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**FACTIONALISM OVER FOREIGN POLICY IN POST-KHOMEINI IRAN:
A CASE STUDY ON THE CLASH BETWEEN THE FORCES OF CONTINUITY AND
CHANGE OVER THE GULF CRISIS OF 1990-1991**

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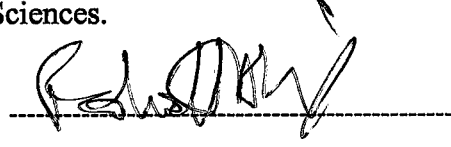
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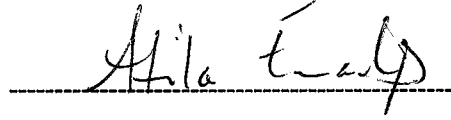
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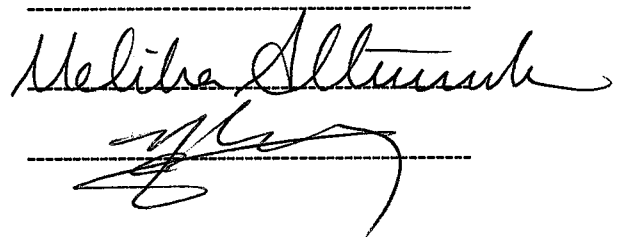
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ABSTRACT

FACTIONALISM OVER FOREIGN POLICY IN POST-KHOMEINI IRAN: A CASE STUDY ON THE CLASH BETWEEN THE FORCES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OVER THE GULF CRISIS OF 1990-1991

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This thesis analyzes the Gulf Crisis (1990-91) policy of Iran as a case to define the extent of the struggle between the Pragmatist and the Hardliner factions over Iran's foreign policy in the post-Khomeini period. Substantial changes in the domestic political structure of Iran, together with transformations in the regional and international conjunctures rendered a revision in foreign policy inevitable. This triggered an unprecedented contention between the forces of continuity and change, and injected foreign policy as major source of clash between the factions. Within this framework, this study examines the factional struggle over the Gulf Crisis policy of Iran to reveal factions' respective foreign policy visions and differences between them. It tries to find out the reflection of this debate on Iran's foreign policy. In doing this ultimate objective of the study is to search for the possibilities of change in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. Throughout the debate of factionalism over foreign policy in post-Khomeini Iran, the thesis mainly argues that in spite of their commitment to the Islamic Republican regime there exists considerable differences between the factions over the external behavior of the country. This factionalism over the issue has substantial implications for Iran's foreign policy. Although the forces of change gained an upper hand in the 1990s, the forces of continuity maintained a considerable power-base in the domestic politics. Given this fact, in the 1990s unresolved differences between the foreign policy visions of the ruling elite reflected itself as "inconsistency" and "duality" in country's external policy.

Key Words: Gulf Crisis, Factionalism, Pragmatist, Hardliner, Foreign Policy, Post-Khomeini Era

ÖZ

HUMEYİNİ SONRASI DÖNEMDE İRAN'IN DIŞ POLİTİKASI ÜZERİNE POLİTİK GRUPLAŞMALAR: DEĞİŞİM YANLISI VE MUHAFAZAKAR GÜÇLER ARASINDAKİ MÜCADELE ÜZERİNE BİR ÖRNEK OLARAK İRAN'IN 1990-91 KÖRFEZ SAVAŞI POLİTİKASI

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Bu tez kapsamında İran'ın 1990-91 Körfez Krizi politikası, Humeyni sonrası dönemde ülkenin dış politikası üzerinde yoğunlaşan, Pragmatikler ve Muhafazakarlar arasındaki hizipleşmelerin boyutunu ve sınırlarını belirlemek üzere bir örnek olarak incelenmektedir. Çalışmada, zamanlaması ve İslami rejim açısından çok önemli ülkelerin katılması nedeniyle Kuwait Krizi örnek olarak seçilmiştir. Humeyni'nin ölümünden sonraki dönemde, iç politik yapıdaki çok önemli değişikliklerin bölgesel ve uluslararası konjonktürlerdeki dönüşümlerle yanyana gelmesi, ülkenin dış politikasının gözden geçirilmesini zorunlu kılmıştır. Bu ise, değişimci ve muhafazakar güçler arasında benzeri görülmemiş bir mücadeleyi başlatmış ve İran'ın dış politikasını gruplararası mücadelenin ana konusu yapmıştır. Bu çerçevede, çalışma iki büyük grup arasında Körfez Krizi politikası üzerine yapılan tartışmayı, bu grupların genel dış politika vizyonlarını, ve bunlar arasındaki farklılıkları ortaya çıkarmak üzere analiz eder. Tartışmanın ülkenin dış politika davranışlarına etki ve yansımalarını tespit etmeye çalışır. Bunu yaparken ise, nihai amacı İran'ın dış politikasında kökten bir değişimin mümkün olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Çalışmanın ana argümanı şudur: Her iki grubun temelde Cumhuriyetçi İslami rejime bağlılıklarına rağmen, dış politika söz konusu olduğunda aralarında büyük farklılıklar vardır. Ve bu iç hizipleşmenin ülkenin dış politikasına yansımaları göz ardı edilemeyecek denli önemlidir. 1990'larda, değişim yanlısı grubun yükselişine rağmen Muhafazakar grup da bu dönemde varlığını güçlü bir şekilde sürdürmeye devam etmiştir. Bunun sonucu olarak, bu iki güçlü grup arasında süregelen mücadele İran'ın dış politikasının doğasını belirlemiş ve "tutarsızlık" ve "ikicilik" olarak yansımıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Körfez Krizi, Politik Gruplaşma, Pragmatik, Muhafazakar, Dış Politika, Humeyni Sonrası Dönem

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| EC | European Community |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| IRGCs | Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps |
| IRI | Islamic Republic of Iran |
| IRP | Islamic Republican Party |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| OIC | Organization of Islamic Conference |
| POWs | Prisoners of War |
| UAE | United Arab Emmirates |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSC | United Nations Security Council |
| US | United States |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In spite of Khomeini's assertion that "an Islamic state will be free of divisions and inter-group struggles", and that "it will be a state of union",¹ factionalism* has been a fact of domestic political scene of Iran from the birth of the Islamic regime. First of all, this factionalism among the revolutionary elite had been a major obstacle to the consolidation of the regime between 1979-1981. However, by the end of 1981, the clergy group defeated its secular and liberal rivals and consolidated its power over the regime. After the elimination of Liberal Islamic figures, such as Bazargan, the first prime minister of the Republic, Bani-Sadr, the first president, and supporters of these two preeminent figures from the power centers, and the purge of relatively liberal groups within the Fundamentalist Islamic Republican Camp², especially with the decline of the Hojatieh Society as

¹ Hamid Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran", in Laurence O. Michalak and Jeswald Salacuse, eds., Social Legislation in the Contemporary Middle East, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p:40

* In this work, "factionalism" is taken to mean fundamental differences on cultural, economic, and political issues which have persisted among the Iranian elite despite changing circumstances. This definition of factionalism that is peculiar to the historical and political context of the Islamic Republic is borrowed from Saeed Barzin, "Factionalism in Iran", The World Today, Oct 1995, p:202. And if factionalism refers to some kind of a split among the political groups within the Islamic Republic, in post-revolutionary Iran commitment to the establishment and maintenance of an Islamic order whereby the clergy holds the last say in all the aspects of life is the common ground around which interests of political factions converge. Such a definition of factionalism takes us to one of the basic characteristics of factionalism in Iran that it does not transcend the boundaries of the existing regime and does operate within the limits of pre-revolutionary Islamic order. In fact, movements outside the regime's borders have never been tolerated in the post-revolutionary Iran. As Rafsanjani made this clear by saying that: "Only those movements that are in keeping with the velayat-a faqih and the line of the leadership will be supported by the system." Tehran Television Service, 26 Dec 1990 in Foreign Broadcast Information Service- Near East/ South Asia (hereafter FBIS-NES), 27 Dec 1990, p:41

² The Republican Camp of the revolution is composed of three groups: Fundamentalist Islamic Republicans, Liberal Islamic Republicans, and Secular Republicans. For more details, see Enteshami, Anoushavan, After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic, London: Routledge, 1995 pp: 7-14

an important opposition from the political scene, differences began to emerge within the core Fundamentalist Islamic Republican Camp, that is within the Maktabi Faction, or the followers of the Imam's line.

In 1981-1988, the focus point of the factional debate between the "Conservative" and "Reformist" wings of the Maktabi Group had been the economic path of the country despite the fact that, after 1985, the ongoing war with Iraq also became an issue of contention between different groups within the so-called "Reformist camp". In 1986, words of then the Majles Speaker, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani emphasized the "coreness" of the disagreement over the economic issues. He described the two factions in terms of their distinguished stands on the economic policy of the country: "In Iran...two relatively strong factions exist. One supports the nationalization of most industries while the other supports the private sector."³

The differences between the two factions led to a paralysis in the policy-making. The way to overcome this paralysis had been "last-moment interventions" by Ayatollah Khomeini in order to establish a balance in this power struggle. It is the disappearance of this balancing factor that makes the separation between "Khomeini period" and "post-Khomeini period" meaningful, and post-Khomeini era factionalism interesting to analyze.

The main objective of this analysis is to shed light on the factionalism and its implications for the limits of change in foreign policy in the period after Khomeini. In other words, the focus point of the study is the contention of different political groups over foreign policy. Because, starting from the second half of the 1980s, but especially after the end of the war with Iraq, and the demise of the leader of the revolution, as a result of domestic needs and changes, together with drastic developments in the regional and systemic conjunctures, the center of the factional debate has shifted from merely economic issues, such as land reform and the nationalization of the industry, to foreign policy. In other words, the end

³ Shahriugh, Akhavi, "Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran", Middle East Journal (hereafter MEJ), Spring 1987, p:184

of the war with Iraq in 1988 ultimately divided the Reformist faction into Pragmatist and Radical factions and injected Iran's foreign policy as a major source of clash between the factions.

In fact, between 1980-88, the foreign policy of Iran was under the domain of war factor. Relations with other countries were determined according to their respective positions vis-à-vis the war. Because of the priorities given to the war effort and especially because of Ayatollah Khomeini's insistence on these priorities, foreign policy remained, for the bulk of the Khomeini period, outside factional struggles. When foreign policy became a subject of factional struggle, after mid 1980s, it was again the ongoing war with Iraq that was debated. The issue was "whether the, so-called, holy war against Iraq should stop or continue despite its calamitous cost." However, the process that resulted in Iran's acceptance of the UNSC Resolution 598, and the end of the war signaled an extreme in pragmatism* in policy-making of Iran, and paved the way for the "rethinking" in foreign policy. This, in turn, put foreign policy at the top of the factional agenda.

The basic reason for the shift of the factional debate to the foreign policy realm, however, was internal and another economy-related problem, that is, the reconstruction of the war-destroyed economy of the country, whose solution required a revision in the isolationist, confrontationist and anti-Western policies of the first decade. With this notion, or requirement of revision in foreign policy at the top of the country's policy-making agenda, the forces of change and continuity began to clash with each other, so did the groups supporting these two trends. It was exactly at this critical point that the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 erupted in the region.

*In this study, Pragmatism is taken to mean "the way of thinking and acting in order to attain practical objectives and benefits, sometimes at the expense of the established principles, and theoretical (ideological) ideals. In other words, pragmatism means, flexible interpretation of ideological rules, and principles, so as to meet the practical needs, and urgent necessities of the society. Or, it is the way of filling the gap between practice and theory by interpreting theoretical norms flexibly in order to meet unpostponable practical needs of the society.

This study takes the factional debate over the Gulf Crisis policy of Iran as a case in order to make a thorough analysis of the extent, and the nature of this factional struggle and its role in determining the foreign policy path of the country. In doing this, the ultimate objective of the analysis is to elaborate implications of this debate for the foreign policy decisions and actions of the Iranian Government vis-à-vis the crisis. By this way, it will be possible to delineate the lines of different factions in foreign policy, and their relative weights in the formation and implementation of the country's foreign policy. In turn, this will indicate the limits and chances of change in the Iranian foreign policy, and the respective roles of different factions in restricting and promoting pro-change trend that gained upper hand in the post-Khomeini era.

The Gulf Crisis is chosen as a case because, first of all, it occurred immediately after fundamental changes in the domestic political structure of the Islamic Republic toward institutionalization and centralization of foreign-policy making took place.⁴ Furthermore, the presidential elections of July 1989 brought Rafsanjani and his Pragmatist government, with the programs of change and moderation in foreign policy at hand, to power, and thus, intensified the expectations of change in the external behaviors of the Islamic Republic.

In addition to multi-faceted alterations in the domestic political scene of Iran, immediately after the end of the war with Iraq, which in itself is a change in the regional conjuncture, the Kuwaiti crisis coincided with a dramatic transformation in the international arena with the end of the Cold War. In December 1989, Malta Summit marked the demise of the Cold War. The change of the international power configuration with the disappearance of the bi-polar system rendered Tehran's Cold-War-product foreign policy strategy "Neither East Nor West", to a great extent, obsolete, and gave an impetus to the pro-change trend in external relations.⁵ Given the juxtaposition of drastic changes in the

⁴ The death of Khomeini, and serious constitutional changes were the factors that enabled a centralized government and foreign policy-making. For a detailed study of this issue, see Afrasiabi, Kaveh L.: After Khomeini: New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy, Oxford: Westview Press, 1994

⁵ The principle of "neither East nor West" implies an independent, non-alignment posture under the Cold War conditions whereby the Islamic Republic remained out of two power blocs. However, for many of the

domestic and regional scenes with a systemic transformation, Gulf Crisis created a historical chance for the pro-change wing of the Iranian elite to overcome the troubles caused by the Iran-Iraq war and the Rushdie Affair, and take feasible steps in the way to normalization of Islamic Republic's relations with the Western Europe and the countries of the region in order to base Iran's foreign policy on a most needed sound basis.

On the other hand, actors involved in the Gulf Crisis were highly interesting in terms of their respective relationship with the Islamic regime. It was for this reason that, government's policy vis-à-vis the crisis was put on the top of the political agenda throughout the crisis, and even after it. First of all, Iraq was the enemy that Iran had been fighting against for eight years. And, after the cease-fire it continued to be perceived as a threat by the Iranian officials, since the two countries had not reached an official peace settlement agreement by the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The anti-Iraqi coalition, on the other hand, was composed of countries with which Iran had had either deteriorating or no relationship since the revolution or the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, such as Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf monarchies etc. On the other hand, the participation of a war-time ally and a rejectionist country, Syria, in the US-led anti-Iraqi coalition was also important for Iran.

No doubt, among the actors directly involved in the Gulf Crisis, the United States, "the Great Satan" in the words of Ayatollah Khomeini, was the main country confrontationist position of the revolutionary regime in Iran has been directed against without any moderation since 1979. In the eyes of the Iranian authorities, the US had been the fundamental source of threat and conspiracies that targeted the very existence of the Islamic regime in Iran. The country's confrontationist stand vis-à-vis the US and rejection of any ties with it had been incorporated as one of the sacred principles of the Islamic regime since its birth.

ruling elite this meant isolation. For more on this, see Keddie, Nikki R., and Mark J. Gasiorowski (eds.): Neither East Nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union, and the United States, London: Yale University Press, 1990

In fact, the crisis was too much complicated for the Islamic Republic in terms of its effects and results. The outbreak of the Gulf Crisis made Iran face a dilemma. Because, the confrontation was mainly between two states, namely Iraq and the United States, from both of which Iran perceived the utmost threat. Neither the Iraqi dominance of Kuwait, nor the American presence in the Persian Gulf region, so close to the Republic, were without serious implications for the Iranian security.

Furthermore, the nature of the crisis, that is, its being a confrontation between an "Islamic country" and "the Great Satan", made it highly difficult for the government of a revolutionary Islamic state -which now had a new foreign policy agenda- to respond it without serious domestic repercussions. Thus, the Gulf Crisis policy of the new Pragmatist government of Rafsanjani who remained in between the old enemy, but an Islamic country, Iraq, and the US-led coalition, that was composed of "the arrogant world" and "reactionary regimes of the region", in the propaganda literature of Iran, had become the issue number-one for the domestic politics of the country.

On the other hand, the crisis reminded Iran's strategic importance to the external world, made its presence-as a primary actor of the Persian Gulf region- felt, and inevitably intensified Tehran's ties with the outside world. By this way, the Gulf Crisis provided the Rafsanjani government with an unprecedented opportunity to normalize country's relations with the EC and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and to transform the "new-thinking" in foreign policy into practice.

However, internal debate over the Iranian government's policy vis-à-vis the Gulf Crisis drew the boundaries of this normalization, or at least indicated the fact that this process would not be so smooth. The juxtaposition of all these factors made the Gulf Crisis a historical test case for the realization of the debated, speculated, and projected changes that the Pragmatist faction -now in power vis-à-vis the Radical Third Majles- favored in order to reestablish Iran's place in international politics.

In this respect, given the timing of the crisis -that is the coincidence with drastic transformations in domestic political structure of the country, in the regional and international environment- and the nature of the actors involved in it, the Gulf Crisis is the best case for the analysis of the factionalism over the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic.

In this study, there will be four main chapters and a conclusion chapter. Chapter 2 attempts to give a general introductory background of factionalism in post-revolutionary Iran. To this aim, first of all, it explains the reasons for factionalism in the Iranian context. Then, the two periods of factionalism, Khomeini, and post-Khomeini, together with the transition period in between them, are elaborated in order to reveal the distinguished features of each, and the basic characteristics of factionalism in the Islamic Republic. In doing this, I will analyze the basic approaches of factions towards important national policies, such as economic policy, domestic politics, and foreign policy. In fact, ultimate objective of this part of the study is to shed light on factional struggle in post-Khomeini era, and clarify the reason why factionalism in the "period after Khomeini" is being studied in this work, and why "factionalism over foreign policy" was chosen as the basic subject of it. In this respect, I will argue that in the post-Khomeini era, especially due to his absence as an important balancing factor for factionalism, but also as a result of important changes in the domestic political structure of the country at the end of the transition period, factionalism escalated, and the boundaries of factions became crystallized. Moreover, the second point that I will raise in this chapter is that foreign policy became the focus of the factional debate in the era in question. The crystallization of the foreign policy visions of the factions revealed the fact that, in spite of the existence of four factions in the post-Khomeini era with different approaches to different issues, in the realm of foreign policy roughly there are mainly two camps, namely, the Pragmatist and the Hardliner.

The third chapter, firstly, deals with the reasons why foreign policy became the issue number-one in the post-Khomeini era. Then, this chapter tries to delineate the boundaries of these factions in this realm, and to define respective

foreign policy agendas of the Pragmatist and Hardliner factions. By this way, the differences and similarities in their respective postures will be revealed. The questions of "whether they advocate confrontational foreign policy or a moderate line in foreign policy", "whether they support isolation of the Islamic Republic or its incorporation into the international system", "whether they favor the maintenance of the policy of the export of Islamic revolution or a stop to this revolutionary ideal" are tried to be answered in this part of the study. In general, I will define the respective positions of two groups on the change and continuity in the policies of the first decade. At the end of the chapter, the implications of this factional struggle for the actual foreign policy of the Islamic Republic will be clarified. In this respect, I will argue that clash of factions over the issue has severe repercussions for the foreign policy of the country, and the most important of them is the duality in Iran's foreign policy.

Chapter 4 presents a thorough analysis of the struggle between the Hardliner coalition and the Pragmatist faction in the Gulf Crisis case. First of all, the question of "why the Gulf Crisis was internalized as a significant matter for the domestic politics of the country" is addressed. For the factional politics of the country, the developments of the crisis is gathered under four headings: Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, international response to the aggression, coming of foreign forces to the region, and the war. In responding these developments of the crisis, how different were the positions of the factions from each other? Were there similarities in their postures? What was the extent of factionalism among the ruling elite over Iran's Gulf Crisis policy? What was the nature of it? Did two groups maintain an internal unity in reacting each of these developments in the Gulf Crisis? All of these questions will be addressed in this fourth chapter.

The last chapter, evaluates the actual policy pursued by the Rafsanjani government vis-à-vis the Kuwaiti Crisis in order to analyze the implications of the struggle between the factions for the crisis policy of the Pragmatist government. How did this factional debate affect the Islamic Republic's Gulf Crisis policy? In the final analysis, was the policy pursued by the Iranian government, pragmatist or radical in nature? To what extent pragmatist, to what extent hardliner was it? Put

in other way, how changed was the external behavior of the country when it is compared with the past policies? In connection with this, what was the importance of the case for the general external policy of Iran? What are the probabilities of change in the future foreign policy path of Tehran? This chapter tries to find out answers to these questions.

Throughout the debate of factionalism over foreign policy in post-Khomeini Iran, it is my major claim that in spite of their commitment to the same Islamic Republican regime there exists considerable differences between the factions over foreign policy. This factionalism over the issue does have substantial implications for the foreign policy of the country. The considerable gap and unresolved differences between the foreign policy visions of the ruling elite, especially in the 1990s when the foreign policy became primarily important, reflected itself as inconsistency and duality in country's foreign policy.



CHAPTER 2

FACTIONALISM IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN, HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Today, in the domestic political frame of the Islamic Republic no formally established political parties exist. By far the only long-lived party in the political history of Iran had been the Islamic Republican Party (IRP).⁶ However, internal polarization within the party in 1986-87 forced, Ayatollah Khomeini to abolish the IRP in June 1987.⁷ The dissolution of the IRP signaled the end of the party system in Iran. From that time on, factions replaced the party and operated as semi-legal political entities and loose coalitions without strict definition of lines.

In fact, there is no legal obstacle before the establishment of political parties. The article 26 of the Constitution of the IRAN writes:

The formation of political and professional parties, associations, and societies, as well as religious societies . . . is freely permitted on condition that

⁶ It was set up in February 1979 to provide a comprehensive political base for the supporters of Khomeini. From 1981 on, the IRP became the only legal political party and the sole ruler of the state. After all the parties had been eliminated from the political scene by 1983, the IRP witnessed an internal polarization between the two groups, respectively Reformists, and Conservatives. For more detail on the Islamic Republican Party see, Rundle, Christopher: "Iran: continuity and change since the revolution-carrying water in a sieve?", in Politics and International Relations in the Middle East: Continuity and Change, ed. by M.Jane Davis, Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Company, 1995, pp:105-117; and Behrooz, Maziar: "Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini", Middle Eastern Studies (hereafter MES), vol.27 no.4, Oct 1991, p:598-602

⁷ Khalid Bin Sayeed writes that "The idea that Islam and revolution carried out in the name of Islam can overcome all conflicts and differences... lay behind Khomeini's decision to close the IRP and thus abolish the party system in June 1987." K.B. Sayeed: Western Dominance and Political Islam: Challenge and Response, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, p:66

they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic.⁸

However, in practice there is no officially recognized political party in Iran.⁹ By far, neither any mass party applied for recognition nor a political party was recognized or allowed to function since the disbanding of the IRP.¹⁰ Rather than political parties, factions function as the basic units of the domestic political system of the Islamic Republic. They are the main actors of the domestic politics of the Iran.

Within the Iranian context, the maintenance of factionalism has two reasons. One of them is the continuing existence of the mobilized masses and politicized groups of the revolution period. This fact remained an obstacle before the regime's imposing of its rules over other social formations such as interests groups, political associations, and social classes. The maintenance of powerful political groups outside the regime's foundations and their capacity to declare their interests and demand a share of political power did not permit factional struggle to end.

Second of all, the notion that "politics and religion are not separate issues", and that for an Islamic Government "clergy should involve in politics" encouraged factionalism. Traditional debates between teachers and students at the schools of theology, given the fact that most senior political leaders have come from this background, were transferred to the political sphere. As a result as the analysis below will also indicate factions, and factionalism among the ruling elite had been an integral part of Iran's political life in all periods.

⁸ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, translated from the Persian by Hamid Algar, Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980

⁹ Although by 1989 nearly 30 groups, appealed to the Council of Guardians since the abolition of the IRP in 1987, for the official recognition, their demands were rejected on the grounds of inappropriateness. BBC-Services of World Broadcast / Middle East (hereafter BBC-SWB/ME)/0552, 4 September 1989

¹⁰ In fact, the issue of the practical recognition of political rights and liberties within the Constitutional framework has become one of the domestic debates under the "relatively liberal" conditions of the post-Khomeini period and the main emphasis of the newly-emerged, "left wing".

FACTIONAL STRUGGLE IN REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

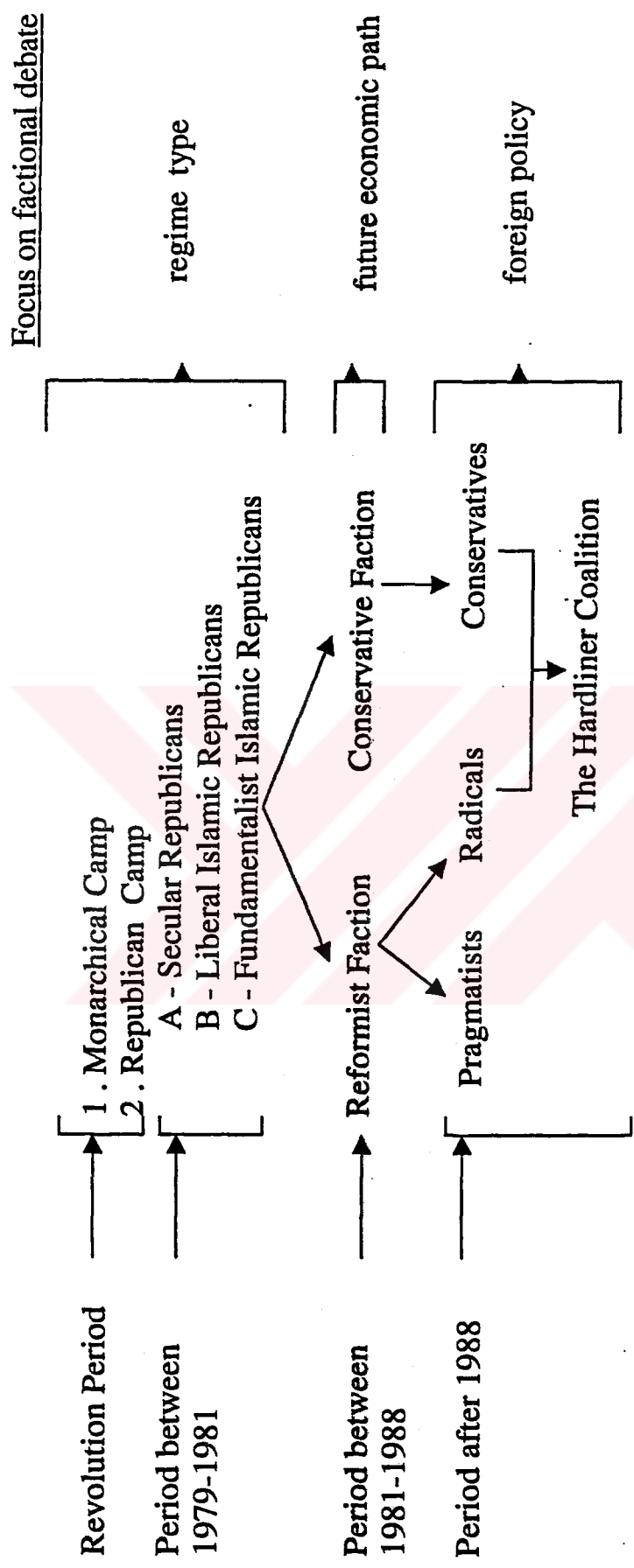


Table 1

2.1 FACTIONALISM IN KHOMEINI PERIOD:

After the elimination of liberal elements outside of, and within the Fundamentalist Islamic Republican Camp from the political scene, within the group, gradually two factions began to take shape which held opposite visions on various social, political, economic, and religious issues including; economic policies of the Republic, interpretation of religious laws, foreign policy, and the role of the Islamic state.

A.Conservatives:

One of them was the Conservative faction. The social base of the Conservative faction has basically been the traditional bazaar capitalists and high-ranking clergy who do not believe in the strict implementation of the "*velayat-e faqih*". The Conservatives in accordance with their social base advocated a free hand for the private sector and struggled against state intervention in economy. They continuously opposed land reform, and nationalization of industry. Personalities such as Ayotollah Azari-Qomi, (then) the President Ali Khamene'i were among the advocates of the Conservative faction. The Conservatives enjoyed control of the Council of Guardians, and the Islamic Republican Party, but they had minority support in the Majles throughout the first decade.

B.Reformists:

The Reformist faction has had a more complex posture. At this stage (between 1981-1987), personalities such as Rafsanjani and Ali Akbar Velayati were in a coalition with more extremist figures, -such as Moussavi (prime minister until 1989), Hojjat-al Islam Khomeini, and Ali Akbar Montashami (Minister of Interior until 1989)- in forming the Reformist faction. The group advocated more role for the state in economy, land reform, nationalization of foreign trade, and the strict interpretation of "the rule of the jurispudent". The group had a majority in

the Majles. Especially, 1988 Majles elections signaled a victory for the reformist group.

C.Others:

Apart from these two Maktabi axes, which had been the factions among the ruling elite, during the period there existed two more groups. These were; the Freedom Movement, headed by the former prime minister, Bazargan; and the movement shaped around some top Grand Ayatollahs who opposed the notion of the Rule of the *Faqih*, the main pillar and the legitimacy source of the regime. These two factions functioned as semi-legal entities by issuing proclamations and decrees, but they were under constant pressure by the two ruling factions.

Differences between the two ruling factions reflected in the functioning of the whole system. In the legal sphere, economic visions of the Conservative and Reformist factions were institutionalized in the two legislative bodies of the Islamic Republic, respectively in the Council of Guardians and the Islamic Consultative Majles, and led to a legislation stalemate, wherein majority of the policy proposals of the government that had passed through the Majles were rejected and returned to the Majles for revision by the Council of Guardians. Due to these differences, fundamental national issues, such as the land policy and nationalization of the foreign trade remained unsolved. The way to overcome this paralysis had been "last-moment interventions" by Ayatollah Khomeini so as to appease the tension in the domestic political scene.

2.1.1 Khomeini's balancer and uniting role :

Ayatollah Khomeini's approach in dealing with factionalism had been "non-interference until the last moment". He, in all phases, in various forms and in different cross sections -tried to maintain equilibrium and make use of every faction where they possessed specific strengths in a field. If a faction possessed

executive capabilities, popular ideological and political strengths, or scientific know-how, he tried to appropriately utilize such capabilities and maintain balance, and unity within the system. He tried to avoid prompting the thought within a faction that it was being excluded from command and the responsibility of the regime had been put on the shoulder of another faction. By this way he preserved the unity within the system. Rafsanjani explained the Imam's view on the factions: "Ayatollah Khomeini wished the two factions to adopt a 'critical stand' but not to clash with or weaken each other."¹¹

This had been Khomeini's position on the two factions until 1987. Nevertheless, escalation of factionalism after 1987 resulted in the direct and vigorous intervention by him. In order to ease the factional tension, he abolished the IRP, and by means of decrees he has issued in 1987-88, endorsed the reformist position. In one of his historical decrees, in order to remove obstacles before the well-functioning of the executive organ, Khomeini declared the omnipotency of the state since the Islamic state's main task was the protection and promotion of the Islamic order.¹² Furthermore, he institutionalized his mediator role in a body called "Expediency Council" in 1987. The basic task of the newly established Council was to find out an ultimate solution to disagreements between the Majles and the Council of Guardians.

The religious leader -via periodic interventions- played a balancer role between the two factions whereby he provided the continuity of the both factions on the one hand, and prevented one of them becoming too powerful, on the other.¹³ Another function Khomeini fulfilled was the appeasement of factional

¹¹ Behrooz, Maziar: "Factionalism in Iran under Khomeini", MES, vol.27 no.4, October 1991, p:599

¹² In this decree he declared that: "The state is a branch of prophet's absolute rule and this is one of the principal laws of Islam and has priority over all the secondary laws even prayer (namaz) and pilgrimage... The ruler can close the mosques when needed... the state can ,on its own, abrogate its religiously lawful contracts with the people when the contracts are found to be against the interest of the country and Islam." Iran Times, 4 May 1988, in Akhavi, Shahrough, "The Clergy's Concepts of Rule in Egypt and Iran", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (hereafter ANNALS, AAPSS), vol.524, Nov. 1992, p:101

¹³ Khomeini's this intention became more clear in the Brotherhood Charter he issued before his death. For more on the Brotherhood Charter see KEYHAN HAVA'I, 25 July 1991 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1991, p:55

debate by means of either sharp criticism of, or soft recommendations to the dominant faction of the debate.¹⁴ Here, the main concern of the leader had been to prevent the factional rivalry from extinguishing the notion of "unity under the Islamic order" on which the whole system of the revolutionary regime was set up.¹⁵

By this way, Khomeini had been a superficial determinant of, and obstacle before the free functioning and evolution of political factionalism. This has been more true especially in the realm of foreign policy until 1987. Khomeini prevented the war from becoming an issue of contention in the domestic scene. However, evolution of the war from 1985 on, inevitably made the war with Iraq a significant topic for domestic debate. Together with rising domestic discontent about the lasting war, practical -mainly economic- necessities of the country convinced Khomeini to come to terms with the Pragmatist technocrats of the country and drink "a cup of poison" by ending the war in 1988. That is how he characterized his acceptance of the UN-brokered cease-fire that ended the eight year Iran-Iraq war.

2.1.2 New dimensions in political factionalism:

Factions functioned as loose coalitions rather than as political parties. This fact had been even more true in the statist-reformist case. This faction was united in its opposition to the Conservatives over domestic issues. However, the Reformists were divided into two groups when the issue under consideration was foreign policy. Their incompatibility over the foreign policy issues became clear

¹⁴ In one occasion Mohtashemi said that: "The imam clearly believes in keeping a balance between the two factions and he gives bitter and sweet reminders to both of them to keep this balance." London KEYHAN, 26 July 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:64

¹⁵ Yazdi, the head of the judiciary in 1990, clarifies this "The imam had repeatedly advised them(factions) to respect each other, refrain from quarrels and arguments, and to maintain solidarity . . . the imam said that the general conditions of the country warrant that the enemies should be shown that there are no problems inside, and that we are working together in utmost unity, solidarity, harmony, and friendship." Tehran Domestic Service, 28 Sept 1990, FBIS-NES, 30 Sept 1990, p:54. For more details on Islamic unity understanding of Khomeini, see K.B.Sayeed, op.cit., Chapter 4: "Pragmatic versus Militant Strategies in the Post-Khomeini Iran."

as the issue of foreign policy became an important matter after 1985. While the Rafsanjani-led group favored a stop to the fruitless war, another group called Radicals advocated to the continuation of this holy war. The Pragmatists has been the victors of this debate, with their impact on the acceptance of the UNSC Resolution 598 and the end of the war with Iraq in 1988. The end of the war ultimately divided the Reformist faction and marked the beginning of the core division of the post-Khomeini Era factionalism, that is Radicals versus Pragmatists. However, in a bid to curb the rise of pragmatist trend, and in order to preserve the balance between different political groups, in line with the radical posture, Khomeini issued the fatwah against the Salman Rushdie, and put his signature on the factionalism in the era after him.

2.1.3 Conclusion:

During the Khomeini era, until 1987, although the political scene was not free of factionalism that paralyzed the functioning of the government institutions, the paralysis could, to a large extent, be overcome by the last minute-intervention of the supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The leader while on the one hand, permitted their oppositional existence, on the other hand set their limits when the one started to gain dominance over the other or the functioning of the system became difficult. As a result, he provided the maintenance of the notion of "unity" in spite of the existing factional differences between different politico-religious groups. In one of his speeches Rafsanjani reminded the role played by the Ayatollah Khomeini in difficult times of the first decade:

If the imam of the ummah had not been among us, and if he had not been at the helm of our ship in the turbulent waters of life, if he had not commanded this force toward the goal, we would

have foundered time after time. Differences and problems always reach a point which may lead us to the point of no return.¹⁶

However, by 1987 when it became clear that the stalemate of the Majles-Council of Guardians prevented the country from going one step further, Khomeini intervened to resolve the problem at the expense of his balancer role and supported the Reformist faction in many ways. This led to a Reformist victory in the 1988 Majles elections. But, as Ayatollah Khomeini was withdrawing his weight on the reformists side, this faction splited over new issues such as cease-fire with Iraq, reconstruction and foreign policy. It was not clear, at the time of his death, which of these two factions he favored. What was clear, however, was that Pragmatists gained a dominant position in late 1980s.

2.2 TRANSITION TO POST KHOMEINI ERA:

The end of the war with Iraq signaled the beginning of an unprecedented transition period for the Islamic Republic. Sequence of important developments, and changes one after other did have important implications for the factionalism in 1990s.

2.2.1 The end of the war with Iraq:

The end of the Iran-Iraq War with the acceptance of the UNSC Resolution 598 in July 1988 had been one of the most important developments having tremendous impact on factionalism in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini was unhappy about the decision to end the war in this manner. In his first public statement after the announcement of Iran's decision he said:

¹⁶ Tehran Domestic Service, 12 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Oct 1990, p:6

The acceptance of the resolution . . . was truly a very bitter and tragic issue for everyone and particularly for me . . . in view of the opinion of all the high-ranking political and military experts of the country . . . I agreed with the acceptance of the resolution and the cease-fire . . . the death and martyrdom would have been more bearable to me.¹⁷

In fact, the statement itself proved the prevailing pragmatism in the ranks of the ruling elite, including Khomeini, that state interests came before ideological ideals. The defeat of Khomeini to this "minuses vs pluses" rationality, and his sacrificing of Islamic principles, and ideals for the sake of practical interests of the nation, marked an unprecedented victory for the Pragmatist wing of the ruling elite.

While many Hard-liners, "the revolutionary idealists"¹⁸ criticized the acceptance of the resolution, the Pragmatists were supporting the decision. Rafsanjani, then the speaker of Majles and the leading figure of the Pragmatist group, endorsed the decision by questioning the past policies: "The main thing is that we can stop making enemies without reason because of this new move."¹⁹

In fact, since 1985 there had been open criticisms of the Pragmatists on the policy of continuation of the war of attrition with Iraq. However, since they were in minority in the Majles vis-à-vis the so called "Radicals" who supported the continuation of the holy war against Iraq at any cost, the war lasted.

Nevertheless, the acceptance of the cease-fire in 1988 signaled a turning point for the foreign policy of Iran that revolutionary idealists -who designed foreign policy throughout the 1980s -were giving way to the preeminence of Pragmatists in the end of the decade. After that date Iranian leadership had been deeply divided between "Radicals" -who maintained their confrontational posture

¹⁷ BBC-SWB, ME / 0218, 3 August 1988

¹⁸ Ramazani, R.K.: "Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations", MEJ, vol.43 no.2, Spring 1989, pp:202-17

¹⁹ BBC-SWB, ME / 0218, 1 August 1988

in the realm of foreign policy, and opposed the reestablishment of ties with the West and with the conservative countries of the region- and “Pragmatists” -who favored the end of isolationist and confrontationist foreign policy of the country. However, it may be argued that Pragmatists started this new era with an advantageous position since the winds of change -within the country, in the regional and international conjunctures- were opening the way for their pro-change policies.

The end of the war initiated a framework for internal looking, open self-criticism and public reflections at the executive leadership level, which in turn gave form to the new agendas of competing factions. The words of Rafsanjani outlined the need for a new path for the Islamic Republic, within a critique of the hardliner position:

There may be some who might think that we are not prepared to compromise. They may say what is the meaning of wealth, comfort, what does solving international problems mean . . .? There is no just government in the world and therefore we should always be as we are now. There is no need for us to change our present situation. Let prices rise as they will; let the people's problems up, irrespective of the burden, we are ready for martyrdom! This is not a correct view. It is not possible to organize the long life of a generation in this way.²⁰

2.2.2.Economic reconstruction:

One of the results of the end of the war with Iraq was the economic reconstruction's becoming the issue number-one of the country. The Iranian economy at the end of the war reached the "red light."²¹ Therefore, the end of the

²⁰ BBC-SWB, ME/0218, 1August 1988

²¹ In August 1991 Rafsanjani for the first time commented: "One of the factors in our accepting the cease-fire was one which we did not mention at the time and have not so far disclosed. It was a letter written by the

war left one more important debate for the factions; “how to handle the reconstruction of the country” especially the economy devastated by the war. The question remained one of the main issues, in post-Khomeini Era, on which the factional struggle was waged and factions crystallized their economic and foreign policy visions.

In terms of factional debate over foreign policy, the issue of economic reconstruction, the basic concern for the Rafsanjani government, was the crucial input. Economic recovery of the country necessitated that huge investments be made. Given limited domestic sources of capital and foreign exchange reserves at the end of eight-year long war, Western capital, and technology, and economic cooperation with the countries of the Gulf region became vital.²²

As a result, urgent needs of the country has been the basis of justification for the foreign policy objectives, decisions, and actions of the Pragmatist in power in the way of moderation and normalization of external relations. The considerable bulk of the revision in the past policies had been economic in origin.

2.2.3. Death of Khomeini:

The most important event affecting the factionalism in 1990's was the death of Khomeini on June 3, 1989. First of all, the supremacy of Khomeini as *velayat-e faqih* did not allow smooth development of independent political institutions and centers of power since he continuously intervened the process and diverted it to one direction or another. Second of all, Khomeini has not permitted any individual or faction to gain preeminence within his government by setting

Minister of Finance, and others responsible for economic affairs, which was discussed by the government and then submitted to the Imam: I as the military commander also studied it. They wrote that the country's economic and financial resources had reached the red light. They wrote that the situation was no longer tolerable for Iranian society..." Ettela'at, 9 August 1991, in Rundle Cristopher, in Jane Davis, op.cit., p:110

²² Closely connected with this Rafsanjani stated that: "The main problem of economy was in the nation's gross product. Production was in a very unsatisfactory condition due to the war and the lack of investment and the employment of the manpower. Production was declining. We thought the best and the most appropriate place to start our work was to approach production, first of all, to **collect capital from anywhere we can**. Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:57-63.

limits to them under the notion of Islamic unity. Now, Ayatollah Khomeini's death left the political factions without their source of legitimation. From this point on they had to function without this balancing force. Thus, it was only after his death that the factions could really effectively take shape and independently draw their boundaries.

Therefore, the direct results of the Imam's death on factionalism were manifold; the end of charismatic leadership and thus, institutionalization of policy-making, the crystallization of the positions of the factions, escalation of the competition for power among them and emergence of new small (leftist) factions under "relatively" liberalized conditions of the post-Khomeini Era.

2.2.4. Succession debate and tension:

The Imam's death had been an important test for the stability of the existing regime. The resignation of the official successor of Khomeini, Montazeri, on 28 March 1989, four years after his official recognition as the faqih-designate,²³ while triggering "succession debate" underlined the instability prevalent in the system and highlighted deep factionalism. In his public statements Khomeini made it clear that he withdrew his support from Ayatollah Montazeri not because he lacks religious leadership qualifications but because he did not possess necessary administrative abilities for political leadership.²⁴ The point is that, by this way, the religious qualifications were subordinated the political abilities in determining the supreme leader of the theocratic regime.

After Khomeini had passed away without selecting another figure as *Faqih*, Hojjat-el Eslam Khamene'i, -a middle-ranking religious man, but a high-ranking political figure (president of the time)- was elected as the new Faqih in June 1989. The result was further deviation of the political practice from the Shi'i

²³ Keesing's, p:36539

²⁴ BBC-SWB, ME / 0406 30 March 1989; For the details of the Montazeri's dismissal, see Jomhuri-ye Eslami, 6-7 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 5 October 1990, p:68-72

tradition and the theory of the *Velayat-e Faqih*, increasing discontent of the "silent opposition" in Qom of the regime, and the strengthening of the "politics over religion notion." This, reinforced the pragmatist understanding in the post-Khomeini era.

The designation of the new *Faqih* by the Assembly of Experts without any hesitation or stalemate, together with the approval of the Constitutional amendments -that introduced new mechanisms to overcome the Khomeini time legislative and executive problems by centralizing the ruling mechanisms- has proved the Islamic regime's ability to survive without the leader of the revolution.

This smooth transition, together with Pragmatist Rafsanjani government's getting an unprecedented vote of confidence (261 out of 270) from the Majles in which the Radicals held the majority²⁵, once more underlined the fact that whenever the maintenance of the regime is at stake, factions put aside their rivalry and differences and cooperate in order for preserving underlying principles and mechanisms of the Islamic Republican regime.

2.2.5. Constitutional changes:

The Constitutional Amendments -ordered by Khomeini in April 1989 and put to a referendum in July 1989, further reinforced the trend of subordination of religion to politics within the political structure of the state.

The amendments aimed at centralizing the divided administrative structure, and thus, overcoming the Majles-Council of Guardians stalemate which had been an important obstacle before the well-functioning of the government mechanism. To this aim, the presidential system was introduced while the office of the prime minister was abolished.²⁶ The president was given the power to

²⁵ See the commentary titled "Obstacles before Rafsanjani within the Majles" in London Keyhan, 21 July 90 in FBIS-NES, 3 Aug 1990, p:54

²⁶ The Article 60 of the Constitution was amended.

appoint ministers, with the approval of the Majles, and to take direct control of country's economy.²⁷

One of the important amendments was the abandonment of the constitutional requirement that the country's supreme leader be a *marja-e taqlid*.²⁸ Only being a *mojtahed* or jurist, not a high level religious leader was sufficient for the supreme leadership. This meant that the supreme leader was to be designated according not to his religious qualifications but to his political abilities.

Another important amendment to the constitution was the legalization of the "Expediency Council". The "Expediency Council" made up of six senior clerics and seven senior government officials was to be appointed by the President. Therefore, the The Expediency Council was put under the control of the executive, at the expense of the Council of Guardians.²⁹ This mean further centralization of power in government's hand.

As a result, constitutional amendments strengthened the executive organ, while on the other hand they reinforced the trend that the religious considerations were subordinate to the political ones. Such a flexible Khomeini-induced re-interpretation of the country's institutionalization reinforced those forces in fundamentalist Islamic Republican Camp, who had gathered around the "pragmatic-reformist" agenda and faction". The development also made an important impact on the political structure of the post-Khomeini Era.

2.3. FACTIONALISM IN POST-KHOMEINI ERA:

In the post-Khomeini era, especially with the absence of the balancing factor, that is, Ayatollah Khomeini, factionalism escalated. As a result, the lines of

²⁷ This was a direct response to the Majles-Council of Guardians stalemate over the economic policies of the first decade.

²⁸ Khamene'i, who has already been selected as Faqih in June 1989 was legitimized by July 1989 referendum, one month after his designation as Faqih. So, he was appointed as Faqih in June 1989 according to the requirements of the unratified constitution.

²⁹ Article 72 of the Constitution of the IRI.

factions further crystallized, factions began to operate as if they are political parties.

A. Pragmatists:

The Pragmatist faction initially crystallized with the fall of the core *Maktabis* in the mid- 1980's and came to power after the Iran-Iraq war and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Results of the May 1997 presidential elections, the victory of a close ally of Rafsanjani, Khatami, at the expense of a powerful Conservative figure, Nateq Nuri, indicated that they would continue to hold the majority in the executive organ of the country. In 1990s the President Rafsanjani, and his Foreign Minister Velayati has been the most distinguished figure of the faction.

The Pragmatists' notion of good government is that of a populist one administered by the coalition of bureaucrats and the clergy.³⁰ The Pragmatists' approach to theoretical concerns, such as the sensitive issue of *velayat-e faqih*, is in terms of its effects on social administration. For example, they vigorously supported the institution in the 1990s, in the face of rising factionalism, because its basic task was to unite the position in the face of disagreement between the political factions, and to overcome stalemates stemming from those disagreements.

For the most part, the Pragmatists tend to be less doctrinaire in their approach to policy issues, and emphasized the need for rationalism and debate in politics. However, the Conservatives and the Radicals view the notions of religious knowledge as the basis of correct social vision and subsequent political strategy.

Pragmatists seem to realize the difficulty of transformation of Islamic principles into practices of the daily life. This, by no means, implies that they gave

³⁰ The final position of Khomeini, his decrees and constitutional amendments reinforced this trend in the 1990s.

up the ideal of creation of a state system based on these rules. Rather, this means, they have flexibility in interpreting the rules of Islam so as to meet the needs of the day. It is this flexibility in interpretation and implementation that made them Pragmatist.

This more moderate approach is, of course, reinforced by close proximity to the bureaucratic machinery and the daily practice of government which in turn makes a modifying impact on views and practices.

In domestic affairs, they advocate an economic reconstruction strategy based on economic liberalization and support from foreign capital which the country is severely in need of. Thus they favor opening up of the country to the external world.

In foreign policy, the Pragmatists tend to see international relations neither in terms of moral nor revolutionary principles. Rather, they tend to analyze foreign relations in terms of national interests of the country. Thus, they are the most moderate faction regarding developing relations with the Western countries, and the countries of the region.

The Pragmatist faction draws its support primarily from the modern urban middle classes, including government employees (bureaucrats), technocrats, professionals and from certain elements of the business community.

B.Radicals:

This faction is the core of the "the Imam's line", that is Maktabis. In the post-Khomeini era, it is no longer the strongest of the factions.³¹ The leading figures of the group are Hojjatolislam Ali Akbar Mohtashemi(former interior minister), Mohammed Moussavi Khoeniha, Sadeq Khalkali, and Hojjatolislam Mehdi Karrubi (the Speaker of the Third Majles between 1988-92).

³¹ The Radicals who had enjoyed a commanding majority in the Third Majles saw their propotion diminish to less than 15 percent, 40 out of a total of 270, at the end of the 1992 elections. Sarabi, Farzin: "The Post-Khomeini Era in Iran: Elections of the Fourth Islamic Majles", *MEJ*, vol.48 no.2, Spring 1994, pp:104-105

The underlying factor shaping the faction's general stand is its understanding of social justice. The Radicals, in the light of the "progressive interpretation" of the Islamic law, consider provision of greater social justice and a better life for the poor masses as the fundamental duty of the Islamic state.³² Within this context, they advocated land reform, economic self-sufficiency, a greater state role in the economy. In their pro-statist, pro-reformist posture, the Radicals differed from the Conservatives.

Initial anti-imperialistic line of the *Maktabi* Group was retained by the Radical faction. Under their anti-imperialistic rhetoric, the Radicals view foreign investment and foreign companies as instruments of political dependency. In the 1990s, they maneuvered against the Rafsanjani government's incentives for foreign investment and expansion of trade ties with other countries.³³

In foreign policy area, anti-imperialism is the basic characteristic of the Radical faction that vehemently implemented in 1980's and requested in 1990's a confrontationalist foreign policy line. The faction continuously opposed any rapprochement with the United States, and, to a lesser extent, other Western countries, and their regional allies. They advocated active support for Islamic and national liberation movements throughout the world. Israel has been viewed by them as a Jewish state seeking to undermine Islam and a strategic instrument of US foreign policy. For this reason they regard Israel a "tumor" to be got rid of in the region and supported Islamic groups rejecting the Peace Process between Israel and the PLO.

The Radicals fear that expanded relations with the West would inevitably increase the influence of Westernized technocrats and experts within the state bureaucracy and other spheres of life. Together with the Conservatives, they

³² For more details on progressive and traditional interpretation of religious laws, see; Banuazizi, Ali: "Iran's Revolutionary Impasse, Political Factionalism and Societal Resistance", Middle East Report, Nov-Dec 1994, p:4

³³ As a radical deputy, Hasan al-Hoseyni, puts it, ". . . foreign investments inside the country and their ensuing economic corruption, which encourages the culture of excessive and illegitimate profit-seeking for individual gain."; Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 25 Oct 1991, p:55

advocated a strict code of dress and public conduct for women, limits on the forms of entertainment and artistic expressions.

The Radical faction's social base is the younger, more militant clerics, members of the Islamic associations in universities, and others in the large network of revolutionary organizations that were created during the revolution or shortly after-wards. Thus, the lower-middle and the lower-urban classes are the social base of the Radical faction.

Finally, as the standard-bearer of the revolutionary tradition, the Radical faction stands against any suggestion of transformation.

C.Conservatives:

The Conservative faction, following the traditional Islamic Jurisprudence,³⁴ upheld the sanctity of private property and advocated a limited role for state in the economy and a free-market.

The social base of the Conservatives is clergy and merchant class. It is on this basis that the Conservative faction is opposed to state intervention in the market. It resisted nationalization of private property in the 1980's. As the faction strengthened its position in the Fourth Majles and the Fifth Majles,³⁵ in 1990's, it seeks the transfer of state-controlled industries to the private sector and management of economic policy by the private sector. To this aim, Conservatives built a coalition with the Pragmatist government and supported, conditionally and on limited basis, the policy of economic adjustment of President Rafsanjani.

In the domain of foreign policy, the Conservative faction maintains its Maktabi line and it is more concerned with establishing relations with Islamic countries. Lest its hold on its social base would be undermined, the faction is not

³⁴ Banuazizi, p:4

³⁵ For the results of the two Majles Elections see respectively; Sarabi, Farzin: "The Post-Khomeini Era in Iran: Elections of the Fourth Islamic Majles", MEJ, vol.48 no.2, Spring 1994, pp:89-107 and; Menashri, David: "The Domestic Power Struggle and the Fourth Iranian Majles Elections", ORIENT, vol.33 no.3, 1992, pp:387-397; and see also BBC-SWB, ME/2557, 11 March-15 May 1996

so supportive of moderation in foreign policy. However, as long as there's no such a threat it shows a capacity for accommodation of moderation in foreign policy line.

On cultural issues the Conservatives are even more rigid than the Radicals. As in the case of economic sphere, they favor the traditional Islamic Jurisprudence and thus, strict observance of Islamic rules. Therefore, they are the most puritan of all the factions.

The Conservative faction has had a considerable power in the Council of Guardians in the 1980s while it had been a minority in the Majles. However, this trend reversed in the 1990s and it became a dominant faction in the Majles after the parliamentary elections of 1992. This time the Conservatives, after consolidating their power in the Majles and in spite of election cooperation, emerged as the powerful rivals and opponents of the Pragmatists in the Majles while the Radicals also remained a strong opposition within and outside the Majles.

It has considerable influence in the theological schools, the Combatant Clergy Association,³⁶ some Islamic associations and the Bazaar chambers of commerce. The Parliamentary Speaker of the Fourth Majles, Akbar Nateq-Nuri and the religious leader Khamene'i are the two most senior figures of the Conservative faction.

D. Leftist wing:

This group is composed of different sub-groups operating mainly outside the Majles and other political institutions. The distinguishing characteristic of the group-formed under relatively liberalized conditions of 1990's-is on the domestic political front; emphasis on public rights, freedom and the rule of law within the constitutional framework. It argues that respect for, and implementation of, the

³⁶ Sarabi, p:89

Constitution would provide a sufficient basis for guaranteeing political development.

Many newly established (not after official recognition) groups, such as Freedom Movement led by Abraham Yazdi,³⁷ and the groups from the time of the revolution, such as the Organization of Mojaheddin of the Islamic Revolution led by Nabavi can be enumerated within this group. All seeks an Islamic Government popularly elected by the Muslim people and loyal to an accurate implementation of constitutional rights.

Regarding economics, the Leftist groups generally supports the idea of a mixed economy with public ownership of major industries and an important role for the state in economy. Thus the left like the Radicals had been a staunch opponent of economic liberalization policies in 1990s.

In foreign policy, they see international order to be dominated by imperialist powers led by the US. The left opposed any suggestion of the possibility of improvement in relations with the United States and even views relations with other Western countries with skepticism. However, in order to evaluate the influence of their position on country's policies one must say that the leftist groups are the weakest and the most vulnerable among the factions.³⁸

In 1990's, Bazargan's movement of Nehzat-e Azadi and the high-ranking religious men in the city of Qom had remained important opposition groups operating outside the government institutions and the Majles.³⁹

³⁷ BBC-SWB, ME / 2525, 2 February 1996

³⁸ For this reason, the Leftist groups were ignored as the opponents of Rafsanjani's Gulf Crisis policy. Rather, the Conservative and the Radical factions are taken as the oppositional front. For more details on the respective majority of the factions in the governmental structure, see Enteshami's evaluation of the 1989, and 1993 presidential elections, and 1989, and 1992 Majles elections, and the interaction between the Majles and the Executive organ, Enteshami, op.cit., pp: 54-71

³⁹ "Many clerics in Qom and Mashhad regard the regime's imam-making to be against Shi'ite religious principles. London Keyhan, 21 July 1990 in FBIS-NES , 3 Aug 1990, p:54

2.4.EVALUATION:

This short analysis of the factional background reveals important points on factionalism in Iran. First of all, it had been an integral part of the political life in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran. While in the beginning the factional struggle was over the nature of the regime, after the consolidation of the Islamic Regime it was over the various national policies, among the ruling elite, and thus within the boundaries of the existing regime. Because, at this stage, existing factional groups shared the same root -Fundamentalist Islamic Republican Camp of the Revolution period- and their leading figures have a common background in schools of theology. They had favored at the time of the revolution, and continue to favor an "Islamic" and "Republican" regime, in Ayatollah Khomeini's own words "Islamic Republic, not one word more nor one word less."⁴⁰ As they share the same root, they have common economic, political, and ideological interests in the maintenance of the Islamic Republican regime. The reasons for the maintenance of the factional co-existence were, during the Khomeini era, balancing interventions on the part of the religious leader, and after Khomeini, the ideological factor -that is, political loyalty and ideological commitment to creating an Islamic order together- with common economic interests, and social background. All the factions prefer the continuation of the Islamic rule and the clerical dominance. This emerges as the basic restraining factor for factionalism in the country, and draws the boundaries of it. This is why despite differences of opinion with regard to the issues regarding the regime's existence they act unanimously. A prime example of this was the election of Ayotollah Khamene'i as leader one day after the death of Khomeini. This fact was underlined by Khamene'i in his address to the Fourth Islamic Unity Conference: " They (factions) have differences of opinion. Those very brothers who argue with each

⁴⁰ RESALAT, 28 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Feb 1991, p:52 One of the Majles deputies clarifies this in his preagenda speech: "The name of our government has two parts, republic, which denotes the role of the people, and Islamic, which denotes the role of Islam in this government. Therefore, no one can and no one should deny the role of the people, or, the role of Islam in the government.", *ibid*.

other over some issue would join hands and clench their fists at the slightest aggression against the Islamic Republic's system." ⁴¹

The other point is about the basic characteristics of the factions that they operate as loose coalitions rather than political parties with set membership or clearly defined policies. This gave them the ability to maneuver according to the necessities of the day, and the topic. In the post-Khomeini era, the clarification of the lines of existing factions revealed the fact that factions common in view in one issue have different positions in another issue area. This pointed out another basic characteristic of the political factionalism in the political structure of the post-Khomeini Iran that factional groups operate as shifting coalitions according to the issue under consideration.

The short outline of the politico-religious visions of factions gives clues on their operational mechanisms. The convergence in stands of different factions in one issue area, while differing in positions in the other, enables them to establish temporary coalitions according to the topic under consideration. For example, while Conservatives and Pragmatists share similar views on economic policies; Radical-Conservative-Leftist coalition emerges as the allied opposition against the moderation policies of the Pragmatist group when the issue under consideration is foreign policy. Under these circumstances, "balance between the factions" is the most sensitive issue of the domestic politics in Iran. Although we are suggesting a powerful Pragmatist wing in 1990s, the power of the Radical and Conservative factions in the policy-making and implementation can not be ignored.

For our purposes, the most important point that can be reduced from the above analysis is foreign policy visions of the four factions. It puts that, when the issue under consideration is foreign policy there are generally two main axes, the Hardliner coalition that is composed of the Hardliner, Conservative and Leftist factions, and the Pragmatist group. Therefore, factional struggle over foreign policy is waged mainly between these opposite camps. Chapter 3 will deal with this confrontation between the Hardliner coalition and the Pragmatist faction.

⁴¹ Tehran Domestic Service, 8 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES , 9 Oct 1990, p:42

CHAPTER 3

NEW FOCUS OF FACTIONALISM, FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy, together with and tied to economic reconstruction strategies, has been at the center of the factional debate in the post-Khomeini era. For the reasons explained in the previous chapter, in this study, factional debate over foreign policy will be taken as a battle ground between two main axes; namely, Pragmatist faction and Hardliner coalition, (oppositional coalition between the Radical, Conservative and Leftist factions in the foreign policy realm.) Here, it should be pointed out that, as aforementioned, from time to time the Conservative faction, which is in coalition with the Pragmatists in domestic issues, allied with this faction in some foreign policy matters. At least, they refrained from direct criticism of government's policy. However, this, by no means, prevented them from being opponents of the pragmatist understanding in foreign policy, and an obstacle before the normalization policies of the Pragmatist government.

For the first time in the political history of the Islamic Republic, in 1990s, foreign policy decisions and actions of the government has become the number-one subject of the factional politics in the country. The reasons that made foreign policy the basic issue over which politico-ideological struggle between the two factions was waged can be grouped under three headings:

I- Changes in the domestic political configuration and structure of the country; and consequent change in the priorities of the government:

a- Centralization and institutionalization of foreign policy making as a result of:

-The death of Khomeini (marked the end of the government of the country with charismatic leadership)

-The constitutional changes; (centralized the management of the country, thus foreign policy, in the hands of the executive)

b- The situation of the war-weary economy of the country made a quick economic reconstruction the primary objective of the government. The need for economic and social reconstruction, and international cooperation forced many of the regime's followers to fundamentally re-evaluate their policies.⁴²

c- The change in the attitude and understanding of the majority of the governmental elite at the end of a decade-long experience in foreign policy-making⁴³. At a historical turning point in the overall conjuncture of the globe, interaction between internal and external sources of change resulted in the change in the public perceptions of foreign policy within the country. Here, an important point is the continuity in the leadership despite multifaceted changes in other processes. Khamene'i, Yazdi, and Rafsanjani had been the preeminent political figures who were supported by Khomeini himself. Rafsanjani was the previous speaker of the Majles, while Khamenei was the president of the Khomeini period. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republican Party in February 1979, they had been the actors of the Iran's politics. The experience in the state management

⁴² In fact, the dismal situation of the economy was not only the result of the war. As the head of the Plan and Budget Organisation, Zanjani, defines: ". . . shock caused by the rapid and unprecedented drop in crude oil prices on world markets in 1985 and its continuation in subsequent years . . . (and) . . . the rapid growth in the nation's population", together with ineffective statist policies of the first decade, were the other domestic factors that contributed to the deterioration of economic situation in the second half of the decade. ETTELA'AT, 14 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 25 Sept 1990, p:64

⁴³ For example, after 10 years of effort to export Islamic Revolution it became apparent to the majority that Islamization of the all Muslim societies is not probable in the near future only by utilising subversive methods. Proposals of new methods for the revolution export such as "setting example" or "being a source of emulation" were underlined in this new era.

and recent changes, however, strengthened the hands of pro-change trends at the leadership level.

II- Changes in the regional environment:

a- The end of the war with Iraq: Implications of this were twofold. On the one hand, it eliminated an important source of unity between the factions. Even though, in its last phase the war became a source of friction between the political groups, throughout it continued to be an overall uniting factor in the domestic sphere. In 1988 the war with Iraq was over, yet the debate, that started after 1985, intensified. Second of all, the cease-fire signaled the disappearance of an important source of conflict between Iran and the external world.

Brinton, in his book "The Anatomy of Revolution", posits the fall of the radical element during a Thermidor in which "most people, overtaxed by the rule of the virtue and justice, long for more accustomed, laxer ways."⁴⁴ In fact, the end of the war may be viewed as the beginning of a Thermidor era in the Islamic Republic. With the end of the extraordinary crisis situation that froze the revolutionary process at its early stage, and kept the revolutionary ideals fresh, in this new stage radical elements of the revolution started to decline, and lose power. In fact developments regarding the Assembly of Experts elections, which will be dealt with in Appendix C, confirmed this process. The normalization, and deradicalization of the revolutionary process brought about normalization in all aspects, including foreign policy.

III-Transformation in the international system:

a-The end of the Cold War and bipolarity in the international power structure: This alteration in the overall power configuration of the international

⁴⁴ Brinton, The Anatomy of the Revolution, London: Vintage Books, 1965, pp:250-51

system rendered a revision in Iran's foreign policy principle of "neither East nor West" inevitable since there remained no more such an "East-West" division. This principle referred to Iran's non-alignment posture vis-à-vis the bi-polarity in international system, and implied its independence, isolation from the two power centers in the Cold War period. Now that the New World Order was being shaped, and world becoming more integrated, the Islamic Republic should take her place in this new order with a new agenda.

All these developments and changes in the domestic political structure of the Islamic Republic, together with transformations in the regional and international arenas, formed and reinforced the foreign policy agenda of the newly emerged pro-change wing of the country's politics. This foreign policy approach of the Pragmatist faction, however, faced with internal opposition of another group that rigidly opposed any change in the foreign policy realm, that is, the Hardline coalition. Basically, the interaction between the two groups determined the factional agenda of the post-Khomeini Era.

At this stage of the analysis, for a brief understanding of the two main axes in question, their clashing claims over different foreign policy issues and their respective overall foreign policy postures should be dwelled upon:

3.1.THE PRAGMATIST FACTION:

In the foreign policy realm, the Pragmatist faction held a new understanding, and agenda. This included the revision of the past policies, and the methods used in their implementation.

Rafsanjani's dictum of "stop making enemies without reason" was the base of the Pragmatists' rejection of confrontationism in foreign policy. Instead of confrontation, they offered a relatively moderate line in foreign policy. The foreign policy instrument that the faction advocated was traditional diplomacy

based on the reciprocal respect of the parties.⁴⁵ They believed that, through diplomacy, the ice between the Iran and the external world could be melted, and this was economically, politically, and in the security aspect, to the benefit of the country in the post-war conditions. The words of an important Foreign Ministry official clarifies the position of the Pragmatist faction on diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument:

The function of diplomacy in the area of achieving national security is changing the enemies in deed to potential enemies, potential enemies to potential friends, and potential friends to friends in deed.⁴⁶

The faction advocated a moderation and normalization in relations with the external world. Rather than isolation, they favored an open-door policy, especially due to the urgent economic needs of the country. This point also reveals the pragmatism of the faction. In order to establish a safe base for Islam, they believed, economic recovery was a must. In a world of interdependence, for an immediate social and economic recovery, it was necessary for the Iran to establish close economic ties with all countries, and especially the Western countries with higher level of technology and investment capability. It is basically this understanding that urged the Pragmatists to defend the establishment of close ties with the Western Europe. Within this framework, the Pragmatist faction supported foreign investment in the country, and foreign borrowing to activate country's production capacity, and complete its development projects which was the most serious problem at the end of the eight-year war with Iraq. The Foreign Minister Velayati openly stated that: ". . . Mutual relations with various countries of the world do not mean dependence, and the growth of the nations of the world

⁴⁵ Here, the term "traditional" is utilized as opposed to the term "Khomeinistic diplomacy" that refers to a tension-laden, aggressive diplomacy.

⁴⁶ Hoseyn Kazempur-Ardabili, ETTELA'AT, 28 July 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990, p:66

depends on their interaction. The Islamic policy is based on logical relations with the world . . ."47

This emphasis on the "logical/ rational relations" had been one of the important characteristics of the Pragmatist wing's foreign policy rhetoric, and the external behavior of Iran in the post-Khomeini era. Here lied the pragmatism of the faction: Iran should choose the best way for the provision of its urgent practical needs, -economic recovery, political development, and maximization of national security- even if it would mean a flexible interpretation of ideological principles. Because it was the best way for the maintenance of the existing system. For example, continuous propaganda attack on other countries resulted in nothing but enemy generation, and this in turn harmed the country itself. Therefore they believed that one of the worst ways to manage a country's foreign policy was to depend too much on the element of emotions. Instead of emotions, in foreign policy-making, they advocated rationality so as to reach what is best for the country. 48

However, on the issue of establishment of relations with the United States, they acted with caution. In 1990s, they were unable to ignore the "emotions" of the public in evaluating their policy towards the US. Despite the fact that there were differences of views within the Pragmatist camp with regard to the issue, in general, the faction did not reject dialogue with the US, and they never ruled out this possibility. Asked, if there was any possibility of normalization of ties with the US, by LE MONDE, Rafsanjani said that this would not be unconditional, and immediate, because of the sensitivity of the public opinion on the issue."49 However, during the same interview, he did not totally closed the door to such a

⁴⁷ Tehran Television Service, 13 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 aug 1990, p:56

⁴⁸ See for example, a Pragmatist Majles Deputy, Heydari's view on the issue RESALAT, 5 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Jan 1991, p:72

⁴⁹ In his interview with LE MONDE on 6 October, Rafsanjani said: "We have no relations, nor plan for relations with the US, which remains very unfavorably viewed by Iranian public opinion. As for now, our assets are still frozen by by the Americans, not to mention the goods which we have paid for, especially military goods, but which they never delivered to us and over which they are impudent enough to demand that we pay storage charges." LE MONDE, 9 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES,10 Oct 1990, p:47

possibility by saying that "it will take time for the Iranian people to forget American hostilities toward them." One of the Majles deputies of Rafsanjani went so far as to suggest direct talks with the United States.⁵⁰ However, the harshness of the criticism of the deputy by the Hardliners, especially by the religious leader, Ayatollah Khamene'i, indicated that time was not ripe for the Pragmatist government to undertake such an initiative. Therefore, due to domestic political considerations, the faction never explicitly favored moderation of relations with the US.

The isolationist policy was also opposed to as a result of a pragmatist reasoning: They argued that if the condition for Iran to establish ties with other countries was their being Islamic and revolutionary at the same time, there was no such state. In the light of this reality, should Iran reject dialogue and cooperation with all the members of the international community? They answered "no". Therefore, they thought, Iran should be flexible in establishing cooperative ties with the external world, because she was, as any state does, in need of economic and political cooperation with other states in the world of interdependence. This was clearly put by one of Rafsanjani's deputies in the Majles, Nowbakht: "We accept the fact that no country has staged an Islamic revolution like Iran . . . Is this reason enough for us to reject all the other countries of world?"⁵¹

The Pragmatist government of Rafsanjani reiterated in many occasions that good relations with all countries was what the IRI's fundamental policy was based on, and what will be pursued in its foreign policy.⁵² The Hardliners, however, denounced this as an urge to establish extensive and unruly connections with all countries, without any condition or restraints. As a response to this Hardliner criticism, the faction developed a notion called "**principled foreign policy**" which further clarified the foreign policy vision of the Pragmatist

⁵⁰ Mohajerati was the deputy suggesting direct talks with the US. Nabiollah Raji, 17 July Majles Session, RESALAT, 18 Jul 1990 in FBIS-NES, 12 Sept 1990, p:75

⁵¹ 14 Oct Majles Session, RESALAT, 15 Oct 90 in FBIS-NES, 16 Nov 90, p: 56

⁵² See for example Velayati's statement in Tehran Domestic Service, 30 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:63

government in post-Khomeini period.⁵³ This "principled foreign policy" did not mean improving relations with all the countries without reservation. From their viewpoint, having good relations with other countries was a primary principle, but not "at any price". They expected that other governments desiring cordial relations with Iran respect the aspirations of the revolution. The government, especially to appease the Hardliner opposition, reminded this understanding in many instances, for example, in resuming relations with Britain that will be detailed in the next chapter.

The Pragmatists, in general, believed in the long-term harmfulness of the "export of revolution" policies through subversive activities. In one of his speeches, on the issue of export of revolution, Rafsanjani explicitly emphasized that: "Our policy is not an adventurous one. We don't consider adventurism in our interests and the interests of the region. Our policy is absolute calm in the region in order for the region to be able to make use of its resources and make up its backwardness."⁵⁴

They tried to break this trend by offering an alternative understanding and method for revolution export: "modeling", "being a source of emulation" for other Muslim countries. In their view, the Islamic Republic should be presented as a successful experiment. If the Iran became a powerful state, especially economically, it would also be politically and ideologically powerful. Then, other Muslim states would follow it, and live through an Islamic revolutionary process. In order for the Islamic revolution to be ideologically attractive for other Muslim states (nations), which are Third World countries with fundamental problems in their development projects, it should be economically promising. Here, the point the Pragmatists underline is that an Islamic revolutionary country with backward

⁵³ IRNA, 5 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 7 Aug 1990, p:57

⁵⁴ At the end of mobilization week Khamene'i, Ahmad Khomeyni, and the representatives of the Majles several times emphasized the export of the Islamic Revolution to all countries of the world through mobilization forces. To neutralize the negative effects of this "mobilization propoganda on the regional level and among Iranian neighbours, Rafsanjani made the above statement. In fact this statement was a response to the representatives of the Majles who had signed a letter supporting, in Rafsanjani's own words, "the adventurous policy of exporting the revolution by the mobilization forces." London KEYHAN, 6 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Jan 1991, p:80

LEADING FIGURES OF FACTIONS IN POST-KHOMEINI ERA

| <u>The Pragmatist Faction</u> | <u>The Radical Faction</u> | <u>The Conservative Faction</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Hashemi-Rafsanjani | 1) Ahmad Khomeini | 1) Seyyed Khamene'i |
| 2) Ali Akbar Velayati | 2) Ali Akbar Monteshami | 2) Nateq Nuri |
| 3) Ali Akbar Khatami | 3) Mehdi Karrubi | |
| | 4) Sadeq Khalkali | |
| | 5) Hadi Khamenei | |

Table 2

economy could not set an example for others, and convince them to adopt the system. They believed that only by this way Iran could "register in history a correct base for Islam"⁵⁵, and that other countries with Muslim nations will follow Iran's path. To speed up the Islamic movements the best method was this. Rafsanjani, in one of his statements asserted that:

Islamic Iran would be developed into a model for Islamic and deprived nations of the world to emulate. If our society is a society afflicted poverty, ignorance, and dependence on the outside world, if it fails to live in harmony with universal science, civilization and technology, then it is not possible to turn it into a model society. A poverty-ridden and defeated society cannot be a model for emulation.⁵⁶

Therefore, one can not conclude that the Pragmatist faction did totally give up the ideal of the "export of the revolution". Rather, it offered a change in the "method" of doing this, a peaceful method, that is; modeling".

In sum, in 1990s the faction shaped its foreign policy understanding around the urgent needs of the country. Here, the priority was given to the economic recovery of the country. To this aim, they adopted a relatively moderate posture on relations with the European countries, and the countries of the region. Instead of an isolationist and confrontationist posture, which harmed Iran's economic, political, and strategic interests in the 1980s, they favored Iran's incorporation into the world community. Because, they, at the end of a decade-long experience, realized that in a world of interdependence, Iran could neither remain outside of the international economic and political network, nor isolate

⁵⁵ Rafsanjani: ". . . Under present conditions, it is necessary for those at the service of the system to adopt a coordinated policy to move ahead from the present stage in order to be able to register in history a correct base for Islam. We will be able, at the end of the country's 10-year reconstruction plan, to present facts and figures and prove that we are the most secure and stable country from the economic, political, and ideological points of view." IRNA, 23 July 1990 in FBIS-NES, 26 July 1990, p:57

⁵⁶ FBIS-NES, 21 Dec 1990, p:46; also see remarks by a Pragmatist Majles deputy Seyyed 'Abbas Musavi in RESALAT, 5 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Jan 1991, p:72

herself from it. Moreover, this was contrary to the economic and security needs of the country. On the issue of the export of revolution, the Pragmatist faction maintained its moderate, compromising position. Despite the fact that the group did not totally leave this goal, instead of subversive activities, they proposed a change in method in exporting the revolution. Thus, in general the Pragmatist faction promoted a revisionist, pro-change trend in the 1990s.

3.2. THE HARDLINER COALITION:

As aforementioned, this group was composed of three different factions with different weights in Iran's politics, whose postures in foreign policy realm intersected. In spite of the fact that the coalition was composed of three different political groups, the faction in the front line of the opposition to the external policies of the Pragmatist government, especially in early 1990s, was the Radical faction.⁵⁷ For this reason, the leading figures of the Hardline wing were from this faction: namely, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, Mehdi Karrubi, and Sadeq Khalkhali. Despite the fact that Ahmad Khomeini, the son of Ayatollah Khomeini is accepted as the real leader of this faction, he never maintained an extremist posture in opposing the Rafsanjani and his aides in power. A Conservative figure, who is at the top of the politico-religious structure of the country, Ayatollah Khamene'i, can be considered within this Hardliner axis in foreign policy realm. Although he was in coalition with Rafsanjani when the issue was domestic politics of the country and economic policies, he was in the opposite camp when the subject under consideration was foreign policy.

⁵⁷ In this study, contrary to general usage, two concepts, "Radical" and "Hardliner" are used to define two different factions, and their affiliates. However, when these terms define the nature of a position and an action they are used in similar meanings, and used as "radical" and "hardliner".

After Khomeini's death, the Hardliner group advocated a strict observance of the revolutionary ideals, and principles of the first decade in the foreign policy-making of the country. They rejected any possibility of change in the foreign policy line. For them, as it was put by the leader: "Islamic Iran must unconditionally remain faithful to its ideological principles in confronting the world powers, in devising its foreign policy"⁵⁸

The axis opposed any change that would amount to a deviation from the Khomeini-time "Neither East Nor West" principle of the country, that, in their view, manifested the independence and isolation of the country from the power centers of the world. Because, they saw nothing had changed that would lead to a change in the foreign policy line of the country. In the 1990s, they rejected the notion that the era of post-Cold War coexistence had arrived. An example of this can be found in one of the resolutions of the Radical Third Majles which declared:

Our nation believe that as long as America is America and as long as force and capital remain the keyholder of the world . . . and as long as the vital passage ways of Islamic territory remain under US control through governments that are its mercenaries . . . one cannot happy with international and diplomatic plays. It is only jihad and martyrdom that nations can achieve their rights.⁵⁹

As the above declaration makes it clear, they never gave up the confrontationist posture of the 1980s in foreign policy. Ayatollah Khamene'i clarified this when he said that: "The path of Islam is the path of confrontation against them (the US and world powers) . . ."⁶⁰

The Hardliner coalition maintained an anti-status quo posture in viewing the international system. They continued to see the existing international system

⁵⁸ Khamenei, Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990, p:53; In another instance the religious leader said that: ". . . we will not relax our struggle against the will and wishes of the arrogant and reactionaries." Tehran Television Service, 27 Spt 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Spt 1990, p:61

⁵⁹ Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 11 Oct 1990, p:53

⁶⁰ Tehran Domestic Service, 30 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 30 Jan 1991, p:45

as a confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed, and presented the Islamic system of Iran as the standard-bearer of the struggle against the oppressors and the international order that served to their interests.⁶¹

Anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism continued to remain their strong base in criticizing pragmatist approach in foreign policy, and an inseparable part of the confrontationist rhetoric. In the post-Khomeini era, basically through the manipulation of this rhetoric, they tried to maintain their power bases in the society.

In light of the above-mentioned isolationist, confrontationist, and anti-imperialist posture, the group vigorously opposed to the policy of normalization of ties with Western European countries.⁶² Because, they believed that initial establishment of close economic ties with these "imperialistic" countries would create economic, political and ideological dependence on them later. Within this framework, they vigorously opposed to foreign investment in the country, thus to the Rafsanjani government's policy of opening up to the external world.

The normalization of ties with the US was out of question for the Hardliner axis. One of the Radical deputies of the Third Majles, in his pre-agenda speech, put it clearly: "It is our final slogan and our imam's assertion that the one that has been treacherous towards our country is America and we shall oppose it as long as we live".⁶³ Another Radical figure, Montakhabnia, reiterated the unchanged stance of Tehran vis-à-vis the US since 1979: "We still consider the world-monger America as the Great Satan . . . (and) consider any contact and connection with it . . . in opposition to all aspirations of the Islamic Revolution."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Khamene'i underlined this confrontationist posture when he said that: ". . . The enemies of Islam completely comprehended the clear threat of the Islam to the global domination system, therefore their enmity and hostility (towards the IRI) have increased in comparison to the past." Tehran Television Service, 5 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Dec 1990, p:49

⁶² For example, in 1990, they harshly criticised the resumption of diplomatic ties with Britain.

⁶³ Qomi, 27 June Majles Session, RESALAT, 28 Jun 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:68

⁶⁴ 27 June Majles Session, RESALAT, 28 June 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:61

Moreover, the Hardliner group strongly opposed Iran's reestablishing of ties with the, so called, "reactionary regimes" of the Persian Gulf, and the "compromising" government of Egypt. One of the Radical Majles deputies, Qomi clearly states this position in his pre-agenda Majles speech:

Our nation considers compromising governments, such as the regime of Egypt, as partners in numerous crimes of the occupying regime in Jerusalem. Valuable principles of the Revolution . . . compels us to refrain from establishing relationships with such treacherous and criminal governments.⁶⁵

In this context, they were staunch opponents of the policy of normalization toward Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the 1990s.

Here, an important point should be underlined: Despite the fact that the two main Hardliner factions, namely, the Radicals and Conservatives, had a common anti-imperialistic stand and they both supported the export of the revolution, in some other issues of foreign policy there were nuances between their respective postures. The issue of the improvement of diplomatic and economic relations with the Persian Gulf countries was one of such issues: While the Radical faction totally rejected ties with the Gulf sheikhdoms, especially with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the Conservative faction supported this in accordance with their positive posture towards "the development of relations with the Muslim countries".

In general, the Hardliners advocated what they saw as the foreign policy instruments of Khomeini era; continuous, confrontationist propaganda, untraditional diplomacy, and support of subversive activities.⁶⁶ The group believed in the continuation of the export of revolution policies. They demanded maintenance of Iran's military and financial support for the Shiite forces in

⁶⁵ Qomi, 27 June Majles Session, RESALAT, 28 June 1990 in FBIS-NES , 21 Aug 1990, p:68

⁶⁶ Once the Majles Speaker of the time stated that: ". . . The destruction of the Zionists is one of the goals of the IRI." Tehran Domestic Service, 28 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 29 Aug 1990, p:52

Lebanon, Islamic rejectionist groups in Palestine, and Shiite groups in Afghanistan etc.. For example, in one of his Friday sermons, when talking about the "Islamic uprising in Palestine", the religious leader stated that:

They should be helped with money, arms, propaganda; they should be helped in every possible way. If we cannot conduct a confrontational struggle against Israel . . . we should equip the strugglers. This is a religious and binding duty.⁶⁷

Since they hold a strong power base out of the executive organ, they were able, to a considerable extent, to implement their own visions in this realm.⁶⁸ In 1990s, the Hardliners defined the Islamic Republic's support for the Palestinian uprising, and the Lebanese Islamic movements as "weak", and unceasingly criticized the government's policies on the grounds that they fell short of thoroughly supporting these Islamic movements.⁶⁹

To conclude, in the post-Khomeini era, there were two main factions over foreign policy; one was the Pragmatist group of Rafsanjani, and the other was the Hardliner coalition that consisted of the Radical, Conservative, and Leftist factions. The considerable divergence between the two axis in foreign policy approaches, understandings, and instruments to implement them, does not necessarily mean that their ultimate foreign policy objectives were totally different from each other. Rather, it can be said that both of the factions target the

⁶⁷ Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 25 Oct 1990, p:52; see also Nowbakht's proposal for that Islamic movements be prepared and equipped by Iran in order to conduct comando actions and destroy Israel, RESALAT, 15 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 Nov 1990, p:56

⁶⁸ For example, rather than the president, it was the one of the leading figures of the Radical faction, former Interior Minister, Mohtashemi who had the direct control of the Hizballah Forces in Lebanon. In 1990s this created an important problem for the Rafsanjani government, because the IRGC in Lebanon were acting outside of the government's control. Another example is that, because the Radicals held the majority in the third Majles, in spite of the pragmatist government's posture on the issue of revolution export, the Majles passed a law on "Support for the Islamic Resistance in Palestine, that foreseen economic aid to the Palestinian uprising. IRIB Television Network,, 28 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 30 Jan 1991, p:59

⁶⁹ See, for example, Mohtashemi's remarks on the issue, IRNA, 15 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 17 Dec 1990, p:43

preservation, and promotion of revolutionary ideals in foreign policy. In fact, Rafsanjani's statement puts it very clearly:

Despite differences in tastes and factions, discussions, and arguments about various issues that exist, the lofty ideal of the revolution -that is, independence and the struggle against arrogance, blasphemy, aggression, expansionism, and hegemony- is still a vivid and unforgettable ideal in our society.⁷⁰

In other words, they both advocated an "Islamic Foreign Policy" whereby the Islamic and revolutionary principles of the system could be preserved. The difference lies in their understanding of this Islamic foreign policy, and the methods they favored in order to materialize their respective foreign policy notions. In order to preserve and promote the revolutionary Islam the Pragmatist wing believe in the harmfulness of propaganda, and forceful instruments in the long run, and prefer diplomacy. The Hardliner group, however, advocates the maintenance of "Khomeinistic diplomacy" (untraditional diplomacy) in external relations, and does not give up propaganda and militaristic methods. This position of the Hardliner group was related, to some extent, to their domestic political considerations, that is, to maintain their power base within the regime.

Commitment to the same principles, and objectives, and the same ideology, however, by no means, reduced the level of difference between the two groups in the foreign policy area, nor did it ease the factional tension over the issue in question. Rather, the 1990s witnessed an unprecedented struggle between the two wings in the battle ground of foreign policy. In the post-Khomeini era, perhaps in no other realm of national policy has been the impact of factionalism as apparent as in the area of foreign policy.

In the 1990s, due to aforementioned developments in the late Khomeini-period and the transition period, the Pragmatist wing that came to power with the 1989 presidential elections and continued to remain there in the two consequent

⁷⁰ Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 13 Nov 1990, p:68

elections, held the upper hand. First of all, this preserved the pro-change trend in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result of the constitutional amendments that centralized the policy-making and, thus strengthened the hand of the executive organ, the Pragmatist government led by Rafsanjani had the opportunity of the implementing their own foreign policy vision.

However, this pro-change trend was not very smooth, and an unchallenged one. The Pragmatist faction that came to power with 1989 presidential elections, faced with the coalition of the opposition that was composed of the Radicals, Conservatives, and Leftists. The fact that the Hardliners maintained powerful positions in different political-bureaucratic structures of the system, such as the Majles,⁷¹ leadership, the Council of Guardians, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps; and outside it -in the religious associations, revolutionary organizations, and theological schools- put the coalition as the main obstacle before the pro-change policies of the Rafsanjani government throughout the 1990s. This oppositional posture, in the foreign policy arena, of the two major political groups of the Iranian politics had important implications for the nature of the foreign policy of the country.

In fact, one of the implications was duality. The reality of factionalism in foreign policy prevented the consistency between the messages and the actions of the Islamic Republic, and created a duality in the external behavior of it:

On the one hand, commensurate with the pragmatist understanding of foreign policy, the Islamic Republic took important steps in order to reestablish ties with the EU governments, the GCC countries, and Eastern Europe; actively participated in a variety of regional and international agreements, provided the release of many of Western hostages in Lebanon, and continuously gave the message that Iran is no longer a threat to other countries.

On the other hand, in line with the Hardliner views, and in a bid to appease this opposition, Iran gave support to rejectionist elements of Palestinian

⁷¹ The Third Majles was a Radical one. In the Fourth and the Fifth ones the Conservative faction raised their power and emerged as the main opponent of the Pragmatist wing in the realm of foreign policy. For more on the respective positions of the factions in the bureaucratic structure at the time of the crisis, see Appendix B.

movement, for example, she established "Support for Palestinian Uprising Committee in the Majles". Moreover, continuous verbal attacks on the US, reaffirmation of the *fatwah* against Rushdie, support to Shi'i Lebanese groups, continuing assassination of the opponents of the regime abroad are other examples in that respect.

In some other instances, Iran's position vis-à-vis the same development showed differentiation. This, in fact, was a direct outcome of the duality in the leadership of the country, the existence of two leading figures with binding authorities in the political matters, the president, and the *faqih* who were affiliated with two different groups. This point will be clarified in the Gulf Crisis case which is discussed in the next chapter.

The second implication of factionalism over foreign policy was the slow phase of change. The continuing powerful position of the Hardliner coalition within and outside of the governmental structures in 1990s, made it impossible for the Rafsanjani government in power to ignore the demands of the group in determining the foreign policy decisions and actions of the Islamic Republic. Although, in some cases, such as the resumption of ties with Britain, the Rafsanjani government acted resolutely despite the Hardliner opposition and implemented its foreign policy decision, in some other instances it had to retreat, or give concessions. For example, in order to appease the opposition against its policy of normalization vis-à-vis the West European countries, the Rafsanjani government raised the support for the Islamic groups in the Palestine, and organized two Palestinian Islamic Conference in 1990 and 1991.

In the Third Islamic Consultative Majles, the Hardliner wing consolidated its power. Given the fact that the Majles continued to hold a considerable legislative power in the post-Khomeini era, the majority group in the Majles was able to exert its influence over foreign policy of the country through initiatives independent of the government control. For example, in May 1989, they established a Committee for the Support of the Islamic Uprising in Palestine. This means that, in spite of the centralization of decision-making mechanisms with the constitutional amendments, and the demise of Khomeini, the government was not

able to impose its full control over the foreign policy of the country. This further confirms the existence of duality in the foreign policy of the country.

In other cases, the government had to instrumentalize a radical rhetoric in order for counterbalancing the hardliner accusations of deviation from the Imam's line. As a result, there appeared an inconsistency in the foreign policy line of the Iranian government, and sometimes it became far from convincing for the external world.

The third implication of factionalism for the Iran's foreign policy was that it set limits for the change in the foreign policy decisions and actions of the government. For example, any suggestion for the normalization of ties with the US, or Israel remained out of question. As a result, anti-Americanism and sometimes anti-Westernism remained a fact of foreign policy position of the Pragmatist government, in spite of conciliatory attitudes and statements of the president Rafsanjani, and his associates.

However, it could be easily said that despite, sometimes major, setbacks, and inconsistencies; in the post-Khomeini era, the general pragmatist approach, and pro-change trend in the foreign policy-making was maintained. The changes in the foreign policy realm had been dominated by the need to improve Iran's regional and international position through cooperation and dialogue with the West, the (former)SU, the Gulf Arab states and other Arab and regional actors. This stemmed partly from Iran's economic needs in the era of reconstruction, and partly from recognition of the fact that the republic's diplomatic isolation had severe repercussions for Tehran's regional status.

Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 was an important indicator of this reality. Iranian officials realized that so long as the GCC perceived the Islamic Republic as a threat, and did not trust it in the conduct of regional developments and in the management of regional crisis, they would continue to rely on the US in providing their security.

CHAPTER 4

FACTIONAL DEBATE OVER THE GULF CRISIS:

The Gulf Crisis revealed all dimensions of factionalism over foreign policy in the post-Khomeini era. First of all, it occurred immediately after a serious transition period. With the presidential elections in July 1989, Rafsanjani and his Pragmatist government, with the programs of change and moderation in foreign policy at hand, came to power. The priority and urgency of reconstruction of the economy, devastated in the war with Iraq, was the underlying reason for the urge of the Pragmatists to give an end to the war-time isolation of the country. Criticisms of the prior government's economic and war policies and popular discontent of the war-weary Iranian nation contributed the Pragmatists to gain an upper hand in the management of the country's foreign policy so as to meet country's urgent needs. Therefore the crisis coincided with an unprecedented transition period in the country.

In addition to this, Kuwaiti Crisis erupted immediately after multi-faceted alterations in the regional and international conjunctures with the end of the Iran-Iraq war, and the Cold War. The change in the global situation, subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, heralded totally different conditions for all countries and Iran was no exception to this. These developments rendered a revision of the "Neither East Nor West" principle of country's foreign policy inevitable.⁷² The combination of these changes in the

⁷² Khamene'i himself refers this East-West division as a past event: "From the start of the revolution until now we have fought against the East and the West which united against us. While there existed an East and a West in the world the slogan of our revolution was to denounce the East and the West and oppose both of them. We never united with the left nor with the right against the left." IRIB Television Network, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 25 Jan 1991, p:53

domestic and regional scenes with a systemic transformation, the Gulf Crisis created a historical chance for the pro-change wing of the Iranian elite to consolidate their new approach to foreign-policy making, and normalize Iran's external relations.

Second, the actors involved in the Gulf Crisis were very interesting in terms of their respective relationship with the Islamic regime. As JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI puts it:

The nature of the fomenters of the crisis, that is, their indisputable hostility toward the Islamic Revolution in the region has given rise to special conditions in which the expression of views (by the two factions) on the two sides of the conflict are sometimes clearly contradictory.⁷³

Iraq was the eight-year long enemy of Iran. There were still important problems between the two countries left from the war time. Because, they did not reach a peace agreement when the Gulf Crisis emerged. For the Iranian government the main obstacle to a permanent peace was Iraq itself. For this reason the regime in Iran was still perceiving Iraq as a threat.⁷⁴

Kuwait, on the other hand, was the country that had been in the conservative camp of the region, against which the newly-established Republic initiated a tremendous propaganda campaign. Therefore, the sheikdom perceived a direct threat from the revolutionary Iran from the very beginning.⁷⁵ This danger Al-Sabah regime perceived from the Islamic revolution was so big that the country, together with the other conservative regimes of the Gulf region, endorsed Iraq, the lesser of evils, in its war against Iran. Therefore, the monarchy had been

⁷³ 21 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 1 Feb 1991, p:47

⁷⁴ Here, in order to understand to what extent Iran has perceived threat from Iraq see; Afrasiabi, Kaveh L.: After Khomeini: New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy, Westview Press, Oxford, 1994. Afrasiabi even defines Iraq as the utmost threat perceived by the Iranian regime.

⁷⁵ "Conservative" here is taken to mean monarchical regime or governmental structure, and it implies the status quo regimes as oppose to the progressive, republican, revolutionary regimes of the region such as Iraq, Libya, Iran.

denounced, by the Iranian authorities, as illegitimate, as the puppet of the West, and enemy -together with other Gulf countries that gave economic, political, propaganda, and military support to Iraq against the Islamic Republic.

Other parties involved in the crisis were those countries with which Iran has had problem-laden relations since the time of the Islamic Revolution. Within the anti-Iraqi coalition, Saudi Arabia again was one of the Gulf monarchies that reinforced Iraqi front by means of granting millions of dollars to that country. In addition to that, there had been an intense struggle between the Islamic Republic and Saudi Arabia over religious leadership in the region. This struggle is defined by the Khomeini as "struggle of the pure Mohammadan Islam against American Islam of the Saudi Arabia."⁷⁶ The confrontationist policy Iran pursued against Saudi Arabia resulted in the cutting of diplomatic relations between the two as a consequence of the killing of nearly 400 Iranian pilgrims by the Saudi security forces in an attempt to quell an Iranians-led demonstrations in 1987 Hajj.⁷⁷ This last crisis culminated in the implicit rejection by Khomeini of the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia in his last will.

With other Gulf sheikhdoms as well Iran had tension-laden relationship, mainly because of again their regime types, and support for Iraq in the war. Throughout the first decade of the revolution, the primary cause of the tension had been the Islamic Republic's "intervention in the internal affairs" of these countries.

In the first decade, Iran's confrontationist policy together with Western European support to the Iraq in the war led to a deterioration in the relationship between the Islamic Republic and many of the European Community (EC) countries. Despite the fact that after the war there were signals of moderation in Iran's foreign policy, and that Rafsanjani government advocated normalization in the country's external relations, the tension between London and Tehran, -caused

⁷⁶ For more on this, see Ahrari, M.E., "Iran in the Post-Cold War Persian Gulf Order, in Ahrari, M.E. and J. Naves(eds.): The Persian Gulf After the Cold War, London: Prageger Publishers, 1993, p:87

⁷⁷ This had been one of the basic issues that the members of the Third Majles debated and one can find the rigid positions of these member on this issue in RESALAT's Majles Reports in FBIS-NES 1990-1991. In the regular sessions of the Majles, deputies continuously condemned the Saudi actions and demanded from the government a never-moderating and never-compromisin stand vis-a-vis the US instrument al-Saud regime.

by Khomeini's *fatwah** on the British author Salman Rushdie, and escalated by a Majles decision to cut off Iran's diplomatic relations with Britain so long as the latter not meet Majles approvals and show respect to Islam's dignity- culminated, in March 1989, in the break up of the diplomatic relations between the two.⁷⁸ This had been the major obstacle before Iran's improving its relations with the EC countries. As a result, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, political relations between Iran and the Western European countries were still frozen for eighteen months.

For the Islamic Republic the "world monger" America was the most critical actor of the Gulf Crisis. It was perceived as the source of all threats targeting the Iranian regime.⁷⁹ Anti-imperialistic tone of the Iranian revolution embodied in the anti-American rhetoric following the sequence of crises between the two states: Shah's admission to the US after the revolution, rejection of the American administration to hand over Shah Reza Pahlavi to the revolutionary bodies; in response, invasion of American embassy in Tehran by militant Islamic students and holding hostage the staff there, Khomeini's support to the students and rejection of any kind of compromise with the Carter Administration; unilateral sanctions America imposed on Iran and the unsuccessful rescue operation; America's support to Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, especially after 1985, and its active involvement in the war against Iran after 1987 through re-flagging of Kuwaiti oil tankers and by launching missiles to Iranian targets -the most dramatic of these cases was America's crushing down of an Iranian passenger plane in which nearly 300 civilians lost their lives.⁸⁰ As a result, the anti-American rhetoric further gained strength, and, in a sense, became one of the bases of the legitimacy for the new regime. The country's confrontationist stand vis-à-vis the

* See Appendix A: Glossary

⁷⁸ IRNA, 3 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 3 Aug 1990, p:48

⁷⁹ Khamene'i's words confirms this: "The arrogant machinery headed by America has made the Islamic Republic of Iran the target of its greatest nervousness and hostility. The imposed war, the economic sanctions, and the extensive support for counter-revolutionary elements are clear examples of this." Tehran Domestic Service, 10 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Dec 1990, p:49

⁸⁰ See Chubin, Shahram: "The Last Phase of the Iran-Iraq War: From Stalemate to Ceasefire", Third World Quarterly (hereafter TWQ)", vol.11 no.2, April 1989, pp:1-14

US had been incorporated into the official ideology as one of the sacred principles of the Islamic regime.⁸¹ By this way, the two countries burned all the bridges between them, and maintained their confrontationist stands against each other by the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The active participation of the war-time ally of the Islamic Republic, Syria in the anti-Iraqi coalition, by sending troops to Saudi Arabia, further complicated the crisis for the authorities in Tehran.

In sum, the Gulf Crisis policy of the Pragmatist government of Rafsanjani -that remained in between the old enemy, but a Muslim country, Iraq and the US-led coalition, "the arrogant world" in the propaganda literature of the Islamic Republic, had become the number-one issue for the domestic politics of the country. During the time of the crisis, the government's policy vis-à-vis the crisis remained at the top of the factional agenda of the Islamic Republic. The repercussions of this factional debate continued even after the end of the crisis.

Above-mentioned factors made it extremely complicated for the Rafsanjani government to take a position vis-à-vis the crisis. The Crisis, by reminding the strategic importance of the country, and making its presence, as a primary actor of the Persian Gulf region, felt, offered the government an unprecedented opportunity to normalize its relations with the EC and the GCC countries. On the other hand, however, internal debate over Iran's policy vis-à-vis the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 drew the borders of this normalization, or at least indicated the difficulty of this process. The juxtaposition of all the above mentioned factors made the Gulf Crisis a historical test case for the realization of the debated, speculated, and projected changes that the Pragmatist faction, now in power vis-à-vis the Radical Third Majles, favored in order for reestablishing Iran's place in international politics.

⁸¹ In order to understand to what extent this rejectionist stand is viewed sacred see Majles debates in 1990 and 1991. During the crisis time, in the midst of the hot debates over foreign policy nearly two-third of the members of the Islamic Consultative Majles began their regular speeches by denouncing America, its actions, policies; in FBIS-NES, 1990-91

For the Islamic Republic the Gulf Crisis has been a multi-dimensional incident with important repercussions on country's domestic politics and foreign policy. Especially America's political and military involvement in the region due to this crisis, made this development the top issue of the factional agenda.

During the first stage of the Gulf Crisis, between August 1990-mid January 1991, both groups, with few exceptions, agreed that both the Iraqi aggression and the military presence of the foreign forces, especially that of the United States, were contrary to the security interests of Iran, and thus, condemnable. However, while the Pragmatist faction put emphasis on the Iraqi invasion in its propaganda, the Hardliners from an anti-imperialistic and anti-American perspective, viewed the main source of the crisis as the foreign military presence in the Persian Gulf region. As a result the nature of their reactions to the developments of the crisis, to a large extent, differed.

Hardliners interpreted the American presence as an act of aggression in itself and called for a "*Jihad*", holy war, against the US forces in Saudi Arabia, and found American presence intolerable. The Pragmatist faction, on the other hand, considered it as an inevitable result of the Iraqi aggression and blamed the America's sending of troops to the region on Iraq. In view of Pragmatists, foreign presence was tolerable so long as it was temporary. And they insisted that whenever the Iraqi aggression came to an end, these forces leave the regional security to its inhabitants.

The Hardliner figures of the country evaluated the crisis through the "Islam vs arrogant world" confrontation, and thus viewed foreign presence as an insult to the Muslim nations and Islam. Pragmatists, on the other hand, seemed to approach the issue in terms of threat and national interest perceptions.

The basic forum of the factional debate over the Gulf Crisis policy of the Rafsanjani government, together with the papers affiliated with the two groups, had been the Islamic Consultative Majles. In other words, due to the majority of the Hardliners, specifically the Radicals there, the source of criticisms leveled

against the policy pursued by the Rafsanjani government had been the Majles.* Throughout the crisis, from the Majles forum, whisperings of discord and disunity emanated.

In addition to the positions taken in connection with the military presence of the US in the Persian Gulf, other developments in the crisis context; including Iraqi peace offer to Iran, the expansion of relations with Western governments, and the issue of relations with the GCC members, especially with Saudi Arabia had been other topics of factional debate during the crisis period.

The factional debate over the Gulf Crisis policy took place at three different levels:

At the leadership level, there were differences of opinion between the politico-religious leader, Ayatollah Khamene'i and the president. There were heated debates in the Islamic Republic's National Security Council on the subject of what position the Tehran regime should take regarding the crisis. The question was that in its policy, and propaganda should it give priority to criticisms of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, or to the massive presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia? Opposition to the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and at the same time denouncing America's military presence was the compromise solution which the Tehran regime adopted for a time. Therefore, this difference between the president and the *faqih* did not manifest itself as a struggle, and could be melted in the basket of the Supreme National Security Council. For this reason, Ayatollah Khamene'i's position could not have developed as criticism of, or opposition against the policies of the government. However, this did not prevent Khamene'i from taking unilateral confrontationalist position vis-à-vis the developments of the crisis -as Khomeini himself did- different from the tone of the government's Gulf Crisis policy. This created a problem for the Pragmatist government, and manifested itself as a "duality" in foreign policy-making.

Since at the time of the crisis the Majles was under the control of Radicals, the basic arena the struggle over the Gulf Crisis policy of the Rafsanjani

* For the respective positions of the Pragmatist and the Hardliner wings, see Appendix B.

government was waged had been the Islamic Consultative Majles. Throughout the crisis, at both stages of the development, the Radicals who held the majority in the Majles increasingly leveled severe criticisms against the government's policies. The junior partner of the Hardliner coalition, the Conservative faction, however, to a considerable extent shifted its alliance with the Radical faction at the war stage of the crisis.

The other platform of the factional debate over the Crisis was the papers affiliated with the both wing of the domestic politics. While the dailies such as TEHRAN TIMES and RESALAT were operating as the mouthpieces of the Pragmatist faction, other dailies, KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI, and ABRAR; and BAYAN a journal affiliated with the Radical faction served as the spokesmen of the Hardliner coalition.

4.1. PRAGMATIST POSTURE VIS-À-VIS THE CRISIS:

First thing to be mentioned about the Pragmatists' approach to the Gulf Crisis is the fact that they viewed the crisis in terms of the threat-national interest perceptions, rather than as "Islamic World vs Arrogant World" confrontation. They perceive the events that have taken place in the region neither as a "battle between revolution and counterrevolution" nor as a "fight between reactionaries and progressives".⁸² According to the Pragmatists the fight was over the worst Iraqi adventure.

Iraq committed an aggression and in the words of the head of judiciary, Yazdi, "a military invasion is condemnable in the light of Islamic law and logic."⁸³ It was for this reason that although the Iranian regime had opposing views with the heads of Kuwait, and that during the Iran-Iraq war, they helped Iran's enemy,

⁸² Rafsanjani, Tehran Domestic Service, 12 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p:52

⁸³ Tehran Domestic Service, 10 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Aug 1990, p:67

the Pragmatists objected to the fact that an independent country being the victim of aggression.

The Pragmatists interpreted Iran's condemnation of the aggression against the tiny kingdom, as an observance of the determined principles of Islamic that ban any kind of act of aggression. In his meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti foreign minister, in August, the president determinedly stated that: "Iran will always move by observing the determined principles of the Islamic system."⁸⁴

On the issue of foreign forces' coming to the region, their reasoning was that "anyone could have foreseen that such an aggression would result in the presence of foreign forces."⁸⁵ Therefore, they saw foreign military presence in the region as a direct result of the aggression committed by the Baath'ist regime. For this reason, for the evacuation of the region by the foreign troops, the condition was the prior or simultaneous Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

Furthermore, in view of the Pragmatist faction, Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait was the only solution to the crisis and the sole condition for the national security of Iran, and the stability of the region in the long term. Because, Iraq's domination over Kuwait would seriously disturb the regional balance of power. The fact that the national security considerations heavily determined the crisis perceptions of the Pragmatists was apparent in one of the statements of Rafsanjani, in which he elaborated the seriousness of the Iraqi threat:

Imagine that the Iraqis, who have access to the Persian Gulf only from one corner of it, come and occupy all the southern shores of the Persian Gulf . . . A country which starts a war so easily, which launches an aggression so easily; they did this to us; they did this to their neighbor which they now admit to us; paid them \$14 billion during the war, which had placed its ports and

⁸⁴ Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug, p:59

⁸⁵ Rafsanjani, Tehran Domestic Service, 12 aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p: 52

everything at their disposal. What kind of security can we have in the Persian Gulf in the future, if such a thing happens?⁸⁶

In the light of this thinking, the Pragmatist figures emphasized the fact that "the fault is with Iraq, which has carried out the aggression."⁸⁷ Therefore, the extent of the Iraqi threat was one of the main inputs that shaped the position of the Pragmatist wing vis-à-vis the crisis.

American presence in the region, especially in the long term, was the other important security consideration for the faction. However, in the final analysis, they viewed the continuous Iraqi dominance in Kuwait as much more imminent danger than the American presence. This is an important point that indicates pragmatism of the faction. If they had made an evaluation from an ideological perspective, since anti-Americanism is one of the main pillars of this ideology, and this Islamic ideology requires cooperation with Muslim countries vis-à-vis blasphemy, their view on the crisis would have been totally different. In fact, the pragmatist line of thinking, in this case, the subordination of the ideological concerns to national security considerations, is the basic characteristic that differentiates pragmatist posture from the hardliner one in the foreign policy realm in general, and in the case of the Gulf Crisis in particular.

This means that, rather than emotional approaches, the Pragmatists favored a "rational stand" towards the developments of the Persian Gulf region in order to preserve the national interest of the country best. Moreover, they viewed the crisis as a chance to materialize their "rationality understanding" in foreign policy-making and thus, to convince the outside world that the Islamic Republic was no longer a threat to them. Rafsanjani clearly stated this concern when he said: "The world is witnessing Iran's rational stand towards these developments."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Tehran Television Service, 18 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 20 Dec 1990, p:49

⁸⁷ Rafsanjani, *ibid*

⁸⁸ IRNA, 7 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 8 Aug 1990, p:56

The fact that Iraq has committed another act of aggression only two years after the cease-fire with the Islamic Republic, and against its small neighbor that had supported it in the war with Iran was suffice to indicate the real aggressor of the Iran-Iraq war. The Pragmatist wing utilized this development in order to promote the Islamic Republic's position in the regional and international environment. "This", the daily affiliated with the moderate faction wrote, "showed that the GCC countries had an illogical fear of the Islamic Republic."⁸⁹ The development fortified the Pragmatist faction's efforts to get rid of Iran's "aggressor" image. Rafsanjani in his message to the "people of the world" said: "We intend to carry out our holy and humane duties, which does not mean committing aggression against anyone."⁹⁰

That statement of the president Rafsanjani was the manifestation of the underlying foreign policy understanding of the Pragmatist faction, that is: The Islamic Republic could do both, remain loyal to its revolutionary and religious principles, and at the same time establish cooperation with all the countries of the world, and thus prevent confrontation without reason.

In sum, during the time of the crisis, the Pragmatist group has had a concern of improving Iran's image in the region and in the international arena, that has not been any matter of consideration for the Hardliner faction. In that respect, the policy pursued by the Pragmatist government of Rafsanjani differed from that in the Khomeini-time, and thus signaled a break with the past policies of the Islamic Republic.

Although the Pragmatists preferred a regional solution to the crisis, given the improbability of such an alternative due to internal differences among the countries of the region, they implicitly consented to a foreign, specifically an American solution to the crisis. Rafsanjani openly stated:

⁸⁹ TEHRAN TIMES, 5 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 31 Aug 1990, p:61

⁹⁰ Tehran Domestic Service, 12 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p: 52

. . . we have no objection to their hindering the aggression; anybody can help in any way. However, it would have been better if the regional countries could do this. We could do this: Turkey, Syria, Egypt and S.Arabia itself could do it. All of us together could have done it. At the time, conditions are not right.⁹¹

Here, in this statement, one thing that is worthy of emphasis is Rafsanjani's words on the regional countries. While the majority in the Hardliner faction rejects ties with these countries Rafsanjani referred to, he talked about the importance of cooperation with them.

On the issue of foreign military presence, the argument of the Pragmatist group was that, despite the fact that they did not have only good motivations in coming to the region, the primary reason for their being in the region was to give an end to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Contrary to the opinions of the Pragmatists, however, the Hardliners argued that the underlying intention of the presence of that massive American forces was the annihilation of the Islamic regime in Iran and "checking the growing influence of the Iran's Islamic Revolution."⁹²

Having the normalization in foreign policy in mind, the moderate wing of the Islamic Republic, from the very beginning, supported Iran's joining hand with the international efforts to put a halt to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, and to end the crisis situation in the region. Thus, they advocated the full observance of the UN Security Council (UNSC) decisions.⁹³ Because, by this way, the Islamic Republic would prove its "commitment to international law" and improve its position in world politics. On the other hand, they believed that internationally imposed sanctions would deter the Saddam Hussein, and push him to withdraw

⁹¹ Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:61-63

⁹² KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 29 Aug 1990, p:59

⁹³ The leading figure of the Pragmatist faction put it clearly: "We will act on the decision of the SC; We respect that." Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990 p:55

from Kuwait without a war in the region. And if all countries participate in the embargo it would have less been a success of the US.

Especially after Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, the Pragmatists revised their initial opposition to foreign intervention. Because they realized that only drastic action could adequately respond to the actions of Baghdad's adventurism. One they after the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, a moderate daily, that is considered as the mouthpiece of the Foreign Ministry, TEHRAN TIMES, for the first time endorsed a foreign solution, and wrote that under these circumstances, this "drastic action" should necessarily "come from the UN". "Because", it continued, "the UN, as the most important defender of international rights has the greatest right to respond to this open aggression of Iraq. Any force that takes the responsibility for thwarting the Iraqi aggression should be under full supervision of the UN."⁹⁴

Here the striking point is that, while the Hardliners denouncing the UN as the instrument of the "Great Satan", and rejecting its impartiality, for example, by making comparisons to the organization's inactiveness on aggressions against Palestinians, the moderate daily called the UN as the "most important defender of international rights".

Therefore, the moderate faction, backed foreign military intervention in the Gulf Crisis, provided it was overseen by the UN. From the statements of Rafsanjani one could easily derive the conclusion that this faction found temporary foreign military presence in the region "tolerable", though "undesired."

Notwithstanding its relatively moderate position towards the temporary presence of the American military forces in the region, the Pragmatist faction

⁹⁴ TEHRAN TIMES wrote that, after the invasion , " the most logical thing would have been cooperation among the regional countries for ending the crisis. But such a regional cooperation would have required a powerful response to Iraq which is unfortunately not possible due to internal differences among the regional countries. Under such circumstances any force which takes the responsibility of thwarting the Iraqi aggression should be under the full supervision of the UN." TEHRAN TIMES, 9 Aug in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990 p:62. Two weeks later, Rafsanjani emphasized the same position: "Of course, the United Nations did well; so did the Security Council which acted in time. We accept them both; We shall abide by the decisions adopted by the SC -a correct and timely decision. However, the presence of the foreigners in the region might well have undue long-term consequences for the region. Therefore, we warn that once the calamity is over . . . then these forces have no place to remain in the region. They must return to their own homes." Tehran Domestic Service, 24 aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:61-63

advocated a rigid stand against the possibility of the long-term presence of these forces in the Persian Gulf region. When, for example, rumors emerged about the establishment of a regional security pact under the US command, they initiated radicalized sorties. At this point their rhetoric came closer to that of the Hardliner coalition. In many instances the leader of the Pragmatist faction, Rafsanjani made their stands on long term American presence clear:

If the Americans remain in the region, and in Saudi Arabia, next to Mecca, that would mean taking on the entire world of Islam. The world of Islam will not tolerate the headman of the global arrogance staying next to the Kaaba. They themselves understand that; when the crisis is over, they will go . . . if they don't we will throw them out. It is not as we can not prevent that.⁹⁵

Therefore, the Pragmatist wing never approved, or ignored American presence in the region. They just tolerated it provided it was temporary. Thus the American presence in the region, unilateral US decision on naval blockade, and other unilateral American initiatives relating to the crisis were denounced on the grounds of unlawfulness, and defined as the violation of international law.⁹⁶

In the light of interest-threat calculations, the faction rejected a military solution to the problem. Because a military solution to the crisis would bear two results:

1-The short term result of the military clash would be the interruption of the oil flow, and an economic crisis for the Iranian state at this sensitive stage of economic recovery.⁹⁷

2-The long-term implication of such an American military solution to the crisis would be more serious for Iran. The psychological impact of such a US

⁹⁵ Tehran Television Service, 8 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Sept 1990 p:59

⁹⁶ See for example, Tehran Domestic Service, 3 Aug in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p:57

⁹⁷ See Rafsanjani's statement on the issue in Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:61-63

action on the political configuration of the region would be far beyond its material loss for the regional nations. The direct result of this would be an overwhelming dominance of the United States over the region, which is the last thing that the Islamic Republic would desire. In his meeting with the visiting Yemeni Foreign Minister, Rafsanjani underlined this concern: "We should not allow it to be registered in the history that the US quelled a sedition through its military buildup in the region while regional states failed to do it themselves".⁹⁸

4.2.POSITION OF THE PRAGMATIST FACTION ON THE OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CRISIS CONTEXT:

The Pragmatist Wing asserted that, as a result of the conditions created by the crisis and the "principled policy" of the country, Iran had the initiative in the regional and international scenes. It was for this reason that they favored normalization of relations with the countries of the region and the Western Europe at this stage. The solution of problems with other countries at the time when the Islamic Republic held the upper hand would offer more advantageous terms for the country. Moreover, under the crisis circumstances, where the diplomatic traffic intensified between Iran and the Western European, and regional countries, they thought it the best opportunity to change enemies without reason into friends.

4.2.1.Relations with the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries:

According to Rafsanjani, one of the fruits of that independent foreign policy was the great developments in Iran's relations with the countries of the region, Iraq and the GCC countries.⁹⁹ First of all, contrary to the oppositional

⁹⁸ IRNA, 21 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 23 Nov 1990, p:69

⁹⁹ Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:57-63

hardliner views on the issue, the moderate faction interpreted improving ties with the GCC countries, and the other countries of the region as a success for the foreign policy of the country. Moreover, according to many in the Pragmatist faction the Islamic Republic should have relations with all the countries in the world except Israel, South Africa and the US.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, they supported improvement in Iran's relations with regional countries.

A-Security cooperation with the GCC countries:

From the point of view of the Pragmatist faction, normalization of relations with the countries of the region, as aforementioned, was one of the main objectives that should be sought. The Gulf Crisis once more underlined the importance of cooperation and coordination among the Persian Gulf countries, and contributed the Pragmatist faction's position on the issue. It was realized that as long as there was not a dialogue between Iran and these countries, and as long as Iran maintained a tension-laden relationship with them, an effective regional security cooperation could not be materialized in the Persian Gulf region. This, in turn, would bring about foreign intervention, -which was the most undesired thing in the eyes of the Iranian officials- whenever there arouse a crisis in this volatile region. For this reason, from the Pragmatist faction's point of view, collective security in a Persian Gulf free from the presence of the foreign forces was crucial for the maintenance of peace and security.

B.Ties with Saudi Arabia:

The faction approached this issue also with pragmatism. They thought, before the Gulf Crisis the balance of regional power was in the Saudis' favor. Because they were leading the Gulf Cooperation Council; Iraq at war with Iran,

¹⁰⁰ A Pragmatist deputy, Harandi says "The late Imam said that if the US behaves like a human being we can have relations with that country." TEHRAN TIMES, 18 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Jan 1991, p:63

was under Riyadh's realm of influence as it was in need of its aid, and in the Arabian peninsula there was nearly no opponent of Riyadh.

However, the situation has changed dramatically in favor of the Islamic Republic, following the end of the war with Iraq and the new aggression of the Ba'tist regime, which revealed the ineffectiveness of the GCC. This left the Saudi regime with no choice other than reaching an understanding with the Islamic Republic. Since in the light of the existing conditions, it could not likely to normalize relations with Iraq in the near future, then Riyadh was forced to come closer to Tehran.

They believed that changes in the Middle East take place very rapidly. Thus, at a time when the conditions were suitable and Iran had the upper hand, it should solve its problems with these countries to its advantage. Concerning Saudi Arabia, the Pragmatist group said that having diplomatic relations with the country was in the interests of Iran and of the Islamic Revolution for the following reasons :

-Firstly the Iranian Muslim people could not be deprived forever from performing Hajj ceremonies, which is a compulsory Islamic duty.¹⁰¹

-Secondly, if Iran wanted to play a key role in the Persian Gulf then it was necessary to have direct diplomatic relations with all countries in the region, and Saudi Arabia was no exception to this.

-Thirdly, both Iran and Saudi Arabia were important pillars of the OPEC, and both countries derived their main revenues through the sales of oil. It was in the interests of both countries to have greater coordination and cooperation instead of enmity, which would inevitably spill over into the OPEC forum.

As a result, according to the Pragmatist faction when the Saudis, due to the sensitive conditions of the region, had extended a hand of friendship towards Iran, it could not be rejected.

¹⁰¹ A leading parliamentarian, Harandi, said: "We need Saudi Arabia and ties with that country as we want our people to go for Hajj." TEHRAN TIMES, 18 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Jan 1991, p:63

4.2.2.Relations with the EC countries:

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Pragmatist faction, especially because of the urgent practical needs of the country favored close ties with the Western Europe. However, the Rushdie affair and then the cutting of relations with Britain became important obstacle before this.

During the Gulf Crisis, when the strategic importance of Iran was recognized by all the European countries, and they were in need of Tehran's support in deterring the Iraqi aggression, these countries, under the EC roof took steps to resolve the problems with the Islamic Republic, and normalize relations with this country.

The Pragmatist faction considered this move by the European Community positively and supported this normalization in relations.

A.Resumption of diplomatic ties with Britain:

In view of the Pragmatist faction, the tension with this country on the Rushdie incident was the basic obstacle before Tehran's improving relations, especially economic relations, which Iran was severely in need of, with the whole Community. For this reason, they argued that diplomatic relations between the two countries should be resumed so as to establish a crisis time cooperation and then cooperation in all fields.

4.2.3.Peace with Iraq:

Iraqi peace proposal, that was based on the Iranian terms, was a victory for Rafsanjani, the commander of the war time and the main communicator of the post-war peace negotiations with that country. This, for this reason, further benefited the faction allied with Rafsanjani.

In the eyes of the Pragmatists, that was an unprecedented opportunity for Iran to make peace with Saddam regime at a time when he gained the hatred of the majority of the world countries with this last aggression.

However, the Pragmatists separated the peace process with Iraq from the issue of the Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Yes, at the time, Iraq extended a hand of friendship to Iran. However, this took place in a crisis situation, when the Ba'tist regime was severely in need of guaranteeing the Islamic Republic's, at least neutrality, so as to materialize another of its aggressions. Thus, there was no guarantee that Iraq would not reattack Iran after it succeeded in annexing Kuwait.

However, in line with the government's policies, the dailies affiliated with the Rafsanjani wing of the domestic politics did not refrain from using the Iraqi card. Moreover, they supported the food and medicine aid to Iraq, but within the framework of the UN resolutions.¹⁰²

On the other hand, the Pragmatists definitely denounced Iraq's instrumentalization of the anti-American, anti-Zionist, and Islamist propaganda in order to get the support of the Muslim masses in the region and found it unconvincing. The Hardliners, however seemed to be influenced by Saddam's propaganda. One of the main objectives of Saddam in trying to present the conflict as "the Islamic World vs foreigners" was to activate the extremist groups within the Islamic Republic. From the statements of some extremist Hardliner figures one could deduce that its propaganda campaign did not fall in deaf ears. The Hardliners viewed this position of Iraq with pleasure and appreciated Saddam.

4.3 THE GULF WAR and the PRAGMATIST FACTION:

The Pragmatist faction favored a peaceful solution to the crisis. However, even before the outbreak of war in the region, they made it clear that the

¹⁰² TEHRAN TIMES wrote: "In the light of the proximity of Iranian borders to Iraqi, Iran is certainly able to solve almost all food and medicine problems the 15 million population of Iraq is presently facing. If need be Iran may charge Iraq a transit fee and allow that country to Iranian ports for transportation of food and medicine which is not against the UN resolutions." 6 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 17 Sept 1990, p:57

responsibility of such a possible war rested with the Iraqi regime, since it did not halt its aggression before a military solution.

Those, who endorsed the government's policy vis-à-vis the war, reiterated that together with the US, Iraq also was unjust in this war, and thus, defending him would not mean to defend the sanctum of Islam. Rather, they argued that this would mean defending Saddam's aggression against Kuwait. They also utilized, as a proof to their stands, Ayatollah Khomeini's words that define Saddam as "mad criminal who on achieving power will not have mercy on anyone."¹⁰³ On this issue, they made references to the unresolved coastal border and POWs issues as sufficient proof for the fact that Iraq still was a main source of threat for the Islamic Republic.

The start of the war against Iraq heated the debate in the Consultative Majles, especially between the Radical and Pragmatist factions. Because, despite the fact that the Conservative figures maintained their criticisms of the indifferent policies of the government, and utilized radical propaganda against the American presence in the Persian Gulf region, and that they demanded a stop to the allied attacks on residential areas in Iraq, on the policy of neutrality, the Conservative faction, together with some Radical figures, endorsed the government's policy, and strongly opposed Iran's involvement in this war.

The Radicals' hot speeches calling for Iran's taking part in the war, were confronted with harsh speeches by the Pragmatist and Conservative Majles deputies.¹⁰⁴ And this further raised the tension of the factional debate within the Majles.

¹⁰³ See for example, Nateq Nuri's preagenda speech in which he responded to the hot speech by Mohtashemi, Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 24 Jan 1991, p:65; also see remarks by another Pragmatist Majles deputy, Borumand, Tehran Domestic Service, 22 Jan in FBIS-NES, 30 Jan 1991, p:57

¹⁰⁴ Jahangiri(a Conservative deputy), for instance criticized the Radicals by saying that "Ever since the first day the protagonists had sought to bring us into this war. If we had not checked our emotions, we would have unwisely entered to this war in which neither sides fights for justice." Tehran Domestic Service, 22 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 30 Jan 1991, p:57

4.4. THE HARD-LINER COALITION¹⁰⁵ and the GULF CRISIS:

The leading figures of the coalition are, the revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khamene'i, Ahmad Khomeini, the son of the former *faqih*, and Khamene'i's representative in the NSC, (then) The Majles Speaker of Karrubi, Majles Deputies Mohtashemi, Hadi Khamene'i, the brother of the *faqih*, and Sadeq Khalkhali. Especially Khalkhali, and Mohtashemi, together with other Hardliner Majles Deputies such as Asgharzadeh, Ali Reza Ferzad, represented the Radical group that continuously criticized the government's policy vis-à-vis the crisis. Together with Ahmad Khomeini, Khamene'i, and Karrubi, who held the two of the most important posts, and thus responsibilities of the Iranian political structure, and who participated in the decision-making process in the NSC on the crisis, acted with caution and refrained from open criticism of the government's policy in the face of the crisis. Nevertheless, they continued to remain in the confrontationalist, and oppositional camp with their respective positions on the developments of the crisis.

The majority of the Hardliners supported government's condemnation of both invasion and annexation of Kuwait.¹⁰⁶ The Majles Speaker viewed Iran's condemnation of aggression against a country that had supported every act of aggression against the Islamic Republic in the past as "a sign of its principled stand", because "Iran and Islam reject all kind of aggression" whoever it was directed.¹⁰⁷ However, in every opportunity they made the point that Kuwaiti monarchy was paying for its past mistakes, that is, the support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War.

¹⁰⁵ In this study dailies such as KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI, ABRAR, and KEYHAN, and a journal BAYAN whose owner and the editor is Mohtashemi are taken as the mouthpieces of the Hardliner group.

¹⁰⁶ Khamene'i: "We condemn aggression either by Iraq or the US." IRNA, 15 Aug in FBIS-NES, 16 Aug 1990, p:52

¹⁰⁷ The Majles Speaker Karrubi, IRNA, 21 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:52

However, the condemnation was not the general and undisputed feeling among the members of the coalition. It was the continuing anti-imperialistic stand of the group, which nearly caused a point of convergence in view with the eight-year long enemy, Iraq. A daily affiliated with the Radicals went so far as to claim that "from a historical point of view Iraq is right in claiming that Kuwait is a part of this country, and what Saddam has done, though internationally condemned, does not seem to be entirely wrong."¹⁰⁸ In its editorial, KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL emphasized the point that division of Kuwait and Iraq was a colonial design. The daily supported anti-imperialist rhetoric of Saddam Hussein, and wrote that "Iraq is also not of the mark when it says that the small nations now existing in the Middle East were purposely created by the imperialist powers to weaken the Muslim ummah."¹⁰⁹

While, on the one hand, Khamene'i and Karrubi were condemning Iraqi aggression, and supporting the government's position on this issue, the daily affiliated with the Radical faction, with an extremist posture, justified Iraq's action. This indicated the fact that there was not a total unity of position within this camp on the issue of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Officially responsible figures of the Hardliner coalition, whether from the Radical or Conservative factions, held views closer to the Pragmatist government on the issue of invasion.

However, there was unity in opinions within the coalition when the issue was the American presence in the region. From an anti-American posture, the Hardliner group asserted that the real source of the crisis was not the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, rather the America's sending of troops to Saudi Arabia. They considered the presence of American forces in Saudi Arabia to the detriment of Islam and the Muslims and against the Islamic revolution. Ayatollah Khamene'i described this as an "insult to the Muslim people of that country".¹¹⁰ Because they perceived the crisis as a confrontation between the "Islamic World" and "the

¹⁰⁸ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 18 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Aug 1990, p:62

¹⁰⁹ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 11 Aug in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:56

¹¹⁰ IRNA, 15 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 Aug 1990, p:52

blasphemy". They believed that the ultimate objective of the America's entering the region was "to suppress the genuine Islam (the revolutionary Islam) and to enforce its own version of Islam."¹¹¹

In addition to that, the Hardliner group continuously questioned the "lawfulness" of the presence of the US forces in Saudi Arabia. They asked: ". . . Under what international law or sanctions of a world body has the US deployed . . . in Saudi Arabia?"¹¹²

Despite the relative support of the Hardliner wing to the government's position vis-à-vis the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, on the issue of government's reaction to the America's troop deployment in Saudi Arabia the situation was totally different. They were asking "why Iran stopped short of strongly objecting to the US intervention in the region".¹¹³ Therefore, they found the government's reaction to the American presence in the region weaker than they thought proper, and demanded a more rigid stand by the government. This position is within the context of an anti-imperialistic outlook which considers the presence of foreign forces as a threat against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations in the region and especially against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Here appeared one of the most important point of divergence between the Pragmatist and Hardline factions in their approach to the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 appeared. The former defined the foreign presence in the region "undesired", but implicitly accepted it as "inevitable" given the lack of coordination and cooperation among the regional countries to give an end to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They were ready to tolerate the situation, on the condition that foreign forces leave the region after the end of the crisis. The latter, on the other hand, totally rejected any kind of American presence on whatever conditions. This difference in views of the two groups had been one of the basic reasons for the internal dispute over the Gulf Crisis.

¹¹¹ Karrubi, IRNA, 21 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:52

¹¹² KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:56

¹¹³ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990 p:56

The other divergence was that, the Iranian Foreign Ministry, in rhetoric, put emphasis on the Iraqi aggression and its long-term implications for the security of the country. The Hardliners on the other hand, viewed American presence in the region as the worst of the aggressions, and more dangerous to the Islamic Regime's future. The head of one of the radical organizations, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Mohsen Reza'i, was making the point that "massive military presence of the US is much more dangerous than Iraqi invasion of Kuwait."¹¹⁴ The Hardliner faction totally rejected the idea of "temporary presence". Another Radical figure, the Majles Speaker, the representative of the *Faqih*, Karrubi clearly stated that even the temporary presence of the US in the region was "harmful to the security and interests of Iran."¹¹⁵

Therefore, in order to confront the biggest of the threats, that is American military presence in Saudi Arabia, they demanded from the government not only not to directly or indirectly join "the foes of Iraq", but also not to remain a "silent spectator" vis-à-vis the development.¹¹⁶ In this connection, they opposed to the government's participation in the international embargo against Iraq, since it would mean Iran's joining with the enemies of Iraq, though indirectly. In other words, they requested that the government pursue an active policy, and be front runner in confronting the American military presence in the region, rather than participating in the US-led sanctions against an Islamic country.

Because, according to Hardliners, the US was attempting to use the UN as an instrument to legalize, legitimize its aggression in the eyes of the domestic and world public opinion; as a front to achieve unquestioned hegemony over the world's energy lifeline and to neutralize the impact of genuine Islam, rather than searching for an amicable solution to the crisis. Furthermore, they believed that

¹¹⁴ IRNA, 9 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Aug 1990, p:66

¹¹⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 14 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p:54

¹¹⁶ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 11 Aug in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:56

the United States was the primary cause of the continuation of the crisis, since it did not leave any face-saving instrument for the Iraqi leader to pull back.¹¹⁷

Therefore, they maintained an anti-status quo perspective in viewing the international system in general, and the developments of the crisis in particular. As a result, they continued to argue that existing international organizations, did not go beyond merely being instruments for the maintenance of the dominance of the oppressors, thus Iran should not cooperate with them.

One important development that strengthened the hand of the Hardliner group, and caused a retreat in the position of the Pragmatist faction, or a radicalization in the stand of the faction, was the statement of an American official that, they were designing a NATO-like security project for the future of the region. The direct result of this development was the historical speech by the regime's *faqih*, in mid-September, that called for a holy *jihad* against the presence of American troops in the region:

We are strongly opposed to the presence of America in this region and to America's demanding, bullying, and shameless attitude . . . If you set up a security and defense system here, then that would be against the security of the nations of this region . . . Americans say that they have to set up a security system here . . . Muslim nations will not allow this . . . Anybody who stands up to fight and confront America's aggression, greed, and plans and policies aimed at committing aggression in the Gulf region will be participating in the *jihad* on the path of Allah, and anybody who is killed on that path will be regarded as a martyr . . . We will not permit the Americans to establish a foothold for themselves in the

¹¹⁷ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL wrote that "For the domestic political considerations, the President Bush, through such a massive and "aggressive presence" of military forces left "no face-saving instrument available" to Saddam Hussein and made a military confrontation inevitable". 18 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 29 Aug 1990 p:54. See also KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL 14 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Aug 1990, p:63. In his speech to 10 Oct Majles Session, Mahmud Astaneh on the United Nations Security Council said: ". . . the decisions of that council are dominated by the satanic power of several nations, including America." RESALAT, 11 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Nov 1990 p:66

region, where we are present, the region where we have influence and any place where our word of Islam reaches the ear of a Muslim.¹¹⁸

This call for *Jihad* by the supreme leader of the country gave an impetus to the Hardliners' criticisms of the policy pursued by the government. Having relied on the religious leader's call for a holy war against the US forces in the region, especially the Radicals, at the Islamic Consultative Majles increasingly leveled their opposition to the "inactive" Gulf Crisis policy of the Pragmatist government. Mohtashemi, for example, accused the country's officials of carelessness with regard to practical measures against the American presence in the region, and said: "Despite the clear view of the Islamic revolution and its leader based on *Jihad*, no move, uprising, an executive and practical planning have been implemented by the executives of the country."¹¹⁹

In spite of the insistence of the Foreign Ministry officials that a struggle against the US would be a holy war provided that it passed the "red-line", and permanently stay in the region, the head of the Radical faction in the Majles called for an immediate holy war against the US: "From this moment we must begin to organize the holy war and the struggle against America."¹²⁰

As mentioned before, the Pragmatist faction totally opposed to permanent US presence in the Persian Gulf region. In the face of the escalating opposition of the Hardline group, together with the *Jihad* call by the supreme leader, and of plans for an American-led security system for the region, the Pragmatist government had to radicalize its position, though in rhetoric, vis-à-vis the crisis.

¹¹⁸ Ayatollah Khamane'i, Tehran Domestic Service, 12 Sept in FBIS-NES, 13 Sept 1990, p:52

¹¹⁹ RESALAT, 29 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 18 Dec 1990, p:74. Another radical figure, Ahmadi, condemned moderate politicians for their warm attitude toward America by saying struggle against America is a sacred cause. *ibid*

¹²⁰ Mohtashemi, Paris AFP, 27 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Sept 1990, p:43. See also Majles deputies' remarks to the 25 Sept Majles Session, RESALAT, 26 Sept 1990. Another leading radical figure, Sadeq Khalkhali, stated that: "America has collected Arabist parasites and brought them in the Gulf. We must at last wage war on America. This is the order of our exated leader, who said 'In this path, jihad and death are indeed as martyrdom.'" 23 October Majles Session, RESALAT, 24 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 14 Dec 1990, p:45

The Radical and active Third Majles made use of every opportunity either to take an independent position, or to exert influence over the external policies of the government. Aside from opposition to the official policy followed by the Rafsanjani government vis-à-vis the crisis, the Hardliner faction, in pursuit of an anti-American movement in the region, instrumentalized hot "propaganda". By differentiating between the governments and the Muslim nations of the region, they called on these Muslim people of the region to come together, in their fight against the "imperialistic presence of foreigners" in the region, in order to negate their governments' hospitality to these invading forces of foreigners. Khamene'i's statement on the issue was striking: ". . . even if a government does permit for the permanent stay of the American forces in the region, the nations will bring that government down."¹²¹

Provocative statement of the religious leader Khamene'i, on the one hand targeted the permanent presence of the US forces in the region, -the most extreme of which was the invitation to the holy war against these forces-, on the other hand, warned the regional countries on the issue of permanent stay of America in the region. While the Rafsanjani government trying to convince the GCC that Iran was observing the principle of non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs, and thus is not a threat to them, Khamene'i's provocative, messianic speeches, and agitating remarks by other Hardliner figures made the position of the government less convincing in the eyes of other governments. Even, it could be affirmed that, as the tension in the crisis rose, the Hardliner faction began to operate as a power independent of government's control. In one of the extremely radical statements against the American military presence, the mouthpiece of the Radicals did not refrain from arguing that in being against the US presence in the region Iran and Iraq were in the same front.¹²²

¹²¹ IRNA, 31 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 26 Dec 1990, p:41. Karrubi, on the other hand, stated that: "Muslim nations will expel America from Saudi Arabia and region with humiliation and America will take its ominous objectives to grave." IRNA, 21 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:52

¹²² KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL wrote that ". . . Iran is as opposed to US military presence in the region as Iraq is." 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:56

In sum, at the first stage of the Gulf Crisis, although there were nuances between the two powerful groups within the Hardliner camp, namely the Radical and Conservative, they shared a common view that the American presence in the region should have been shown more vigorous reaction, and that the government should have adopted a rigid stand on the issue, and this rigid stand should have been followed in practical policies of the government. Rather than the policy of wait-and-see, the Islamic Republic should have pursued an active policy in the way of realizing the declared policies. For example, they complained that, in spite of the fact that since the outbreak of the crisis the government voiced its opposition to the foreign presence in the region, it did not take any practical step against this development. In their view, such a "laissez-fair policy" was against the Republic's declared policies which were embedded in the aspiration of the Islamic Revolution.

Within the framework of declared position of the government they demanded a response to threats facing the Islamic Republic. For example, the presence in the region of foreign forces disrupted the normal conduct of sea and air traffic of the Islamic Republic of Iran within her airspace and territorial waters as well as violations of the country's territories in that part. The Hardliner daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami wrote that even at some instances there were reports of threats against Iranian boats.¹²³ The Hardliners asserted that, the fact that, in spite of these actual violations of national security and sovereignty, the Iranian government did not show any reaction, even diplomatically, indicated the passiveness of the government's policy, and contradicted with the revolutionary policies of the past decade.

4.5 HARDLINER POSTURE VIS-À-VIS OTHER DEVELOPMENT THE CRISIS CONTEXT:

For the Hardliner wing the crisis was not the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, rather, the presence of the US forces in the soil of the Saudi Arabia. Here, the

¹²³ IRNA, 10 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 10 Jan 1991, p:54

coming of the foreign forces to the region -that was perceived as the primary threat to, and disgrace for the Islamic Iran, and revolutionary Islam- was blamed on the "reactionary, rootless, and dependent" Gulf countries, "the lackeys" or "servants" of the America, who appealed to the US to come and rescue them. One of his extremist statements Khamene'i said:

The governments inviting the US to their countries to defend themselves are governments without grassroots support . . . and for this reason they are unable to defend themselves. They will have to pay a dear price for the military presence of the US as a bullying power." ¹²⁴

In this context, the Hardliners argued that unlawful act of the US was shared by the Gulf countries.¹²⁵ As a result, they opposed the government's policy of establishing crisis-time coordination and cooperation with the GCC. First of all, they opposed the visit of Kuwaiti Foreign Minister to Tehran. Majles deputy Ali Salehabadi explained this opposition by saying that "Officials should realize that an important event which is going to be a threat is taking place. The invitation extended to the former foreign affairs minister of Kuwait is a wrong decision . . . as our Foreign Minister, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati visiting the Sheikhs of Qatar and Bahrain."¹²⁶ They demanded from Velayati that the announced visit to Tehran of Kuwaiti foreign minister be canceled.¹²⁷

Throughout the crisis, Radical Majles deputies utilized agitative propaganda, and called on the Muslim nations of the region, to revolt against their "treasonous", "reactionary" governments that either invited, or supported the US

¹²⁴ IRNA, 15 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 Aug 1990, p:52

¹²⁵ On the issue KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL wrote: "Saddam is for once telling the truth when he says 'The Croesus of Kuwait and his aides became the obedient, humiliated, and treacherous dependents of that foreigner (the US).'" 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:56

¹²⁶ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 12 Sept 1990, p:57

¹²⁷ IRNA 21 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21Aug 1990, p:53

presence in the region. The target of these propaganda activities by the Hardliner figures were the GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Egypt.¹²⁸

4.5.1. The Hardliner view on the relations with the GCC countries

A. The Hardliner position on the issue of security cooperation with the GCC:

From the early days of the Gulf Crisis, even before it, the policy makers of the Islamic Republic began to promote the idea that there should be a security cooperation among the countries of the Persian Gulf and that any kind of regional security arrangement without Iran's participation was bound to fail. In connection with this, in the concluding statement of a GCC session it was suggested that a regional security cooperation be established with the Islamic Republic. While this was viewed as a success by the Rafsanjani government, the reaction of the Hardliner group -that staunchly opposed any deviation from the "Neither East Nor West" principle in foreign policy- to the development was extremely critical. An Iranian journal, BAYAN, whose owner is Mohtashemi, questioned this cooperative attitude of the government officials toward the "reactionary regimes affiliated to world arrogance":

In view of the fact that all regional and multilateral pacts are formulated within the framework of the objectives and the protection of the interests of the West and the arrogant powers of the world spearheaded by the US, (in case it enters a pact with the GCC) the Islamic Republic should relinquish the slogans, the principles and the aspirations of the revolution in its campaign to

¹²⁸ See Najafi's preagenda speech to the 14 October Majles session, RESALAT, 15 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 Nov 1990, p:56. Another deputy, Tateli said: "The revolt of the Muslims of the world against these inhuman acts of Husni Mubarak, Fahd, and the world-engulfing US in the Middle East is a religious and holy duty." 28 Nov Majles Session in RESALAT, 29 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 3 Jan 1991, p:62. At the same Majles session another Radical deputy, Tabe, went so far as to call assassination of Sadat as a revolutionary execution due to the Camp David agreement, and said "the Muslim people of Egypt should take Husni Mubarak and cut his head off in public with a guillotine."

eradicate infidelity. Not only this, but it should also be drawn into the infrastructure of this international clan system, with all its rules and regulations which are naturally geared to the interests of the arrogant powers led by the US. The Islamic Revolution would become shackled within Iran. Incorporated into the international world order, Iran would be reduced to a mere pawn in the service of the objectives of the managers of the world system.¹²⁹

This statement does not only indicate the Hardliner position on the issue of security cooperation with the GCC countries, but also summarizes the coalition's opposition to the pragmatist notion of "halting enmities without reason", and Iran's incorporation into the international order, since in Hardliners' view this would be the end of the revolutionary posture of the Islamic regime in Iran.

B. Ties with Saudi Arabia:

After the meeting, in late September, between the foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia at the UN, the issue was placed on the factional agenda by the oppositional coalition. On the issue of the normalization of ties with Saudi Arabia they adopted a strict position. Some members of the Hardliner group viewed this as a betrayal of the Imam's last will, and thus staunchly opposed to the resumption of regular ties with Saudi Arabia. The other group argued that, at a time when the regional balance of power was favoring the Islamic Republic, no compromise should be shown, and Iran should not back away from its demands related to the change in the management of the *Hajj*, and now it should insist on this condition.

The Saudi regime's invitation of the American forces to the country intensified the hatred for the regime in Iran, and thus, propaganda attacks of the Radical faction against the kingdom. This occasion, according to the Hardliners,

¹²⁹ BAYAN, 22 Dec 1990-20 Jan 1991, pp:10,18 in FBIS-NES, 14 Feb 1991, p:57

once more justified the fact that King Fahd was a "stooge of the US", and "the most unholy man put in the charge of the holiest Muslim sanctuaries", and that "he has no right to be in power."¹³⁰ Moreover, because of the permission for the American presence by Riyadh, rather than agreement with the Fahd regime on the *Hajj* issue, they favored boycotting *Hajj* in 1991. Because, they argued, while other countries, due to American military presence, boycotting the *Hajj* ceremonies, Iran's participation would give some credibility to the Sa'ud dynasty.

Another point of the Hardliner opposition was related to the nature of the Saudi regime, which was criticized throughout the Khomeini decade. They said, at a time when the hereditary, monarchical system of sheikhs was being threatened seriously in the region, Iran would be aiding the survival of this "reactionary regime" by reestablishing diplomatic ties with the Saudis.

After the beginning of the military operation against Iraq, the Hardliner coalition intensified propaganda attacks especially on Saudi Arabia, and sharpened their criticisms of the official policy of the Rafsanjani government. The statement by one of the leading figures of the Radical wing within the Majles, Mohtashemi, with reference to Ayatollah Khomeini, was striking: ". . . the Imam used to say graciously that if we forgive Saddam we cannot forgive Fahd and his house, because he slaughtered hundreds of pilgrims beside God's house [Mecca] and violated Kabah's sanctity . . ." Then he questioned the Rafsanjani government's policy of normalization of ties with that regime by asking: "What has happened that the crimes of the principle enemies of Islam and Muslims the treacherous house of Sa'ud have been forgotten and some are after forming relations with Fahd's mercenary regime?"¹³¹

The Hardliner group went further, and demanded that any sort of contact and relation with the Saudi regime be broken off to do confrontation with the US in a serious way. The Radical figures made the point that fighting America

¹³⁰ KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 18 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Aug 1990,p:62; and KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 14 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Aug 1990, p:63

¹³¹ Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 24 Jan 1991, p:64

required cutting of relationship with all of the American mercenary rulers in the region.¹³²

Since anti-imperialism, and in connection with this, anti-Americanism are the two sacred principles of the ideology of the Islamic Republic, the Radical wing demanded that relations with regional Sheikhdoms that were responsible for the active American presence and involvement in the region should be denied.

4.5.2. The Hardliner position on the ties with the West:

The NSC's decision on the improvement of relations with Britain, and, the so-called "passive" position of the government vis-à-vis the American presence in the region, together with Rafsanjani's relatively moderate message on the future of the ties with the US, in an interview with LE MONDE revived the factional debate over the issues of ties with these two countries. While the government was trying to manipulate the crisis in order to improve its regional and international ties by underlying points of convergence in interests with the regional and European countries, the Hardliners voiced the view that "the day when the differences between the interests of Muslims and those of infidels are removed" this would mean the end of the revolutionary system in Iran.¹³³ Thus, they rejected all the normalization programs of the Rafsanjani government.

As aforementioned, the new regulation on the Assembly of Experts election resulted in the dismissal of the leading Radical figures from being representatives in the Assembly of Experts. By the Radicals, this development

¹³² See, for instance, Mohtashemi's statement in Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 24 Jan 1991, p:64

¹³³ See Hoseyni's preagenda speech to the 23 Oct Majles Session: "What threatens the interests of America is the pure Mohammaden Islam, which coincides with the sovereignty of nations. It is simple-mindedness if we believe that animosities have ended. Therefore, it becomes evident that the ignorant people who-by adopting positions in alignment with America- are trying to suggest and create common interests and cooperation ,despite differing strategies, and thus depict the exalted and divine as the lowly and material goals are either adherents to American Islam, in the service of their world or agents of that damned system." RESALAT, 24 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 14 Dec 1990, p:45

was interpreted as the purge of the militant faction so as to send Europe and the US promising messages about the future of mutual relations. In one of extreme remarks the Deputy Majles Speaker said: "You cannot fight America with these capitalist leeches. Instead of a green light, they have shown America and Britain an open door."¹³⁴

A. Ties with the United States:

First of all the politico-religious leader of the Republic voiced the idea that "the great Satan will never be friend with Islam."¹³⁵ Furthermore, the Consultative Majles, the base of the Hardliners, continuously issued statements declaring the basic characteristic of the Islamic Revolution as "combating hegemonism", and "crimes of America and other cruel oppressors". In these statements, the rejection of any possible contact or compromise with America was accepted as the basic objective of the Islamic Republic, and the officials of the country were seriously warned on the issue.¹³⁶ In this respect, the letter from the Majles Deputies on the occasion of the National Day of Struggle Against World Aggression, was significant. Because, by making reference to Rafsanjani's statements to LE MONDE that "before the resumption of ties with the US first the problems between the countries should be solved" and that "it will take time for the Iranian people to forget US hostility toward them" ¹³⁷ the letter wrote:

¹³⁴ Asadollah Bayat, 18 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Nov 1990, p:49. See also Ebrahim Asgarzadeh's preagenda speech at the 16 Oct Majles Session in RESALAT, 17 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 Nov 1990, p:60

¹³⁵ Khamene'i, Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 10 Jan 1991, p:53

¹³⁶ See Tehran Domestic Service, 4 Nov in FBIS-NES, 5 Nov 1990, p:58. See Jasem Jadari's speech to the 4 Nov Majles Session: "Our issue with the US is one of basic existence." in RESALAT, 5 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Dec 1990

¹³⁷ LE MONDE, 9 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Oct 1990, p:47. Elaborating on the possibility of establishing relations between Iran and the US Iran's permanent representative to the UN said similar things, "The US must set aside its belligerent policies and stop interfering in the affairs of others; only in that case would we have no difficulty in having relations with them." Tehran in English to Europe, 29 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:58

To presume that relations between Iran and the US . . . may be repaired with time and with the solving of the issues, is a false presumption. These assumptions come from the sick thinking of the pro-Western elements who have been bewitched by the devilish powers of the US and its allies.¹³⁸

In this letter, whom the Hardliner Majles deputies referred as the pro-Western elements was in fact the Pragmatist group of the Rafsanjani.

In addition to the Majles, religious organizations affiliated with the Hardliners continuously underlined the same points. Tehran Militant Clerics Association, the breakaway group led by the Radical faction, in a statement reiterated the meaning of anti-Americanism for the revolutionary Iran by saying that: "The enemies of Islam and of the Islamic Revolution, headed by America, have not changed their nature. Ignoring this fact should be considered the beginning of the decline of the system."¹³⁹

In sum, both of the partners within the Hardliner coalition utilized the most harsh of slogans, and words in attacking any possibility of resuming ties with the US. Because, they view establishment of ties with America as the concession of one of the ideological principles of the Islamic Republic, thus the beginning of the decline of the system. As a result, they maintained their anti-American posture during the Gulf Crisis. Even it could be said that they viewed whole the crisis from this anti-American perspective.

B. Resumption of ties with Britain:

In response to government's decision to normalize relations with Britain, immediately after the eruption of the Persian Gulf Crisis, the Hardline coalition

¹³⁸ RESALAT, 5 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Dec 1990, p:52

¹³⁹ KEYHAN, 28 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 13 Feb 1991, p:39

began to raise the disputes between the two regimes in order to block this process.¹⁴⁰ Since the very beginning of Hashemi-Rafsanjani's flirtations with the British Government, by their insistence on the death sentence on Salman Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*, on the continued imprisonment of Roger Cooper, the British Merchant who had been living for close to five years in Evin Prison on charges on espionage, and also on the release of Mehrdad Kowkabi, the Hezbollahi element related to the Islamic Republic of Iran, they had tried to disturb this normalization process. For example, Ahmad Khomeyni visited Kowkabi's family, and in this visit he warned the heads of Britain.

This issue gave the Hardliner faction a chance to bring the policies of Hashemi-Rafsanjani on seeking close ties with the West under intense fire. In any case, these moves -especially the hostile positions adopted by the Hardliners at the Majles, at the beginning of talks between the government of Rafsanjani and Britain on the restoration of ties, and also their statement that ties between the two countries must not be restored so long as Mahrdad Kowkabi was not released from jail- revealed the fact that the Radicals, finding themselves cut off from the Assembly of Experts and many other decision making organs, intended to direct their anger and criticism toward points which are among the weaknesses of the government of Rafsanjani within the Islamic regime.

After the resumption of ties with Britain, in December 1990, the Hardliner opposition within the Majles openly criticized the government's decision on, first, to reopening of the British embassy in Tehran, and second, the British representation's being at the level of embassy. One of the Radical Majles deputies, Abdol Rasul Musavi, questioned the decision and asked:

"If the respected president and the respected foreign minister see any good coming from this action, would they please make it clear to the deputies and to the people?"¹⁴¹ The beginning of the war against Iraq, and Britain's participation in this war against Iraq, intensified the attacks by the Hardliners on ties with Britain.

¹⁴⁰ See 30 Oct Majles Session in RESALAT, 31 Oct 1990, p:52

¹⁴¹ 4 Nov Majles Session in RESALAT, 5 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Dec 1990, p:63

They continuously requested that the government cut off relations with Britain, the main ally of America in the war.¹⁴²

C.Hostage issue:

In the process of normalization of ties with the West, in many instances Rafsanjani made the point that the government of the Islamic Republic was doing everything for the solution of the hostage issue, and the release of all Western hostages held by Lebanese groups. This was strongly condemned by the Hardliner group, especially by the Radical figures within the group. In his preagenda speech to the Majles, Mohtashemi said: "Murmurs about the imminent release of Western hostages is (coming) at a time . . . when America at present, is holding all the Middle East hostage." ¹⁴³

D.The Conference on Palestine:

This conference held in December 1990 was a pretext for the Hardliners to openly suggest that the Islamic Republic be the organizer of a military struggle against Israel. They continuously underlined the fact that Iran should more actively, and militarily support the Islamic movement in Palestine. Addressing the first ever Islamic Conference on Palestine, Karrubi said that the Islamic Republic could be "a training center for an army made up of Muslim youths from all parts of the globe to liberate Palestine." Then, by making an implicit reference to the inadequacy of the government's policies on the issue, he went on saying that "Conferences, speeches and resolutions are welcome, but what we need are

¹⁴² Mohatashemi, Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 24 Jan 1991, p:64

¹⁴³ 28 Oct Majles Session in RESALAT, 29 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 18 Dec 1990, p:74

practical steps in this direction, because Palestine can only be liberated by force".¹⁴⁴

This emphasis on the use of force, and violent actions in order to establish an independent "revolutionary Islamic State in Palestine" was one of the main characteristics of the Hardliner coalition on the issue of revolution export in general, and on the Palestine issue in particular.¹⁴⁵ They made it clear that Arafat did not attend the conference since he was not a person favoring the liberation of Palestine and that, "the Palestinian masses will follow the Iran's model and regardless of what the non-Islamic groups dictate to them."¹⁴⁶

Therefore, the First Islamic Conference on Palestine once more underlined the radical posture of the Hardliner faction on the issue of the "export of the Islamic Revolution." On the other hand, the conference indicated the considerable power of the coalition within the domestic political structure, and continuing influence of the Hardliner wing in foreign policy-making. Because, as will be detailed in the following part of the work, this first ever Palestinian Islamic Conference in Iran, was organized by the government in a bid to appease the Hardliner opposition to its Gulf Crisis, and approachment with the West policies.

4.6. THE NEXT ROUND OF FACTIONAL STRUGGLE: THE GULF WAR AND THE HARDLINER OPPOSITION:

The worsening situation in the Persian Gulf, and the intensification of the crisis, as the deadline set by the UN Security Council approached, raised factional tension within the country. As the crisis neared its final stage, the government's,

¹⁴⁴ IRNA, 6 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 7 Dec 1990, p:52

¹⁴⁵ The Majles Speaker Karrubi suggested that the intifadah must be expanded from within the occupied territories to the outside world: "If it is implemented", he said, "the Zionists will never feel secure in any part of the world. Where Israel has an embassy, Muslims there, even if they do not carry out any armed attack against the embassy, just throw pebbles at the embassy." KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 15 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Dec 1990, p:48

¹⁴⁶ Mohtashemi, KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, 15 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Dec 1990, p:48

so called, "indifferent" policy vis-à-vis the crisis, especially American presence, increasingly became a subject to criticism by the Hardliner group. The argument they made was that "American danger faces us more than anyone else", and thus "we can not keep quiet."¹⁴⁷ Therefore, they intensified demands to the effect that the government show strong reaction to the foreign handling of the Gulf Crisis and increasing American military presence in the region.

One of the most striking developments with regard to the Hardliner opposition against the policy pursued by the government vis-à-vis the Gulf Crisis occurred only three days before the expiration of the deadline set by the UNSC. This development manifested itself as a show of force by the Radical majority within the Majles, whereby the newly appointed Minister of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education, declined to get "vote of confidence."¹⁴⁸ Although this move by the Majles had reasons related to domestic policies of the government, the timing of the action indicated the extent of the Hardliner discontent within the Majles as a result of Hashemi-Rafsanjani's "weak" reaction to the developments in the region. Moreover, this incident once more confirmed power of the opposite wing as an obstacle before the open-door policies of the Rafsanjani government.

During the war stage of the crisis, the Islamic Consultative Majles had been, first of all, the scene for factional collisions. Secondly, it was manipulated by the Radical Majority as an important base of attacks on policies of the Rafsanjani government. On the day the allied military operation against Iraq began, the Majles called for an immediate cease-fire, and called on the people to participate on a rally the day after to protest the killing of Muslims by the American forces and their allies.¹⁴⁹

The reaction of the Hardliner figures to the US-led military operation against Iraq was tremendous. As they viewed the war as a "Muslim World vs the

¹⁴⁷ See Abdollah Tатели's speech to 28 Nov Majless Session in RESALAT, 29 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 3 Jan 1991, p:62

¹⁴⁸ IRIB Television Network, 13 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 15 Jan 1991, p:65

¹⁴⁹ IRNA, 17 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 18 Jan 1991, p:52

Blasphemy", they went so far as to term the war as "crusade against Muslims" for the protection of Israel.¹⁵⁰ Because the Hardliner wing believed that the next target of the US would be the Islamic Republic and the Islamic liberation movements in order to secure Israel. Therefore, they attacked on the Pragmatists' view that the US has come to the region in order to remove Iraqi aggression from Kuwait and it would leave after finishing the job. The Hardliners believed that the US has entered the region to impose its full economic and political domination over the Muslims of the region.

4.6.1. The split within the Hardline coalition on the war:

Upto this point, in their perception of the US-led war, and other developments in the region the Hardliner faction maintained a considerable unity of view. However, the issue "whether the Islamic Republic should involve in the war or maintain its neutrality" divided the camp into two. The first group, that consisted mainly of powerful extremist Radical Majles deputies, and their supporters, increasingly maintained its oppositional position on the government policies as they advocated Iran's participation in this war against the "arrogance". They named the US and Zionism as the principle enemies of Islam and Muslims. It was for this reason that the group called it a "cardinal sin" if nothing is done in words and deeds for the annihilation of the Great Satan, America.¹⁵¹ Since the war against the US was a holy war, they called on the government to fulfill this Islamic duty, and join the war "in words and action."¹⁵² Now that the fate of Islam was at stake, they demanded that the bitter past with Iraq be forgotten, and that the Islamic Republic participate in the Iraqi front. Sadeq Khalkali, in his pre-agenda speech said: "We can not leave the Iraqi nation alone in this brave battle."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Khalkhali, Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:91

¹⁵¹ Mohtashemi, Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 24 Jan 1991, p:64

¹⁵² Mohtashemi, Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128

¹⁵³ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128

Contrary to the government's definition of the war, that is, "the war of two wrongs", and completely excluding the threat by Iraq, Sadeq Khalkali in the most extreme of his speeches stated that for Islam's progress and for the progress of the revolutionary Islamic ideals, Iran should go to the war. In the same speech he equated the success of Islam to the Iraqi success and said: "The victory of Iraq is victory of Islam. We hope that Iraqi soldiers are victorious."¹⁵⁴

In his first statement on the war, Rafsanjani said that "fortunately, so far we have not seen any signs of evidence of our country's interests being threatened."¹⁵⁵ The leading figure of the Hardline faction, Mohtashemi, by making critical reference to this evaluation by the president in his preagenda speech to the Majles said:

The fact that some gullible or timid individuals think we should not worry about this war and the people should be concerned is a source of great regret. Such thinking means that either the Iranian nation and the Islamic Revolution have changed, or the world-devouring United States has changed its nature. Are such remarks an invitation to the people to become indifferent toward their own destiny and Islamic revolution?¹⁵⁶

The other point that was raised in the harsh criticisms of this group was that the Islamic Republic, as the leader of revolutionary Islamic movements, could not remain indifferent to this destructive war, and the fate of the Muslims. The Islamic Republic, according to the extremists, in view of its principles and aspirations, was more duty bound than any other country to take part in a holy *ji had* against the United States.

They supported this posture by making reference to the last will of Ayatollah Khomeini, in which he says "All Muslims should join the war with all

¹⁵⁴ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128

¹⁵⁵ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 17 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 18 Jan 1991, p:51

¹⁵⁶ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 20 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:127

their belongings when a Muslim state is attacked by a foreign enemy",¹⁵⁷ and to Khamene'i's call for holy war against the United States at the initial stage of the Gulf Crisis.

In this context, they questioned the compatibility of government's, so called, "ignorant" policy vis-à-vis the "deathly crime of the US" with the revolutionary principles and Khomeini's heritage, and asked why Iran contended itself "purely with an expression of regret" and did not condemn the "crimes of the US and its allies."¹⁵⁸ The "negligent" position of the government was called as a "shame" for Iran.

People from this group demanded that the Iranian government, at least take practical steps that will manifest its opposition to this US-led war, and consequent crimes in Iraq. In connection with this, one of the Radical Majles Deputies, Salebabadi, requested that necessary measures be taken to strike blows against American interests in the region. In his preagenda speech to the Majles, he said that ". . . I call on the honorable government to suspend our country's political and economic ties with Britain, France and Turkey whose forces are taking part in the unequal battle in the region."¹⁵⁹

In connection with this, they intensified their propaganda campaign against the countries, that directly or indirectly took part in the anti-Iraqi coalition with which the Iranian government tried to establish close contact for consultation on the crisis from the beginning.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Sadeq Khalkali made this reference. Tehran IRIB Television Network, 20 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:127

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*

¹⁵⁹ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128. Hadi Khamene'i, for example, although he did not demanded participation in the war, asked the government to show strong response to any violation of Iranian air space, violation of neutrality." Tehran IRIB Television Network, 21 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:130

¹⁶⁰ In this context, Khalkali made this statement: "Now we should annihilate, in their trenches, the US, Bush, Fahd and the parasitic regimes such as Mubarak's and Ozal's." Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128. In the same manner JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI criticized Turkey's consent to the use of its airbase by multinational forces. 28 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 12 Feb 1991, p:81

4.6.2. The Hardliners supporting neutrality:

Another group within the Hardliner camp, that was generally composed of Conservative faction, including Ayatollah Khamene'i and some influential Radical figures such as, Ahmad Khomeini, and Mehdi Karrubi, nevertheless, endorsed the government's decision to remain outside the war. Because, first of all, they admitted the reality of the Iraqi threat, and the fact that Iraq was unreliable, and nobody could guarantee that after a victory in this war it would not turn to the Islamic Republic.¹⁶¹ Second of all, they were aware of the fact that country's economy could not afford one more war, especially if this war was against the united forces of the Western and regional countries.

The fact that, there was disunity in the ranks of the Hardliner wing on the issue of "how to handle the Gulf Crisis" reduced, to a large extent, the resonance of the extremist arguments and criticisms on the Iranian people. In this respect, the stand of two most influential Hardliner figures, the religious leader, Khamene'i and Ahmad Khomeini, the son of Ayatollah Khomeini, was critical.

1. Ayatollah Seyyed Khamene'i:

It was surprising that while he called for a holy war against the American presence in the region as early as September 1990, when the war has started in the Gulf, Khamene'i invited all powerful political groups, and people within the country to calm, and fully supported government's policy of "neutrality" vis-à-vis the war.¹⁶² He responded to the extremist figures' demands for the declaration of holy war by him, with silence.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI, 21 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 23 Jan 1991, p:53

¹⁶² Khamene'i stated that: "Of course as our honorable officials and our dear government announced on many occasions, we shall not enter this war. This lust for power is ugly, whether it comes from the leaders of Iraq or from the US and its allies in Europe." Tehran Domestic Service, 13 Feb 1991 in FBIS-NES, 14 Feb 1991, p:54

¹⁶³ Khalkali, Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128

Despite the fact that he intensified his confrontationalist rhetoric against the US-led military operation, and went so far as to call the American president as a "murderer", and the operation as a "genocidal war"¹⁶⁴, interestingly, he tried to appease the harsh criticisms by the Radical faction, by justifying the government's noninvolvement policy in his speeches. In one of such speeches he stressed that the stand adopted by the Islamic Republic in the face of the war in the Persian Gulf region was "100 percent Islamic and revolutionary" and said:

The sides involved in conflict in the Persian Gulf are fighting for the wrong objectives, which are unholy and contrary to divine law, and the Iran rejects both parties since their conflict are based on materialistic considerations. This war is not a war against Blasphemy where one is divine and the other is for materialist aims.¹⁶⁵

Therefore, Khamene'i endorsed the official view that the Iraqi regime was responsible and guilty for such a war, and for the killing of Iraqi civilians. On the other hand, however, he did not refrain from making references to Britain and France, with which the government was trying to normalize relations, as co-criminals of the US in the war against Iraq.¹⁶⁶

2.Ahmad Khomeini:

Despite the fact that he was agreeing with the general hardliner belief that the government's policy, especially vis-à-vis the American presence in the region, should have been more active, and confrontationalist than it was, Ahmad Khomeini refrained from taking oppositional stand against the government. On the contrary,

¹⁶⁴ Tehran Domestic Service, 3 Feb 1991 in FBIS-NES, 14 Feb 1991, p:54

¹⁶⁵ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 25 Jan 1991, p:44

¹⁶⁶ See his speeches to Tehran IRIB Television Network, 24 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 25 Jan 1991, p:44 and Tehran Domestic Service, 30 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 30 Jan 1991, p:45

he supported the government's "neutrality" policy in the war, and, from time to time, made calls for unity, and underlined the trustworthiness of Rafsanjani as a revolutionary figure, in order to reduce the oppositional current in the country.¹⁶⁷

Ahmad Khomeini explained that the Iran's neutrality in the Persian Gulf War did not mean that it adopted silence in the face of killing of the Muslim inhabitants of the region by the multinational forces and the Ba'athist regime of Iraq. He made the point that the US was not the only danger for the Islamic Republic and the world Muslims. He remarked that Saddam, by his assaults against Iran, -the true flag-bearer in the struggle against Israel, and the castle of Islam in the region-, and his martyring of tens of thousands of Iranian youth, has committed the greatest treachery against Islam, and done the greatest service for the Zionist regime.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, he was one of the supporters of the government's policy vis-à-vis the Gulf War.

4.7.EVALUATION:

The fact that, in the post-Khomeini era, factions became like political parties with considerably different paths in different policy issues became clear with the above analysis. Because, the differences between the positions of the two wings vis-à-vis the Gulf Crisis to a large extent differed from each other. On the other hand, the argument that factions operate as loose coalitions also became more clear since the members of the same faction divided over some specific issues. Moreover, the oppositional coalition between the two Hardliner factions had its own boundaries. When there emerged an internal division within the

¹⁶⁷ In one of his speeches he stated that: "I earnestly beseech you to pursue factional issues only to the extent that will not, harm the original revolutionary identity of the system . . . We all firmly believe that Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani is wholeheartedly devoted to the attainment of the country's total independence, and that his stances are aimed at resolving these problems . . . it is possible that those who are not deeply aware of the issues and the problems may not like such stances." Tehran Domestic Service, 31 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Jan 1991, p:60

¹⁶⁸ Tehran Domestic Service, 27 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 30 Jan 1991, p:56

MOUTPIECES OF FACTIONS

1) HARDLINERS :

- **KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL**
- **ABRAR**
- **KEYHAN**
- **JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI**
- **BAYAN (journal)**

2) PRAGMATIST FACTION :

- **TEHRAN TIMES**
- **ETTELA'AT**
- **RESALAT**

coalition the extent of their oppositional influence over the government's policy diminished.

The above analysis of the postures of the two groups towards the Kuwaiti Crisis, first of all, revealed the fact that in general the two factions held significantly different visions of foreign policy. Notwithstanding their commitment to the same Islamic regime, the gap between their respective postures, especially between the two extremes, seems irreparable. While the Hardliner coalition maintained the anti-status quo posture of the first decade, and represented the continuity, the Pragmatist faction advocated a revised foreign policy notion based on moderation, and normalization in external relations, and thus symbolized the "change". The answer to the question that which of these groups prevailed in this foreign policy struggle will be find out in the next chapter, at the end of the analysis of the policy pursued by the Rafsanjani government in the face of the crisis.

CHAPTER 5

GULF CRISIS POLICY OF THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT

5.1.THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CRISIS: August 1990-15 January 1991

Immediate reaction to the Iraqi aggression of the Iranian Foreign Ministry was to condemn the invasion of Kuwait because "it violates the basic principles of intergovernmental relations: respect for sovereignty and non-intervention" and to call for an immediate withdrawal. At the same time, the Ministry explained its "concern about the (probable) presence of foreign powers in the region", and declared that "Iran cannot remain indifferent to the developments that could endanger her national security and regional stability".¹⁶⁹ In this first statement, it was underlined that weak reaction against the invasion could not deter Iraq, therefore severe reaction was necessary.

The Hardliner opposition viewed this reaction as a support for the "reactionary regime", that is Kuwait, which has supported Iraq in its war with Iran. Yet, the government did not retreat from its initial position and explained Iran's condemnation of the aggression against Kuwait as an observance of the determined principles of the Islamic Republic that prohibit aggression in any form, and against anybody. In his meeting with the Kuwaiti foreign minister, in Tehran in minister's first visit in late August, Rafsanjani stated that: "Iran will

¹⁶⁹ Tehran Television Service, 2 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 3 Aug 1990

always move by observing the determined principles of the Islamic Republican system."¹⁷⁰

In terms of Iran's threat perceptions, this immediate and strong rejection of the invasion by the Republic is understandable. In spite of the end of the war with Iraq, the Islamic Republic continued to see Iraq as a threat to its security. Iranian officials thought that Iraq couldn't extract what it wanted from Iran. Furthermore, after the cease-fire, Iraq was the party that prevented a permanent settlement. This made Saddam Hussein's intentions obvious to the Iranian Government and let them believe that "it will try again at the most suitable time". Under these circumstances, Iraq, now economically stronger with the developed Kuwaiti economy, more importantly, strategically advantageous with a direct and wider outlet to the Persian Gulf, would be more dangerous than anybody else to Iran.¹⁷¹ The latest move by Saddam Hussein reinforced the Islamic Republic's threat perceptions from Iraq. Iran, who was waiting for a peace agreement with Iraq faced with a new aggression by this country and highly disturbed by it. One of the results of this invasion, on the part of the Iran, was further realization of the reality of Iraqi threat and weakening of their hopes for a permanent settlement with Iraq.¹⁷² It was this huge threat perception on the part of the Islamic Republic that, in spite of the harsh domestic criticisms, made the temporary presence of the US forces in the Persian Gulf region more tolerable than the permanent dominance of Iraq there.

¹⁷⁰ Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:59. In another instance, Foreign Minister Velayati declared that: ". . . aggression must be condemned from our point of view; regardless of the aggressor and victim . . . Iran follows principles which cannot be changed on the basis of circumstances." IRNA, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:60

¹⁷¹ During the Iran-Iraq war major problem of Iraq had been its lack of direct access to the Gulf. This was one of the obstacles that blocked an Iraqi victory in this war. Annexation of Kuwait would eliminate this factor. In the future, Iraq might wage a successful war against Iran with the Kuwaiti asset at hand.

¹⁷² Rafsanjani in his response dated 8 August to Saddam's letter dated 3 August criticizing Iran's stance vis-a-vis the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, explained the impression that Iraq's "incredible aggression" created in the minds of the Iranians: ". . . weakened our trust . . . not witnessed any steps of goodwill . . . witnessed an insistence on continuing the occupation of territories." RESALAT, 16 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Sept 1990, p:49

Another significant concern for the Islamic Republic was the possibility that this crisis might "pave the way for the presence of expansionist foreign powers in the region", which was "certainly against the interests of the entire region". In the initial stage, the Foreign Ministry tried to postpone foreign presence by arguing that "if the foreign countries enter the scene the crisis will certainly increase . . . The first step would be to condemn Iraq", and if it would not bear fruit, "to impose international sanction on it in a later stage"¹⁷³. This means that Iran faced a dilemma as a result of the invasion. On the one hand, it proposed that Iraqi aggression should be answered with a strong reaction. On the other hand, however, this reaction should, if possible, not go so far as to military involvement of foreign forces in the region, at least immediately.

In the course of the crisis in many instances, Foreign Ministry officials voiced Iran's opposition to the presence of foreign forces in the Persian Gulf.¹⁷⁴ They argued that the stability of the region should be maintained by "regional states rather than outsiders". In an official letter to the UN, the Foreign Ministry wrote that "International law says that regional problems must be solved by the peoples and the governments of the concerned region" rather than by foreigners.¹⁷⁵

The annexation of Kuwait by Iraq on 8 August was denounced by the Iranian Foreign Ministry as "illegal". Iraq's insistence on the aggression made it easier for the Islamic Republic to put its position clearly. It was declared that ". . . Iran as the major power of the Persian Gulf will not tolerate any alteration in political geography of the region".¹⁷⁶

By the time of the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, the Islamic Republic distinguished between the embargo imposed against Iraq and the foreign

¹⁷³ Tehran in English to Europe, 3 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Aug 1990, p:67

¹⁷⁴ Deputy Foreign Minister Besharati, IRNA, 9 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Aug 1990, p:65

¹⁷⁵ Tehran International Service in Arabic, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p:56. Velayati emphasized the same point by saying that: "Now, in the first instance, the governments of the Persian Gulf region should work for a serious common position without foreign interference or influence." Tehran Domestic Service, 4 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Aug 1990, p:69

¹⁷⁶ IRNA, 9 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 9 Aug 1990, p:60

intervention in the crisis, and vigorously opposed to the latter, while supporting the former.¹⁷⁷ However, after it was recognized that Iraq would not give up its claim over Kuwait, and after Arab initiatives failed to resolve the crisis, the Islamic Republic revised its position, as any consolidation of Iraqi power in Kuwait would be totally unacceptable to Tehran. There after, Iran began to argue that organization of a forceful intervention, representing international consensus against the Iraqi invasion, and preservation of Kuwait's sovereignty rests with the United Nations, of which Kuwait was a member. The Foreign Ministry, in a letter, reminded this to the UN: "the people's right to sovereignty and the recognition of the political borders of the UN members are two of the main responsibilities which the UN must undertake for its members."¹⁷⁸ In the same letter, the Foreign Ministry referred to the military presence of the US in the region as "violation of international law" since it was not approved by the SC. The Iran's envoy to the UN went so far as to state that ". . . American presence in the region had turned aggression against Kuwait into a secondary issue and created a gulf within the Islamic world, whereas, if UN forces had intervened this would not have happened."¹⁷⁹ This means, Iran revised its initial position, and began to consider the possibility of foreign solution to give an end to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Therefore, when it became obvious that there could not be found any regional solution to the Kuwaiti Crisis, they began to promote the idea that a foreign military solution to the crisis should be under the full observance of the UN. The government adopted this position, in spite of the distrust the Hardliners felt to any international organization in the light of their anti-status quo posture in viewing the existing international system.

In the official declaration at the end of the National Security Council's 11 August session on the Gulf Crisis, although the displeasure with the increased

¹⁷⁷ They voiced the view that the military intervention of foreign powers, as opposed to economic and arms boycott, would turn the Persian Gulf into the center of conflagration. Tehran Domestic Service, 4 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Aug 1990, p:69

¹⁷⁸ Tehran International Service in Arabic, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p:56

¹⁷⁹ Tehran in English to Europe, 29 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:58

presence of foreign forces in the Gulf region was mentioned as a factor for deepening the crisis, the point of emphasis was the Iraqi aggression. The NSC declared that the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq "completely unacceptable to Iran" and "Iran recognizes Kuwait as an independent country".¹⁸⁰ For the Hardliners, the American military presence in the holy cities of Islam was more imminent danger to Iran, and revolutionary Islam in the region, than the Iraqi aggression. However, in line with pragmatist thinking, the government of Rafsanjani viewed Iraqi threat as more real and foreign presence as a consequence of this irresponsible adventure of Saddam Hussein.

For this reason, the government, led by the leading figure of the Pragmatist faction, albeit without officially admitting it, tolerated, or implicitly consented to the presence of Western expeditionary forces near Iran's coast, whether willingly or unwillingly, in the absence of a regional solution to the crisis. This was the reason behind the government's viewing foreign presence "inevitable", and its toleration of increasing foreign troops in the region. Velayati's words confirmed this: "It is not reasonable to say that the foreigners must not be present in the region in circumstances in which there is no solution for ensuring the security of the region."¹⁸¹ This relatively limited reaction of the government to the temporary presence of foreign forces in the region, however, had been sharply criticized by Hardliner figures and newspapers.¹⁸²

Contrary to the Hardliner position on the issue, throughout the crisis period, Iran maintained an unprecedented dialogue and cooperation with the UN. In line with the Pragmatist faction's view of the UN's role in the crisis, the government advocated an active role for the UN to put an halt to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. They thought that in order to prevent a war in the region,

¹⁸⁰ Tehran Television Service, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 14 Aug 1990, p:66

¹⁸¹ Paris AFP, 1 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 2 Jan 1991, p:60

¹⁸² On the issue of foreign presence, there was a difference of opinion even within the Foreign Ministry. Despite the fact that Velayati, the Foreign Minister was rejecting the idea that Iraqi invasion was a conspiracy of the US, in many instances, the First Deputy Foreign Minister, Ali Mohammad Besharati voiced that "this attack was carried out under the direction and with the support of the US". JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI, 6 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 31 Aug 1990, p:57

and in order to eliminate the pretext for the American presence in the region, all the countries of the region should apply international sanctions approved by the UNSC, and thus force Saddam to evacuate Kuwait. To this aim, first of all, the Rafsanjani Government officially declared its full observance of the UN Security Council Resolution 661, on the economic embargo to be imposed on Iraq.¹⁸³ Till the end of the crisis, except for humanitarian food aids to the Iraqi people, in spite of the rising internal opposition to the government policies-even after the reports that Allied forces were bombing civilian targets- government continued to maintain its commitment to all of the UNSC Resolutions. In the midst of the crisis, asked about the embargo, Rafsanjani said: ". . . if, like us, every country applies without fail the embargo decreed by the UNSC, Iraq will be forced to give in and to withdraw from Kuwait."¹⁸⁴ Later in another speech Rafsanjani made it clear that Iran would follow the UNSC Resolution 665 on blockade of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil: "We move, condemning the occupation of Kuwait, and like others we will take part in the blockade of Iraq. We will not violate the embargo because that would mean Iraq being able to remain in Kuwait."¹⁸⁵

Second, in every step of the Gulf Crisis, the government of the Islamic Republic, either by sending letters, or through its permanent representative, conveyed the official position of the country, and its commitment to the decisions taken by the Security Council, to the Secretary General of the UN.¹⁸⁶

It was interesting that after the UNSCR 678, that permitted the use of "all necessary means" in case Iraq would not withdraw from Kuwait until mid-January 1991, Tehran did not show any official negative reaction to the decision. In his visit to Paris in early December, answering the question of "what is Iran's position on the ultimatum issued to Iraq by the UN resolution 678?", Velayati stated that: "We firmly believe in efforts to solve the Persian Gulf Crisis by peaceful means.

¹⁸³ IRNA, 20 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:53

¹⁸⁴ LE MONDE, 9 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Oct 1990, p:47

¹⁸⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 13 Nov 1990, p:68

¹⁸⁶ For example, see IRNA, 11 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 14 Aug 1990, p:66

At the same time, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the resolutions adopted by the Security Council."¹⁸⁷ This statement by the Iranian Foreign Minister, to a large extent, clarified the government's position vis-à-vis the new UN resolution; the Islamic Republic was endorsing it, or at least it was not rejecting it.

5.1.1 Iraq offers peace to Iran:

Two weeks after the invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi initiative for a permanent settlement, based on the recognition of 1975 Algiers agreement, and observance of the UNSC Resolution 598¹⁸⁸, shocked both Iranian officials and international observers. This proposal, while being termed as "the biggest victory for the Islamic Republic within its lifespan" by the Iranian officials,¹⁸⁹ in the international arena raised questions of 'whether Iran would leave its initial position vis-à-vis the Iraqi invasion in return for the agreement in its terms. However, immediately after the peace offer by Saddam Hussein, Rafsanjani declared that "peace with Iraq and Iraqi invasion of Kuwait are two separate issues", and that the elimination of this problem between Iran and Iraq would not change Iran's opposition to the Iraqi aggression.¹⁹⁰ Despite this overture from Iraq, Iran continued to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and pledged to honor the UN embargo. More than one month after the peace process between Iran and Iraq started, at the UN, the Iranian Foreign Minister reiterated that: "the Islamic Republic of Iran will not officially recognize the annexation of even a part of Kuwait to Iraq."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Paris Le Figaro, 8-9 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 11 Dec 1990, p:9

¹⁸⁸ For the details of the peace proposal, see Saddam's letter to Rafsanjani, in FBIS-NES, 1 Nov 90, p:49

¹⁸⁹ Tehran Domestic Service, 15 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 16 Aug 1990, p:51

¹⁹⁰ IRNA, 16 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 17 Aug 1990, p:61. The First Vice President, Habibi, repeated the same thing when he said: "The peace with Iraq is not connected with the problem of Kuwait", Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Sept 1990, p:60

¹⁹¹ Tehran Domestic Service, 28 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Sept 1990, p:59

Furthermore, the Republic responded any speculation on the Iranian violation of the embargo against Iraq officially, and continuously affirmed its commitment to the UNSC decisions, even though it continued to send foodstuff to that country.¹⁹² Most probably this was the reason for Iraq's creating problems on the issue of exchange of POWs.¹⁹³ The halt to the exchange of war prisoner, Iraqi refusal of freeing the Iranian prisoners, among whom there was the former Iranian Oil Minister, revealed their dissatisfaction with the policy of Tehran.¹⁹⁴ If the Islamic Republic regime had helped Iraq break the UN economic embargo, the Iraqi regime would not have obstructed the prisoner exchange, most probably the marking of the borders would have begun quickly. But the Islamic Republican regime avoided openly violating the economic embargo against Iraq.

During the time of the crisis, one of the important concerns for the Iranian government was to neutralize the propaganda campaign of the Iraqi regime. The Iraqi leadership, in a bid to mobilize Arab, and other Muslim masses, initiated an anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist, anti-Americanist, and Islamist propaganda. Lest it would leave the flag of anti-Zionism, anti-Americanism, and Islamism to the hands of the Saddam Hussein, the Iranian government continuously denounced Iraqi messages, and arguments. The president, for instance, stated that "the aggression against Kuwait took place under the demagogic mask of support for the Palestinian people, it has been of the best service to the Zionists and their masters."¹⁹⁵ This concern was influential in determining Iran's rhetoric vis-à-vis

¹⁹² On November 15, in a letter to the UN Secretary General once more declared its adherence to the UN-led embargo against Iraq by saying that "the NSC of Iran has ordered the Iranian Ministry of Interior as well as the military and law enforcement organs to ensure compliance with sanctions against Iraq as recommended in the UNSCR 661. As a result, Iran has banned export to and import from Iraq of all commodities and in addition currency transfers to Kuwait have also been discounted in keeping with the UN resolution." Tehran Domestic Service, 16 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Nov 1990, p:54

¹⁹³ Ali Nazaran, in charge of a commission dealing with the Iraqi POWs affairs, urged Iraq to show goodwill and release other Iranian POWs. IRNA, 22 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 22 Oct 1990, p:56

¹⁹⁴ As late as December, five months after the Iraqi peace initiative, Rafsanjani was complaining about Iraq's stance towards the issue: "Despite Iraq's claim that no other Iranian war prisoners remain in that country, we possess documents indicating that some POWs kept in Iraq are alive. An Iranian delegation has visited Baghdad twice to investigate the issue but the Iraqis have evaded answering." IRNA, 18 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 19 Dec 1990, p:58

¹⁹⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Sept 1990, p:54. Saddam's proposal was accepted as a time-buying action and the linkage efforts by him were rejected. The official television of the

the developments of the crisis. In this context, it had been one of the reasons for the increasing opposition to the American presence, and then the military operation, in propaganda of the officials of the Islamic Republic.

5.1.2 Khamene'i calls for Jihad:

In terms of factional struggle over foreign policy, the most striking of the developments was Khamene'i's call for holy war against the United States. In order to reduce the impact of this call on internal and international public opinion, for a long time the Foreign Ministry tried to disassociate the government from the consequent anti-American marches, and underlined the fact that the call for the holy war by the leader of the revolution was valid provided that the US passed the red line, and undertook a regional security initiative in order to guarantee its permanent presence in the region. In this connection, they emphasized that this point had not yet come for the present. The president on the other hand, preferred to keep silent on this issue for a while. Furthermore, Ayatollah Khamene'i was prevented from repeating the Jihad call.

Immediate official response of the Foreign Ministry to the American plans of a regional security arrangement was to declare that "Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati will visit Iraq soon to discuss developments in bilateral relations and the food assistance Iran can give to Baghdad".¹⁹⁶

The second step of Iran's reaction to the development was the resumption of diplomatic relations with Iraq. Upon the Iraqi foreign minister's call, Iran and Iraq have resumed direct diplomatic ties, after a gap of three years following the reopening of their respective embassies in Baghdad and Tehran in mid-October.¹⁹⁷ This act was justifiable according to a daily affiliated with the government,

Iranian regime claimed that: "Saddam, by the linkage method, is trying to exploit Arab masses' public opinion for their support regarding the presence of foreign forces in the region." Tehran Domestic Service, 3 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Aug 1990, p:57

¹⁹⁶ TEHRAN TIMES, 12 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 13 Sept 1990

¹⁹⁷ IRNA, 14 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Oct 1990, p:62

RESALAT, because, after Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, "Western countries did not cut off their diplomatic ties with Baghdad."¹⁹⁸

Therefore, this development relatively, and inevitably, radicalized Iran's hitherto cautious and accommodating policy vis-à-vis the crisis, and the American presence in the region, and gave hardliner views a preeminence. Because, it unambiguously revealed the fact that the American presence in the region was not temporary as the Pragmatists thought of, or expected, and irritated even the most Pragmatist figures within the country. In that sense, Khamene'i's action facilitated the government's job, by clarifying the extent of Iran's opposition to any possibility of a US-led security arrangement in the Persian Gulf region. The president Hashemi-Rafsanjani clarified Iran's position on the issue in his interview with LE MONDE:

The foreign military forces stationed in the Persian Gulf are there only because of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and must leave as soon as Kuwait has been evacuated, otherwise the Iranian public, already offended by their presence, would naturally demand measures on our part to force them leave.¹⁹⁹

In response to the development, the Iranian government showed its Iraqi card to warn the Americans that they would violate embargo and give support to Iraq had they not withdrawn their permanent presence projects. Iran's permanent representative to UN, Kamal Kharrazi implied this position by saying that: ". . . no Iraqi oil has been transferred through the Iranian territory so far. Our commitment to UN resolutions is real; however, we must keep in mind our national interest in

¹⁹⁸ RESALAT, 13 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Nov 1990, p:58. Another daily affiliated with the Pragmatist faction wrote that: "By no means, however would it imply that there is the slightest deviation in Iran's often repeated stance that Iraq should unconditionally and immediately withdraw its occupation forces from Kuwait." TEHRAN TIMES, 17 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Nov 1990, p:50

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Rafsanjani on 6 October in LE MONDE, 9 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Oct 1990, p:47. To the domestic television Rafsanjani declared that: "Iran announces that arrogant plans under the label of creating a new security system in the Persian Gulf are rejected and unacceptable and that this will not lead to ensuring security and peace in the region." Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Sept 1990, p:54

this regard . . . Such a step (American initiative for a regional security arrangement) would not only be an obstacle in the of the resumption of relations but also a great danger for the Americans and it will not be tolerated."²⁰⁰

5.1.3 Diplomacy: the main foreign policy instrument:

From the early days of the crisis on, the Rafsanjani government utilized traditional diplomacy, and consulted with almost all of the regional countries, whether they were ideologically in line with the Islamic Republic or not, on "how to respond to and how to solve the crisis". The crisis became a cause for more contact between Iran and the world. While Iranian delegations were visiting regional countries and delivering messages from the President to the leaders of these countries, Tehran became a scene for an unprecedented diplomatic visitors traffic. In this crisis context, Tehran's diplomatic activity was successfully utilized to express the Islamic Republic's position towards the developments in the region.

5.1.3.1 Relations with the regional countries:

A. Dialogue with the GCC:

In the meetings with the representatives of nearly all Middle East countries, the Foreign Ministry officials underlined the importance of regional cooperation in responding the Gulf Crisis. Having returned from his visit to four Gulf states and Syria, Velayati stated that one of the basic foreign policy principles of the Islamic Republic was "cooperation and good neighborly and friendly relations, particularly with Muslim neighbors".²⁰¹ Here, despite increasing propaganda campaign of the Hardliner figures and papers against the regional

²⁰⁰ Tehran in English to Europe, 29 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:58

²⁰¹ Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Aug 1990, p:66

countries which invited foreign forces and permitted their presence on their soil,²⁰² this statement by Velayati was indicator of the Rafsanjani Government's determination to instrumentalize traditional diplomacy, in order to normalize relations with all the regional countries. This was the most appropriate time to implement moderation policies. Because, the crisis in the region already underlined the common interests of all the regional countries in the maintenance of stability in the Persian Gulf region, despite internal differences among them.

Therefore, one of the targets of this normalization policies of the Rafsanjani government was the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries. During the time of the crisis, they promoted two views related to this group of countries:

1-One was that, the countries of the region should strengthen relations with each other, including the Islamic Republic, for the solution of the current crisis, and future stability and security in the region. In that respect, they underlined the intention to maintain dialogue with these countries after the crisis.²⁰³

2-The second of the objectives of the Islamic Republic's stance during the crisis has been to convince the GCC members that their fear from the Islamic Republic was illogical, and, Iran was not a threat to the regional security rather it was an element of stability for the regional balance of power. Therefore, all kinds of security establishments would be ineffective without Iran's support. The Foreign Minister Velayati put it clearly: "The Islamic Republic of Iran is pivot of regional security and as an influential and powerful country should be included in the regional decision-making".²⁰⁴

In order to materialize these objectives the government of the Islamic Republic pursued a warm attitude toward the members of the GCC involved in the

²⁰² By the end of August, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar permitted the deployment of foreign troops on their soil. Oman, and Bahrein had already placed their facilities at the disposal of West before the crisis. IRNA, 22 Aug 1990 FBIS-NES, 23 Aug 1990, p:49

²⁰³ See, for example, Velayati's statement to Tehran Domestic Service, 25 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Nov 1990, p:80

²⁰⁴ IRNA, 31 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, Jan 1991, p:59

crisis, and took practical steps each of which further intensified the criticisms by the Hardliner group. First of all, Iran's condemnation of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, despite the bitter past with this country, was important enough to be met with enthusiasm by the GCC countries. Rafsanjani was well aware of this fact as his words put it:

From the very first moment we took the lead . . . we condemn this. Indeed our condemnation assuaged all of them; they were wondering how we supported Kuwait who had so mistreated us . . . we supported what is right irrespective of individuals concerned.²⁰⁵

The second of these steps was the government's approval of the visit of the Kuwaiti Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. The Hardliners strongly opposed government's positive response to demand of the exiled government of Kuwait that its foreign minister visit Tehran. A group of Majles deputies, in a letter, asked foreign minister Velayati to cancel of the announced visit to Tehran of Kuwaiti foreign minister.²⁰⁶ However, in spite of the opposition from the Hardliner faction, from August 1990 to February 1991, the Kuwaiti representative three times visited Tehran.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, in order to appease the Hardliner opposition, the government officials made the point that Iran's agreement to the visit did not by any means imply a backtracking from its previous policies, and that condemning aggression against any country did not necessarily imply entirely unstinted support for the ruling regime of any particular country.²⁰⁸

Among the most surprising developments during the crisis was the meeting between the Iranian Foreign Minister and his counterparts at the Persian

²⁰⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:61-63

²⁰⁶ IRNA, 21 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990, p:53

²⁰⁷ On 21 Aug, 27 Sept, and 3 Feb. Respectively see IRNA, 21 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 21 Aug 1990,p:53; Tehran Domestic Service, 27 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Spt 1990, p:47; IRNA, 3 Feb 1991 in FBIS-NES, 4 Feb 1991, p:57

²⁰⁸ TEHRAN TIMES, 22 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 23 Aug 1990, p:48

Gulf Cooperation Council, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and the GCC Secretary General at the UN. At the end of the meeting, the participants declared unanimous opposition to any change in recognized international borders in the region, and also called for the observation of the UNSC resolutions.²⁰⁹ This was historically important since it underlined the unanimity of the interests and positions of the all the Persian Gulf countries vis-à-vis the crisis, including the Islamic Republic. The Republic and the members of the GCC, that had been in the two opposite camps before, were now in the same front against an aggression in the region. In other words, the Gulf monarchies that were in alliance with Iraq, in a bid to protect themselves from the danger of revolutionary Iran, were now joining hands with the Islamic Republic against their old friends. In the meeting, Velayati expressed Iran's intention to maintain the contact with these countries, and reiterated that the IRI's fundamental policy was based on "mutual cooperation" and this was what would be pursued in its foreign policy.²¹⁰

With regard to the second objective, that is, any regional security arrangement should involve Iran, policy-makers of the Republic made proposals to form a "regional military defense accord", based on "mutual respect and non-intervention in each other's internal affairs", which will guarantee the permanent security of the region.²¹¹ In the later stages of the crisis the Islamic Republic held direct negotiations with the Council to create a new security system to prevent future violent upheavals in the region.²¹²

Here, two points are important. One is the need the Iran felt to make such a proposal. The second is the emphasis put on the mutual respect and nonintervention. In fact, violation of these principles by the Islamic Iran had been

²⁰⁹ IRNA, 30 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:1

²¹⁰ Tehran Domestic Service, 30 Sept in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:63

²¹¹ The proposal by the First Deputy Foreign Minister, Besharati. JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI, 6 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990, p:57

²¹² See the statement by the Qatari Foreign Minister al-Khatir in TEHRAN TIMES , 25 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 8 Jan 1991, p:55

the basic source of friction with the Gulf monarchies. Now the Iranian proposal indicated a substantial change of mind of the policy-makers in Iran with the aim of gaining trust of regional countries. This initiative of the Rafsanjani government involved pragmatist approach to the issue: If regional countries continued to perceive Iran as a threat, and did not get into security cooperation with it, first this would add the tension in the region. Second, in the future crises, undesirable foreign intervention to regional developments, as in the case of the Gulf Crisis, would be inevitable. The First Deputy Foreign Minister, Besharati, explained the necessity of the regional security cooperation: ". . . Such an accord will defend the territorial integrity of the regional countries and their interests so that there will be no justification for the military presence of super powers in the region."²¹³

Although the Rafsanjani government underlined the importance of the principle of "non-intervention", given the ever-increasing propaganda attacks of the country's Hardliner figures, -including the most important of these figures, Khamene'i, who has the last-say in all political matters in principle, the applicability of this principle by the government was debatable. Here, again aforementioned duality in country's policy-making structure fed by different factional affiliations emerged as one of the important obstacles before the moderation policies of the Pragmatist faction led by Hashemi Rafsanjani. This was despite the fact that there existed a considerable unity in views between Rafsanjani and Khamene'i, which became more clear especially at the war stage of the crisis.

Fifth, in spite of the fact that the Rafsanjani government changed the tone of the rhetoric according to time, and the audience, on the subject of American presence in the region; the Pragmatist government never adopted a radical tone while referring to the policies of GCC countries on the issue. While the Hardliners insulted the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms in every possible manner for their inviting American forces to the region, and went so far as to question their legitimacy for this, the government followed a cautious stand. The warm wording of the

²¹³ JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI, 6 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 31 Aug 1990, p:57

statement made by Velayati was indicative in that respect: "To invite foreign forces in this region is not a correct action; this is something which we condemn."²¹⁴

B. Ties with Saudi Arabia:

At the 45th Session of the UN, the Iranian Foreign Minister held bilateral talks with foreign ministers of 65 countries in New York. One of them was Saudi Foreign Minister, Sa'ud al-Faysal. It was the first meeting of the two foreign ministers since 1988 when Riyadh cut off diplomatic ties with Tehran, after the 1987 Hajj incidents.²¹⁵ After this meeting, Riyadh declared its readiness to discuss normalization of diplomatic ties with Tehran²¹⁶ and sent Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for political affairs, Mansuri, to Tehran. This overture by Saudi Arabia was met positively by the Iranian Foreign Minister on the condition that the Hajj problem between the two countries be solved.²¹⁷

Despite the fact that Khomeini implicitly prohibited reestablishment of ties with Saudi Arabia in his last will,²¹⁸ that the Hardliner faction continuously reminded Khomeini's testament on the issue, and Foreign Ministry officials stated that they observed the red-line zone regarding the reestablishment of relations; during the time of the Gulf Crisis, the Islamic Republic, in line with pragmatist posture on the issue, continued its path on the way to normalizing ties with Saudi Arabia. This in turn, intensified the Hardliner attacks on the Saudi regime, and criticisms of the government's policy on the issue.²¹⁹ After the meeting at the UN,

²¹⁴ IRNA, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:60

²¹⁵ IRNA, 3 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Oct 1990, p:46

²¹⁶ Saudi daily AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, IRNA 3 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Oct 1990, p:46

²¹⁷ Tehran Television Service, 27 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 29 Oct 1990, p:63

²¹⁸ London KEYHAN, 11 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Nov 1990, p:51

²¹⁹ See, for example, Karrubi's statement in London KEYHAN, 11 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Nov 1990, p:51

Iran dispatched two of its high-ranking Foreign Ministry officials on announced visits to Riyadh, and initiated the normalization process with this country.

What were the results of this moderation policy that the Rafsanjani government pursued, at the time of the crisis, towards the Persian Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia. This policy beard fruit. First of all, diplomatic ties with these countries strengthened. For example, Bahrain and Iran agreed to raise mutual ties, which were reduced to the level of charge d'affairs in early 1990 due to Iran's interference in Bahrains internal affairs, to ambassador level.²²⁰

Iranian policy succeeded in renewing its image in the eyes of these regimes. The same countries who adopted a hostile stances in the Iran-Iraq war, began to refer to Iran as a stabilizing force in the region. Their recognition of Iran's important role in the region reached a point where they demanded that Iran assume a "guiding role" for the Muslims.²²¹

They continuously appreciated Iran's position vis-à-vis the Iraq's aggression, and reiterated the necessity that Gulf states expand cooperation with Iran.²²² This positive response by the Gulf countries to the cooperation initiative of Tehran, culminated in a critically important invitation by the Council in late December. In the final communique at the end of the 11th GCC summit, the leaders of the GCC members stressed the need for extensive relations with Iran, and their readiness to begin talks for establishing a new regional security set up including Iran. As a result of accommodating policies Iran pursued towards the GCC countries, without looking at their policies vis-à-vis the crisis, Tehran's relations with these countries considerably improved. In fact, it was a notable success to turn old enemies into new friends.

However, the fact that Iranian Government determinedly maintained its dialogue with the Council members, in spite of domestic Hardliner opposition

²²⁰ Tehran Television Service, 1 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Nov 1990, p:45

²²¹ See statement by Qatari minister. IRNA, 10 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 11 Oct 1990, p:57

²²² See the statement by the visiting UAE Foreign Minister, Tehran Domestic Service, 5 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Sept 1990, p:59

against such a dialogue "with these illegitimate monarchies" did not eliminate the dual position within Iran vis-à-vis the relations with the Gulf shaiykhdoms: On the one hand, the government tried to improve its economic and political relations with these countries by emphasizing the point that the Islamic Republic had never been a threat to the Gulf countries, and decided either to resume, or upgrade diplomatic ties with, and held negotiations with them in order to create a new regional security system, including the Islamic Republic. However, on the other hand, the Hardliner opponents of the Pragmatist government's foreign policy, including high-ranking officials of the country, such as Ayatollah Khamenei, maintained their verbal attacks that amounted to the intervention in the internal affairs of these countries.

5.1.3.2 Ties with the Western Europe:

The next target of the Pragmatist Rafsanjani government's moderate messages in words and actions, and normalization policies were the countries of Europe. In that respect, an important decision of the Iranian government that had been subject to criticisms of the Hardliner faction was the decision to resume diplomatic relations with Britain. Immediately after the Iraqi invasion, Iran's National Security Council, on August 4, proclaimed its support for restoring normal diplomatic ties with Britain, after it found that remarks by Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd on August 1 had fulfilled demands by the Iranian Parliament concerning Rushdie issue.²²³ Although the statement by Hurd was not that much different from the earlier statements by British officials, the extraordinary crisis conditions provided the Rafsanjani government with the opportunity to eliminate this major obstacle to its improving relations with the EC. In many occasions, the president Rafsanjani reiterated that problems on the way of establishing ties with the West European countries were resolved, and by

²²³ Paris AFP, 2 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Sept 1990, p:51

this way tried to fasten the normalization process.²²⁴ Another point here is that the Islamic Republic by this way tried not to remain outside of the developments regarding the Crisis.

The response by the British officials that in order to reestablish diplomatic relations "a substantial good will by Iran is needed" further increased the hardliners opposition to the renewal of official relations with Britain. But, in spite of the opposition of the Hardliners, Iranian Government did not retreat.

Here, from an anti-imperialistic perspective, the Hardliner figures interpreted this action of the Iranian government as a deviation from the revolutionary line in foreign policy. However, the government approached the issue with pragmatism. Iran should establish ties with Britain, first of all, in order to remove obstacles before the development of economic relations with other EC countries. Second of all, under the crisis situation, the Islamic Republic was in need of consultation, and cooperation in policy with the European countries to counterbalance the American initiative in the region, and to exert its influence over the developments in the region. Moreover, they see no reason for viewing the resumption of diplomatic relations with Britain as deviation from revolutionary principles. Vaezi, Iranian deputy foreign minister responsible for Europe and the US, told: "The Islamic Republic can remain committed to its principles and at the same time have important regional and international cooperation with Britain."²²⁵

On September 27, the two countries resumed diplomatic relations. While the resumption of relations with Britain was in line with the views of the Pragmatist faction, the tone and ingredient of the declaration was heavily radical, and responded all the points raised by the Hardliner faction. First of all, it reminded once more that for the preservation and regard for Islamic principles Iran was ready to rupture all diplomatic ties with any country. Second of all, the declaration emphasized that Iran would not sacrifice Islamic principles for the sake of preservation of diplomatic ties, as the fatwa on the death of Rushdie continued

²²⁴ IRNA, 4 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 5 Oct 1990, p:54

²²⁵ Paris AFP, 2 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Sept 1990, p:51

to remain as an Islamic decree.²²⁶ In fact, the declaration reflected the balance of positions of factions within the country. While taking a moderate step, the Pragmatist government was trying to appease the Hardliner opposition by saying that it would safeguard Islamic principles at whatever cost, and that resumption of ties with Britain by no means implied that Iran would tolerate future insults on the Islamic principles.

Statements of the British officials made it clear that it was basically the crisis circumstances that necessitated direct talks with Iran, and led to the reestablishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.²²⁷ Therefore, the Gulf Crisis had enabled the Islamic Republic to reestablish political ties with Britain, which meant the opening of the door to cooperation for the all EC countries.

After the resumption of ties with Britain, Iran decided to eliminate obstacles before good relations with France. Velayati's two day-visit to France, in early December, was important in this respect. This was the first time since the Islamic Revolution that an Iranian delegation paid a visit to France. Here, the fact that the visit followed the UNSCR 678 made this visit to one of the European countries that did not support military option for resolving the Gulf Crisis more meaningful.²²⁸

In this visit, financial problems between the two countries that were inherited from the former regime were addressed. Although the visit did not solve these problems the message of it, that is, Iran's crisis-time cooperation with the European countries was significant, when one considers the Hardliner criticisms of the government's policy of improving relations with Western Europe. A striking detail was that in his return to the country Velayati announced that the

²²⁶ Tehran in English to Europe, 28 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Oct 1990, p:59

²²⁷ See statement by Waldegrave, Britain's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in Tehran Domestic Service, 3 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Sept 1990, p:52

²²⁸ Velayati's statement in his return was striking in this respect: "Iran and France both agree in principle in not supporting the military option in order to end the Persian Gulf crisis. They also agree in principle that these countries themselves should be responsible for the establishment of the security in the region." Tehran Domestic Service, 5 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Dec 1990, p:51

Iran-France friendship society was to be set up in the Islamic Consultative Majles.²²⁹

In order to justify its close contact with the countries of Europe, the government did everything to show the Iranian public that Middle East policies of the EC countries were designed independent of the US influence, and that one should differentiate between the interests of America and the those of the EC. In that respect, the government appreciated European attempts, especially that of France, to find a peaceful settlement, and to avoid use of force. It underlined the similarities between Iranian and European policies in trying to prevent the outbreak of a war in the region.²³⁰

The other objective of the Rafsanjani government in making best efforts to normalize relations with the European countries, and to increase the crisis time contact with these countries was that, Iranian officials tried to get the guarantee of the European countries in order to counterbalance America's heavy involvement in the region. In his meeting with the German Foreign Minister Genscher, with British Foreign Secretary Hurd, and the EC representative, Italian Foreign Minister Velayati deplored the presence of the foreign forces in the Gulf region and got guarantees from these three European representatives, one was the spokesman of the European Community that all the foreign military forces including that of the United States would leave the region after the solution of the crisis.²³¹ Especially the Italian Foreign Minister, whose country was heading the EC at that time stressed this view of the European countries that foreign military forces in the Persian Gulf should leave the region after the crisis is resolved. Therefore, the dialogue with the Europeans was instrumentalized vis-à-vis the Americans. Europe's responsiveness to the Iran's sensitivity on the permanent

²²⁹ Tehran Domestic Service, 7 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 11 Dec 1990, p:50

²³⁰ See Rafsanjani's speech in Paris AFP, 2 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Sept 1990, p:51

²³¹ For the details of these three meetings see respectively IRNA, 25 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Sept 1990, p:47; Tehran Domestic Service, 28 Sept in FBIS-NES, 1 Oct 1990, p:57; Tehran Domestic Service, 29 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Oct 1990, p:55

presence of forces was also an important point that indicated the strategic importance of the country during the crisis time.

As a result, in the Persian Gulf Crisis context, Tehran eliminated the basic obstacle to its improving, especially economic, relations with the EC countries. While the diplomatic relations with Britain were resumed, the Community met this development positively, and sent its representative to Tehran to negotiate the future of relations. And, this signaled a new beginning for the Iran-EC relations.

5.1.3.3 Efforts to find a peaceful solution:

In the course of the crisis, another role played by the Islamic Republic was interesting. From the eruption of the crisis, Iran initiated a diplomatic campaign in order to find out a peaceful solution to the crisis. To this aim, Iran maintained an unceasing dialogue with the regional organizations and the United Nations. Moreover, with the start of the peace process with Iraq, Iran the old enemy of the Iraqi regime, and the country isolated by the Western Europe in the past became, in a sense, mediator between the two parties. The messages by the West were conveyed to Bagdad via Tehran. The Iranian government tried to dissuade Saddam from the invasion of Kuwait. This became clear when the president complained that "The Iraqis are not listening to us either. No matter how many messages we send them, they are continuing their own work."²³²

5.1.4 Self-promotion:

The Kuwaiti Crisis had been an opportunity for the Rafsanjani government to develop Iran's international position and prestige as it provided a sound platform through which the important messages of the Pragmatist government were able to reach at every corner of the world. It could have been possible only at

²³² Tehran Television Service, 26 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Dec 1990, p:41

a time when the projectors were directed at the Islamic Republic for the reaction of this strategically important Persian Gulf country. The Islamic Republic utilized this chance effectively and successfully underlined the following messages in words and actions:

-The Islamic Republic of Iran, "as the major country in the region", has a presence and influence there and this reality should be recognized by everybody, including world powers.²³³ Therefore, any regional security arrangement excluding Iran could not be successful, as the ineffectiveness of the GCC in this crisis indicated.

-Iran is strategically very important. The crisis disturbs the strategic balance in this sensitive region. The Islamic Republic is important in maintaining a reasonable balance in the region. Various countries in the world, specifically the regional countries, can count on their negotiations and deliberations with the Islamic Republic.²³⁴

-Therefore, Iran's position vis-à-vis the crisis is a determining factor in the development of the crisis. In one instance Velayati explained that: "No developments can take place in the region without taking into account Iran's role."

²³⁵

-Iran was the right party in the Iran-Iraq War. The Crisis once more proved the fact that while Iraqi regime was expansionist "the Islamic Republic was steadfast, solid and justice seeking".²³⁶ The members of the GCC exaggerated their threat perception from it. Now they should recognize that it is not Iran but Iraq is the real aggressor, and the main source of threat for the regional countries.

-Iran is a factor for stability in the region, rather than a threat to it. Rafsanjani emphasized this message promoted by the Pragmatist faction when he

²³³ Velayati's words put this clearly: "Iran controls the entire northern half of the Persian Gulf including its gateway the Hormuz Strait and parts of the Gulf of Oman while the other seven littoral states combined together make up for the other half." IRNA, 31 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Jan 1991, p:59

²³⁴ Rafsanjani, IRNA, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:60

²³⁵ IRNA, 31 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Jan 1991, p:59

²³⁶ Rafsanjani, Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:61-63

said: "Iran is capable of and willing to act as an anchor of stability in the region."²³⁷

-The Islamic Republic pursues a principled foreign policy. Iran was one of the first countries that condemn the aggression. The country did this because its Islamic principles necessitates this. It is for this reason that in spite of Iraqi peace initiative Iran's position vis-à-vis the Iraqi aggression did not change.²³⁸

-Iran is committed to the international law. Therefore, it endorsed all of the UNSC resolutions.

In sum, the Gulf Crisis was an unprecedented opportunity for Iran to offer an olive branch to the regional countries and to present itself to the decade-long enemies as the primary friend. The Rafsanjani government manipulated this chance in the best way, and, in the crisis diplomacy, presented the Islamic Republic as the "most stable system in the region". The policy they pursued, to a considerable extent, has been influential in changing Iran's international image from "threat" to "stability factor".²³⁹ An important development in that respect was that, during the crisis time, for the first time a Western official, the EC envoy, admitted Iran's being victim in its war with Iraq.²⁴⁰ This was an important recognition for Iran's prestige, and indicated the success of Iranian foreign policy in attaining its objectives.

²³⁷ IRNA, 1 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Oct 1990, p:57

²³⁸ On the issue Rafsanjani's stated that: "Iraq and its old allies are now at each other's throats. At this juncture we are playing our Islamic role without being influenced by the injustices and wrongs done to us. We are not after revenge." Tehran Domestic Service, 21 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Sept 1990, p:62

²³⁹ See the statement by the chairman of the UN General Assembly in Tehran Domestic Service, 27 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Oct 1990, p:54. Also see the remarks by the special envoy of the prime minister of Japan in Tehran Television Service, 29 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Oct 1990, p:61; and the envoy of the EC in IRNA, 12 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 13 Sept 1990, p:56

²⁴⁰ Claudio Lenoci. IRNA, 12 Sept in FBIS-NES, 13 Sept 1990, p:56

5.2.THE WAR and IRAN's MOWZE'E-E BITARAFI:

Velayati's visit to Baghdad in late November, together with the approval of the UNSC Resolution 678 had important implications for the Rafsanjani government's policies toward the internal opposition and the crisis, especially the foreign presence in the region.

First of all, few days after Iranian Foreign Minister's return from his official visit to Iraq, Iranian media received instructions from the Islamic Guidance Minister Khatami,²⁴¹ containing an order not to publish any comment or news conflicting with the government's declared position on the Gulf Crisis and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. This was immediately after Velayati's return, because the visit was historically important for the Rafsanjani government, in terms of the message conveyed to Baghdad, and the response of the Iraqi side to the message. Velayati's visit aimed at convincing the Iraqi leader to evacuate Kuwait as soon as possible. At the NSC meeting Rafsanjani explained this as the underlying reason for the visit:

In fact there are dangers that made Velayati's visit to Baghdad at this particular time a pressing necessity. Özal told me that the international resolution on liberating Kuwait, restoring the situation to the status quo before the aggression, and punishing the Iraqi regime is a principled resolution. And the United States did not send 300.000 troops to the region to intimidate Saddam. Özal asked me to convey his warnings to the Iraqi president.²⁴²

However, Velayati's visit to Baghdad did not achieve its aims and the two countries' agreement to resume the process of exchanging POW's and the agreement on drawing the borders neither contributed Velayati's efforts to

²⁴¹ Became president in May 1997.

²⁴² London SWAT AL-KUWAYT, 24 Nov 1990 FBIS-NES, 28 Nov 1990, p:56

convince Saddam to evacuate Kuwait and nor did it eliminate the differences between the two on the Gulf crisis. The first statement made by Velayati immediately after his arrival in Tehran revealed this fact:

Our position is clear and we defend Kuwait's independence and oppose its occupation. We informed the Iraqi president . . . of this, and the seriousness of the situation resulting from the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. We have even told the Iraqi president in Baghdad that you should leave Kuwaiti soil.²⁴³

After further realization of the fact that Iraqis had no intention to leave Kuwait, and change their position, and thus, that the only solution left was the military one, the Rafsanjani government initiated efforts to minimize the implications of such a solution for the domestic politics of the country. It was within this framework that the government began to take measures in order to reduce the influence of the Hardliner opposition on the Iranian public opinion. For this reason, Rafsanjani requested that the issuing of statements conflicting with the country's official policy on the Gulf crisis, and the publication of statements by the group opposed to the Iranian leadership's policy be monitored by the Islamic Guidance Ministry.²⁴⁴

Second of all, when the resolution 678 was passed, and the possibility of a military operation became apparent along the horizon, which was certainly undesired by the Islamic Republic the official rhetoric of the Rafsanjani government towards the American presence, and the possibility of war in the region radicalized. The reasons were twofold: The first reason was to reduce, or,

²⁴³ Tehran Domestic Service, 30 Nov 1990 FBIS-NES, 30 Nov 1990, p:49

²⁴⁴ At the same NSC session he further demanded that the media services in the country be sent an order that they should be careful not to harm Kuwait legitimacy and not to publish anything likely to raise questions among the Kuwait and the international community supporting the Kuwaiti people and their legitimate government. Rafsanjani addressed Khatami: "Do we not recognize Kuwaiti legitimacy? While we continue to reiterate our condemnation of the occupation of Kuwait and openly declare in our statements and at our meetings with foreign reporters out total rejection of any change in our region of the map, whether by granting Iraq a foothold in Kuwait or its islands or by granting Saddam any financial concession, how can we tolerate the products of revolutionary workshops and the statements of those who were until recently demanding Saddam's head?" London SWAT AL-KUWAYT, 24 Nov 1990 FBIS-NES, 28 Nov 1990, p:56

eliminate the post-war American involvement in the region by making Iranian position against it clear.

The second reason was to neutralize the Hardliners' propaganda against the policies followed by the government, and its influence on the public opinion. The Pragmatist faction in power predicted that a US-led military operation against a Muslim state would activate the hatred of even the most depoliticized people in the country. Given the increasing Hardliner criticisms of the Rafsanjani government's Gulf policy parallel to the deterioration of the situation in the Gulf, in order not to lose credibility in the eyes of the people, the government had to adopt a confrontationist, anti-American "rhetoric" towards the crisis. Therefore, as the deadline set by the UNSC approached, and the tension of the factional debate over the government's handling of the crisis escalated, despite the censorship efforts by the government, interestingly Rafsanjani radicalized his posture against foreign forces in Saudi Arabia. He went so far as to term the foreign presence in the region as "invasion" and demanded that this invasion be halted.²⁴⁵

However, this radicalization in rhetoric against foreign presence did not let the government to take effective practical steps against it. Moreover, parallel to the radicalized statements on the American presence in the region, the government officials began to overemphasize the expansionist nature of the Iraqi action in order to justify their policies and the fact that "the responsibility of all these undesired developments rests with the Iraqi regime."²⁴⁶

Therefore, following the resolution 678, the government further crystallized its rigid stance vis-à-vis the solution of the crisis, and the Iraqi aggression. The basic factor for this was another development following the UN Security Council decision. After it was approved, the American president Bush declared that there would take place bilateral talks between Iraq and the US. Following the US-Iraqi agreement to hold direct talks, the Iraqi authorities

²⁴⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 28 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Dec 1990, p:28

²⁴⁶ Rafsanjani. Tehran Television Service, 26 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Dec 1990, p:41. In another instance, Rafsanjani called the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait "an expansionist act." Tehran International Service, 28 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 31 Dec 1990, p:64

announced that they would release foreign hostages held in Iraq. The Islamic Republic, while on the one hand declared its opposition to a military solution to the conflict, now in suspect of a secret compromise between the US and Iraq based on territorial concessions to Iraq, announced its rejection of any kind of solution that would change political geography of the region. Since the compromise between America and Iraq was the worst case for Iran, few days after the development, the Vice-president Habibi declared Iran's position: "Iran is opposed the giving of any concessions to Iraq by the West".²⁴⁷ Even before it, the president put Iran's position in a decided statement: "If Kuwait were nevertheless agree to cede Bubiyan island to Saddam we would do what we can to prevent it."

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The approachment of the deadline set by the Resolution 678 let the Iranian Government intensify its diplomatic efforts in order either to prevent the war, or to have a say in the nature of it. For a peaceful solution to the Gulf Crisis Tehran appealed to the regional organizations such as the OIC, and the ECO, together with the Nonaligned Movement, and got into contact with the GCC. But these attempts did not bear fruit.

Iran rejected any possibility of continuous Iraqi dominance over Kuwait, and opposed any concession, territorial or economic, to be given to Iraq in order to put a halt to the crisis. In a situation where Iraqi part totally rejected any pull back, it was obvious, to the Iranian government, that only solution left was war.

Even before the outbreak of the war, when the crisis was nearing its sensitive stages, the Islamic Republic made it clear that it would not participate in a war against Iraq, and remain neutral.²⁴⁹ From that time on, in many instances Islamic Republic's official stance vis-à-vis any possible war had been reiterated

²⁴⁷ IRNA, 3 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 5 Dec 1990, p:65

²⁴⁸ LE MONDE, 9 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 10 Oct 1990, p:47. In another instance, Rafsanjani further clarified this point: "Even during the war, when there were talks the Kuwait wanting to give Bubiyan Island to Iraq, we informed Kuwait that if it gave the Island to Iraq we would occupy the island, and it would not be able to take it back from us." Tehran Domestic Service, 9 Nov 1990 in FBIS-NES, 13 Nov 1990,p:68

²⁴⁹ See Velayati's statements in IRNA, 31Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 2 Jan 1991, p:59. Also see his statement in Paris Le Figaro, 8-9 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 11 Dec 1990, p:49

by the Foreign Ministry that, Iran would not enter any possible war in favor of either sides.

In accordance with this, from the beginning till the end of the Gulf War Iran maintained its neutral stand despite continuous calls by Hardliners for the active involvement in the "holy war" against the US. Although the Rafsanjani government condemned the allied attacks on civilian and economic targets in Iraq by saying that it was beyond the UNSC authorization, they continuously made the point that "Iraq is also guilty" and responsible for this calamity in the region. Even before the outbreak of the war the government had made the point that if a war started in the region "the responsibility of such a war would rest with the Iraqi regime."²⁵⁰

After the US-led allied operation has begun, an unprecedented factional debate erupted within the country. This, on the one hand, further crystallized the Rafsanjani government's position on the Gulf Crisis, and the War, on the other hand revealed the gap between the perceptions and the stances of the two factions, namely the Hardliners and the Pragmatists related to the developments in the Persian Gulf. In fact the nature, and extent of the debate was sufficient enough to distinguish the foreign policy trends of these two powerful political groups in Iran.

Because of the unceasing Hardliner attacks on the non-involvement policy by equating it with indifference, the government, together with other figures who participated in the decision-making process of the National Security Council, briefed the public about the official policy vis-à-vis the war. According to Hashemi Rafsanjani, "Iranian public opinion demanded this discussion since the issue was very important, particularly because there were remarks made at other state platforms which may deceive people".²⁵¹

This statement once more confirms the two significant points raised in the former chapters of this study: First of all, the Gulf Crisis was internalized as a significant domestic political issue, on which divergent, and generally conflicting

²⁵⁰ Tehran Television Service, 18 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 20 Dec 1990, p:49

²⁵¹ Tehran Domestic Service, 25 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:81

voices arouse. Second of all, the debate took place mainly as criticisms by the Hardliner Majles of the pragmatist policies adopted by the Rafsanjani government, and the responses the officials of the Pragmatist government, especially the president, and other preeminent figures gave. Therefore, the Gulf Crisis became an issue of contention mainly between two governmental organs, namely, the executive and the legislative. This was the reason why the president referred to "other state platforms" in his speech. This platform in question was the Islamic Consultative Majles.

In the wake of the attack by the multinational forces on Iraq, Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the president of the Islamic Republic and head of Supreme National Security Council expressed Iran's "regret" for the start of the clashes.²⁵² However, this regret was not only for the "people of Iraq", but also for "some other regional countries". Here, reference made to other regional countries involved in the anti-Iraqi coalition was an important indicator that the initial stance of the Islamic did not change and that position of the government on the war was totally different from that was demanded by the Hardliner coalition, specifically the Radical faction, who endorsed the idea of full support for Iraq in this war, against the "infidels" and "their reactionary allies in the region".

In the first statement on the war, one sentence by Rafsanjani reflected the utmost pragmatism of the government in viewing all the development culminated in the outbreak of fightings in the Persian Gulf region: "Fortunately, so far we have not seen any signs of evidence of our country's interests being threatened, thus, the National Security Council could see no reason to involve Iran in that conspiracy."²⁵³ Then he made a direct reference to the Hardliner faction and accused the group by saying that "some current could have dragged us into the war but acting in a coordinated fashion helped us to remain safe."²⁵⁴

²⁵² Tehran Domestic Service, 17 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 17 Jan 1991, p:44

²⁵³ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 17 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 18 Jan 1991, p:51

²⁵⁴ *ibid*

Given the huge threat perception the Hardliner coalition perceived from a massive American involvement in the region, first official explanation, saying that there was nothing threatening Iran's interests, had been the basic point the Hardliner accused the government of ignorance, and indifference to the fate of a Muslim nation and Islam. At this stage of the crisis, different attitudes of the two factions towards the war stemmed from differences in their perception of the crisis. The differences between the two extremes were such that while one was blaming Iraq of all the undesired developments in the region, including the coming of "all the satans" to the region, the other one prayed for the victory of the Iraqi soldiers by equating it to the victory of Islam. The security interests at stake brought some officially responsible influential Hardliner figures, such as Ayatollah Khamene'i, Mehdi Karrubi, and Ahmad Khomeini, in line with the pragmatist approach of the government, and strengthened the faction's posture. However, the positions of the remaining powerful Hardliner personalities, especially the extremist figures of the Radical faction continued to be an important consideration for the government in implementing crisis policies.

Explanations by the government officials revealed the fact that in making its policy vis-à-vis the war, the pragmatist and rational approaches, which first take national security considerations, rather than ideological ones, into consideration prevailed. The point of the government was that, the war was not an issue that the government could approach "simply and emotionally" without an overall investigation.²⁵⁵ Although the government had been pragmatist in practical policies, it tried to embody ideological properties into it in order not to loose the support of people. And this was done in the rhetoric. In a bid to justify their policies vis-à-vis the war, in public expressions Rafsanjani and his aides made references to Islamic principles. Therefore, they adopted an ideological posture in their statements.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ See the statement by the Deputy Minister of Defense in Tehran Domestic Service, 23 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 24 Jan 1991, p:63

²⁵⁶ An example to the radicalization in rhetoric was Rafsanjani's statement in which he used the Hardliner propaganda concepts such as "arrogance", "reactionaries"etc. In his speech he enumerated European

In order to enlighten the public, with the aim of neutralizing the effects of the Hardliner opposition, the Pragmatist government elaborated its neutral position, and the reasons for it. First of all, it was underlined that neutrality did not mean indifference to American crimes in Iraq. Because, the Islamic Republic issued severe condemnations on this issue. Rather, neutrality meant that Iran would not become involved in the fighting, in the words of the president, "so that the United States attains victory, achieving its aims -in which case our entering it is inconceivable-" or "so that Iraqis may remain in Kuwait, which again makes our involvement inconceivable."²⁵⁷ Because, entering war on the Iraqi side would mean helping Iraq to consolidate its power over Kuwait, and Iraq's expansion to the southern coast of the Persian Gulf which could have made the entire Persian Gulf unsafe for the Islamic Republic. At this point Rafsanjani asked: "Does it not mean we must go to the war to help Iraq remain in Kuwait?"²⁵⁸ In the long term this might mean turning of the Persian Gulf into an Arabian Gulf, therefore it would be a "suicide" for the Islamic Republic to enter the war on Iraq's side. They maintained that the issue evolved in such manner, and America involved in the crisis, however, that did not bind Iran to involve itself a suicidal action. The government unceasingly emphasized, in rhetoric, the danger of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait for the security interests of the Islamic Republic. In one occasion, the president asked a question to the people who advocated Iran's entry into the war to help Iraq: " What will happen to us if Iraq were situated on the southern coast of the Persian Gulf. Could we have resisted the way we did had Iraqis been stationed then on the southern shore of the Persian Gulf? Could we have made any use of the Persian Gulf?"²⁵⁹

countries as satans together with the US. See Tehran International Service, 25 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:86

²⁵⁷ Tehran Domestic Service, 25 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:81

²⁵⁸ Tehran Domestic Service, 25 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:81

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

In order to explain the seriousness of the Iraqi threat for the Islamic Republic, he referred to a past event that took place during the war with Iraq. In that case, in order to prevent annexation of one of the Kuwaiti islands to Iraq Ayatollah Khomeini told Rafsanjani to announce that if Kuwait had given Bubiyan Island to Iraq and Iran captured it from Iraq in the war, they would never return it to Kuwait.²⁶⁰ By this way, the president gave the message to the public that, in spite of the arguments to the effect that government was deviating from the Imam's line, what the government did was to follow the legacies of the Imam Khomeini.

The second point the Pragmatist government emphasized in order to justify their neutral position was the fact that in spite of increasing international pressure on it, Iraq did not give up its aggression that was against Islamic law. Rafsanjani stated on the issue that: "The Iraqis remained and said that they were not going . . . In our negotiations with them they told us; This place is ours. Therefore, the Iraqi regime is guilty."²⁶¹ Because Iraq was also not right, and because the Baath Party was not an Islamic revolutionary force, -if it was, they said, it would not have fought against the most revolutionary Islamic rule for eight years- fighting on Iraq's side would not mean fighting a holy war.

One important point raised by Rafsanjani was that "Although the US has other objectives in coming here such as protecting Israel, controlling oil supplies, and to support its regional allies, one of its aims is the Iraqi withdrawal from

²⁶⁰ On this issue Rafsanjani said: "During the war a suggestion was made to Kuwait that it should give Bubiyan Island to Iraq. I talked to the imam and explained the geographic position. Then the imam told me to announce that if Kuwait gave Bubiyan Island to Iraq and we captured it from Iraq in the war, we would never return it to Kuwait. The Imam told me to say that we could not in any way tolerate an Iraqi presence on the Persian Gulf coastline at that corner of the Iraq Kuwait border. The Islamic Republic of Iran, the center of worldwide Islamic revolution, cannot accept an Iraqi presence on its southern shores, on its coasts where its lifeline is situated. We cannot accept so serious threat.

In the same speech, he further elaborated the issue: "In one of the letters which the Iraqi presidents addresses to me - these letters have been published in Persian and Arabic and you must have seen them- he wrote that Iraq has an 800-km land border and an 800-km sea border with Iran. I asked one of the Iraqi leaders who came here what they meant by the reference to an 800 km sea border: I asked whether it was his personal view or whether the High Command had approved the reference on the letter, or Saddam had personally written it. He said the letters were approved by High Command; they were not personally prepared. Then I asked what was the meaning of the 800 km issue. He said it probably referred to the south of Kuwait. I told him that could not stretch over 800 km. He said he could not remember." *ibid*

²⁶¹ *ibid*

Kuwait and they are serious." ²⁶² This statement once more revealed that even at a stage, when civilians in a Muslim state were being killed by foreigners, the government continued to believe that the US-led multinational forces would settle account with Iraq, to give implicit consent to the operation.

In response to the Hardliners' argument that the government ignored the supreme leader's call for *jihad*, Rafsanjani had to detail the foreign policy-making procedure in order to convince the opposition that policy pursued by the government vis-à-vis the war was under the control of the *velayet-e faqih*.²⁶³

Attacks on civilian targets by the allied forced Iranian government to take an oppositional stand towards the military operation. Although the government condemned this crime, and argued that this went beyond the Security Council approvals²⁶⁴, the non-involvement posture was maintained. Towards the development, the posture of the head of the government was that, attacks on civilian Iraqis should be severely condemned, but "the battlefield is a different matter." Iran's permanent representative to the UN went further and called allied attacks on civilian targets in Iraq as a genocide.²⁶⁵ Immediately after the reports proving the bombardment on civilian areas, the National Security Council, in a special meeting on 26 January, decided to offer foodstuff and medicine assistance

²⁶² *ibid*

²⁶³ Rafsanjani explained that: "The declaration of war and peace and the call for the mobilization of forces are the prerogatives of the *velayete faqih*. The *Faqih*, too, has been provided with a strong advisory arm, by that very constitution, it is the Supreme National Security Council. The most influential power of the country are present in this council; the president, interior minister, the information minister, the head of budget and planning-because of this department's panoramic view over economic affairs-the most high ranking military officials- from the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps to the army, and defense minister two representatives of the *Vali-e Faqih* who are present Mr Haj Seyyed Ahmad Khomeini, and Dr. Rohani the political advisors to the president and the leader as well as the foreign minister. The entire group sits together and reviews the issue after which they submit their view to the leader in the form of a proposal. If signed by the leader, this becomes an endorsed a diet, and he graciously orders its enforcement." Tehran Domestic Service, 25 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:81

²⁶⁴ The words of the Iranian Foreign Minister were explanatory in that respect: "We strongly condemn these attacks and don't see them in line with the U.N. Security Council approvals because none of them justifies such savage bombardments." Baghdad INA, 12 Feb 1991 in FBIS-NES, 13 Feb 1991, p:38

²⁶⁵ IRNA, 14 Feb 1991 in FBIS-NES, 14 Feb 1991, p:53

to the Muslim Iraq people, but, within the framework of international regulations.

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In the course of the war, in a bid to appease the Radical opposition, the government once more appealed to Islamist and anti-Zionists rhetoric, and declared that "Iran would not remain neutral if Israel directly participated in the Gulf War." and that "Iran will enter the war if any Islamic country is subject to aggression by Israel."²⁶⁷ Furthermore, it was argued that the reason for the bombardment of the resources of the Iraqi people was the wish to prevent Iraq from being a powerful Islamic country in the region. That would only benefit "the regime occupying Qods," and "the Western agents in the region."²⁶⁸

5.2.1. Peace efforts:

At the first NSC session following the beginning of the allied operation, it was decided that Iran will make an extensive diplomatic effort toward a speedy end to the war.²⁶⁹ This decision taken in the Council fortified the neutral position of the country, and determined the role of Iran in the war, that is, "mediator".

In light of the decision taken in the NSC, the Rafsanjani government initiated efforts at the United Nations, in the region and in the form of visits and messages, in order to curtail the war. During the war period Tehran was the scene of diplomatic activities relating to the Persian Gulf War. This showed that by adopting a policy of neutrality, Tehran was able to make itself the pivot of political activities to halt war. Here, one important point was that Hashemi Rafsanjani put emphasis on the UNSC as the basic platform to find a solution to

²⁶⁶ IRIB Television Network, 26 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:91

²⁶⁷ Velayati, Baghdad INA, 12 Feb 1991 in FBIS-NES, 13 Feb 1991, p:38

²⁶⁸ Velayati, Tehran Domestic Service, 27 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:101

²⁶⁹ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 17 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 18 Jan 1991, p:52

give an end. He said: "Come and gather round, in the United Nations Security Council, in the region. Let Iraq understand that she cannot remain in Kuwait."²⁷⁰

5.2.2. Iraqi planes land Iran:

One of the important developments during the time of the war was the landing of Iraqi aircrafts in the Iranian territory. Because of the domestic opposition that called for the direct participation in the war on Iraq's side, the Iranian government, that wanted to preserve its neutrality faced a dilemma here. Despite all the political problems it could create in the sensitive war conditions the Republic admitted them. However, the first thing the Islamic Republic did, at the end of the NSC meeting was to declare that: If any aircraft , from either of the warring sites, made an emergency landing in the Iranian territory it would be confiscated until the end of the war.²⁷¹ Moreover, Iraq was protested against violation of the Iranian airspace. The position of the government, determined to maintain neutrality vis-à-vis the war, was conveyed to UN Secretary General, and it was further declared that Iran would maintain its neutrality.

After Iran's criticisms of the allied attacks on Islamic shrines in Iraq, the British Government tried to relief Iran on this issue through an official message in which it explained that allied commanders have been fully briefed on the locations of religious sites and very clear instructions have been given them to avoid damage to places of religious and cultural significance. The message rejected the Iraqi allegations that allied aircraft have deliberately attacked Shi'ite shrines at Kharbala and Najaf.²⁷² This was another instance that the parties to the crisis showed responsiveness to the Iranian reaction, and further consolidated Iran's important role in the crisis.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*

²⁷¹ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 26 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES 28 Jan 1991, p: 91

²⁷² IRNA, 27 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:97

On the other hand, Iraq's declarations that allied forces deliberately attacked Shi'ite shrines, indicated that until the end of the crisis Iraq tried to gain the support of the Islamic Republic, or drag it into the war on its own side, or at least attain its propaganda support.

However, despite ever increasing discontent of the Hardliner coalition with the Gulf Crisis policy, Iraq's efforts to drag Iran into war, and the US-led military operation's transcending the limits set by the UNSC resolutions, Iran maintained its neutrality and did not go beyond expressing regret on the war and condemning the bombardment of civilian targets.

5.3.GOVERNMENT COPEs WITH THE HARDLINER OPPOSITION

The Foreign Minister's statement in the wake of the Gulf Crisis made it clear that the government was well aware of the fact that its policy vis-à-vis the crisis would trigger an internal dispute. In his statement, Velayati warned the potential opposition about the necessity to maintain a unity in foreign policy stance, and in a sense, from the beginning tried to lower the oppositional voices by saying that:

It is of utmost political significance and relevance to our national security that those whose voices carry weight in the country should act with caution, diplomacy, expediency, proper judgment, and without haste in their adoption of stands. In addition, there should be lack of diversity in their stands. Any

unwarranted action or untimely remark may be detrimental for us.²⁷³

By this way, he invited the Hardliner figures to unity of action, caution and, in fact, moderation in order not to harm national security interests of the country. He maintained a pragmatist vision by this act. This statement by the Foreign Minister had three implications. One is related to the domestic politics of the Islamic Republic. There are important figures, or groups, within and outside the governmental organization, who could take stands independent of the government's control. And Velayati advised them not to take stands beyond the official stand of the government. In fact, the target of the message was the Hardliner Majles deputies. He asks them "avoid factionalism" over foreign policy.

Second, through this statement, the Foreign Minister tried to convince them to keep silence, and thus prevent these power centers from creating duality in Iran's stance vis-à-vis the crisis. By this way, positive messages of the Iranian government to the external world would not be overshadowed by the conflicting positions of the Hardliner faction.

Third, the overemphasis of Velayati on the national security, in fact, indicated the primacy of the notion over other considerations (including ideological principles) in foreign policy-making, thus the pragmatist approach of the new government in Iran.

During the time of the crisis, as expected, oppositional voices arose from the Majles, from the leadership, and the press affiliated with the Hardline faction. In order to cope with these forces, and neutralize their effects on the domestic and international public opinion, the government utilized various methods:

5.3.1.Censor:

One of these methods utilized during the crisis time was the strict controls Iranian media services had been subjected, from late-November on, regarding

²⁷³ IRNA, 23 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:60

what they publish about the Gulf Crisis. Upon the request by the president, the Islamic Guidance Ministry began to censor the commentaries, or news that were either in conflict with the governmental policy towards the crisis, Iraq's aggression, the GCC countries, the EC, and the American presence, or criticizing government's handling of it.

Especially after the war started the government increased its control over the media. One example of them was the censorship of statements signed by the majority of Majles deputies, reflecting their deep repulsion toward the US. Hadi Khamene'i, an important Radical figure, in his preagenda speech, criticized this and said that "the reporting of only deputies stating their regret over the issue, and not informing the people of the views of their representatives contradict the basic duties which the public media should perform."²⁷⁴

The response by the Hashemi, the head of the Voice and Vision (Iranian Radio and Television) to the censorship criticisms confirmed the existence of it: "The policy of Voice and Vision is to safeguard the methodical and prudent policy set by the system's officials. Therefore, the news by the Voice and Vision constitutes the integral part of Iran's neutrality policy." Therefore, views that urge Iran's participation in the war were subject to censor by the official radio and television of the country.²⁷⁵

Another example to the censor was that; on the same day the allied military operation started, the Majles called on people to join anti-US rally to be held the day after, on 18 January. However, because of the decision by the NSC the marches were canceled.²⁷⁶

These incidents, on the one hand, indicated the unignorable extent of the Hardliner opposition to the Gulf crisis policy of the government that the government had to apply some measures to cope with the impacts of this

²⁷⁴ Tehran IRIB Television Network, 21 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:130

²⁷⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 20 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:135

²⁷⁶ Khalkali called this "repression". Tehran IRIB Television Network, 19 Jan 1991 in FBIS-NES, 22 Jan 1991, p:128

opposition. Here, the main concern of Rafsanjani appears as the manipulation of the public opinion by the Hardliner group. On the other hand, this revealed the government's determination, in spite of the rising criticisms of the government's policies by the opposite wing, not to deviate from its initial position on the crisis. One more implication of the development was the revelation of the limit of toleration to the oppositional views within the Islamic Republican regime.

5.3.2.Explanations for the domestic public opinion:

From the first day of the crisis, the government tried to enlighten the public on the policy it adopted vis-à-vis the crisis. The underlying reason for intense public explanations was again the Hardliner opposition. Because in many instances these explanations by the government officials took place as direct response to the questions, or criticisms raised by the opposing coalition.

In one of such statements, Velayati said that if Iran was opposed to the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq, it was not saying that under the influence of imperialist powers. He underlined that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the most independent of all states. He advised the opposition not to mix up "the criticisms of the legitimacy of the Kuwaiti Government, and the aggressive presence of the US in various regional countries with the Iraqi aggression by saying "none of these is proper justification for the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq."²⁷⁷

As in the above statement by the Foreign Minister, in many instances, they had to emphasize the independence of the Islamic Republic in designing its foreign policy in general, and in its position vis-à-vis the crisis in particular.²⁷⁸ Moreover, the government continuously stated the regime's commitment to the "Imam's line", or the legacy of the Imam Khomeini, the principles of Islam and the revolutionary system.

²⁷⁷ Tehran Domestic Service, 16 Nov 1990 FBIS-NES, 19 Nov 1990, p:45

²⁷⁸ See Rafsanjani's speech in Tehran Domestic Service, 24 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 27 Aug 1990, pp:57-63

The president Rafsanjani's speech immediately after the war erupted, in which he briefed the public about the "hows, and whys" of the government's Gulf War policy²⁷⁹ was the most important example of this.

5.3.3. The radicalization of the rhetoric:

The rhetoric of the government differed in tone in accordance with the developments of the Gulf Crisis. For example, developments such as rumors about the establishment of a US-led security organization in the region, deterioration of the situation in the Gulf after the approval of the Resolution 678, then the beginning of the war and allied attacks on civilian targets in Iraq were all the incidents that escalated internal debate over the crisis, and that made impact on the government's policy vis-à-vis it. The rise of the Hardliners' attacks on the government's policies, in turn, made government to radicalize its rhetoric vis-à-vis these developments.²⁸⁰

However, this radicalization in appearance of the crisis policy took place in commensurate with the audience. This point is worthy of emphasis; the tone of the rhetoric of Rafsanjani and other government officials differed according to the audience. While, for example, speaking to a European daily, or television, their statements had been in line with their policies in practice, and they gave relatively moderate messages to European audience. However, whenever they were meeting with regional Islamic groups, giving Friday sermons to domestic audience, or speaking to an Islamic Conference they maintained a radical posture.²⁸¹ This

²⁷⁹ See Rafsanjani's statement in Tehran Domestic Service, 25 Jan 1991, FBIS-NES, 28 Jan 1991, p:81

²⁸⁰ To the Forth Islamic Unity Conference Rafsanjani told: "We hope that the wise prophecies of Khamene'i, the successful examples of which we have often seen during the past few months (call for jihad) . . ." Tehran Domestic Service, 8 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 9 Oct 1990, p:2

²⁸¹ When a delegation of Islamic movement leaders held talks with him, Rafsanjani said: "We consider ourselves the standard-bearers of the anti-arrogance and anti-US struggles. When the US adopted their long-term security plans for the region, His Emminence Ayatollah Khamene'i, leader of the Islamic Revolution, issued the order of jihad against US forces. This shows the fundamental policy of the IRI." Tehran Television Service, 27 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES, 28 Sept 1990, p:54. The statement by Hashemi Rafsanjani in his Arabic Friday sermon, when he was addressing to Arab masses via Tehran International Service in Arabic was striking in that respect: ". . . forces of world atheism brought their troops to the region in great numbers under

indicates the fact that the basic source of radicalization of the Gulf Crisis rhetoric was domestic considerations of the Pragmatist faction in power. Together with the radicalization in statements on the crisis, they utilized the anti-Zionist statements in order to prove the commitment to the revolutionary ideals, in order to divert the attention of public opinion from the policy pursued towards the developments in the region, and the initiatives to improve ties with the European and regional countries.²⁸²

5.3.4. The Islamic Conference on Palestine:

Throughout the crisis, in order to appease the militant wing, and to prove them that there was no deviation from Khomeini's legacy, the Pragmatist government in many instances officially expressed its continuing support to the Islamic Palestinian movements. In addition to mere statements, Tehran hosted the ever First Islamic Conference on Palestine during the time of the crisis.

While, on the one hand, the Islamic Republic of Iran aligned itself with the UN-led international campaign against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and thus followed a relatively moderate foreign policy, on the other hand, Tehran, in December 1990, by hosting this conference made it clear that Iran's 'revolution export' policies continued.²⁸³ The participants in the conference were Ahmad Jibril, the secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; colonel Abu-Musa, secretary general of Fatah; Khalil al-Buka, one of the leaders of the Islamic Resistance Movement of Palestine, HAMAS. In his speech to the conference, the Iranian Foreign Minister said: "One of our strategic aims is the

the pretext of confronting Iraq's illegal invasion. However, presence of foreign troops is nothing more than a serious threat to Muslims and their sanctities." 12 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 15 Oct 1990, p:63

²⁸² An extreme example to this was the statement made by Rafsanjani in December in which he urged an active policy against Israel: "Muslim countries in the region could use oil as a political weapon in the issue of Palestine and force the West , especially the United States , to yield. You can count on Iran as an important base ready to cooperate until the last phase of the rescue of Palestine." Tehran Television Service, 6 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 7 Dec 1990, p:50. In another speech of him Rafsanjani called Muslims to support holy jihad of Palestinians against Israel. Tehran Domestic Service, 12 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 13 Dec 1990, p:41

²⁸³ Tehran Television Service, 3 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 4 Dec 1990, p:65

destruction of the occupying Qods regime and the liberation of Palestine. This is why reactionary and compromising powers are not happy with the convening of this conference.²⁸⁴ In another case, Velayati praised the *jihad* of the Palestinian Muslims and the effective role played by HAMAS.²⁸⁵ By this way, he adopted a stern rhetoric and openly declared Tehran's support to the uncompromising elements within the Palestinian movement. Therefore, to counterbalance its toleration of foreign forces in the region, and the moderation in policies towards the Western Europe, and the GCC countries, the government utilized anti-Zionist rhetoric once more.

The timing of the conference in question was highly interesting. It was held in the sensitive stage of the crisis, immediately after the SC approved the Resolution 678. Throughout December, the Palestinian issue had been the basic topic addressed by the governmental officials, and official media services. Therefore, the Palestinian Conference was a tactical initiative of the Rafsanjani government to divert the attention of the public opinion and to appease the Hardliner coalition by giving them a concession.

All the above mentioned measures, or policies of the government were developed in order to deter the Hardliner opposition, to appease them, and to prevent the manipulation of the public opinion by their propaganda. All these were indicative of the fact that there had been an important internal discontent with the Gulf Crisis policy of the government. And, despite the fact that the powerful government acted resolutely in order to implement its own version of foreign policy in practice, this displeasure on the part of the other powerful group within the country was such that the Pragmatist government could not ignore this reality, and had to give an important concession to the Hardliner coalition on policy of the regime export, and organized a conference for the rejectionist Palestinian movements in Tehran.

²⁸⁴ Tehran Television Service, 2 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 3 Dec 1990, p:68

²⁸⁵ Tehran Domestic Service, 5 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 6 Dec 1990, p:51

5.4.EVALUATION:

The above analysis of the policy pursued by the Rafsanjani government vis-à-vis the Gulf Crisis reveals important points about the nature of this policy. First of all, it was more of a moderate, and pragmatist policy. It was pragmatist, because while determining the posture towards the crisis, the most important consideration for the government was the national security, rather than ideological concerns. It was moderate, because, rather than an anti-status quo posture, as every state did, Iran cooperated with the international community; condemned the Iraqi aggression, endorsed the UNSC resolutions, and tolerated American presence in the region. As many states the Islamic Republic preserved its neutral position on the war. Moreover, in other aspects, the Gulf Crisis signaled a turning point for Tehran's external relations. Iran resumed ties with Britain, and improved its relations with the whole European Community. On the other hand, under the extraordinary conditions of the crisis, it developed a crisis time consultative dialogue with the countries of the GCC, and convinced them for the future cooperation in the Persian Gulf region. It took important steps to reestablish diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the government initiated policies to renew the international "image" of the country, and to a large extent had been successful in this. In doing all the above mentioned jobs, the basic instrument utilized was "traditional diplomacy." Therefore, in general the policies adopted by the Rafsanjani government in the course of the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 were heavily pragmatist in nature, and moderate in line.

The only exception, that involved hardliner elements in the Gulf Crisis policy of Iran was the rhetoric the government adopted vis-à-vis the developments in the region. In cases where the oppositional voices arose, where the government's policies came under intense fire, in addressing especially to the domestic, or regional audience, the government radicalized its rhetoric. It harshly criticized foreign military presence in the region, took an oppositional posture

towards the bombardment of civilian Iraqis. This "balancing-with-rhetoric" method was utilized in many cases. For example, in resuming ties with Britain, the heavily radical declaration issued by the government was a proof for this. In addition, anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian statements were used for the same purposes. This radicalization in rhetoric, however, did not have important equivalent in the actual Gulf Crisis policy of the government. But, this by no means imply that the Hardliner opposition within, did not have any impact on the Gulf Crisis policy of the government. In fact, the contradiction between the words and actions of the government, sometimes very important, did draw the boundaries of moderation in foreign policy, and told the external world the nature of the change in Iran's foreign policy: It was limited, and its future was blurred.

At this point, the Islamic Conference on Palestine was critically important. The extreme pragmatism in the course of the Gulf Crisis, and the moderation, and normalization in external relations rendered it a necessity to underline the hardliner features of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. In other words, change in some aspects of foreign policy, confrontationism, and isolation, required emphasis on continuity in another issue, and that was the export of the revolution. This was in a sense concession to the conservative forces of the regime in the sense that they were reminded government's commitment to the revolutionary principles of the first decade.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Factionalism has been an inseparable part of the domestic politics of the Islamic Republic. The continued existence of highly mobilized and politicized groups of the revolution, and the notion that "religion is not separated from politics" further strengthened factionalism in post-revolutionary Iran.

Throughout the Khomeini period the basic issue of contention between the two main groups of the Maktabi line, Conservative and Reformist, had been the future economic path of the country. However, after the end of the war with Iraq, unprecedented sequence of changes in the domestic political structure of the country, the most important of which was the death of the leader of the revolution; and transformations in the regional and international conjuncture injected Iran's foreign policy as the main issue over which, now basically the two powerful groups within the Reformist faction, namely Radicals and Pragmatists were fighting with each other. The role of the Conservative faction became critical at this point. Generally, in line with its Maktabi origin the faction allied its power with the Radical group when the issue under consideration was external policies of the country. However, given the fact that the Conservative group had been in coalition with the Pragmatist camp against the Radical elements in the domestic power struggle, and on economic policies, the Conservative group's position on the pro-change policies of the Rafsanjani government, in its nature and extent, differed from that of the generally extremist posture of the Radical faction. However, this did not prevent the Conservative faction from forming the Hardliner coalition with the Radical wing, and becoming one of the major obstacles before Rafsanjani government's policies aimed at normalization of Iran's

relations with regional and European countries, the ending of isolation of the country in the international arena. In that respect, the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991 was a critical test case for both forces of change and forces of continuity in Iran in the realm of foreign policy.

The factional debate over the Gulf Crisis policy of Iran centered around four headings:

- Iran's reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.
- Iran's position on the foreign, especially American, presence in the region.
- Iran's response to the UN Security Council Resolutions.
- Iran's policy vis-à-vis the military confrontation between Iraq, a Muslim state, and the US-led multinational forces, that is, combination of "reactionaries" and "the arrogant world" in the propaganda literature of the Islamic Republic.

Other issues in the crisis context, normalization of relations with regional and Western European countries in general, and issues of resumption of diplomatic ties with Britain and Saudi Arabia further increased the tension of the debate in Iran.

First of all, on the issue of Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, there was a difference of position between the Pragmatist faction and the Hardliner coalition. Even the Hardliner coalition itself divided over the issue. Some figures of the group, such as the Majles Speaker, and the politico-religious leader, condemned the aggression on the grounds that "Islam forbids any kind of aggression, against anybody", and endorsed the government's official posture, that was in line with the pragmatist approach to the issue. However, another group within the coalition criticized government's condemnation of Iraq's aggression against this "reactionary regime" in Kuwait, that had extended every possible aid to Iraq in its war against Iran. In this context, this group of Hardliners viewed government's condemnation of Iraq as a support for the "illegal" regime of Kuwait. Furthermore, some in this extremist group within the Hardliner camp, from an anti-imperialistic vision, went so far as to argue that from a historical point of view Iraq was right in its claim over this tiny kingdom. In the final analysis, however, the Hardliner wing maintained a considerable unity of position, and this

was the emphasis on the "illegitimacy" of the exiled regime of Kuwait. Contrary to the official policy of the government that recognized sovereignty of Kuwaiti regime, and consented to the visit to Tehran by the regime's Foreign Minister several times in the course of the crisis, the Hardliner faction unceasingly questioned the legitimacy of the al-Sabah family in its propaganda campaign. Moreover, they showed severe reaction to government's handling of the issue, and permission to the visits by Kuwaiti representative. This propaganda campaign against the legitimacy of the al-Sabah regime, and criticisms leveled against Rafsanjani government's official policy vis-à-vis the invasion went so further that in order to minimize its psychological impacts on international community, and domestic public opinion the Rafsanjani government had to put censor on the media services.

On the issue of invasion, the Hardliner position, and their criticisms of the official policies did not result in a pull back in the initial posture of the Rafsanjani government. The government, from the first day of the invasion joined the international chorus condemning the invasion. However, the fact that the opposition was not ignorable for the government became manifest in the officials' public explanations. It is true that, the government of Rafsanjani severely condemned the invasion, and maintained its dialogue with the exiled government of Kuwait. However, it explained that this, by no means, imply support for this regime. Furthermore, the notion of "principled policy" was manipulated so as to convince the public opinion that "the Islamic Republic acted in accordance with the established principles and rules of Islam, and condemned any aggression since Islam ordered so without looking at the victim."

The second issue, where the views of the two axes clashed with each other was the position Iran adopted vis-à-vis the UN Security Council resolutions. In spite of warnings by the Hardliner faction that "Iran should not join the enemies of Iraq directly or indirectly", the Rafsanjani government participated in the UN-led international embargo, and officially remained loyal to it till the end of the crisis. In the later stages of the crisis, the Iranian government even urged a more active role for the organization, and made it clear that any military solution should be

under full supervision of the United Nations. This was at the expense of Hardliner coalition's distrust to the neutrality of the organization.

The third, but the most significant subject of interfactional "war" was the foreign presence, especially the military presence of the United States in the holy Islamic land of Saudi Arabia. This was the issue on which the two powerful wings of the Hardline coalition were totally united. Moreover, if one puts that anti-imperialism, embodied in anti-Americanism in the Iranian context, was one of the most sacred principles of the revolutionary Iran in the first decade, America's unprecedented involvement in the region was the utmost critical aspect of the Gulf Crisis.

In the beginning, the Pragmatist faction and the Hardliner coalition were common in their opposition to this. However, with a pragmatist evaluation of the developments, the government revised its position. In spite of its opposition to the US military presence in the region in words, in actions it did not show a severe reaction to this. On the contrary, in many occasions, the government officials made it clear that in the absence of a regional solution to the crisis, a foreign solution was inevitable. Therefore, from Pragmatists' point of view, temporary presence of the American forces in the region was tolerable. This posture by the government was the utmost reflection of pragmatism in policy-making: the Iranian government subordinated its ideological principles to urgent security needs of the country, and preferred temporary American presence to permanent Saddam threat in the Persian Gulf region at the expense of facing ideological loss.

The issue gained another dimension with Khamene'i's call for *Jihad* against the American forces in the region. When an American official stated that US was planning to create a NATO-like military pact in the region, the repercussions of the Hardliners' reactions, the most dramatic one being a call for *Jihad* against the US forces in the region by Khamene'i, transcended the boundaries of the official policy pursued by the Rafsanjani government and overshadowed it. During the Gulf Crisis, this call for holy war by the politico-religious leader was the most apparent reflection of the factional difference at the

leadership level. And this once more confirmed the duality in the foreign policy-making of the country.

Despite the fact that at the earlier stages of the crisis the government did follow a policy in line with the pragmatist posture towards it, acted resolutely and did not retreat in the face of the Hardliner attacks on its policies, in this case the situation, to some extent, changed. The Hardliner coalition, in a sense, imposed its position over the government's policies via this *Jihad* declaration of the *faqih*, who was at the top of the Islamic Republic's politico-religious structure. The government could not deny this stand of Ayatollah Khamene'i, or disassociate itself from it, as it would mean denial of all the system that was based on the notion of *Velayat-e Faqih*. Therefore, throughout the crisis, this development was a hallmark that indicated the extent of the factionalism over the foreign policy, and, the independence of the Hardliner faction as an important power out of the governmental control. Inevitably, this posture by the Khamene'i strengthened the hands of the Hardline coalition, intensified opposition's demands for radicalization in the policy vis-à-vis the Kuwaiti Crisis, imposed pressure on the Rafsanjani government, and reminded them the fact that they did not have a free hand in making country's foreign policy, especially in the face of oppositional coalition of the other two powerful factions.

The next, and the most hard round of factional struggle was the war. At this stage of the crisis the differences between the factions reached such a point that while the government asserted that it was Iraq's incorrect policy that "gathered all the satans in the region", and that this was a war between two wrongs, the opposition argued that challenging the "infidels" fighting against a Muslim State would mean *jihad*, and thus it was a religious duty for the Islamic Republic to participate in the war.

In spite of the Radical extremists' calls for joining the war, the government maintained its neutrality policy until the end of the war. The demands of the Hardliners that Iran, at least, take effective measures to weaken the American front in the war via, for example, cutting of relations with the regional and European states involved in the war, fell in deaf ears. Until it became clear that the

allied forces were bombing the civilian, and economic targets in Iraq, the Iranian government had not even officially condemned the military operation. When they did condemn the bombardment of the civilian targets, the grounds were the violation of international law, and attacks' going beyond the limits of the UNSC approvals, which meant the Islamic Republic's implicit consent to the military operation in the beginning. One measure to appease the rising opposition was to decide on sending foodstuff and medicine to civilian Iraqis. However, even in this case it was underlined that this would be within the limits set by the UNSC resolutions. Here, in order to reduce the repercussions of the Radicals' negative propaganda campaign against the government's policies, the censorship measures imposed on them was increased, and the broadcasting of the Radical Majles deputies's preagenda speeches was banned.

At the war stage, the fact that the Hardliner coalition did not maintain an internal unity in position vis-à-vis the development, and that the most influential Hardliner figures of the country, such as Ayatollah Seyyed Khamene'i, and Ahmad Khomeini, and majority of the Conservative faction, endorsed the neutrality policy pursued by the government, reduced the resonance of the "war invitations" of the Radical figures on the internal and international public opinion and strengthened the hands of the Pragmatists in power in their war policies. This development once more confirmed the fact that factions operated as loose coalitions, and this coalition may shift according to the issue in question. The split even within the Radical faction itself proved this. Moreover, the fact that the majority of the Conservative faction did endorse the government's policy of neutrality, while the majority of the Radical faction was advocating active involvement in the crisis drew the limits of coalition between the two Hardliner factions. However, in spite of differences within the Hardliner coalition vis-à-vis the crisis, generally, they were common in that "the government should have handled the affair differently, and pursued a more confrontational stand vis-à-vis the US-led military operation against Iraq."

On the issues of resumption of relations with Britain, and Saudi Arabia, the two faction pursued distinct postures. In spite of the Hardliner opposition,

however, the government approached the issue with pragmatism and favored a normalization in relations with the regional and European countries at a time when the Islamic Republic had an upper hand. Thus, while resuming political ties with Britain, it took important steps in the way to reestablish its ties with Saudi Arabia. Iran's policy in the Gulf Crisis has been welcomed by the European Community, leading to a reopening of embassies in Tehran and London and lifting of a ban on the purchase of Iranian oil by EC members. In another important development, preliminary talks took place between Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and some of the Gulf states on creation of a multi-national military force to secure stability in the Gulf once the crisis was over. On the other hand, Iran's relations with other countries of the Persian Gulf region and the European Community countries substantially improved. The Republic was successful in reshaping its image as the "stabilizer", "pursuer of international law". Nevertheless, even in these resolute normalization policies the Pragmatists in power incorporated radicalized elements in it. And this was generally the rhetoric. For instance, while resuming relations with Britain, the tone of the government declaration was heavily radical, and responded all the oppositional points raised by the Hardliner faction.

Overall analysis of Iran's foreign policy in the Gulf Crisis case amounts to a breakthrough for the Pragmatist faction. The faction in power with considerable executive abilities, implemented its own foreign policy vision vis-à-vis the crisis, and changed lots of things in the foreign policy heritage of the first decade. First of all, in the course of the Gulf Crisis, they gave an end to the isolation of Iran in the region and the international arena. From Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Mauritania to Britain with which it had suspended relations, generally due to ideological positioning of the Islamic Republic, Iran reestablished its diplomatic and economic ties.

Second, rather than a confrontational policy, the Rafsanjani government pursued relatively conciliatory posture towards the Kuwaiti Crisis and consequent developments. Islamic Iran acted with the international community against the Iraqi aggression, condemned the aggression against Kuwait, endorsed and implemented the embargo against Iraq, tolerated foreign presence for the solution

of the crisis. It exercised absolute restraint and refrained from any action that could escalate the crisis.

Therefore, two basic components of the foreign policy in the Khomeini period, namely, confrontationism and isolation were, to a considerable extent, abandoned by the Pragmatist government of Rafsanjani in their Gulf Crisis policy. This break with the past in these two aspects of external policy, however, caused, in a sense, reinforcement of another aspect, that is, the export of the revolution. During the time of the Crisis, the Islamic Conference on Palestine once more underlined Iran's commitment to this revolutionary ideal in general, and its support for the rejectionist fronts in the Palestinian movement. In fact, this took place as a concessionary act to the Hardliner faction in return for the moderation in other aspects of the foreign policy.

In addition to this, the fact that Iran's relations with the US remained untouched, that Iran continued its propaganda attacks on Israel, that the government adopted a radicalized, and even confrontational rhetoric vis-à-vis, for example, the American presence in the region, and the war, were also indicative of the limits of change in the confrontationist posture, the continuity, and the Hardliner weight in the foreign policy of the country. On another issue, the foreign military presence in the region, for example, the reaction of the Hardliner figures transcended the official policy of the government and put itself independently as a factor for Iran's Gulf Crisis policy. Another example to this system-caused relative independence of the Hardliner groups from the government's control was related to the relations with Britain. On the eve of resumption of relations with this country, the opposition raised the irreversible nature of Khomeini's *fatwah* against Rushdie. The government could have done nothing on this issue, since the authority who would decide on this religious issue was the *faqih*, a Conservative figure, Khamenei.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ It was Khamene'i who reiterated that " the Imam's verdict against the author of the blasphemous book, Rushdie, is unalterable". Tehran Domestic Service, 26 Dec 1990 in FBIS-NES, 26 Dec 1990, p:41

In this context, the response of Iran to the crisis was a complicated and multi-dimensional. Iran was divided between the minimization of cost of the crisis and the maintenance of the ideological principles. In other words, it faced a dilemma between the hardliner and pragmatist postures towards the crisis, or, between change and continuity. In general, it chose a value concession, and maintained a heavily pragmatist and moderate policy. However, in the face of the continuing strength of the Hardliner opposition, especially when they were united in posture, this was tried to be balanced by radicalized rhetoric vis-à-vis the developments of the crisis, pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli rallies and conferences.

By this way, factional struggle between the Hardliner coalition and the Pragmatist faction manifested itself as a duality, and inconsistency in the Gulf Crisis policy of the country with the gap between the rhetoric and actions. Second of all, the two-headedness in the leadership of the country, at a time when the political leader and religious leader did have different factional affiliations, further reinforced this notion of duality in foreign policy. Thirdly, another inconsistency was in the overall foreign policy of the country. It is true that in spite of the powerful, active, and anti-American Third Majles, the situation prevailing in the country and conditions at home and abroad did not allow them to place insurmountable barriers in the way of the programs of Hashemi-Rafsanjani, including the expansion of ties with the West. Thus the government acted resolutely and changed many things in this respect. However, while giving the messages that "Iran is no more a threat to regional countries", "the Republic seeks good relations with all members of international community", "it is committed to international law", Iran renewed its commitment to the "revolution export policies" through the conference held for the Islamic rejectionist front of the Palestinian movement. This indicated the limits of the change in the Islamic Republic's overall foreign policy.

To conclude, it is true that the Gulf Crisis policy of Iran, in general, was a product of the pro-change understanding and pragmatism in foreign policy. Thus, the Gulf Crisis gave an impetus to this understanding, and pragmatist posture in the realm of foreign policy. However, there were always people of significance

pulling against this trend in foreign policy, and the struggle between the forces of change and continuity reflected itself as an inconsistency and duality in the external behavior of the Islamic Republic. Given the fact that, in the 1990s the Pragmatist faction remained in power, and that the Hardliner factions maintained a considerable power in the governmental structure of the country, and outside it, - in the religious societies, revolutionary organizations,- factionalism remains as an important factor for foreign policy of the country. In other words, in spite of the unprecedented rise of the forces of change, forces of continuity continue to hold an important power base in the society. Therefore government's commitment to the revolutionary and Islamic ideals continues to be the major source of legitimacy. The impression that the ruling elite deviates from these revolutionary ideals thus becomes the basic source of harsh criticisms of governmental policies. In fact, during 1990s the Radical faction utilized this "deviation from the line of Imam" rhetoric as the main instrument in its fight against the moderate policies of the Pragmatist government. This in turn many times caused set backs, the government's self-restraining in its moderation policies, or concessions to the Hardliner faction.

In sum, the above analysis of the factionalism over foreign policy in the Gulf Crisis case reveals three points of significance. First of all, in the realm of foreign policy there are sometimes even huge gaps between the approaches of the two main axes, despite their commitment to the same ideology. Second of all, the extent of differences between them also signals the extent of factional struggle over foreign policy path of the country. Thirdly, this serious struggle between the two important, powerful camps of the country, inevitably has substantial repercussions for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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Appendix A:

Glossary

Faqih : politico-religious leader

Fatwa : a decree issued by a religious leader which has to be obeyed by the believers

Hajj: pilgrimage

Jihad : holy war

Majlis : parliament

Maktab : islamic school

Maktabi : people coming from Maktab

Marja'e taqlid : highest-ranking religious leader ; source of emulation

Mojtahed: jurist

Sunna : the customs and practices of the Prophet

Velayat-i faqih : government by religious leader

Appendix B:

Factions in the Governmental Structure At the Time of the Gulf Crisis:

For a thorough analysis of the impact of factionalism on Iran's policy towards the Gulf Crisis, one should first analyze, the respective positions of these groups in different governmental mechanisms.

I-the leadership:

The politico-religious leader, Ayatollah Khamene'i, was a pre-eminent figure of the Conservative faction, that is a part of the Hardliner coalition when the issue at stake is foreign policy. Thus, naturally, in line with the Conservative faction's foreign policy vision, the supreme leader has had a Hardliner posture in foreign policy matters. Another aspect that influences the leader's position on the issue of external relations is related to the succession issue after the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini. The appointment of Khamene'i -who had none of the qualifications specified in the constitution, that is being a high-ranking cleric and source of emulation- as religious leader of Iran on the day after the death of Khomeini'i created many doubts about the religious legitimacy of Khomeini's successor. The inevitable result of the election of Khamene'i, -a middle-ranking cleric- as faqih, after the demise of the omnipotent leader of the revolution, Khomeini, was that Khamene'i's political management, including his stand vis-à-vis the factions, was continuously compared to that of the previous religious leader. Therefore, his success as faqih is measured in terms of proximity of his policies to Khomeini's management. It was for this reason that, from time to time, he had to take radicalized positions that indicate his commitment to Khomeini's

heritage. Because, as a Conservative figure and a responsible authority, he backs economic and social reconstruction policies of the Rafsanjani government, and he is in coalition with Rafsanjani in domestic policy vis-à-vis the Radical faction, the only realm he could maintain a "radical" posture so as to get the support and recognition of the Radical faction is foreign policy realm. When, for example, he called for jihad against the US forces in the region, he gained support of Hardliners, and was appreciated by the Radical figures of the country.

Therefore, in the Gulf Crisis case, in spite of the fact that he gave consent to the Supreme National Security Council decisions, and thus, the pragmatist policies of the government vis-à-vis the crisis, on the other hand, through unilateral positions against the American presence in the region, verbal attacks on the Kuwaiti and Saudi regimes, -although he never criticized the government policies- at least in the rhetoric, he maintained a Hardliner posture.

II-Majles:

At the time of the Gulf Crisis, the Third Majles was under the control of the Radicals. 180 out of the 270 members of the Majles were elected in 1988 elections, when Sheykh Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, the leader of the Radical faction within the Majles, was Minister of Interior, through his influence.²⁸⁷ Therefore, those who oppose Rafsanjani have more leadership power in the Majles. As a Majles deputy, Mohtashemi was able to guide the activities of his group.

In June 1990, for example, one of the leading figures of the Radical faction, Mehdi Karrubi, was once again elected speaker of the Majles with 155 votes out of a total of 229, and the group once more consolidated its power over the Consultative Majles.²⁸⁸ Together with the deputies from the Conservative

²⁸⁷ See London KEYHAN, 21 July 1990 in FBIS-NES, 3 Aug 1990, p:54 and 25 July KEYHAN HAVA'I 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990, p:55

²⁸⁸ NAMEH-YE IRAN, 27 June 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Aug 1990, p:52

faction, the hardliner group held an overwhelming majority within the Majles at the time of the Gulf Crisis.

In every aspect of the national policy, the Radical Third Majles, the heritage from the Khomeini period, flexed its muscles, and remained an obstacle before the internal or external policies of the Rafsanjani Government.²⁸⁹

III-Executive organ:

The 1989 Cabinet, so called, Rafsanjani's "Cabinet of Construction", has had a technocratic nature, in the sense that, the Cabinet included many individuals with little or no religious credentials. In that respect it symbolized the de-ideologization of the executive power. However, one of the characteristics of the 1989 cabinet was the balance between continuity and change. Of the 22 ministers, 10 were the ministers of the former Moussavi Cabinet.²⁹⁰

More important than that "the pattern of the vote of confidence" to the Rafsanjani's ministers by the Third Majles indicated the sensitivity of the legislative organ on the new nominees²⁹¹, in spite of the unprecedented vote of confidence they have given to the Rafsanjani government.

The Foreign Ministry was in the hands of a close ally of Rafsanjani, Velayati, who, like Rafsanjani, holds a pro-change vision on foreign policy.²⁹² The foreign policy-making of the country was heavily under the control of these two figures. Therefore, this study takes the government of Rafsanjani as the base of the Pragmatist group.

Nevertheless, one can not conclude that there was a unity in views of all the governmental officials on the foreign policy of the country. Together with the

²⁸⁹ For an example, see NAMEH-YE IRAN, 27 June 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Aug 1990, p:54. See also, London KEYHAN, 20 Sept 1990 in FBIS-NES 5 Oct 1990, p:66

²⁹⁰ For more details on the Cabinet, see Enteshami, op.cit., p:56

²⁹¹ See Enteshami, op. cit., pp: 56-57

²⁹² Actually, Velayati himself was the Foreign Minister of the former government. This once more highlightens the continuity in the leadership of the post-Khomeini politics in Iran.

influence of the Third Majles vis-à-vis the executive branch, the executive organ has not had a free hand in the foreign policy-designing. However, in spite of these refraining factors, following the constitutional amendments, the powerful executive organ maintained a considerable ability to manage the foreign policy of the country.

Here, the role of the president was vital. Because of his personal qualifications, and his unceasing loyalty to the ideals of the revolution, and the initiative at hand, nobody, other than Rafsanjani could have taken fundamental steps in rearranging country's foreign policy.

IV-Council of Guardians:

The function of the Council is to monitor the laws passed by the Majles, and determine their appropriateness to the Islamic Law. Therefore, by its very nature the Council of Guardians is composed of high-ranking clergy generally affiliated with the Conservative faction. However, the fact that Constitutional amendments in 1989 have offered the president a considerable control over the Council via new appointment procedure, prevented the Council from being an open opponent of the policy pursued by the government.

As the above analysis of the respective weights of the two groups in different political organs of the Islamic Republic indicates, the factional collision over the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 took place mainly between the two main organs, namely, the government, and Majles.

Appendix C :

The Gulf Crisis coincided with a factional debate over a domestic issue, that is the elections of the Assembly of Experts:

The struggle between Mohtashemi and Rafsanjani over the measures taken by the Assembly of Experts took place when this organization approved regulations under which, in the next elections for the Assembly of Experts²⁹³, the competence of the nominees will be determined by the Council of Guardians. The debate started with the decision taken by the Assembly of Experts and increasingly continued by the time of 8 October elections, and even after the elections.

The approval of these regulations prompted Mohtashemi to criticize it in a harsh speech to the Majles. The new measures placed the Assembly at the disposal of the religious leader whereby the change or the dismissal of the current leader, Khamene'i became nearly impossible. According to Mohtashemi, this change was to guarantee the leadership of the Khamenei, so it was a plan of the Rafsanjani-Khamenei coalition to weaken the impartial position of the Assembly of Experts. He questioned "how will the council of Guardians, appointed by the leader, be able to determine the competence of the people whose most important responsibility has to do with the duties of the leadership?"²⁹⁴

Until this decision by the Assembly of Experts, nominees for the Experts Elections could be selected with the confirmation of three persons with independent discretion in matters of jurisprudence, or external teachers.

²⁹³ The tenure of the Assembly of Experts' office is **eight years** and the first term has begun on **21 March 1983**, Tehran Domestic Service, 29 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990, p:57

²⁹⁴ London KEYHAN, 26 July 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:64

The importance of the Assembly of Experts in the government of the Islamic Republic, stems from its discretion in the appointment, monitoring, and the dismissal of the faqih²⁹⁵. It was this same assembly that chose Khamene'i as the regime's highest official after the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and gave him the rank of Ayatollah.²⁹⁶

The transfer of authority to determine the competence of Assembly of Experts nominees to the Council of Guardians raised the problem that from now on the 'leader' of the Islamic Regime will be able, through the Council of Guardians, to prevent his opponents from joining the Assembly of Experts, because he himself appoints most of the members of the Council of Guardians, and the others must be appointed with his confirmation.

After the decision, it was predicted that the approval of this regulation would be entirely detrimental to the Mohtashemi-Karrubi Faction. The result confirmed this, the Council of Guardians did not approve the competence of the three leading figures of the hardliner faction, namely, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, Mahdi Karrubi, and Sadeq Khalkali. In fact, the dismissal of Abdol-Karim Musavi Ardabili, Mehdi Karrubi, the speaker of the Majles 'Ali Akbar Mohtashemi and Sadeq Khalkhali influential representatives of the Majles from being representatives in the Assembly of Experts has been interpreted as a "minicoup d'état" in Tehran.²⁹⁷ Simultaneous with the passing over of several well-known Radical figures for the next Assembly of Experts, the Radical majority in the Majles prepared a plan to dismiss the "liberals" or "Hojjatiyyeh" members, from "key" and sensitive positions. The extremists of the Majles consider some of the members of Rafsanjani's Cabinet to be "liberals" and "Hojjatiyyeh" members.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Articles 107 and 11 of the constitution.

²⁹⁶ Tehran Domestic Service, 29 Aug 1990 in FBIS-NES, 30 Aug 1990, p:57

²⁹⁷ London KEYHAN, 11 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Nov 1990, p:54

²⁹⁸ London KEYHAN, 11 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 1 Nov 1990, p:54

In this debate, while Rafsanjani called opponents of the decision as traitors that tried to weaken this important organization of the regime²⁹⁹, Khamene'i termed words of Radicals in their pre-agenda speeches to the Majles as "the voice of Radio Israel" .³⁰⁰

The Radical faction, on the other hand, argued that the decision of the Assembly of Experts was to eliminate the faction loyal to the Imam's principles and to replace "the genuine Islam with American Islam".³⁰¹ As a result they called people for boycotting the Assembly of Experts elections.

The debate once more underlined the importance of the role of Khomeini as a balancer. In the absence of him, now one of the factions disturbs the balance in favor of itself. Therefore this event further affirmed the difference between the Khomeini and post-Khomeini era factionalism. The Radical faction pointed to the danger that one of the main pillars of the regime was becoming aligned to a single faction.

This debate over the Assembly of Experts elections had been one of the most important one that revealed the extent of the division between the two main factions, and the leading figures of them. The extremism in wording of accusations on both sides revealed the fact that the power struggle between the factions reached the point of no return. The critics of the Radical figures in the Majles was so harsh that, another Radical figure, the Majles Speaker had to remind them the limits of freedom of speech. ³⁰²Second of all, it pointed out to the process of the reduction of the power of the Radical group in the post-Khomeini period. Thirdly, the war of words took place as a conflict between the majority in the Majles on the one hand and the religious and political leadership, that is president and the faqih, and the Council of Guardians on the other. And, this nature of the debate clarified the respective weights of the two factions in different

²⁹⁹ London KEYHAN, 26 July 1990 in FBIS-NES, 24 Aug 1990, p:64

³⁰⁰ RESALAT, 29 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 18 Dec 1990, p:74

³⁰¹ See, for example, Karrubi's statement in London KEYHAN, 26 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 9 Nov 1990, p:55

³⁰² Karrubi, RESALAT, 25 Oct 1990 in FBIS-NES, 17 Dec 1990, p:49

governmental structures: the Majles was the base of radical opposition against the Pragmatist-Conservative coalition in domestic matters. For our purposes, the last end the most important thing about the debate was that coincidence of the debate over the Assembly of Experts elections with the Gulf Crisis has further escalated the tension of the debate over the Gulf Crisis policy of the government within the Majles. In sum, the development indicated the fact that as Iran moves from Islamic fundamentalism in its foreign policy, the country's institutions are undergoing a gradual change which eventually could see a total takeover of political power by moderate factions.

