war” meaning that the conflict will be primarily military-handled and “terrorism” is in principle meaningless because of the vast variety of definitions. More problematic will be to decide which groups might be fighting for “legitimate” causes as “freedom fighters” against real state repression and which groups might represent regular terrorists⁸².

Also, the term “rough states” can be considered vague, because it raises question of double standards, in which obvious crimes against humanity, or the lack of democratic parties and procedures of selected governments are singled out, while similar actions of the U.S. allies, and supported regimes, or even sometimes the U.S. (for example, its refusal to abide several international laws and treaties that Washington had helped to formulate) itself are overlooked. As a result, accusations of these “double standards” can easily occur. For example, Wolfowitz admits, that for instance, military involvement in favor for democratic movements does not always create allies, but according to his view it is to support such movements, because, even if it works against the U.S. interests in the short term, it may work in the long-term national interest of the country, as well as in the American interests⁸³.

Another practical problem raises, once the leadership of a particular country has been labeled as a “tyranny”. In such terms, engaging in real diplomacy and reach compromises is nearly impossible. Firstly, it is improbable, that these countries would maintain the positive reform in these circumstances, secondly, Washington may be in need to negotiate with these countries at some point, so threats to engage “regime change” policy may possibly prove ineffective and also dangerously destabilize the whole region. “Without a truly concerted and differentiated approach to each of these ‘problematic’ states (as well as to others), it is dubious that the unilateral U.S. measures and pressures will bring about positive results”. “While a leader may publicly claim to be impossible to deal with ‘terrorists’, secret diplomacy may prove necessary to break the deadlock. The question remains: Which groups or regimes to ‘appease’? Which ones to ‘co-opt’? And which ones to ‘eradicate’?”⁸⁴

81 BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew. *Volba – globální vláda nebo globální vedení*, Mladá Fronta, 2004 s.67

82 GARDNER, Hall. *American Global Strategy and the War on Terrorism*, ASHGATE, 2005 pg. 15

83 Ibid, pg. 39

84Ibid, pg. 45

These very statements and questions are just several of the huge amount of problematic issues, which were obtained in the NSS 2002. This very National Strategy was in general vastly underestimating collateral damage, which it had triggered, and consequences which had emerged because of its implementation, such as the geopolitical rise of Iran after the American invasion of Iraq and subsequent civil war between Sunni and Shiite insurgents, or more assertive steps of Russia and China, destabilizing area of the Middle East, deterioration of relations with Pakistan, an increase in the number of al-Qaeda's sympathizers throughout the globe at that time (cover operations since then were indeed able to significantly weaken the organization).

5.4 Conclusion on the U.S. foreign policy towards the Iranian nuclear program during the first term of George W. Bush

During the first term presidency of George W. Bush, Iran was recognized as one of the main representatives of the "axis of evil", labeled as one of the countries which actively support terrorism. Former president was an active proponent of severe action against Iran, often speculating about the possible military action. Such an approach resulted into a confrontational response from the Iranian government, intensified by the fact that at the time newly elected Iranian president Mahmud Ahmadinejad was a member of a more conservative political wing of Iranian government, unwilling to make neither compromises nor agreements.

In 2002 thoughts, and doubts arose around a possible NPT violation. Those were confirmed, when secret nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak were discovered.⁸⁵ Subsequent IAEA inspections did not confirm nor deny Iran's intentions to obtain nuclear weapons. Subsequently, in 2003 Iranian government implemented additional Protocol allowing IAEA inspectors much detailed inspections of nuclear capabilities and construction sites.⁸⁶ One of the most important issues according to the Iranian nuclear program at the time was the fact, that the enrichment of the nuclear fuel was being enriched more than it was needed for energy or medical purposes.

In 2004 Iran signed the Paris Agreement, which expanded activities suspended from the nuclear program. Iranian government had to cease all enrichment activities and especially the

⁸⁵ BAHGAT, Gawdat. Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran, pg. 309–310.

⁸⁶ IAEA. Communication dated 12 September 2005 from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency. INFCIRC/657. Iranian Nuclear Policy & Activities Complementary Information To the Report of The Director General (GOV/2005/67) 15 Sept 2005.

process of manufacture and import of gas centrifuges, however, the contract would allow Iran to develop nuclear technological, and logistical means for civilian purposes. Despite of the Paris Agreement, Iran actively worked on missile development,⁸⁷ which resulted into extended possibilities of the first strike capability against any country in the MENA region (after several years later, Iranian ballistic missiles were further improved).

In June 2005 newly elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, strong supporter of the Iranian nuclear program and pro-conservative politician, brought an important change into the entire negotiation process. Negotiations continued during the next years of George W. Bush presidency in so called P5+1 group according to which Iran was offered the possibility to continue the nuclear research for civilian purposes, while also to suspend uranium enrichment. In August 2006 Iranian government refused to suspend its activities. Further negotiations and discussions with Iran came to no results, which prompted the Council of Governors of the IAEA to refer this case to the UN Security Council. The Council further approved the Resolution 169689, which introduced a ban on international transfers of nuclear and missile technology to Iran and froze the foreign assets of several people and organizations affiliated with the Iranian nuclear program. Subsequently, Iran ignored the resolution, while ending of cooperation with the IAEA. During the years 2006-2010 several rounds of negotiations in Tehran and Geneva took place, all ended in with no success.⁸⁸

After George W. Bush's presidency, the position and the image of the U.S. in the MENA region became problematic in terms of maintaining or further develop constructive relations with countries and regimes in the above-mentioned region, due to the American war in Iraq and subsequent civil war and sectarian unrests between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Americans troops stationed in the country supported pro-Shia oriented government, fighting Sunni insurgents composed mainly from former soldiers, officers and security personnel originated from Saddam's Hussein army and Ba'ath (pan-Arab, nationalist political party). This notion was further emphasized by the fact, that during the presidency of George W. Bush, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia was, traditionally, heavily favored American ally, supported almost uncritically.

It is important to state, that since the 1970's the U.S. economic sanctions on Iran were meant to influence Iranian government and Iran's opposition to the Middle East peace process, cease its

⁸⁷ In 2004, Iran introduced the missile Shahab-3, which has a range of 1000 km and is thus able to attack targets in Israel and in southern Europe.

⁸⁸ "the new direction of U.S. policy towards Iran", quote due to Arms Control Association. *History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue*. January 2014.

support for Hezbollah and Hamas, stop Iranian attempts to acquire nuclear and ballistic weapons, stop general support for international terrorism and general hostility towards the United States. After more than 30 years of sanctions and various hostilities, Iranian government still opposes the U.S.-led peace process, support for Hezbollah and Hamas is did not ceased, and Israel territory is becoming more and more vulnerable towards various military, paramilitary or terrorist related operations.⁸⁹

6. American foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear program during the second term of Barack Obama

Iranian government during the second presidency of Barack Obama was able to successfully proceed with the research of its nuclear program, however, its capabilities had still not yet been developed into the degree of being an imminent threat to the U.S. or its allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia in particular. However, Iran possessed certain military capabilities, which could pose a significant-non nuclear threat. Due to these circumstances, the second government of Barack Obama decided to change the political approach towards Iran from the confrontational one, inherited originally from the first government of George W. Bush, to the approach, which is opened for possible negotiations and also possible future cooperation in some security areas.

6.1 Review on the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran until the second administration of Barack Obama

As a solitary global superpower after the end of the Cold War, the United States happened to be in a position of the “norm leader” which means that its decisions may lead other governments to reconsider their own policies. The U.S. nuclear weapons policy includes these points: (1) deterrence, preemptive attack and preventive war, (2) nuclear non-proliferation regime, (3) challenges to this regime, especially latent proliferation, and nuclear smuggling networks, (4) appropriate response to possible adversaries (Iran, North Korea) and different cases (India, Israel, Pakistan).⁹⁰

⁸⁹ ASKARI, Hossein G.; FORRER, John, TEEGEN, Hildy. *Case Studies of U.S. Economic Sanctions*, Greenwood Publ.Group, 2003, pg. 226

⁹⁰ BUNN, George. *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy: Confronting Today's Threats*, Brookings Institution Press, 2006

At the time of his first years of presidency, there were in general rather positive reactions and expectations among moderate Iranian politicians concerning Obama's position towards Iranian nuclear program and ambitions, based on the hope that the new United States government would finally recognize Iranian position among nuclear powers.⁹¹ Iranian Vice President Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaei commented on Obama's ascent to the presidency: "*Mr. Obama stands at a historically significant crossroads, but there are only two paths for him – one which leads to good results through a 'change' as promised by his campaign slogan, the other with extremely grave consequences if he continues the same policies as previous administrations*".⁹² Due to Obama's statement, it was the wrong decision not to pursue direct talks with "rogue states"⁹³, Iran responded when the new president received a letter from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009, congratulating him and also proposed for a hope to improve the U.S.-Iranian relations. In general, Obama's initial approach was viewed positively among Iranian reformists and moderate conservatives, who had been long waiting for a non-confrontational approach from the western countries.

The U.S. policy towards Iran until the second Obama's administration was based on two basic principles. On the one hand U.S. tried to raise the cost to Iran pursuing its nuclear program and on the other hand it tries to offer incentives for forgoing the development of nuclear weapons. U.S. was using economic sanctions based on government restrictions on the import or export of goods and services while targeting specific persons, sectors and groups⁹⁴. The aim to keep up economic pressure in order to force higher costs of Iran's nuclear program or affect inner-political debate in which different factions would have different view how to deal with an American pressure⁹⁵.

In *Nuclear Posture Review* from 2010 U.S. Department of service announced new approach towards Iranian nuclear program, both threatening it and respecting it. United States declared, that "*it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.*" This meant

⁹¹ SAVYON, Ayelet. *Discussion in Iran on Possible Dialogue with U.S.*

⁹² Cit. by An Iranian official urges the US President-elect to distance himself from Washington's current stance towards Iran to implement his slogan. PRESS TV, Tehran, Iran, Fri Nov 28, 2008.

⁹³ Iran, Syria and North Korea

⁹⁴ DAVIS John, MARTINI Lynn, ALIREZA, Jeffrey. *Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices*, RAND Corporation, 2011, s.47

⁹⁵ Ibid pg. 48

that if Iran comply to NPT, U.S. would lose any particular reason to stop Iran in its way to become regional power⁹⁶.

On 12 June 2009 the controversial presidential elections in Iran were won again by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This fact was determined as the major turning point in Obama's effort to improve mutual relations during his first term in the office. Hundreds of thousands Iranians decided to march into the streets to protest against the results of these elections, while the Iranian regime responded with violence and intimidation, which attracted the international attention and subsequent outrage. The conservative circles of Revolutionary Guards, whose main ideology was (and till nowadays remains unchanged) based on the premise that the US represent the greatest enemy, pushed the inner political debate once again into the radical path.⁹⁷

Fortunately, the United States still not occurred in an either-war-or-surrender position. Diplomatic solution, through sanctions, which already had (in order to see the full extent, sanctions would have to take much more longer time and also would have to be implemented by all countries- China, Russia, Turkey, EU) disproportionate effect on Iranian economy. While poor economic performance, dissatisfied population and relatively isolated position, regrettably, as long as the U.S. remains in Iraq without the power to restore order or to resolve Israel-Palestinian conflict, Washington will be unable to beat Iran in the field of ideology⁹⁸.

United States were able to apply only greater unilateral economic pressure, without comprehensive and multilateral international sanctions. Based on strengthening of *Iran Sanctions Act* from 2006, which barred Iranian banks and financial institutions from directly accessing the U.S. financial system through "U-turn transactions". Much wider international pressure took place in 2009 when UN Security council passed *Resolution 1929*, which significantly tightened sanctions, banning Iran to use international financial system into vast extent. Subsequently U.S. Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) of 2010 authorized the U.S. president personally to penalize foreign companies, which seek the opportunity to aid Iran's fuel-refinement capability or provide it with refined-fuel product, or those who invest into

⁹⁶ Ibid, pg. 49

⁹⁷ CRIST, David. *The Twilight Wars*, pg. 541-543.

⁹⁸ DOBBINS, James, KAYE, Sarah. *Coping with Iran: Confrontation, Containment, or Engagement?* A Conference Report, RAND Corporation, 2007 pg. 54

Iran's energy sector, particularly involving mainly European energy firms such as France's Total and Germany's Linde Group which cut off their ties to Iran completely⁹⁹.

Every step taken by the U.S. would have primary impact on Israel, so it would be wise to consider the question, what kind of outcome would be acceptable for this sole democratic country in the Middle East while accepting American national interests? The Iranian government is fully aware of the fact that any kind of attack against Israel would automatically invoke American counter-response, while Israel is the only ally of the U.S. in the area¹⁰⁰.

It is important to emphasize that the U.S. was (and this position remains the same until nowadays) still focused primarily on a diplomatic solution. Discussions and negotiations were understood as a primary objective, partly because of relatively a lot of time, until Iran would be able to come up with a fully functional nuclear device, and even more time while Iran would be able to hit the continental grounds of the United States with the long-range ballistic missile. Another strong focus of the American government is on the behavior of regime stances, and attempts to send proper signals for diplomatic negotiations, while also trying to engage especially young Iranians through exchanges between U.S. and Iran's professionals, such as doctors, students, athletes¹⁰¹.

According to Iran as a subject of international relations, which is significant for the United States, it is questionable what stance should be taken. Three options are available. Engagement, deterioration or direct confrontation. The possibility of an engagement could be a serious option, if certain conditions were considered by both sides of a dispute. Iran would have to stop its nuclear program, normalize its relations with Israel and stop any kind of support towards terrorist groups in the Middle East, while United States would have to accept key role of Iran in the MENA region, cancel all sanctions, and stop all attempts to replace an Iranian government.

The second possibility is a deterioration of Iran to stop mainly its nuclear activities unilaterally and cooperate with IAEA in order to fulfill Non-Proliferation Treaty and international standards. This possibility is improbable, because of the very notion of Iranian perception of war, as prequel to the Armageddon and the end of all evil in the world, which is more than welcomed assumption by the Iranian government elite.

99 DONNINS, James, KAYE, Alireza. *Coping with a Nuclearizing Iran*, RAND Corporation, 2011 p. 109

100 DOBBINS, James, KAYE, Sarah. *Coping with Iran: Confrontation, Containment, or Engagement?* A Conference Report, RAND Corporation, 2007 pg. 57

101 Ibid, pg. 60

Even more improbable sounds the possibility of direct military conflict between the U.S. and Iranian forces. United States most probably does not have free capacities at the present to deal with such a threat at least not in terms of total occupation of entire area of Iran. New approach, with mutual understanding and compromises on both sides seems to be the only possible solution according to Iran as an ascending power in the Middle East.

6.2 The second presidency of Barack Obama – new approach towards Iranian government

In 2013, the new Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, a moderate and diplomatically inclined candidate was elected. This election symbolically sent a message from the Iranian inner political circles and various influential groups, that the chance and devotion to reach at least basic diplomatic agreement should be possible. Rouhani also clearly stated that: *“The Iran–U.S. relationship is a complex and difficult issue. (...) In my view, the current state of affairs between Iran and the U.S. cannot and should not remain forever. Extremists on both sides seem to be determined to perpetuate the situation of animosity and hatred between the two countries. However, common sense dictates a change in this trend with a view to opening a new chapter in this uneasy and challenging relationship to decrease enmity and mistrust. (...) As a moderate, I have a phased plan to deescalate hostility to a manageable state of tension and then engage in promotion of interactions and dialogue between the two peoples to achieve détente, and finally reach to the point of mutual respect that both peoples deserve.”*¹⁰²

Barack Obama during his second term decided to distance himself completely from the strategy of formal president Bush based on preventive war and preemptive strikes and replaced these with his “new partnership” multilateral diplomacy¹⁰³ and the promotion of “*going soft on Iran*”.¹⁰⁴ During the visit by president Rouhani of the UN General Assembly on 27 September 2013, president Obama and Rouhani spoke by a phone, which was the first personal contact at the presidential level since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.¹⁰⁵ However, member selection for the new government showed no radical changes to policy towards Iran – Hillary Clinton, Obama’s first Secretary of State and Robert Gates (a Republican, whom Obama took over from the previous Bush

¹⁰² REIFOWITZ, Ian. *President Obama Must Seize the Moment on Iran*. Huffington Post, Oct 23, 2013

¹⁰³ National Security Strategy 2010, pg. 22.

¹⁰⁴ „*Going soft on Iran*.“ PARSİ, Trita. *A Single Roll of the Dice*, pg. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Quote by Obama, *Iran's Rouhani hold historic phone call*. Reuters, Sept 28, 2013

government) as the Secretary of Defense. According to Clinton, a nuclear-armed Iran represents an unacceptable threat, and according to her statement, if Iran “*gets a nuclear weapons program, that will launch an arms race in the Middle East the likes of which we’ve never seen*”.¹⁰⁶ In order to create more plausible circumstances towards possible negotiations, Obama administration stopped Congress from adopting new sanctions towards Iran, while stating that blocking efforts to reach a diplomatic solution would, under some circumstances lead to an open military conflict.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, in the case of collaboration and decreasing of tensions, mutual cooperation, respect for regional and national interests would have an immense positive impact on regional stability and development.

The slow and gradual process of rapprochement between two countries during the second Obama’s administration, through small steps reached the positive result on July 14, 2015 when the United States and the rest of P5 + 1 members managed to create an agreement upon Iranian nuclear program. Due to a mutual declaration, “The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action”, JCPOA, prevented Iran from developing nuclear weapons, while also granted its government to utilize and develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Due to basic parameters of the agreement, Iranian government pledged to reduce the total number of centrifuges for uranium enrichment process by two thirds and also to abandon 96 % of its enriched uranium, which could be further processed to the degree usable in nuclear weapons. Vice-versa, the economic sanctions focused on Iranian export of oil and natural gas were repealed, Iran was able to reuse the global financial and banking systems, while the arms embargo was given specific terms and was released slower. The UN IAEA inspectors certified that the Iranian government fulfilled the terms of an agreement. IAEA inspectors have not found concrete evidence of nuclear weapons construction. In a report this information was presented as this: “*The Agency is not in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities*”.¹⁰⁸

In October 2013 another negotiations resumed in Geneva. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif was appointed as the new head of a negotiating team. According to a new proposal, a broad framework for a comprehensive agreement introduced concrete steps for both American and Iranian governments. This Geneva Agreement (Joint Plan of Action) acknowledged Iran’s right to enrich

¹⁰⁶ CLINTON, Hillary. Interview With Vladimir Poznerof First Channel Television, March 19, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ *Iran Nuclear Pact Faces an Array of Opposing Forces*. The New York Times, Nov 16, 2014;

¹⁰⁸ IAEA. Board of Governors. *Implementation of the NPT Safeguards. Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran*.(GOV/2014/10) 20February 2014.

uranium on its territory and the use of nuclear power for civilian purposes.¹⁰⁹ According to the agreement, the UN inspection team could stay in Iran for another six months, however, it also created distortions among the U.S. and its major allies, especially France and Israel, whom heavily criticized this process.¹¹⁰ Especially Israel was not (and never will be) willing to accept Iranian military nuclear development, while such as alternative would be viewed as an imminent threat.

Probably the most important success of the second administration of Barack Obama according to the U.S.-Iranian negotiations was an agreement signed on 14 July, 2015 called The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It was a political agreement, according to which, Iranian nuclear program would be under strict surveillance and also would have to fulfill its commitments. Monitoring and inspections towards Iranian nuclear facilities would remain effective even after the fulfillment of agreed obligations. All sanctions conducted by the U.S., and the United Nations would be suspended, if Iran would comply with all the key commitments, regarding its nuclear program, due to the JCPOA. According to the agreement, Iran was able to freely export oil, regained access to its frozen foreign currency reserves of approximately \$60 billion.¹¹¹ A possible breach in Iran's obligations would consequence in a renewal of sanctions on the Iranian regime. It is possible to assume, that JCPOA represents an important diplomatic achievement, basic road map for further negotiations, and a possible solution for the further relationship enhancement

Due to the fact that the Iranian government would be given an opportunity to fulfill its part of an agreement it is possible to expect, that JCPOA will contribute to a greater stability in the region, while there is also a possibility for further concessions on other controversial issue in the future. It is possible to assume that the entire de-escalation process would strengthen Iranian influence in the MENA region, at the expense of the influence of Saudi Arabia and Israeli security interests. However, in the view of broader, geopolitical situation in the MENA region, it is possible to state that progress in political diplomacy among these countries would be highly desirable, while further deterioration of mutual relations would lead to a possible military confrontation, which would pose an eminent threat for the American foreign policy in the region and American allies as well. During the first decade of the twenty first century, the Iranian government was able to create policy, which vastly oppose the U.S. interests in the MENA region, which contributed to the fact

¹⁰⁹ Joint Plan of Action. For the full deal see. *Full text of interim nuclear deal between Iran and six powers*. Haaretz, Nov. 24, 2013.

¹¹⁰ *Israel's Netanyahu calls Iran deal 'historic mistake.'* The Washington Post, Nov 204, 2013.

¹¹¹ Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. US Department of State; UN, Security Council, Adopting Resolution 2231 (2015), Endorses Joint Comprehensive Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Programme. 20 July 2015.

that Iran was able to enforce its interests and influence and support various militant or terrorist groups. Inclusion of Iran into the solution of regional problems could theoretically lead to strengthen stability, shared responsibility and ultimately force Iranian government to ease its aggressive policies. The idea of shared responsibility over the MENA region between Iran and Saudi Arabia was ultimately advocated by Barack Obama in April 2016.¹¹²

Conclusion

The foreign policy approach towards Iranian nuclear program during the 1st term of George W. Bush was heavily influenced by the terrorist acts which took place on 11 September 2001. Although both initial and subsequent research and investigation cleared Iranian government from suspicions of supporting this act by any means, the American government added Iran on the list of so called “rough states”, which, according to the United States government beliefs actively support various terrorist groups throughout the MENA region, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon or several other militias in Iraq. In spite of various measures taken by the international community, Iranian government refused to change its attitude towards its nuclear program. Furthermore, American war in Iraq created a power vacuum, which created a possibility to spread Iranian influence, and support pro-Iranian sentiments and insurgents, whom actively conducted military operations against American forces deployed in Iraq. These actions actively contributed to a deterioration of the already damaged US-Iranian relations. The American foreign policy during the evaluated period of years 2000-2005 was unable to create a comprehensive affiliation policy towards Iran, which ultimately resulted into an increased isolation of its regime and subsequent radicalization of its political and security positions. Iran as one of the most important actors in the MENA region has got means and possibilities to force its own views.. Both the US and Iran share common interests in the area of security issues, such as prevention and termination of drug trafficking and smuggling from Afghanistan, counter-insurgent operations against various militant groups supported by Taliban. The policy of intentional isolation of Iran by the US government empowered radical groups inside Iranian government, which manifested into the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and also empowered the refusal to cooperate with the international institutions and postponed the development of internal democratic principles in the country.

¹¹² LANDLER, Mark. Barack Obama says Saudi Arabia needs to learn to share region with Iran. URL <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Saudis-must-learn-to-share-region-with-IranObama/articleshow/51348627.cms>>

It is possible to state, that previous policies implemented by George W. Bush were incapable to deter Iranian government from development of its nuclear capabilities, while worsening of mutual relations led to the immense threat of military escalation.

As stated above in the thesis, even if the threat of terrorist groups armed with nuclear weapons, with or without Iranian support, is significantly low, however public, experts and governments must accept those solutions, which would even more secure nuclear capacities and capabilities, especially of those countries which might be willing to provide their expertise to various terrorist groups in order to fulfill their political or security objectives. Menace of nuclear armed terrorists is serious enough to closely examine particular aspects of such a situation.

The second Obama administration decided to improve mutual relations by opening an international dialogue with the Iranian government. This approach led to fundamentally different results. The Iranian government responded positively to diplomatic concessions and small steps. In spite of complicated circumstances in Iraq, the American government reached for more opened-minded diplomatic solutions. The main goal of Obama's governments due to the region of MENA was to position the U.S. into the middle ground of regional rivalry and by that gain the opportunity to negotiate with all the interested parties (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel) through diplomatic channels. At that, time it was questionable, whether this new approach would benefit the long-term U.S. interests or whether it would have any positive impact on the geopolitical stability in the MENA region.¹¹³ The basic and crucial effort was turned towards the idea to create more possibilities and opportunities to ease and, if possible to enhance relations with the regional power, the Iranian Islamic Republic. This decision was upheld in order to enhance the U.S. diplomatic courses of action in the MENA region, on one hand and simultaneously subdue Iranian influence and abilities to spread it into other countries, especially Lebanon and Syria, in which pro-Iranian paramilitary groups Hezbollah and Hamas create quasi-governmental political bodies or parties with a significant scale of influence

¹¹³ WILLIAMS, Brock R., DONNELLY, Michael J. U.S. *International Trade: Trends and Forecasts*, pg. 31.

Summary

The thesis main concern is to analyze difficult notions and realities between the U.S. government and the Iranian Islamic Republic during the time of two presidencies, the first term of George W. Bush and the second term of Barack Obama. The thesis main focus is to distinguish two different approaches towards the complicated issue of Iranian nuclear program and its possible implications with terrorism.

The first chapter describes the theoretical framework upon which the entire thesis is based upon. The second chapter provides a short review on the MENA region, describing the most visible factors and issues from the very last years of the second administration of Barack Obama. The third chapter is based upon the research of the Iranian position in the MENA region, its potential, and what possibilities the U.S. government possesses in order to contain Iran from spreading its influence. The next chapter deals with an issue of nuclear terrorism and its connections towards Iran, evaluation of possible nuclear terrorist menace and possibilities of so called “Dirty Bombs” usage. The fifth chapter is based upon the research of the first presidency of George W. Bush and the policies which were implemented after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. The last chapter deals with the policy implemented by Barack Obama during his second presidency and examines its effect on the mutual U.S.-Iranian relations.

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