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The presentation of the foreign
troops and their operations in
Afghanistan in Iranian
conservative and reformist media.
Case study: Kayhan and Shargh
newspapers (November 2013-July
2014)

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Declaration

I, (Bijan Tafazzoli), declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date 15th August 2014

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The presentation of the foreign troops and their operations in Afghanistan in Iranian conservative and reformist media: Case study: Kayhan and Shargh newspapers (November 2013- July 2014)

Abstract

This study investigates the presentation of the foreign troops and their operations in Afghanistan in the Iranian newspapers Kayhan and Shargh during the first year of Iranian President Hasan Rouhani's presidency.

The study suggests that there are different political factions with different / opposite approaches in Iran, which present their political and ideological perspectives through the like-minded media. The study mainly uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and its techniques to find the news structures and ways of presentation of "other" individuals / groups. To analyze the two newspapers from the main political factions, the Conservatives and the Reformists, the study first details the Iran's socio-political context and then shows that despite unequal balance of power and restricted media freedom, the two newspapers have two noticeably different and opposite approaches to the issue under study. The study draw the conclusion that these differences in presenting their "reality" can be rooted in their different logics and their different supporters' political approaches.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	11
Background and context	11
1.1 Iran, Basic information.....	11
1.2 Revolutionary Iran and Iranian people	12
1.3 Does Iran really matter?	16
1.4 Iran’s revolution and changing foreign policy.....	18
1.4.1 Independency and seeking influence in the region	18
1.4.2 Pragmatism and national interest	24
1.5 Power dynamism in current Iran	25
1.5.1 Supreme Leader	26
1.5.2 President	27
1.5.3 Parliament.....	27
1.5.4 Judiciary	28
1.5.5 Council of Guardians	28
1.5.6 Expediency Council	29
1.5.7 Assembly of experts	29
1.5.8 Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)	30
1.6 Political factions in Iran.....	32
1.6.1 Conservatives	33
1.6.2 Reformists	35
1.6.3 Centrists/Pragmatists.....	36
1.7 The Supreme Leader and factions	38
1.8 Media’s law and freedom in Iran	42
1.9 Shargh and Kayhan as representative of different factions	45
1.9.1 Shargh	45
1.9.2 Kayhan.....	47
1.10 Iran’s new government and the struggle for detente	50
1.11 Relationship between Iran and Afghanistan.....	55
1.11.1 Iran’s political, economic and ideological influence on Afghanistan.....	56
1.11.2 Iran and Sunni extremism	59
1.11.3 Iran and the relationship with NATO and the US	61

1.11.4 Iran and fighting against narcotics.....	64
1.11.5 Iran and Afghan immigrants	65
Chapter 2.....	68
Methodology.....	68
2.1 Research question.....	68
2.2 Philosophical considerations.....	69
2.2.1 Epistemological issues	69
2.2.2 Ontological issues	70
2.3 Method	71
2.3.1 Qualitative and quantitative researches.....	71
2.4 Evaluating qualitative research.....	72
2.4.1 Dealing with data: Gathering data.....	72
2.4.2 Evaluating data.....	73
2.4.3 Generalizability and transferability.....	73
2.4.4 Validity	74
2.4.5 Reliability.....	75
2.5 Ethical issues	76
Chapter 3.....	77
Theoretical discussion.....	77
3.1 Media and reality	77
3.1.1 Do the media represent reality?	78
3.1.2 Media as a connection between people and the world	79
3.1.3 Policy makers and the media	80
3.2 Discourse analysis as a news research.....	81
3.2.1 Why critical discourse analysis?.....	81
3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and news	82
3.3 Media practices.....	83
3.3.1 Descriptions	84
3.3.2 Implications.....	84
3.3.3 Disclaimers	84
3.3.4 Omission.....	85
3.3.5 Counter arguments	85
3.4 Us and the other side.....	85
3.4.1 Foreigners as an other	86

3.5 Problems and limitations	86
3.6 Discussions and conclusions	86
Chapter 4.....	88
Media practice	88
4.1 The main Issues.....	88
4.2 NATO and the US military operations.....	88
4.2.1 Kayhan: Demonizing them!.....	88
4.2.2 Shargh: Keeping low profile	90
4.3 The US – Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, President Karzai and his administration’s policy... 93	
4.3.1 Kayhan: Against the agreement.....	93
4.3.2 Shargh: Necessary and inevitable	95
4.4 Afghanistan’s presidential election.....	97
4.4.1 Kayhan: No matter what they say.....	97
4.4.2 Shargh: Issues are related	99
Chapter 5.....	101
Conclusions	101
References	106

Chapter 1

Background and context

1.1 Iran, Basic information

Iran (the official name: Islamic Republic of Iran) is located in 32°00'N, 53°00'E. It has 1,648,195 km² area and according to the latest national survey in 2011, its population is 75, 149, 669¹. Iran is a pluralistic society. Despite many people in Iran actually have mixed ancestry, the Persians are predominant and their ethnic and cultural codes are prevalent. Besides, the country has a noticeable population of Turkish language people (especially Azeris) and Arabs which are living mostly in Southwest of Iran. Other minorities like Kurds, Lurs, Balochis and Bakhtiaries and smaller minorities like Armanies also make up Iran's population.²

Absolute majority of Iranians are Muslims. In 2011, 99.4% of Iranians were Muslims and 0.3% non-Muslims (0.3% did not answer).³ Among Iranian Muslims, almost 9% are Sunnis and around 89% are Shias.⁴ “Islamic republic just approves Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as religious minorities: “Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities”...⁵

In 2011, 71.4% of Iranians were living in cities and literacy rate was 92.4%. In recent decades many Iranians have chosen following their educations after high school. In 2011, 18.2% of men and 18.4% of women had higher education compare with 3.8% for men and 2.6% for women in 1976.⁶ The information consumption of educated Iranians is noticeable; according to UNESCO statistics, in 2010, 65000 titles books were published in Iran that puts the country in ninth place in the world.⁷ All of these books are published despite governmental and self-censorship. In cyber-

¹ According to the latest national Register-based Population Statistics, conducted by Statistical Center of Iran in 2011 available at: <http://www.amar.org.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=1187> (09/ 10/2013)

² *Countries of the world and their leaders yearbook 2010*. (2009). Detroit, Mich: Gale.

³ <http://www.amar.org.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=1187> (25/09/2013)

⁴ *Countries of the world and their leaders yearbook 2010*. (2009). Detroit, Mich: Gale.

⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran's constitution, Article 13

⁶ <http://www.amar.org.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=1187> (09/ 05/2014)

⁷ <http://www.worldometers.info/books/> (10/02/2014)

space, censors and limitations are even harsher and more extensive. In 2012, a renowned organization, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Iran among five “State Enemies of the Internet” where their governments “are involved in active, intrusive surveillance of news providers, resulting in grave violations of freedom of information and human rights”⁸. Despite these pressures and other technical difficulties⁹, in 2012 the rate of Internet users per 100 population was 61.4% in Iran.¹⁰ City residents and educated Iranians have struggled against the controlling system in the Islamic Republic through the new social media in recent years, while the regime has become less revolutionary and more moderate/pragmatist compare with the first years after the 1979 revolution.

1.2 Revolutionary Iran and Iranian people

Understanding the dynamism and role of Islam in social and political movements in Iran before and after 1979 revolution and the official interpretation Islam’s position in the today’s Iran provide a better understanding of power equation and in analyzing the context in which media work.

Despite some opposite examples, religion and clerics (*ulama*) have been important element of social movements and unrests in modern Iran¹¹. One of the first riots that religion and *ulama were* active in happened as a result of a foreign war. Immediately after signing Turkomanchai treaty¹²

⁸ <http://surveillance.rsf.org/en/> (10/01/2014)

⁹ Lack of infrastructure (For example still 9.23% of Iranians use dial-up connection) and government’s huge filtering program that forces Iranians to use anti-censorship programs are some of them. See: <http://www.iriu.ir/matma/> and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2013/08/15/heres-how-iran-censors-the-internet/>

¹⁰ There are different statistics between Iranian official statistics and international statistics. While International Telecommunication Union (ITU)’s statistics show 26% Internet users per 100 populations in 2012 (which is very close to 26.4% of official Iran’s statistics in four years ago) Iranian statistics show this rate 61.6% in 2012. See more: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=605>

<http://matma.ir/> in fact it seems that there is total chaos in this filed. For example while the World Bank’s statistics show 26% internet users per 100 people in 2012, the same source has another statistic in 2012 show around 35% for Iran’s internet users per 100 in 2012.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2/countries/1W?display=graph>. There are still some other statistics for this rate like internet world stats’s one that show 53.3% internet penetration in 2012. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm> (16/06/2014)

¹¹ For example Sheil found throughout the country "much agnosticism, deism, and freedom of religious expression (Abrahamian, 1982, p.71) and de Groot (2007) suggests that there were some “critical thought and movements in anti-traditional, anti-*ulama*, freethinking directions...” (p.30)

¹² Following the defeating by Russia, Iran was forced to accept unfavorable peace terms in the treaty signed in the village of Turkmanchai, on 21 February 1828. Under the treaty, Iran ceded its remaining provinces north of the Aras

in 1828 between Iran and Russia, the Tsar sent Griboyedov, a dramatist notorious for his contempt for all Asians, especially Iranians, to implement its degrading clauses (D. Costello, 1954; cited in Abrahamian, 1982, p: 71). In response to some activities under the Griboyedov supervision, like allowing Cossack bodyguards to go drunk to the streets or going into private homes to "liberate" former Christians who were now Muslim slaves, a mujtahed (very high rank Shia cleric) proclaimed a fatwa (religious edict) against Griboyedov's orders. In summer, angry mobs looted Russian mission and 80 Russians were killed during the incident. (Abrahamian, 1982). A climax of the mobilization of the people by clerics accorded in the so called Tobacco movement. Widespread riots were then cemented by a fatwa and forced Iranian monarch to cancel a humiliating contract with one British businessman that had been granted the monopoly for the production and sale of tobacco in Iran (Keshavarzian, 2007; Abrahamian, 1982; Gheissari & Nasr, 2006).

These resistances and social movements showed themselves in the constitutional revolution that took place in 1906. The constitution revolution was not totally religious, although religious elements were powerful. The prior demands by some ulamas and people who took sanctuary in protest against the monarch suppression, were "replacement of the governor [of Tehran]; dismissal of Naus [the Belgian customs administrator]; enforcement of the *shari'a*; and establishment of a House of Justice" (Abrahamian, 1982, p: 82) But on their way to return they greeted by slogan "Long Live the Nation of Iran." That was entirely new, nobody has heard such a slogan before (Ibid). In fact, the movement that led to constitutional revolution in Iran consisted of various ideas and ideologies, ranging from conservative clerics like Fazlullah Nouri to educated liberals like Taghizadeh and socialists like Haydar Khan·Amu Ughli.

Islamic discourses of the constitutional revolution consisted of to two main orientations: Islamic reformism and traditionalism compete for greater political space and popular appeal as articulated especially by Ayatollahs Mirza Hosein Na'ini and Fazlullah Nouri respectively. Within one or two decades, both of these discourses had largely given way to secularists who embraced modernity, economic development, and statism (Kamrava, 2008, p.5).

River (Yerevan and Nakhichevan) to Russia; extended preferential trade rights to Russian subjects; recognized Russia's exclusive naval rights in the Caspian Sea; accepted the application of Russian law to Russian subjects in Iran involved in civil or criminal legal cases; and agreed to pay Russia an indemnity of 20 million rubles. (Mattar, 2004, p: 2252- The Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa)

This dialectic between religious players and non-religious parties (who did not define themselves according to religion) resumed in modern Iran. During the two years Mohammad Mosaddegh was Prime-minister (1951-53), religious players had an unstable relationship with the nationalist government. At first Mosaddegh, who nationalized the oil industry, tried to keep religious players calm. He banned selling alcohol and entered some religious trustees to his cabinet. He also gave up women's right to vote which the religious players disagreed with (Abrahamian, 1982). However, the relationship between nationalists and religious elements did not last and religious players (especially religious anchor, Ayatollah Kashani) harshly criticized government's reforms, including its program for giving women right to vote (Abrahamian, 1982). Some scholars even suggest that "...to a considerable extent they collaborated in the coup of 1953" (Halliday, 2004, p: 26). Although Mosaddegh could gain support among nationalists and some leftists, he lost religious and traditional conservative Bazaris' support and at the end Mosaddegh's democratically elected government was toppled by the U.S- British coup through the Iranian army¹³.

Between the 1954 coup and 1979 revolution, a phenomenon on the religious flank grew noticeably. Suggesting by Ali Shari'ati, a new influential approach to Shi'a Islam emerged. Shari'ati combined Iranian nationalism, third worldism and anti-imperialism, which learned from Fanon, and a new redefinition of Shi'ism. Although Shari'ati died in 1977, his idea remained strong. In fact Shari'ati's patriotic Shi'aism and Khomeini's solid stand against the regime and his anti-Americanism, attracted many (including leftists) to join an alliance with religious groups (Groot, 2007). In fact, the Pahlavi regime was overthrown in 1979 by a heterogeneous group of social actors ranged from traditionalist bazaris to radical clergies lead by Khomeini, to various leftist groups and nationalists. They had different interpretations about socio-political issues but could gather around the charismatic Khomeini to topple the regime (Khosrokhavar, 2004).

The honeymoon between Khomeini and his supporters and the others did not last long. Until 1981, only a Muslim populist approach was dominated in the Islamic Republic of Iran that was different from Shari'ati's radical laicized version or Bazargan's¹⁴ liberal version of Islam (Groot,

¹³ First time Madeleine Albright, former U.S. secretary of state, noticed the U.S. role in coup. Latter some documents also revealed. http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/000419/i_ins.00.html (10/05/2014) , <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/> (10/02/2014)

¹⁴ First Iran's prime minister after revolution from Freedom Movement of Iran party. He forced to resign just after eight months.

2007, p. 143). The traditional/populist version dominated in Islamic Republic, used binaries for its judgments. So, good/bad, religious/secular and so forth was used for establishing “we” and “others”. Yesterday allies and today’s others were then omitted from the political atmosphere and this process was not peaceful (Axworthy, 2013; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006; Khosrokhavar, 2004). The regime also tried to impose Islamization on every aspect of social life. This idea was followed by verbal and later on physical attacks on “the others”. For example, thugs and militias (along with official security forces) attacked on women and youth that displayed “moral laxity” in the streets like women who refused to wear hijab. Intellectuals who embraced cultural change came under attack as well (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006; Ellicott, 2009, p. 1004). Suppression accelerated during the Iran-Iraq war in 1980s. The nationalist reaction and religious feeling of threat from the west helped fundamentalists to crush remained oppositions in the name of Islam and emergency war condition. (Khosrokhavar, 2004, P. 73; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006). Calming down the revolutionary atmosphere, ending the war and the death of Khomeini changed the equation in Iran in late 1980s. The next supreme leader, Khamenei, had neither Khomeini’s charisma nor his Islamic knowledge. Thus, President Rafsanjani could use greater power in the bureaucracy and made it more autonomous from ideology. In fact, “If the motto of the government in the 1980s was “we want the ideologically committed, not specialists,” in the 1990s it was “we want specialists who are also ideologically committed.”” (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006, pp.95-96). Changes become faster in Khatami’s presidency. He did not change the regime’s hierarchy but people experienced limited freedom of press and openness in society. In the same era differences among various voices inside the regime become more vivid and reformists who were more liberal and tolerant separated themselves from the conservatives.

New cultural phenomenon in society and politics in Khatami’s era happened alongside new voices in philosophy and theoretical approaches. In this era, this time, something made new voices different: there were from inside the circle of the Islamic Republic. Scholars like Soroush, Kadivar and Eshkevari suggested that “*fiqh* can change through the *ijma* (the collective dialogue and consensus of the *ulama*), and nothing in it could be called sacred” (Khosrokhavar, 2004, P.79) this idea weakened the concept of Khamenei’s position as the representative of Shi’a’s twelve’s Imam on earth which Islamic Republic uses in its propaganda. Some religious reformists like Soroush and Kadivar also tried to depoliticize Islam. Based on Iranian Sufism, they suggested an

internalized Islam and rejecting its involvement in the politics and worldly affairs (ibid). However, de-Islamization began in society and ordinary people's life apart from theoretical trends.

Socialized Islam backed by Islamic law was also challenged by ordinary people, especially educated youth. We see for example today, despite severe punishment for drinking alcohol, that Iranians consume extensive volumes of alcohol¹⁵, that first alcohol abuse treatment center will soon open in Tehran¹⁶. People also reject regime's sexual codes and officials that announce their worries about sexual habitats like cohabitation without official marriage in Iran¹⁷. Actually, changes in Iranian's sexual life has been so fast and dramatic that some scholars named it a sexual revolution¹⁸. In fact, people use every kind of opportunity to challenge the official Islamic lifestyle codes, even through their dog walking.¹⁹ In the meantime many Iranians are actively involved in social/political movements and traditional protests on the streets, in 2009 millions of people took to the streets in protest against the presidential election results (which wildly believed was rigged). In result of the regime's use of an iron fist policy to crush the resistances between 72 and 80 people died, hundreds wounded, and hundreds of reformists and street protesters were arrested.^{20, 21}

Foreign policy has more immediate implications for internal security than elsewhere. State leaders, to protect their domestic support, should legitimize themselves by asserting their own revolutionary and independent alternative foreign policy (Ehteshami, & Hinnebusch, 1997). In today's Iran, there are some doubts about the accepting fundamental revolutionary position in foreign policy by Iranians. This pessimism and difference is echoed in Iran's media, especially in media close to the reformists.

1.3 Does Iran really matter?

Iran is an important country in the region and cannot be neglected from regional and world's equations easily. Iran holds the world's fourth-largest proven oil reserves (155 billion barrels) and

¹⁵ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/08/daily-chart-2>

¹⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/08/130825_nm_alcohol_addiction_center.shtml?ocid=socialflow_face_book_persian (01/07/2014)

¹⁷ http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f4_iran_worry_unmarried_couple_life/24812949.html

¹⁸ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/05/29/erotic_republic_Iran_sexual_revolution%20?page=0,0

¹⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/18/in-iran-walking-your-dog-is-a-symbol-of-resistance>

²⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2009/jul/29/iran-election-protest-dead-missing> (10/06/2014)

²¹ <http://www.peykeiran.com/Content.aspx?ID=6167>

the world's second-largest natural gas reserves (1187 trillion cubic feet)²². Some sources even put Iran in the first place in terms of natural gas reserves²³. Besides natural sources, Iran has a unique position in terms of international transit network. Iran overlooks the Strait of Hormuz which 20-30 percent of global oil consumption passes through it daily, in addition to 20 percent of the world liquid natural gas transports²⁴. Any kind of interference in the region leads to immediate skyrocketing of prices in the global energy markets and it seems that Iran can block the strait²⁵. In sum, Iran has a capability to be a corridor in some other crucial ways: North-South International Transport Corridor that connects Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf first to Caspian Sea via Iran, and second to San Petersburg and Northern Europe through Russia; East-West Corridor or the Old Silk Road: This corridor (old silk road), is able to both transit the goods from China and Middle Asia in the east and northeast to Caucasus, West Asia, and Mediterranean Sea through the territory of Iran and reciprocally the transit of products in these areas to Middle Asia and China; Asia Southern Corridor which begins from southeastern Asia, goes across the Indian Subcontinent, passes through Iran's territory, Turkey and Iraq and then extends to Europe and Mediterranean Sea; Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus that is a corridor that ensures minimum cost and time for connecting the Republics in the Middle Asia to global markets and European ports.²⁶ There are still some other capacities in the list in terms of size, population, minerals, human capital and etc.

Iran was at the center of U.S (and West) attention in cold war era also. Before the 1979 revolution, Iran was a barrier against the expansion of communism by its Northern neighbor. The West wanted to keep this oil rich barrier at any price, even coup d'état against its elected government. During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, west and especially the U.S did nothing against using chemical weapons by Iraq against Iran and even helped Saddam Hussein²⁷. On some cases the U.S directly participated in operations against Iran: in 1988, Iraqi regime relied on the "US

²² <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=ir> (12/06/2014)

²³ <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/25/business/iran-energy-potential-defterios/index.html> (07/04/2014)

²⁴ <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=2241> (24/06/2014)

²⁵ Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the U.S chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told to CBS news, "The simple answer is yes, they can block it" <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/13/world/middleeast/us-warns-top-iran-leader-not-to-shut-strait-of-hormuz.html?pagewanted=all> (10/06/2012)

²⁶ <http://transit.pmo.ir/en/transit/internationalcorridors>

²⁷ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/08/25/secret_cia_files_prove_america_helped_saddam_as_he_gas_sed_iran (17/05/2014)

Navy taking on and destroying most of the key modern elements of the small Iranian Navy” (Rogers, 2006, p.246). The U.S and West ended their support policy towards Iraq after Iraq’s attack to the Kuwait in 1991. They overthrow the Iraqi regime in 2003 at the end. In fact, Iran’s unique position in the region and its past hostile relationship with the west and especially with the U.S make Iran-west relationship complicated. In one hand Iran is an important country in the region that can be a good partner or a part of solution for troubles in the region and on the other hand Iran has a big capacity to be a serious competitor for western countries specifically the U.S. This complex can be trace through the Iran’s political dynamic and media discourse which will be experience in the current study.

1.4 Iran’s revolution and changing foreign policy

1.4.1 Independency and seeking influence in the region

Iran is a Persian Shia state with a different language from Persian Gulf Arab countries. Most of these countries regards Iran as an ambitious country seeking regional and religious domination. All of these countries (except Oman) have Sunni leaders and many of them a powerful Sunni majority. Political instabilities, economic hardships, sectarian conflicts, extremism and ethnic and tribal conflicts have complicated the region’s conditions (Cordesman, et al. (b), 2013) which engaged Iran as a country in the region although Iran does not have some of the mentioned problems.

Realists believe that every nation-state seeks power and influence. (Baylis, and Smith, 2005 & Williams, 2008). In this manner, Iran can try to spread its power and influence at the international arena while its national security is at risk in the anarchic world (especially from countries like the U.S and Israel and Sunni extremists like Taliban) as well as other countries like U.S and Israel. So, each nation-state will pursue its own demands and actions to achieve power and security. Some realists believe that states cannot guarantee how much power they need in time. For them the most secure way is to eliminate challengers so they can be sure about achieving hegemony. Offensive realists like Mearsheimer believe that the most a state can hope for is regional hegemon, and for there to be no other regional hegemons elsewhere in the world (Williams, 2008). From these assumptions, in terms of balance of power in the Middle East, this approach can say why Iran seeks to maximize its power and influence.

For defensive realists, security dilemma is the core supposition. States do not trust each other's intentions and thus want to maximize their security. John Herz (1950: 157) was an early advocate of the concept of the security dilemma; he suggested that defensive actions and capabilities are often misinterpreted as an aggressive action. Reasons why states move to seek security and preserve the status quo are often blurred, and others often cannot set a difference between that and preparation for an offensive act. So, 'threatened' states respond, leading to a spiraling of mutual aggression that nobody prefers. This is international relations as tragedy, not evil: bad things happen because states are placed in difficult situations (Williams, 2008, p. 21-2). This concept is very important in Iran's foreign policy in the region (especially in the Persian Gulf area) and its nuclear case because misunderstanding from each side can deteriorate the situation and leads to disaster.

According to offensive-defensive view, countries can use two strategies for maximizing their security: defensive and offensive strategy. The defensive strategy tries to protect the controlled territory and resource with raising the costs of attacking the territory by others. While this strategy leads to almost impossible concurring country by rivals, does not seek to expansion of its own territory or eliminating the competitor. On the other hand, offensive strategy uses military power for expansion of country's resources or intimidating of other rival countries. (Lynn-Jones, 1996, p.665 & Jervis, 1978, p.253). Iran's only ally in the region is war-torn Syria besides groups like Hezbollah. This situation suggests that Iran was focused on the core of offensive – defensive strategy rather than finding reliable allies in the region.

One of the most important slogans in the Islamic Republic is "neither Eastern, nor Western, [just] Islamic Republic". Islamic Republic has tried to follow an independent foreign policy in the region and world since the first year of its establishment. Different groups and ideas participated in Iran's revolution and almost all of them were agreed on one point: they were neither friends of U.S and West nor Soviet Union and the East.²⁸

Until 1979, Khomeini could attract almost all of society's groups. His position against foreign domination alongside other promises like extending freedom to all political parties, even "atheistic" ones; guaranteeing the rights of all religious minorities, except those of the "heretical" Baha'is; and bring social justice to all, was attractive for the bazaaris, the

²⁸ Some leftist group including the biggest and well-organized among them, named Tudeh Party, was Soviet sympathizer.

intelligentsia, the peasantry, and, most mentioned of all, the dispossessed masses (Abrahamian, 1982. P: 532). After neutralizing the former allies, the Islamic Republic regime could pursue its radical foreign policy, although hardliners practically started their dramatic shifts with taking the U.S diplomats hostage which forced Bazargan, the nationalist prime minister, to resign just few months after the revolution. Besides antagonism with Israel, the Islamic Regime has had difficulties with many countries in the region after the revolution.

However, Iran tried to have influence on Shias beyond being a model which encourages them. Iran has supported militant Shias in the region. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has particularly close links to revolutionary Iran. In 1995, Khamenei nominated Nasrallah as his deputy in Lebanon (Fuller, 2007, P: 141). Over time, Hezbollah became more and more important in Lebanon's political and economic atmosphere and despite a set back after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and Syrian troops withdrawal following that, Hezbollah still is an important player in Lebanon. Especially after the 2006 war against Israel has Hezbollah stabilized its position.

In Iraq, Tehran's policies have been vastly successful and have given Iran a novel influence at the expense of the United States and of Baghdad's Arab neighbors (Kagan, et al., 2012). Iran has its elements in Iraq: Its powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-Quds force in Iraq. The Quds force is the sharp instrument of Iranian foreign policy, roughly analogous to a combined C.I.A. and Special Forces. Its commander in chief, Suleimani, "is the single most powerful operative in the Middle East today," John Maguire, a former C.I.A. officer in Iraq, tells New Yorker magazine.²⁹ Besides, IRGC and its Quds force is active in Syria and Lebanon (Gold, & Diker, 2007; Cordesman, et al. (a), 2013). Iran also is accused of supporting some Shia militant / former militant groups. IRGC-QF and these groups show that Iran seeking to

²⁹ http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/09/30/130930fa_fact_filkins?currentPage=1 (11/06/2013)

adjust balance of power in the region and its neighborhood against Sunni forces who are also anti-western. Iran is accused of supporting Kata'ib Hezbollah. Designated as a foreign terrorist organization on July 2, 2009, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) is a radical Shia group established in 2006. The group is accused of being support by Iran. The group has been responsible for some terrorist attacks since 2007, including the use of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and rocket propelled grenade attacks. In June 2011, 5 U.S soldier were killed in a rocket propelled attack by KH, but there was no more attack by the group against U.S interests. Besides Iraq, they are reportedly as active in Syria, protecting Shia shrines (Cordesman, & Khazai, 2013, P: 16).

Shi'a militias in Iraq, Jayish al-Mahdi (JAM), and its successor, the Promised Day Brigade, are the militant arm of the Sadrist movement led by cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The group was engaged in some violent conflict against Sunni militants and U.S troops, but in 2007 Moqtada al-Sadr ordered his fighters to stand down.³⁰ He later established a non-violent movement called Munahidoon, but maintained a small number of fighters calling themselves the Promised Day Brigade. It seems that decision of ending violence was made after Iraqi delegations talked to their Iranian supporters (Kagan, et al., 2012, P: 65).

In Syria, there was growing evidence in 2012 that the IRGC's Quds Forces, aided by Hezbollah, were actively training and equipping mainly Alawite and Shi'a irregular forces into what could be a deeply ideological Jaysh al-Shaab or "People's Army". These were meant to take pressure off Syrian regular forces and fight for the interests of the Alawite community and other allied factions in Syria (Nerguizian, et al., 2013). Additional reports surfaced that Iran pressured its friends in the Shi'a Iraqi government to extend support to Syria as well³¹. Since at least mid- 2008, Iran has sponsored "dozens of Shi'a theological centers, or hawzas, as well as Iranian cultural and

³⁰ Country Reports on Terrorism 2012, United States Department of State Publication, Bureau of Counterterrorism, Released May 2013.

³¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/13/world/middleeast/13iraq.html? r=0> (14/04/2014)

educational centers” throughout Syria. The trade between two countries in Iranian fiscal year 2009-2010 was \$400 million. In 2011, Iran’s investment in Syria was \$1.7 billion. The relationship between Iran and Syria is more client-patron rather than partnership and Syria relies on Iranian military, financial, and economic support to survive (Kagan, et al., 2012, p: 26-30).

Besides antagonism with Israel, Iran’s Islamic Regime has had difficulties with many countries in the region after the revolution. Some Arab states, especially in the Persian Gulf area, are not satisfied with Iranian regional policy. There is noticeable Shi’a population in many of them and in Bahrain and Iraq Shi’as are in majority³². Sunni governments in the region worry about the influential Shi’a Iran in the hub of Shi’a crescent (Cordesman et al. (b), 2013; Shapira & Diker, 2007) however, some scholars suggest that the Shiite crescent concept is “more a challenge to the stagnant political order than any sectarian threat to Sunnis per se” (Green et al., 2009, p: 113; Ehteshami, & Hinnebusch, 1997).

These Arab countries also worry about their own Shia population relationship with Iran and consider IRGC-QF and Hezbollah as the main threat in this way. Arab countries here are especially worried about a potential future alliance between Iraq and Iran, two powerful oil-rich Shia countries, and creating a block in the region (along with Lebanon, Syria, if Assad survive,). Sunni-Shia conflict in the region and Syrian civil war have exacerbated Arab Persian Gulf countries worries about the issue.

Arab Persian Gulf countries should fight against the terrorism and extremism in their own countries. They are also engaged in tribal, sectarian, and ethnic conflicts and should create many jobs and infrastructures for their own young population. They need stability and social evolution to prevent political upheavals, which some of them like

³² 60% - 65% of Iraqi population and 65% -75% of Bahrain population are Shi’as
<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/iraq/igfacts.htm> , (12/01/2014)
<http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/#sunni-shia> (11/01/2014)

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia already faced, like their counterparts in North Africa (Cordesman, et al. (b), 2013).

Afghanistan is become strategically important to Iran, especially after US-led invasion. Iran has been focused mostly on securing its borders, seeking to limit US influence in the Afghan government, support the Hazara Shi'ite minority, and spreading out its political and economic influence in Northwest Afghanistan (Shelala, et al., 2013). According to Afghan president Hamid Karzai, trade between his country and Iran totals more than \$1.5 billion³³.

Afghanistan is specifically important to Iran as a tool for securing its eastern flank and fighting against the cross-border trafficking. Afghanistan gives Iran a low-cost opportunity to sabotage the U.S and western countries interests. There is not a comprehensive estimation of Iran's influence in Afghanistan. As an estimation, a part of Iran's influence is through the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) which is close to Iran's government and has over 30,000 employees in Afghanistan. IKRC has a good relationship with Shia Hazaras which are around 9% of Afghan population. Iran has provided weapons to Hazara militias since the days of Soviet occupation. There are some reports suggesting major Hazara political groups gains in the 2010 parliamentary elections, was because of Iran's helps (Ibid, P.5)

Hazaras have been suppressed in Afghanistan. For example an estimated 300 Hazara men, women and children were deliberately killed by Taliban while seeking shelter in a mosque in Yakaolang in January 2001. In another case in 1998, Taliban killed at least 2000 Hazaras in Mazar-e Sharif (Jackson, & Oxfam, 2009, p: 11). Hazaras probably will seek more support from Iran after the withdrawal of foreign troops in 2014. Iran itself has not had a normal relationship with Taliban and as a consequence of Hazaras massacre, Iran began to support all groups that opposed the Taliban. Iran become more determined against Taliban as a national security threat when they murdered eight

³³ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-08-05/iran-afghanistan-trade-is-more-than-1-5-billion-president-karzai-says.html> (11/03/2014)

diplomats and a journalist at the Iranian Consulate in Mazar -e Sharif on 8 August 1998 (Koepke, & Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013, p:7). Basically, the existence of a sanctuary for Sunni extremists in Afghanistan under a Taliban regime, is the worst scenario for the neighbor Shia Iran.

1.4.2 Pragmatism and national interest

The Islamic Republic has constantly showed some signs of pragmatism after the wave of fundamentalism by revolutionaries, like taking the U.S diplomats hostages in Iran. It seems Islamic Republic's pragmatism mostly is because of (or a combination of) two reasons: surviving and being integrated and prosperous. During the Iran and Iraq war, Iran was isolated and desperately needed weapons and spare parts for its American-based military technology. Despite west and U.S's silence about using Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD)s by Iraqi regime, active support of Iraq³⁴ and even direct warfare against Iran (Rager, 2006 , Cordesman et al. 2013), Iran broke some arms deals with them and their allies in the region. Iran-Contra scandal could be a good example of this affair but it is not the isolated story. Evidences show that Iranians and Israelis had a meeting in France about attacking Osirak and even Iran suggested that Israel can use Tabriz airfield in Iran for this plan (Parsi, 2007, p.107), and in another story, CIA tracked around \$300 million weapons sold to Iran by Israel in 1980s. Other sources like Jaffee Institute for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University estimate \$500 million for this case (Ibid). Iran also showed its pragmatism later when following the September 11 terrorist attacks, pledged its support to the United States and provided crucial tactical help to coalition forces in Afghanistan during operation *Enduring Freedom*, clearly helping the coalition to a quick "victory" over the Taliban. But the U.S response was cold and hostile. Only weeks after Iran played a key role in forging the Bonn agreement

³⁴ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/08/25/secret_cia_files_prove_america_helped_saddam_as_he_gas sed_iran (13/05/2014)

in December 2001, President George W. Bush included Iran in the “axis of evil” in January 2002 (Carter, 2010, Parsi, 2006; Rubin & Rashid, 2008).

Days before President Bush declared “Mission Accomplished” on May 1, 2004, Tehran tried one last attempt to reach out to Washington. Attacking Iraq was a wakeup call for Iran. So, they put everything on the table— Hezbollah; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad; and Iran’s nuclear program. But the U.S did not use this opportunity (Parsi, 2006). These U.S mistakes paved the way for hardliners in Iran.³⁵

Iran like every logical player in the international arena knows that without a normal relationship with its neighbors (as well as other countries) cannot secure its national interests. Thus, for example, despite some not friendly activities in the international arena, Iran can have a long dispute with U.A.E, the country that supported Iraq in Iran-Iraq war, over some issues like three islands’ possession in Persian Gulf and still continues to maintain strong economic ties with it³⁶ (Dunne, 2012). In fact, the inescapable dilemma for Islamists, including Islamic Republic regime in Iran, is that they cannot promote their values without political and economic pragmatism (Murden, 2001, p. 467).

1.5 Power dynamism in current Iran

At least on paper, Iran looks like many western democracies. A popularly elected president, elected legislature (and even mayor and city council election) and a powerful judiciary. But a deeper look shows that the balance of power and players’ roles in this theocratic regime, which officially its supreme leader is the representative of the Shia’s

³⁵ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2014/01/140110_l31_straw_britain_iran_interview.shtml?ocid=socialflow_facebook_persian (12/06/2014)

³⁶ However, the trade between Iran and UAE is effected by sanctions against Iran as for example official statistics show that trade between Dubai and Iran has fallen by nearly one-third from 36 billion dirhams (USD 9.8 billion) in 2011 to 25 billion dirhams (USD 6.8 billion) last year. See: <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/03/29/295685/uae-economy-hit-hard-by-iran-bans/> (12/11/2013)

twelfth Imam, is different. In follow, the parts and role of different players (especially supreme leader) will be showed shortly.

1.5.1 Supreme Leader

According to Iran's constitution, "absolute sovereignty over the world and man belongs to God" and "the people are to exercise this divine right in the manner specified" in the constitution (Article 110). In Iran's constitution, powers are independent as it is noticed: "the powers of government in the Islamic Republic are vested in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive powers" (Article 57). But also these powers are "functioning under the supervision of the absolute wilayat al-a'mr and the leadership of the ummah..." (Article 57). He is the top of Iran's power structure. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the Iran's supreme leader after Khomeini's death in 1989. According to constitution, he is responsible for "delineation of the general policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran" and "supervision over the proper execution of the general policy" (Article 110) which means he set the theme and guidance of Iran's both domestic and foreign policy. Khamenei has the greatest political and religious authority. He can appoint or dismiss:

- The fuqaha' on the Guardian Council [who are six of twelve members of the council which oversees the parliament activities and qualifies / disqualifies of individuals running for public office]
- The supreme judicial authority of the country
- The head of the radio and television network of the Islamic Republic of Iran. [this is especially important issue because there is no private radio or television network in Iran].
- The chief of the joint staff
- The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps
- the supreme commanders of the armed forces (Article 110)

The supreme leader also has authority for:

- issuing decrees for national referenda
- Assuming supreme command of the armed forces
- Declaration of war and peace, and the mobilization of the armed forces (Ibid).

The supreme leader also has his representatives in every sector of government as well as other parts of bureaucracy like armed forces, universities,...according to the constitution, he “may delegate part of his duties and powers to another person” (Ibid).

The supreme leader’s role in Iran’s decision making process will be more studied furthermore.

1.5.2 President

The president is the second highest ranking official in Iran. However, his power is limited by constitution in favor of the supreme leader. For example, the supreme leader controls the armed forces instead of president. The president is responsible for country’s economic policy. He is also the head of powerful supreme council for national security that according to the constitution established in order to” safeguarding the national interests and preserving the Islamic Revolution, the territorial integrity and national sovereignty” (Article 176). But even in this council, the president’s role is limited by the supreme leader. According to the constitution, this council determines” the defense and national policies within the framework of general policies determined by the [supreme] leader.” (Article 176). Current Iran’s president Hasan Rouhani was the supreme leader’s representative in the Supreme National Security Council before being elected as a president.

1.5.3 Parliament

Iran has a unicameral legislature with 290 members who are publicly elected for four years. Drafting legislations, ratifying international treaties and approving the countries budget are Iran’s parliament responsibilities. In the latest parliamentary elections of

2012, most of elected MPs were conservatives because of reformist's absence.³⁷ However, the influential Council of Guardians checks all laws passed by parliament to recognize if they are compatible with Sharia or Islamic law. This is the same body that qualifies candidates for parliamentary elections. Parliamentary sessions are usually open to the public and broadcast through the Majlis radio station. According to the constitution "members of the Assembly are completely free in expressing their views and casting their votes in the course of performing their duties as representatives, and they cannot be prosecuted or arrested for opinions expressed in the Assembly or votes cast in the course of performing their duties as representatives." (Article 86).

1.5.4 Judiciary

Under Iran's constitution, Judiciary is an independent body (Article 57). However, the supreme leader appoints the head of Judiciary branch who employs "just and worthy judges, their dismissal, appointment, transfer, assignment to particular duties, promotions, and carrying out similar administrative duties, in accordance with the law." (Article 158). In addition of public courts which deal with civil and criminal cases, there are Revolutionary Courts and Special Clerical Courts. Revolutionary Courts' activities are specified to some issues like crimes against national security, crimes related to narcotic drugs, and insulting to the supreme leader.³⁸ The special clerical court is independent from regular juridical framework and is accountable to supreme leader. The special clerical court handles all cases that committed by clerics or clerics are a part of them, besides cases that supreme leader orders to investigate directly³⁹

1.5.5 Council of Guardians

³⁷ http://www.radiofarda.com/content/o2_iran_election_majles/24570501.html (07/07/2014)

³⁸ <http://inn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Serv=0&Id=1950&Rate=0> (16/05/2014)

³⁹ http://www.dadkhahi.net/law/Ghavanin/Ghavanin_Jazae/Aeennameh_roraniyat.htm (14/05/2014)

This council has 12 members which 6 of them are chosen by the supreme leader and another 6 members suggest by the Judiciary's head (who is selected by supreme leader) to the parliament to approve. (Iran's constitution, article 91).

The council checks if bills passed by parliament are not against Islam and the constitution. The council can veto the parliament's laws and refer back them to the parliament. The Council of Guardians also examines candidates who want to run for public offices elections to determine their eligibility.

1.5.6 Expediency Council

This council is an influential body created by Khomeini in 1988. According to the constitution, Expediency Council mediates between Council of Guardians and parliament. The council also "shall meet for consideration on any issue forwarded to it by the Leader and shall carry out any other responsibility as mentioned in this Constitution." (Iran's constitution, article 112). However, the supreme leader is dominant on the council because "the permanent and changeable members of the Council shall be appointed by the Leader. The rules for the Council shall be formulated and approved by the Council members subject to the confirmation by the Leader." (Ibid)

1.5.7 Assembly of experts

The member of this institutions are elected the public for eight years. Like other public elections, Council of Guardian should approve the candidates' illegibility. All the members of Assembly of Experts should be high rank clerics (faghihs). They should elect supreme leader (Khomeini was an exception) and reaffirm the supreme the supreme leader's illegibility periodically (Iran's constitution, article 111). However, the supreme leader has not been challenged by this council in any case until now.

1.5.8 Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

IRGC is one of the most powerful organizations in Iran. It was established in 1979, shortly after the revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini established it to “protect the Islamic order of Iran’s new government and as a counterweight of regular army (Cordesman et al. 2013 ; Buchta, 2000). The IRGC became an offensive force during the Iran-Iraq war, as well as a key tool in dealing with internal opposition and supporting foreign state or non-state players (Byman, 2001; Cordesman et al. 2013). The IRGC has bases in every one of Iran’s major cities that are organized into quick reaction groups against unrests. IRGC has more than 125,000 men, capable of drawing upon 300,000 Basij (Cordesman et al. 2013, P. 124). The organization is heavily engaged to economic activities and it is believed to control a third of the Iranian economy⁴⁰. The IRGC also has its own independent intelligence (edareye hefazat va ettela’at) which co-operates closely with ministry of intelligence and security (Buchta, 2000, p. 68).

In June 2013, Hassan Rouhani was elected as the president of Iran. He backed by Khatami (former president and the most prominent reformist figure) as well as Rafsanjani (former president and a powerful centrist-pragmatist figure) and many ordinary Iranians. Rouhani could win in the first round. Many have estimated his victory as a signal of probable rationalization and liberation of Iran’s domestic and especially foreign policy.⁴¹ But the powerful figure in Iran is the supreme leader Khamenei, not the president. Iran’s constitution gives tremendous power to the supreme leader, including being the head of the state, commander of chief, directly electing the head of Judiciary and the Expediency Council’s members. In sum, Khamenei’s view determines Iran’s policy. Besides, Khamenei’s 2000 representatives control a network spread out

⁴⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10743580> (16/07/2014)

⁴¹ For example see: <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/jack-straw-in-hasan-rouhanis-iran-you-can-feel-the-winds-of-change-9068260.html> (14/07/2014)
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/the-case-for-giving-irans-scholar-diplomats-a-chance/282010/> (14/07/2014)
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/03/iran-president-hassan-rouhani-us-relations> (13/07/2014)

across the country to enforce his ideological codes. Some believe that they are more powerful than ministers and other government functions and can intervene in any matter of state (Buchta, 2000, p. 48).

Part of Khamenei's power comes from a vicious circle in the constitution: Council of Guardians should qualify candidates for parliamentary election 6 members of this council are elected by the supreme leader and another 6 members are suggested to parliament by the head of Judiciary who is selected by the supreme leader also. The current MPs who should approve the 6 members of the Council of Guardians are qualified by the Council of Guardian before. In the first parliamentary election after revolution the council of Guardians did not intervene⁴² but in elections after that (and after fundamentalists seized power the council intervened to qualify the regime's supporters. Even in case of differences between parliament and the Council of Guardians, in which the Expediency Council should have the last word, the supreme leader is dominant because he appoints the Expediency Council's members. There is a mechanism to oversee the supreme leader by the Assembly of Experts but the members of this body should be qualified by the Council of Guardians to run for public election (which its members are chosen by the supreme leader directly or indirectly). In addition, in few cases Khamenei has intervened in regular process personally. For example in 2000 he ordered parliament to give up a moderate bill about the media law. In another case, when in 2012 minister of intelligence and security (who was close to Khamenei) resigned because of disagreements with President Ahmadinejad, Khamenei ordered the President that the minister should come back to work.

Besides the political power, Khamenei controls huge amounts of assets directly (and controls more indirectly). According to some investigations, only in one case Khamenei controls a \$95 billion organization called Headquarters for Executing the Order of the

⁴² http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/05/090516_ba-ir88-guardian-council.shtml

Imam, although there is no evidence that Khamenei is using the organization to enrich himself,⁴³ the wealth boosts his power even more.

There is an idea telling the Islamic Republic is summarized in the supreme leader and he is the only real power in Iran, thus investigation about reactions to issues like foreign forces in Afghanistan through the media is fruitless. But Iran's political atmosphere is more complicated and fractionized containing other players who provide a fertile ground for investigation.

1.6 Political factions in Iran

Beneath the surface of supreme leader's role, his office and representatives, there is a highly pluralistic political system with more than 200 parties and many informal networks⁴⁴ (Green et al., 2009, P. 25). Since mid-1980s we can label three main overlapping factions in Iran's politics: Conservatives, Reformists, and Pragmatists-Centrists (Green et al., 2009; Buchta, 2000; Ehteshami, & Hinnebusch, 1997; Bakhash, 2013). But especially after ending the Iran-Iraq war and Khomeini's death, political factions resurfaced more vivid. Facing with a nearly bankrupt economy and an impoverished population, different factions that Khomeini had held together with his personal influence and weight, fragmented fast (Ehsani, 2009, p. 28). Power struggle happens between these factions in various arenas: from parliament and various consultative forums to government agencies, and from Friday Prayer sermons to print media (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006, p. 102) these factions and definitions should be seen within the Islamic contexts and current Iran's situations. Part from these factions, there are some interpersonal competitions among leadership elite members that can be explained by pluralistic structure of the Shi'i clergy which is characterized by diverse opinions and schools of thoughts (Buchta, 2000, p. 10). One good example for that was

⁴³ <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/iran/#article/part1>(16/07/2014)

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139643/akbar-ganji/who-is-ali-khamenei> (18/07/2014)

⁴⁴ Actually supreme leader's side was once united through the Islamic Republican Party (1979-1987) but the party dissolved by Khomeini because of splitting and inefficiency. (Buchta, 2000, p. 12 ; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006)

Ayatollah Montazeri's case. This Marja' (the most high rank clergy in Shi'a) was the deputy of Khomeini but "purified" after disagreement with Khomeini. He was in house arrest for years but the regime could not omit and isolate him totally. Even some Khamenei's close relatives are against the Islamic Republic's policies while the regime tolerates them. For example Ayatollah Hadi Khamenei, who is the supreme leader's brother, talks against the regime's policy obviously.⁴⁵

1.6.1 Conservatives

This faction is concentrated around the supreme leader and some clerics like Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani and has powerful members and allies in every sector in the system as well as among traditional bazaaries (Green et al., 2009; Keshavarzian, 2007). In fact, Khamenei was not the most qualified candidate for being supreme leader and conservative Ulam's support was a key element for choosing him⁴⁶ (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006). Even Khamenei was not ready to seize the power himself only few years before becoming supreme leader. As Sciolino who interviewed with Khamenei at that time says: "When I interviewed Khamenei in 1982, he said that no one man could ever replace Khomeini as supreme leader, predicting that instead a council of three or five religious leaders would have to rule. He certainly did not portray himself as a candidate for the job"⁴⁷ (Peterson, 2010, p. 195) Conservatives support a patriarchal Islamic government, solidifying of the revolution results, protecting a traditional lifestyle, self-sufficiency, and cultural purity. Conservatives have supporters among some of IRGC's

⁴⁵ For example Hadi Khamenei in a speech in February 2014 suggests: "...While military and militia organizations [IRGC and Basij militia] are superiors, there is no political and media freedom and Mousavi and Karroubi [so-called Green Movement's leaders] are under arrest, we should not have expectation for [foreign] in the country." See: <http://www.dw.de/%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%85/a-17403102> (15/06/2014)

⁴⁶ Rafsanjani's support, which at that time was Khamenei's ally, was also so important to choose Khamenei as the supreme leader. Khamenei at that time says: "When I interviewed Khamenei in 1982, he said that no one man could ever replace Kho

⁴⁷ At that time, Khamenei was Iran's president.

members and bazaaries, as well as lower middle class, rural population, lower ranking preachers and certain radical clerical figures (Green et al., 2009, p. 25; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006). In foreign policy, conservatives are loyal to Islamic and anti-western activism, against the cultural imperialism, and American hegemony, while two other factions do not emphasize on these Islamic revolutionary aspects anymore. Among the three factions, conservatives are more committed to exporting revolution and supporting Islamic activities around the world (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006). Khamenei, like most conservatives, is deeply suspicious of western powers (especially the U.S) and thinks they are seeking regime-change in Iran. In their view, this can happen in different ways like through the Green Movement or a cultural invasion⁴⁸ and skepticism and conspiracy theory has shaped conservatives' ideas and influenced their actions from foreign policy to human rights (especially freedom of media) and cultural aspects. This faction is not without its own fractions. One of the biggest challenges was president Ahmadinejad's populist approach within the conservatives which they called the "deviant current". Ahmadinejad who had the support of conservatives in 2005 election against Rafsanjani and pragmatist camp and in 2009 suppression of Green Movement (people who took to the streets against the presidential election result), lost the conservative's support when tensions between his camp and traditional conservatives escalated. In one extreme case, his first deputy Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei was forced to resign by Khamenei's direct order⁴⁹ and Ahmadinejad forced to bring back his resigned intelligence minister which he wanted to change, again by Khamenei's direct order.⁵⁰ Ahmadinejad reacted to conservatives, especially during the last months of his presidency. He, for example, condemned the speaker of the house's⁵¹ brother for bribery through the airing of a video file in the parliament. In another case, he called

⁴⁸ <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139643/akbar-ganji/who-is-ali-khamenei> (18/07/2014)

⁴⁹ Rahim Mashaei's illegibility for 2013 presidential election also rejected by Council of Guardians later, despite obvious support by Ahmadinejad.

⁵⁰ <http://www.rahesabz.net/story/35858/> (12/07/2014)

⁵¹ Ali Larijani is a famous conservative figure. One of His brothers Sadegh is the head of the Judiciary.

IRGC “our own smuggling brothers” and actually confirmed the long term allegations about IRGC’s illegal businesses.⁵²

Despite some disagreements and fragmentations⁵³, conservatives have their own voice in the media. The most famous conservative media in Iran is the Kayhan newspaper which its manager editor, Hosein Shari’atmadari, is Khamenei’s representative also.

1.6.2 Reformists

This faction originally formed in 1987 by some leaders like Mohammad Khatami. Here, there is not one party or organization representing the whole faction but players are united around some targets like pluralism, freedom of speech, and open civil society (which have not the exact same definitions among them). Khatami, two period’s president between 1997 and 2005, argued for promotion of civil society, economic and cultural openness. These ideas had some new generation of Iranian religious thinkers’ support like Abdul Karim Soroush and Sai’d Hajjarian (Green et al., 2009; Buchta, 2000; Morady, 2011; Khosrokhavar, 2004).

Within a decade after the Iran-Iraq war, a substantial urban middle class emerged in Iran. At that time, many Iranians were young people who barely had experiences from the 1979 revolution or even the Iran-Iraq war. Their demands was for reform in civil society, bureaucracy, and bazaar. The middle class and young people were strongest supporters of the reformists, and its leader Mohammad Khatami won a landslide presidential election in 1997 (Ehsani, 2009; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006, p. 129).

⁵² For example See <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-17/khamenei-condemns-iran-leadership-quarrels.html> (10/07/2014)
<http://iranpulse.al-monitor.com/index.php/2013/09/2826/rouhani-tells-irgc-stay-out-of-partisan-politics/> (09/06/2014)

⁵³ for example they suggested several candidates in 2013 presidential election that in some cases were obviously disagree with each other and did not give up in other’s favor. But at the end they put themselves in one big camp.

Khatami changed the regime's domestic and foreign policies in some aspects. He supported more artistic and creative works and adopted a more liberal, or less radical, policy on the freedom of the media (Mozaffari, 1999, p.19). After the revolution, Khomeini's foreign policy was mostly about confrontation with the west (and especially with the U.S as the Great Satan), and to a lesser degree with USSR and also with many Muslim / neighbor governments. During Rafsanjani's era, this confrontation was moderated and become instrumental rather than fundamental. Khatami, tried to improve relations with the world (except Israel) although confrontation remained in the supreme leader's line (Ibid, p.20). Khatami's government tried to normalize the relation with the U.S government through the cooperation on Afghanistan and Iraq cases, but received a cold response.

At the end, Khatami two-term presidency (1997-2005) was marked by the intense struggles between conservatives who wanted to solidify power in the theocratic regime's clerical bodies and reformists / prodemocracies who sought power through the civil society and its institutions (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006, p.128). In this struggle, the reformist faction experienced serious setbacks as conservatives closed tens of newspapers, arrested and intimidated political opponents, and smashed student's protests by an iron fist.

1.6.3 Centrists/Pragmatists

This faction, which its most prominent figure is Hashemi Rafsanjani, was standing between the two previous factions. Rafsanjani had strong bands with Khamenei and even was a key player to elect Khamenei as supreme leader (Sherrill, 2011).⁵⁴

In terms of economy, Rafsanjani and his fellows (many of them gathered in the Executives of Construction Party) believed in providing more room for liberalism and

⁵⁴ also see: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/09/201391595824472506.html>
<http://iranwire.com/en/blogs/election/984> (15/06/2014)
<http://www.rand.org/blog/2013/05/the-supreme-leaders-revenge.html> (17/05/2014)

privatization which 80 percent was state-controlled in 1989. In foreign policy, they sought better political and economic relationship with the world (Brumberg, 2001; Gheisari & Nasr, 2006; Ehsani, 2009). Initially, the pragmatists did not oppose reform but instead, redefined it. Meanwhile, they did not support return to theocracy, revolutionary values, or militant foreign policy. Their pragmatic domestic and foreign policies promised change, despite lacking democratic intent (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006, p.153). Rafsanjani's model during his presidency (and after that), which was based on a modern and legal-rational state rooted in and committed to the revolutionary ideology, was unworkable. The failure of this model harmed the regime's legitimacy noticeably. By 1996, Iran was internationally isolated as most European ambassadors had left Iran and the U.S congress had passed more sanctions against Iran. Pragmatist approach has been under the pressure especially after 2009 presidential election and protests followed by people.

Rafsanjani (as well as many others in the faction) recently was inclined to the reformist camp⁵⁵ which leads strong disagreement with conservatives. After 2009 presidential election and widespread protests against the result, Rafsanjani supported protesters indirectly. The result was increasing pressure on him. Some of political figures and even his son and daughter were detained. As a consequence, even his qualification for presidential election was rejected by the conservative Guardian Council in the recent Iran's presidential election. However, it seems that pragmatists' new approach is focused on reconciliation in foreign policy and more open domestic policy by supporting the new president, Hasan Rouhani, who is close fellow of Rafsanjani as well as Khamenei.

⁵⁵ See for example: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/30/iran-new-press-freedoms>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/18/world/middleeast/ex-iran-president-seeks-comeback-against-odds.html?pagewanted=all& r=0> (14/06/2014)
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/2012215164958644116.html> (02/07/2014)

1.7 The Supreme Leader and factions

The current supreme leader's views about both domestic and foreign policy (including Iran's position about relations between Iran and western countries) has never totally dominated Iran's policy. This means to some extent that different political players, with their own instruments (including media), at the same time can influence on Iran's political atmosphere. Main political factions have echoed their ideas about Iran's policies according to their political and economic weights in Iran's internal atmosphere. Different factions in Iran's political arena means that power relations and decision-making processes are complicated in the Islamic Republic. In fact, in each period, domestic politics and to some extent foreign politics are influenced by one specific faction rather than only following a standard line which is determined by the revolution and even the supreme leader.

For instance, recently, there was an indirect debate between the supreme leader and the president. The story was that Khamenei in a speech in a meeting with members of the Assembly of Experts said: "...I am worried about the cultural issues just like you, honored Assembly of Expert's representatives".⁵⁶ Just a few days after, president Rouhani in the speech in the closing ceremony of the festival of press and news agencies said: "Why we could not make our honored people satisfied from the cultural situation of our society, after 35 years? What is wrong? If the cultural issues could have been solved through pressures and policing, we wouldn't have had worries about the culture today".⁵⁷

After the revolution, Khomeini did not allow differences among the regime's loyalists to surface. His power and charisma helped him to do this without any serious backlash and opposition. For example when differences in the only official Islamic Republic's

⁵⁶ <http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f10-khamenei-jannati-asseblt-experts-cultural-concerned-facebook/25288320.html> (01/07/2014)

⁵⁷ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2014/03/140308_i12_iran_media_freedom_rouhani.shtml?ocid=socialflow-facebook (02/07/2014)

Party, called the Islamic Republic Party, affected its function, Khomeini simply dissolved the party. However, he was so open to other ideas and accepted pragmatists like Rafsanjani and moderate generals' views that Iran could not win the war against Iraq and signed the 598 Security Council's resolution⁵⁸ (Tarock, 2001). Khamenei did not (and does not have) Khomeini's charisma or his rank in religious hierarchy, so he was dependent on others like Rafsanjani or some conservative clerics like Mahdavi kani to be appointed as the supreme leader and thus playing in context with different factions.

After Khomeini's death, the country faced sporadic and bloody street protests which were poorly-organized like shortly after the revolution (Butch, 2000). In Khatami's presidency era, Iran experienced both relative freedom and increased suppression. Along with relative openness in the political and social atmosphere, tens of published media criticized authorities and asked about regime's established policies. As a result, conservatives used the Iron fist and many critical media were shut down and some activists and journalists were detained⁵⁹ (Semati, 2008). The protests against the regime climaxed in widespread street protests (mostly by students) in Tehran and some other major cities, triggered by shutting down of a reformist newspaper (Butch, 2000) In these protests, "death to dictator" were heard pretty often, and referred to Khamenei. In the 2004 presidential election, Ahmadinejad's candidacy seemed to be supported by Khamenei and IRGC which supposed to boost Khamenei's power even more. But Ahmadinejad, who was supposed to be an obedient president, opposed some of Khamenei's wills. In addition, widespread street protests against the 2009 presidential election-showed that Khamenei did not have the legitimacy and the charisma of his predecessor, Khomeini, as the supreme leader. Meanwhile, international economic

⁵⁸ In some interviews and publications, Rafsanjani admits that he encouraged dissatisfied commanders to say the problem, directly to Khomeini. See: <http://aftabnews.ir/vdcdfn0fxyt0xf6.2a2y.html> (11/06/2014)

⁵⁹ Khatami himself forced to resign as a cultural minister in 1992 because of conservatives' pressures who thought Khatami is too tolerate with regard to "liberal" tendency in the press, books and film (Butch, 2000).

pressure hit the Islamic Republic more than ever⁶⁰. As Susan Rice said: “We have pursued the toughest sanctions regime ever imposed on any country against Iran”⁶¹. In this situation, accepting moderate factions and relatively openness in foreign and domestic policies are understandable.

In Iran’s latest presidential election, the Guardian Council rejected Rafsanjani’s candidacy and Khatami did not suggest himself as candidate (because he knew that he would be rejected⁶²) but both Rafsanjani (and most of the pragmatists) and Khatami (and most of the reformists) reached to a compromise to support Rouhani who is close to both Rafsanjani and Khamenei. In his critical comments through the national television in pre-election programs, Rouhani harshly criticized Ahmadinejad’s policies including his inflexible position about Iran’s nuclear issue as harmful to national interests. Rouhani won in the first run while gathered votes more than the other 5 candidates together.⁶³ Among the candidates was Said Jalili who was the head of the Iran’s negotiator team on Iran’s nuclear issue, that received less than 12% of the votes. Pretty high turnout (72.7%)⁶⁴ and conservatives’ defeat⁶⁵, showed that Iranians did not support the conservatives. Khamenei whose main motto against the international pressure over the Iran’s nuclear issue was “resistance economy”, suggested “flexible

⁶⁰ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/statement-president-first-step-agreement-irans-nuclear-program> (11/06/2013)

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.539115> (10/06/2014)

⁶¹ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world-july-dec13-rice_11-19/ (03/07/2014)

⁶² For instance, few weeks before the recent presidential election, Khatami in one speech said: “I should decide personally, but you can be sure that I do not make a decision that causes more costs for Iranian people. We should make the most flexibility with the least costs and going out from the atmosphere of suspicious, omitting and security. But do they allow a person with such thoughts and plans come?” (As a candidate). These statements show that even Rouhani maybe was not an ideal candidate in Khatami’s view. See: <http://www.radiozamaneh.com/65679> (11/07/214)

⁶³ In fact, some scholars suggest that Rouhani’s election showed Iranians are deeply against Khamenei’s decisions (Nader, 2013)

⁶⁴ <http://www.entekhabat.com/%D8%A8%D8%A7-%DA%A9%D8%B3%D8%A8-18%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-613%D9%87%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%88-329%D8%B1%D8%A3%DB%8C-%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%A6.html> (19/07/2014)

⁶⁵ Conservatives even could not reach an agreement to introduce one candidate while reformists and pragmatists were successful to reach an agreement and reformist candidate, Mohammadreza Aref, withdrew in Rouhani’s favor.

heroism”⁶⁶ after election and supported Rouhani's charm offensive policy. He knows that Rouhani's foreign and domestic policies successes could boost reformists and pragmatists' power against the conservatives and even IRGC. However, it seems that Khamenei does not agree with some of the new government's modus operandi. For example Khamenei has said that a phone call between Rouhani and Obama (during Rouhani's trip to the UN in New York 2013) was not “appropriate” while at the same time supported Rouhani's trip to New York. "We support the government's diplomatic moves including the New York trip because we have faith (in them)," Khamenei told commanders and graduating military cadets in Tehran. "But some of what happened in the New York trip was not appropriate," a thinly veiled reference to the phone call.⁶⁷ Before and during his stay in New York, Rouhani indicated he had "full authority" on the nuclear negotiations with the West, and the support of Khamenei.⁶⁸ In domestic policy, the new government cautiously began to criticize the status quo and changing some policies. For example, the president and some other members of cabinet are active in social networks like Twitter and Facebook, both banned in Iran. Actually, they were successful in grabbing Iranians' attention, for example, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the foreign minister, has more than 850,000 followers on Facebook⁶⁹. This is totally against conservatives' ideas that assume social networks as enemy's spying tools⁷⁰. In cultural issues, the government re-opened Iranian Alliance of Motion Picture Guilds (Khane-ie Sinama) and withdrew previous government's lawsuit against national Journalists

⁶⁶ <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139953/akbar-ganji/frenemies-forever> (12/07/2014)

<http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/10/201310612759862847.htm> (12/07/2014)

⁶⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/05/ayatollah-khamenei-rouhan_n_4049638.html (13/07/2014)

<http://www.roozonline.com/persian/news/newsitem/archive/2013/november/04/article/-9e8d190bb2.html> (10/06/2014)

⁶⁸ <http://www.france24.com/en/20130930-revolutionary-guards-chief-jafari-criticises-rohani-obama-phone-call/> (19/07/2014)

⁶⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/jzarif> (17/07/2014)

⁷⁰ <http://www.roozonline.com/persian/news/newsitem/archive/2013/november/20/article/-02cf181659.html> (14/05/2014)

Union.⁷¹ Also the new government promised to be more tolerant about censorship and for example allowed to re-print some previously banned books. Maybe because of the government's cultural policy Khamenei emphasized that he is "worrying" about the cultural issues.

1.8 Media's law and freedom in Iran

Iran has experienced short periods of free atmosphere press freedom in the past. This spring ended by imposing the Islamic / revolutionary ideology by the new rulers (Shahidi, 2007). Although during the time, early fundamentalism changed to greater realism, pressure on media continued (Kamalipur, 2007). The main mission of the media officially remain unchanged. For instance, according to the Iran's press law, the press' mission are including: "resisting against the symbols of colonial's culture...and promotion and propagation of pure Islamic culture and spreading the ethical perfections" and "protection and solidifying the neither East nor West policy".⁷²

Iran's regime has tried to control media but has been unsuccessful in controlling different media by the same measure. There is no private radio and television network in Iran. In addition, the supreme leader appoint the head of the radio and television (Seda-va-Sima) directly. Lack of other voices in radio and television, caused people to use alternative media vastly (Alikhah, 2008). Many Iranians are watching foreign programs through band satellite receivers. In return, government jams satellite frequencies and sporadically attacks residential areas and damages satellite dishes but has not been successful in stopping their use. According to Iran's new culture minister, 71 percent of Iranians use satellite dishes.⁷³

⁷¹ <http://shahrekord.irna.ir/fa/News/81067583/%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A8/%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%B4%DA%A9%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B5%D9%86%D9%81%DB%8C%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%BE%D8%B3%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%AA> (11/07/2014)

⁷² Iran's press law, Article 2 see: <http://press.farhang.gov.ir/fa/rules/laws2> (13/05/2014)

⁷³ <http://www.dw.de/irans-culture-minister-to-loosen-internet-restrictions/a-17468301> (14/07/2014)
http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/12/131217_139_satellite_ban_jannati.shtml (14/07/2014)

Iran imposes harsh limits on the internet. The country has been one of the biggest internet enemies in the world for years.⁷⁴ Many famous websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are banned as well as thousands of other websites. Cyber activists are under pressure and face persecution while some are jailed. In 2012, Iran's cyber police arrested Sattar Beheshti, a blogger, apparently because of his critical posts about the regime. He passed away few days after in jail. His death cause announced stress officially but still many questions remain unanswered.⁷⁵ Authorities also have reduced the internet speed and periodically blocked proxy servers and virtual private networks (VPN) that Iranians use to circumvent internet filtering.⁷⁶ It seems that the new government seeks a moderate policy on the internet. Several members of the cabinet are active on social media like Twitter and Facebook. Until now, some cabinet member and influential people close to the government have said statements against censorships in Islamic Republic. Recently Rafsanjani criticized censorship in media. "Iranians are not under the influence of Seda-o-Sima [National Radio and TV] and the box which censors materials any more. Instead, Iranians are aware and do not hear to the box that censors" Rafsanjani said in an official speech⁷⁷. Iran's culture minister said 4 million Iranians are members of the Facebook and preventing Facebook is impossible. "Four million Iranians are on Facebook, and we have restricted it. We cannot restrict the advance of [such technology] under the pretext of protecting Islamic values." Jannati said.⁷⁸ However, there is still no noticeable breakthrough in cyberspace freedom.

Because of a lack of political parties' activities, the press and especially newspapers have been mouthpiece of political factions and approaches in Iran's balance of power between players (Alikhah, 2008). They have freedom of speech according to the weight of powers which they are close to. Recently, President Rouhani harshly criticized some press that have "bastion of steel"

⁷⁴ <http://surveillance.rsf.org/en/iran/> (11/07/2014)

⁷⁵ <http://www.dw.de/%D9%BE%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B1%DA%AF-%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B7-%D9%BE%D8%B2%D8%B4%DA%A9%DB%8C-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C/a-16938162> (12/06/2014)

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch world report (2014) see the PDF at: <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014> (12/07/2014)

⁷⁷ http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f9_hashemi_criticizes_censorship_iran_state_tv/25138303.html (15/07/2014)

⁷⁸ <http://www.dw.de/irans-culture-minister-to-loosen-internet-restrictions/a-17468301> (18/07/2014)

and think they are “people’s guardian”. There is a strong belief that he referred to Kayhan newspaper and Radio and TV.⁷⁹

The Islamic Republic has to some extent, a flexible policy about newspapers compared with other media such as television or internet. The newspapers experienced suppression and relative freedom periodically. Only a few months after the revolution in July 1979, dozens of newspapers were closed down, bringing to an end what had become known as ‘The Spring of Freedom’ (Shahidi, 2007, p. 23). Khomeini’s statement against the Ayandegan (Posterity) newspaper caused to close the newspaper (which was followed by a wave of suppression), and even street protest could not change his mind (Behruz, 1999 & Shahidi, 2007). Years after the first wave of freedom of the press, in Khatami’s presidency era, newspapers experienced a moderately free atmosphere. Tens of newspapers appeared and started to criticize different aspects of authorities’ performances. This relatively free atmosphere did not last long. Many newspapers were shot down by the judiciary system and tens of journalists persecuted. According to Iran’s press law, violation by newspaper should be investigated by a special court and jury. Exceptions are offences like treason, acting against the national interests, sacrilege and insulting to supreme leader.⁸⁰ These offences are investigated in the ordinary judiciary system and have been used for suppression and arbitrary interpretations and judgments. Even the press court is under the conservatives’ control. Only one member of this 7 member body is a press representative while others have been chosen by government, parliament, judiciary, and Howzeh as a religious institutions.⁸¹

In 2013, 40 journalists and bloggers were in jail⁸² and Iran’s rank in the press freedom index was 173 among 180 countries⁸³. However, the new government brought some hope for changes and a more moderate atmosphere to newspapers. Recently, the government withdrew the previous government’s closure and lawsuit against the Iran’s journalists’ national union and paved the way for re-opening it.

⁷⁹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2014/03/140309_i26_rouhani_press_radio.shtml (25/07/2014)
http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f14_rouhani_crititized_policing_methods_culture/25290124.html
(22/07/2014)

⁸⁰ Iran’s press law, articles 24-27

⁸¹ Iran’s press law, article 10

⁸² Human Rights Watch world report (2014) see the PDF at: <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014> (14/06/2014)

⁸³ RSF World press freedom index 2014 available at: <https://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php> (14/06/2014)

In the following, the history and experiences of two Iranian main newspapers which are case studies in this study, will be investigated in more details.

1.9 Shargh and Kayhan as representative of different factions

1.9.1 Shargh

Shargh (East) newspaper was established in 2003 and, at that time, was the most circulated private newspaper in Iran.⁸⁴ Its editorial was the editorial of “Hamshahri Javan” (Fellow City-dweller - young) which was published by Tehran’s city council controlled by centrists at the time. After transferring the control of Tehran’s city council to conservatives and electing Ahmadinejad (future president) as Tehran’s mayor in 2003, the editorial team of “Hamshahri Javan” resigned. They started to work in the then newly established Shargh newspaper which was managed by Mehdi Rahmanian.⁸⁵ The newspaper has had a difficult time and has been banned several times until now.

First time it was banned was in February 2004. Shargh published an open letter from 144 MPs to Khamenei protesting the vast rejections of reformist candidates of parliamentary election by the Guardian Council ⁸⁶(Shahidi, 2007). Another reason for banning the newspaper was publishing the Zahra Kazemi⁸⁷’s lawyer statements which made the judiciary angry.⁸⁸ Shargh apologized officially through a public letter to the general prosecutor and could resume its publishing again.

The newspaper was shot down again in 11 September 2006. The reason apparently was a cartoon showing one horse and a donkey in front of each other on a chess pad,

⁸⁴ <http://aftabnews.ir/fa/news/97390/%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D8%AF> (23/07/2014)

⁸⁵ <http://isna.ir/fa/news/91101107037/%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B4%D8%AA> (23/07/2014)

⁸⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2004/02/040219_bt_papersban.shtml (13/05/2014)

⁸⁷ The Iranian-Canadian journalist who was detained in Iran while taking photo from a protest by political prisoner’s families and passed away in the notorious Evin jail in 2003.

⁸⁸ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/09/090915_mg_shargh_newspaper_media_history.shtml (12/05/2014)

named “another game’s role”, apparently cartooning Ahmadinejad as a donkey.⁸⁹ Before the second ban, the press supervisory board had ordered Shargh to change its editorial team, which Shargh did not.⁹⁰ In fact, some journalists who had cooperated with Shargh were detained and persecuted by judiciary system especially after Iran’s controversial presidential election in 2009. Some of them got heavy sentences like the prominent journalist, Ahmad Zeidabadi who was sentenced to 6 years in prison, five years of internal exile in the city of Gonabad (a remote area) and life-time ban on all social and political activities.⁹¹

Shargh started to publish again on 14 May 2007, this time without some of its old writers⁹². However, another ban happened less than three months later and this time the reason was an interview with Saghi Ghahreman, a lesbian poet who was living in exile. Conservatives accused her of being morally corrupt and an American spy.⁹³ This time, the ban lasted around three years until April 2010. The new chief editor, Ahmad Gholami, said the newspaper will be more focused on cultural and social issues (instead of political one)⁹⁴. But even the newspaper’s cautiousness could not prevent another ban in 26 September 2012. The reason this time was a cartoon which was interpreted as insulting Iranian fighters in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988).⁹⁵ In this case, press court acquitted Shargh after three months from insulting to the Iran-Iraq fighters and in 31 December 2012 Shargh came back to newsstands. Shargh has been published ever since.

⁸⁹ <http://www.economist.com/node/9621974> (19/05/2014)

⁹⁰ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2006/09/060911_shr-sharg.shtml (05/05/2014)

⁹¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/04/100411_l11_shargh_newspaper.shtml (05/05/2014)

[http://www.amnesty.ie/sites/default/files/Ahmad%20Zeidabadi%20-%20PDF%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.amnesty.ie/sites/default/files/Ahmad%20Zeidabadi%20-%20PDF%20(2).pdf) (17/06/2014)

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/iranian_journalist_ahmad_zeidabadi_to_receive_2011_unescoguillermo_cano_world_press_freedom_prize/#.Uz1v2fmSzkI (12/05/2014)

⁹² <http://www.roozonline.com/persian/news/newsitem/article/-e706a212d4.html> (24/06/2014)

⁹³ <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8605170420> (28/06/2014)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-08-06/iran-paper-banned-for-interviewing-gay-activist/2523518> (11/04/2014)

⁹⁴ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/04/100411_l11_shargh_newspaper.shtml (10/04/2014)

⁹⁵ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2012/09/news-reformist-daily-shut-for-cartoon-irna-head-jailed-in-presidents-absence.html> (09/005/2014)

Shargh is one of the few reformist newspaper which survived through the suppressions and banning newspapers in Iran, although it has been forced to be cautious and “exercising self-censorship” (Ibid, P.77).

1.9.2 Kayhan

Kayhan (the universe) is one of oldest Iran’s newspaper still in the newsstands. Kayhan was established in 1942 as a leading daily newspaper published in Tehran and was under the aegis of Moṣṭafā Meṣbāḥzādeh (1908-2006) from 1942 until the 1979 Revolution.⁹⁶ Before the revolution, Kayhan’s publishing company was part of Iran monarch’s (Shah) establishment and Kayhan’s Moṣṭafā Meṣbāḥzādeh became a member of the Senate (Shahidi, 2007). Kayhan was one of the biggest newspapers in Iran before the revolution. In 1976, Kayhan had a staff of 1,500 in Tehran and 1,200 in the provinces (Javanroudi, 1980, p.218). By comparison, the average number of staff in Iran’s large industrial firms in the same year was 60 (Shahidi, 2007, p.4). Sometimes, Kayhan had direct financial support from the Shah’s regime.⁹⁷ During the revolution and especially in the last months before the ousting the regime, Kayhan reflected the revolutionaries’ positions (Javanroudi, 1980)⁹⁸. After a short period of a “spring of freedom” which ended in July 1979, dozens of newspapers were closed down, newspapers and journalists including Kayhan’s staff experienced heavy pressure. Many of them “purified” and persecuted. Even Kayhan’s editor, Rahman Hatefi, was executed for his membership of the Tudeh Party (Shahidi, 2007).

A few months before the revolution, Kayhan sympathized with the revolutionaries but tried to maintain an independent position; meanwhile, for example when Khomeini called for vahdate- kalameh (unity of world), which was sometimes used as the justification for attacks on non-conformist views, Kayhan’s editorial described

⁹⁶ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kayhan-newspaper> (13/06/2014)

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ <http://www.irdc.ir/fa/calendar/129/default.aspx> (19/05/2014)

‘diversity as the embodiment of real unity,’ and ‘the essence of life and truth’ that had to be respected” (Javanroudi, 1980, p.74). After the revolution, Kayhan was under constant pressure and as a result, gave in. “Editorials on 18, 19, and 20 March, before the week-long Iranian New Year holiday, described the paper as an ‘organ of the Islamic Revolution’, and a supporter of ‘Islam, Iran’s independence and general freedoms.’ (Shahidi, 2007, p.29) this position cut Kayhan’s circulation by around 200,000 just in less than 4 days (Javanroudi, 1980, p.136). Kayhan stayed in this position and during the time became more and more conservative and in line with the intelligence organizations. For instance, when Khatami resigned from cultural ministry because of conservatives’ pressures, “Kayhan group were also replaced with officials close to or sympathetic with the military and intelligence organizations” (Shahidi, 2007, p.48). Kayhan, in the Khatami’s era, went even more to the margin after establishment of many new newspapers (most of them reformists) that brought new blood to Iran’s domestic atmosphere. In 2004, Iran had 1200 newspapers which was 10 times more than under the revolution era (Ibid, p.133). In 2005 one survey suggested that 44.2 percent of people trusted Shargh newspaper and 20.3 percent thought that Kayhan was trustable (Semati, 2008, pp.63-64). Kayhan, after the 2009 protests in Iran, adopted a hostile position against protesters and their leaders (Musavi and Karrubi which are more than 3 years on the house arrest). Kayhan usually calls them spies, enemy’s fifth pillars, mercenaries, and terrorists’ collaborators, and names the widespread protests against regime after 2009, Fitnah (sedition).⁹⁹ Kayhan even calls Khatami with exactly the

⁹⁹ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8977/%D8%A2%D9%86-%D8%AA%DA%A9-%D9%88-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%AA%DA%A9-%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%AA-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2> (17/05/2014)
<http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9089/%D8%AF%D9%8F%D9%85-%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%87%E2%80%8C%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%87%D9%85-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%88%DB%8C%DA%98%D9%87> (17/05/2014)

same name which it usually uses for the detained Musavi and Karrubi who are Sedition's leaders.¹⁰⁰ Kayhan's ongoing position about Rafsanjani is different; on the one hand it tries to show that Rafsanjani and reformists (secessionists) disagree¹⁰¹ and on the other hand, criticizes Rafsanjani for being vocal against conservatives.¹⁰² Kayhan continues its opposition to Rouhani's government, especially its foreign policy and nuclear talks, expressing the view that Rouhani's government is "naïve" and "not firm enough"¹⁰³. In cultural issues Kayhan refers to the cultural minister's statements about Facebook (see before) and calls him "cultural general!" who bombards his own troops and is worrying about shutting down enemy's basis in the country.¹⁰⁴ In another case, Kahan suggests changing "university! We are ashamed" instead of "thank you

¹⁰⁰ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9190/%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%DB%8C%DA%A9%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A8%DB%8C-%D9%88-%D9%87%D9%86%D8%B1%DB%8C>

¹⁰¹ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8978/%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%88%DB%8C%DA%98%D9%87>
<http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8714/%DA%86%D9%87-%DA%A9%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%B4%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%AF-%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%88%DB%8C%DA%98%D9%87> (17/05/2014)

¹⁰² <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8412/%D8%A7%DA%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%81-%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF-%DA%86%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AD%D8%B0%D9%81-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%88%DB%8C%DA%98%D9%87>
<http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8822/%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B9%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D8%B0%D8%A8-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA> (16/05/2014)

¹⁰³ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8826/%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%86%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B4%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87> (11/06/2014)

¹⁰⁴ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9247/%DA%98%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A8%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87> (16/05/2014)

Rouhani”¹⁰⁵(this issue will be further discussed). It seems that Kayhan is backed by the judiciary system in Iran (called a “bastion of steel” by Rouhani). In one rare case Kayham was sued by several reformists (and Ahmadinejad’s close ally, Rahim Mashae) because of defamations and false accusations, its manager-editor and Khamenei’s representative, Hosein Shariatmadari, was acquitted off all charges by the press court.¹⁰⁶ There will be more extended and precise investigating about two mentioned newspaper in this study. A more detailed analysis of the two newspapers will be discussed further.

Next part will be investigated Rouhani’s foreign policy shortly.

1.10 Iran’s new government and the struggle for detente

The Islamic Republic has always shown a mishmash of pragmatism and ideology in its foreign policy (Mahdvi, 2013). In some periods, pragmatism dominated and Iran tried to put its differences with other countries aside in some fields (Carter, 2010, Parsi, 2006) and offered détente, especially in Khatami’s era (Mahdavi, 2013). Iran had experienced periods when ideology was dominating its relations with other countries (especially western countries). One of the first tensions between Iran and foreign countries was started by the U.S hostage crisis in 1979. The hostile rhetoric against the West and other enemies has remained until now. In Ahmadinejad’s era, ideology gained a dominant position in Iran’s foreign policy again and the result was devastating for Iran. In an official meeting with some ministers, deputies of ministries and chief executives of public companies Rouhani said “in foreign policy... the building which

¹⁰⁵ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9334/%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B4%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA> (11/06/2014)

¹⁰⁶ http://www.aftabir.com/news/view/2010/may/11/c1c1273571968_politics_iran_hosein_shariatmadari.php/%D8%AD%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B4%D8%AF (11/06/2014)

is ruined during past 8 years will not be rebuilt in few months...”¹⁰⁷. Even Kayhan which initially called Ahmadinejad’s government “the most beloved government” since the Islamic revolution, changed its tune and on Tuesday, April 23rd, 2013, called the outgoing president “a coward, a bluffer and insincere.” (Amuzegar, 2013. P.132).

Iran’s new government tries to end Iran’s international isolation and have a better relations with the country’s neighbors and the world (Nader, 2013; Monshipouri & Dorraj, 2013).¹⁰⁸ Rouhani and his foreign minister Javad Zarif, shortly after going to office, tried to emphasize Iran’s moderation and modified some sensitive issues like the position on the Holocaust.¹⁰⁹ As Rouhani said in an interview with NBC, he wants to remove barriers against Iran to join the international community: “Suspicious and miscalculations have created many walls between nations. Leaders must try to remove these walls. The wall which is called mistrust, the wall which is called suspicion, the wall called miscalculation should all be torn down...”¹¹⁰. Javad Zarif in his interview with ABC news said: “[The] Holocaust was a heinous crime, it was a genocide, it must never be allowed to be repeated...”¹¹¹ The Iranian government has even used unconventional diplomatic channels to reduce tensions. Javad Zarif uses his famous accounts on Facebook and Tweeter to spread moderate messages and Rouhani uses his

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/323982> (11/06/2014)

¹⁰⁸ The Rouhani’s speech in media horizons conference, Tehran, 2013 available in: <http://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/119133/%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD-%D8%B3%D8%AE%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A8-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82-%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87> (13/05/2014)

¹⁰⁹ <http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/25/transcript-amanpour-rouhani-interview/>
http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-of-iran-hassan-rouhani-time-to-engage/2013/09/19/4d2da564-213e-11e3-966c-9c4293c47ebe_story.html
http://www.nbcnews.com/id/53069733/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/full-transcript-ann-currys-interview-iranian-president-hassan-rouhani/#.U1gehvmSzkI (01/05/2014)
http://www.nbcnews.com/id/53069733/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/full-transcript-ann-currys-interview-iranian-president-hassan-rouhani/#.U1gehvmSzkI (06/06/2014)

¹¹⁰ http://www.nbcnews.com/id/53069733/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/full-transcript-ann-currys-interview-iranian-president-hassan-rouhani/#.U1gehvmSzkI (16/05/2014)

¹¹¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/09/iranian-foreign-minister-javad-zarif-holocaust-a-heinous-crime-and-a-genocide/> (16/05/2014)

Tweeter account for the same purpose. For example, Rouhani greeted the Rosh Hashana through his Tweeter account as well as Zarif.¹¹²

As Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif has particularly drawn attentions. He is an experienced politician and chief negotiator in the recent nuclear talks between Iran and the six global powers. He studied at the University of San Francisco and completed his doctorate at the University of Denver. For five years, he lived in New York and was Iran's ambassador to the United Nations.¹¹³ In his book, *Mr. Ambassador*, which was published in 2013, he says his religious father was against the revolution. He admits mistakes in Iran's foreign policy in the first years after the revolution and in Iran-Iraq war era. He says "because of lack of experience, we did not take into account [rationality] in that period... of course our goal was sacred, but every work has its own way and we made mistake"¹¹⁴ He also thinks that Ahmadinejad's foreign policy was inappropriate. In one article in *Foreign Affairs* he explains "Rouhani promised to remedy the unacceptable state of affairs through a major overhaul of the country's foreign policy."¹¹⁵ Both Rouhani and Zarif are currently supported by Khamenei in terms of managing foreign policy and especially nuclear talks with 5+1.¹¹⁶

As discussed previously, Khamenei himself does not have absolute power in Iran and there is a level of competition among different factions and powerful individuals (like Rafsanjani). He has always been skeptic about the West and the U.S and, as famous

¹¹² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/09/04/irans-president-just-wished-all-jews-a-happy-rosh-hashanah-on-twitter/> (21/06/2014)

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23990717> (16/06/2014)

¹¹³ <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/the-case-for-giving-irans-scholar-diplomats-a-chance/282010/> (16/06/2014)- Hassan Rouhani, Iran's president, has more cabinet members with Ph.D. degrees from U.S. universities than Barack Obama does. In fact, Iran has more holders of American Ph.D.s in its presidential cabinet than France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, or Spain—combined (Ibid).

¹¹⁴ http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/11/131112_zarif_safir_review.shtml (26/06/2014)

¹¹⁵ <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141209/mohammad-javad-zarif/what-iran-really-wants> (26/06/2014)

¹¹⁶ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/irans-khamenei-approves-rouhanis-diplomacy/2013/10/05/75fa8336-2db9-11e3-b141-298f46539716_story.html (16/05/2014) 5+1: permanent members of United Nations Security Council plus Germany which in 2006 joined the diplomatic efforts with Iran regards to its nuclear program.

Iranian first revolutionary and then dissident Akbar Ganji says,” he believes that the U.S. government is bent on regime change in Iran, whether through internal collapse, democratic revolution, economic pressure, or military invasion.”¹¹⁷ Khamenei is under pressure to accept a moderate foreign policy at least in the nuclear case, he invested his political capital on Ahmadinejad’s second presidential term which was heavily controversial and further lost legitimacy after tough sanctions and deteriorating conditions of people’s everyday lives. In fact, he was forced to accept Rouhani as the president facing his popularity (Nader, 2013; Monshipouri & Dorraj, 2013). Khamenei’s “heroic flexibility” could be a green light to the pragmatic and to some extent, for realist Rouhani to pursue a reconciliation especially in the nuclear issue.

Rouhani’s policy, which is well-known for its moderation, is close to realists, especially defensive realists. He talks about “power calculation” which is close to “balance of power” in realism. He believes the international arena is an environment of bargaining, struggling and competition in an unclear atmosphere: “every [country] bargains and struggles, that one wants to build a unipolar world and others want to build a multipolar world and all of them are active in the foreign policy arena...in the current time, assessing our power incorrectly and assuming it less than what is exists, is dangerous. Assessing power as more than what is exists, is also dangerous.”¹¹⁸ It seems that, president Rouhani believes in game theory and pros and cons. Unlike his predecessor, Rouhani is cautious about Iran’s ambitions and actions. On the one hand, he wants to boost Iran’s power and influence and on the other hand, he wants to decrease tensions in the region and use opportunities through the rapprochement in the region. As he said: “in our region, some countries miscalculated and you saw their fate [likely

¹¹⁷ <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139643/akbar-ganji/who-is-ali-khamenei> (19/06/2014)

¹¹⁸ <http://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/119133/%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD-%D8%B3%D8%AE%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A8-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82-%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87> (17/06/2014)

he meant Iraq in Saddam Hussein era] and some countries in Asia made correct calculations and you can see their progress, new position, and emergence”.¹¹⁹ He has already emphasized in his presidential campaign several times that he “prevented war against Iran through prudent negotiations with the world”¹²⁰

It seems that Rouhani’s discourse in foreign policy is based on the following elements:

- Calculation in perusing national and international interests
- Interaction with neighbor countries and the world
- Balance of power based on moderation concept
- Rapprochement with neighbor countries and world powers

Iran has always (and especially during the past eight years) emphasized its identity as: a moderate Shia regime in opposition to Sunni extremists, hostile to Israel and pro-Palestinian, and anti-hegemonic / capitalist powers. Rouhani should find good alternatives for them and make them moderate. In addition, the ongoing war in Syria has isolated Iran in the region more than before and Rouhani should struggle to find a solution for this conflict alongside old conflicts in the region which Iran is accused of intervening in them, like in Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ <http://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/115305/%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%A2%D9%82%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%85-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%85-%DA%AF%D9%81%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%AC%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%DA%AF%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%BE%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D9%87-%D9%86%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%AF-%DA%AF%D9%81%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%85-%D9%88%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%81-%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-4%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%85%DB%8C> (16/06/2014)

1.11 Relationship between Iran and Afghanistan

Iran and Afghanistan have had an up and down relationship throughout history. The control of western Afghanistan changed hands several times, which led to strong cultural and economic ties. Until 1857, as former Iran's president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said, Herat was considered as "integral part" of Iran. After a brief war between Iran and the UK, the two countries signed the Treaty of Paris in March of 1857. Through this treaty, Iran dropped its historical claims in Western Afghanistan; however, under Article VII Iran reserved the right to send forces into Afghanistan "if its frontier is violated". Afghanistan was acknowledged as a sovereign state at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, but exact demarcation of the common border between Iran and Afghanistan did not happen until the 1930s (Milani, 2006, p.252; Wild, 2009, p.13; Carter, 2010, p. 981; McCauley, 2002, p.8). Since then, Iran has sought western Afghanistan and Herat as a buffer zone (Milani, 2006; Kagan et al., 2012; Wild, 2009). Traditionally, before Iran's 1979 revolution, the country had warm relationship with both Afghanistan and Pakistan. To specify, during the 1970s, Iran's regime was an anti-Soviet barrier and a pro-U.S. "regional gendarme" (Morini, 2010, p.78).

There was no compromise in Iran's policy towards Afghanistan after the revolution. For instance, Anoush Ehteshami (2002), a leading scholar of international relations and Iran's foreign policy suggests, "revolutionary Iran always been a "rational actor" in the classic Realist model. Even some of its excesses can be as calculated risks or opportunity responses to difficult situations" (Akbarzadeh, 2014, p.65). Some scholars argue that Iran's policy towards Afghanistan after revolution has been complicated and contradictory (Akbarzadeh, 2014; Carter, 2010; Kagan et al., 2012; Milani, 2006) and even schizophrenic (Sadjadpour, 2008).

Iran's policy towards Afghanistan and the foreign forces in Afghanistan can be investigated through some main elements: 1- Iran's attempts to deepen political, economic and ideological influence in Afghanistan. 2-Iran's recognition of Sunni extremism and militancy as a threat. 3- Iran's fear of the possibility of enduring US and

NATO military existence in its east. In addition, Iran believes NATO is fueling militancy and insurgency and regional instability by presenting and operating in Afghanistan. 4- Iran's attempts to stop drug smuggling from Afghanistan to Iran which can finance terrorists and militants and additional negative impacts on Iran's security. 5- Iran tries to resolve the issue of 2 million legal and illegal Afghan immigrants in Iran. Tehran believes this huge amount of immigrants and refugees can put pressure on an already vulnerable economy and put Iran's security at risk (Carter, 2010; Akbarzadeh, 2014; Kagan et al., 2012; Sadjadpour, 2008).

However, the mentioned issues are inadequate to understanding the logic of Iran's attitude towards Afghanistan and foreign forces. Iran's political atmosphere is factionalized and we need to investigate each faction and the priorities which play in "determining appropriate courses of action in Afghanistan" (Carter, 2010, p.985). According to Hadi Khalid, former Deputy of the Interior for Security between 2006 and 2008, "Iran has many institutions and these are often in competition with one other, serving Tehran at cross-purposes. Iran's Afghan policy is fluid and changes rapidly according to interests of the day. Iran is constantly shifting its position here." (Ibid). Despite the complicated and contradictory nature of Iran's policy in Afghanistan, investigating the roots of Iran's national interests creates a better and more accurate picture of Iran's policies.

1.11.1 Iran's political, economic and ideological influence on Afghanistan

It seems that Iran has been noticeably pragmatic in this field in the past. Iran harshly condemned the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and asked for the **Soviet's** withdrawal but also was cautious not damage its relations with Soviet irreversibly (Milani, 2006). Hours before the Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan, Vladimir Vinogradov, the Soviet ambassador to Iran, met Supreme Leader Khomeini in Qom and informed Ayatollah about the Soviet plan. According to the Vinogradov what Soviet wanted from Iran was "to refrain from arousing anti-Soviet and Pro-Islamic

sentiments in Iran, Afghanistan and the Soviet Central Asia” (Tarock, 1999, pp.804-805). The ambassador adds that Ayatollah asked a favor from the Soviet Union in return. Khomeini assessed that sooner or later the US would ask the UN Security Council to impose economic sanctions against Iran over Iran’s hostage crisis. Khomeini asked the ambassador, “would the Soviet Union support Iran on that issue [voting against the sanctions]?” Khomeini also assumed that even without any sanctions by the UN, the Americans would likely blockade all of Iran’s ports in the Persian Gulf. So, he asked ambassador, “could Iran use the Soviet Union as transit route to Europe?” The ambassador’s positive response was, “without hesitation” (Ibid, p.805). Iran also used the Afghan card as the bargaining chip to limit Soviet’s supply of arms to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and to tame the pro-Moscow Tudeh party’s activities (Milani, 2006, p. 237). These kind of pragmatic relations resumed between Russia and Iran. Despite Tehran’s criticisms against the suppression of Chechen Muslims, relations between the two countries did not face any major problems” due to convergence of Russian and Iranian strategic interests” (Smith, 2000, p.140; Akbarzadeh, 2014).

Soviet forces did not dominate the Hazarejat region in Central Afghanistan, which is Shia’s community stronghold. It is not clear if this policy was because of uprising Pakistani-backed resistance or was due to concession towards Ayatollah Khomeini. After all, this policy allowed Iran to establish a sophisticated network inside Afghanistan and spread and deepen its influence (Milani, 2006, p.238). Years after, during the international negotiations for Soviet withdrawal, the US and Soviet Union pledged not to interfere in Afghanistan. This policy caused a dangerous power vacuum, which paved the way for greater part for Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Ibid, p.239).

Iran tried to spread its influence especially on the Northern Alliance among Shia Hazaras, Persian/Dari speakers Tajiks, and Uzbeks. As a result, Iran helped to build a shakening alliance between Ahmad Shah Masud, Borhaneddin Rabbani, and Abdol Rashid Dostum which overthrew Najibollah’s government (Morini, 2010; Akbarzadeh, 2014; Milani, 2006). Iran’s continued support has not been limited to political and

military support. To support a stable country and a buffer zone and to boost economic activity between Iran and Afghanistan, Iran has pumped money to Afghanistan generously. Iran pledged some \$560 million at the Tokyo Conference in 2002 and added \$100 million more during the London Conference on Afghanistan Reconstruction in 2006 (Akbarzadeh, 2014; Milani, 2006). In addition, some reports suggest Iran has helped its allies and the Afghan government directly separate from international conference commitments. It was reported that Iran supplied Ismail Khan, Herat's former governor, with at least 20 truckloads of cash to help him buy the loyalty of his forces (Johnson, 2004). Also, Afghan intelligence sources claimed that Iran supplied arms, cars, trucks, and cash to the Uzbek General Abdol Rashid Dostum. It is also reported that Iran sent bags of cash amounting to up to €500,000 to Afghan political leaders, including the Karzai presidential office, to cover administrative expenses¹²¹ (Akbarzadeh, 2014, pp.68-70). In addition, some sources say that Iran financed religious schools and media outlets in Afghanistan. According to Mohammad Omar Daudzai, former Afghan ambassador to Iran, thousands of Afghan religious leaders are on the Iranian payroll, which is created by officials in Supreme Leader Khamenei's office (Kagan et al., 2012, p.81).

Iran has a noticeable share of Afghanistan's legal economy. Iran prefers a politically and economically stable Afghanistan as a neighbor. In 2006, four percent of Iran's total exports went to Afghanistan, putting it seventh on the list of countries receiving Iranian goods (Carter, 2010, p. 982). Iran's exports to Afghanistan have grown over the years and increased from \$800 million in 2008 to more than \$2 billion in 2011. In 2014, Iran's trade balance with Afghanistan was \$2.4 billion in exports and \$32 million in imports.¹²² Afghanistan's total imports in 2013 was \$8.9 billion.¹²³ Presently, more than 2000 Iranian companies operate in Afghanistan in different sectors. Infrastructure

¹²¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/25/hamid-karzai-office-cash-iran> (11/06/2014)

¹²² [http://www.irna.ir/en/News/2683992/Economic/Iran_exports_to_Afghanistan_to_top_\\$4_bn](http://www.irna.ir/en/News/2683992/Economic/Iran_exports_to_Afghanistan_to_top_$4_bn) (13/07/2014)

¹²³ <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/imports> (14/07/2014)

projects are especially important because infrastructure can connect the two countries' economies due to long-time effects. Iran has also invested hundreds of million dollars in industry, mining and building roads (Akbarzadeh, 2014, p.67; Kagan et al., 2012). In the energy field, Afghanistan imports half of its oil from Iran (Akbarzadeh, 2014). Iran has been focused on the transit part of trade with Afghanistan including Afghanistan's contributions to the international North-South corridor, which is also beneficial for Iran. This route is used by India, the Central Asia Republics, and Russia for trade. Iran has spent hundreds of million dollars on building roads, railways and infrastructures to build the corridor in Afghanistan (Carter, 2010, p. 983). In 2014, Afghanistan, Iran, and India signed an agreement, which connects Afghanistan to India through the Chabahar port in Southern Iran.¹²⁴

1.11.2 Iran and Sunni extremism

Sunni extremists are great danger at Iran's gates. The Taliban has shown that it is deeply hostile against Iran and its allies in Afghanistan. By killing 8 Iranian diplomats and journalists in Mazare-Sharif and massacring large numbers of Shias in 1998, The Taliban has put itself in direct contest against Iran (Byman, 2001; Morini, 2010; Akbarzadeh, 2014).

By mid-1994, Pakistan already lost hope on Hekmatyar, founder and active leader of the Hezb-e Islami political party, which was close to Iran, and started to support the Taliban. Saudi Arabia joined Pakistan in helping the Taliban. For Saudi Arabia, Taliban was an option against the influence of Iran's ideology in Afghanistan (Wild, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2001). Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also had common economic interests. American Unocal and Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia were the main financiers of 1040-mile long Turkmanestan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline. This project was supported by Clinton Administration. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan convinced

¹²⁴ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/world/1.582805> (14/07/2014)

Washington that Taliban can restore order, neutralize Iran, and provide a safe gateway for U.S interests within Central Asia (Milani, 2006, p.243).

Iran's policy against Taliban until 2001 can be summarized to 4 phases: a) Iran refused to recognize Taliban government. b) Iran supported the Northern Alliance as counterforce against the Taliban. c) Iran tried to avoid direct military engagement with the Taliban. d) Iran tried to intensify its activities in the United Nations' "Six plus Two", a coalition of six countries neighboring Afghanistan plus the U.S and Russia, which concerned itself with negotiations on the future of Afghanistan (Ibid). In the early stage, Iran considered that the Taliban could not be identified, but after the assassination of the Pro-Iran Hizb-I Wahdat party's leader, Abdul Ali Mazari in March 1995, Iran and Taliban became opposed to each other (Wild, 2009, p.25).

Iran supported the Northern alliance against the Taliban (Milani, 2006; Green, et al., 2009; Carter, 2010; Byman, 2001; Akbarzadeh, 2014). Iran even in one period tried to stop Taliban by bringing the Pashtuns, who ordinarily have a contentious relationship with Iran, into power by supporting the notorious Hekmatyar as the prime minister of a "national unity" government, which was unsuccessful (Milani, 2006, p.242; Wild, 2009, p.25). Iran and Taliban came close to direct military confrontation when the Taliban killed Iranian diplomats and journalists after attacking Iran's consulate in Mazar-e Sharif in 1998. Iran amassed some 200,000 troops on its Eastern border. The subsequent maneuver was the largest military exercise in Iranian history (Milani, 2006; Wild, 2009). Iran ended to its military activity in Iran-Afghan border, although all parts of armed forces did not agree with that. The IRGC favored at least a punitive attack against Taliban but the military (Artesh) did not support a military attack (Bayman, 2001, pp. 70-71). In light of this, Iran also showed even more pragmatism in its relationship with Taliban.

The pragmatic Iran and the Taliban even had some indirect and limited cooperation during Taliban's government. For example, in the border areas where Iran's local officials and the Taliban had some arrangements regarding water issues and the Baluch

minority who live on both sides of the Iran-Afghanistan border. The Taliban also got some of their fuel from Iran (Wild, 2009, p.26).

1.11.3 Iran and the relationship with NATO and the US

Despite some adventurism in foreign policy, it seems that Iran's policy towards Afghanistan overall "has contributed more to moderation and stability than to extremism and instability moderate." (Milani, 2006, p.236). Some scholars go further and suggest that Iran's approach to foreign policy is initially "defensive, mainly pragmatic, and based on state-oriented and strategic issues" (Barzegar, 2008, p.47). Basically, Iran inferred that it should pursue a more realistic policy, years before foreign intervention against the Taliban (and Iran's cooperation with that). Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia which could affect Iran's large Azeris minorities, civil war in Tajikistan, and the ever-present crisis and threat in Iraq and Afghanistan lead to the idea that Iran should pursue stability and normal state-to-state relations with countries in the region (McCauley, 2002, p.132).

The contact and cooperation between Iran and the U.S started from in the late 1990s when Iran participated in six-plus-two framework on Afghanistan. The framework led to direct contact between Iran and the US (thereafter the West more broadly). This occurred during the Geneva Contact group, which discussed mutual concerns about Taliban's growth and influence in Afghanistan (Milani, 2006, p.977; Carter, 2010, p.246). Iran could not see instability and Sunni extremism on its Eastern border. In addition, Iran worried about the arm smuggling from Afghanistan and Taliban's support to anti-Iran terrorist groups (Byman, 2001, pp.71-72). During the foreign intervention in Afghanistan and Operation Enduring Freedom, Iran played an important role to help the US (Omidi, 2013). Tehran even offered "search and rescue assistance" in Afghanistan during the US-led war and announced it would provide "sanctuary to distressed American military personnel" inside Iran. Iran also allowed the US "transport

food and humanitarian goods to Afghanistan” through Iran (Milani, 2006, p.247; Addis, et. al, 2010, p.26). Iran also resumed its participation in the UN brokered and US sponsored Bonn Conference in December 2001, which was a breakthrough for establishing an Afghan government. Dr. Muhammad Javad Zarif, Iran’s current foreign minister, as Iran’s observer, assured Pakistan no mass killing will happen in Kabul by the Northern Alliance and supported the US choice, Hamed Karzai. Iran also put pressure on Ismail Khan, Herat’s previous governor, to support Karzai (Milani, 2006, pp.247-248; Carter, 2010). Overthrowing Taliban was in Iran’s favor but also brought the US and its allies to Iran’s gate. After losing hope of more cooperation occurring between Iran and West, the existence of the US and its allies was synonymous with regime changing for Iran. Iran felt surrounded by the US and its allies after 2003 and invasion of Iraq (Morini, 2010, p.79; Rubin & Rashid, 2008). In 2011, a spy drone crashed approximately 160 km inside Iran’s territory, which was apparently launched from the American base in Shindand in Herat. This accident shows how vulnerable Iran’s security is (Akbarzadeh, 2014, p.70).

Western officials and some Afghan officials believe that Iran pursues a hypocritical policy towards Afghanistan and helps both the government and players within the government’s side while supporting insurgences and the Taliban. They have accused Iran of helping the Taliban in the past (Carter, 2010; Kagan et al., 2012). Carter (2010) lists 5 reason Iran helped the Taliban: First, to slow NATO operations and prevent their victory in Afghanistan. Second, to prepare for every scenario. Iran wants to have allies in every possible condition. Third, to warn the US and its allies that Iran can compromise American interests in the region in case of any military confrontation. Forth, a democratic Afghanistan could provoke Iranian youth to act against the regime. In addition, Shia minorities would be in weak positions. Finally, Iran wants to destabilize Afghanistan to prevent the pipe-line between Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India and instead suggest its Iran-Pakistan-India pipe-line (pp. 987-988).

However, the aforementioned accusations have their own critics. Critics suggest that Iran's interests will be in greater danger by the Taliban rather than NATO. Iran invested millions of dollars in Afghanistan. A stable Afghanistan not only has benefit for Iran's economy but also has political benefit for Iran and region. Shia minorities' rights will be respected in a stable and possibly democratic Afghanistan. Iran is worried about Sunni extremism in its neighbor country and its possible effect on Iran's Sunnis radicalization (Bruno, & Beehner, 2009¹²⁵; Green, et al., 2009) Iran has had some conflicts with Iran's Sunni terrorist groups like Jondohhal and Jeish-ol Adl in South-Eastern parts of the country in recent years. In addition, Iranian weapons could be purchased from black market or copied in Pakistan (Bruno, & Beehner, 2009). After all, destabilizing Afghanistan affects the withdrawal of foreign troops. Destabilization can slow or change the decision for the US and its allies to leave the country, which is not in Iran's interest.

Some scholars believe that the US and Iran have common goals in Afghanistan (more than Pakistan and Saudi Arabia) including stability, uprooting Al-Qaeda and fighting against the Taliban, reconstruction of Afghanistan, and fighting against the narcotics trade (Milani, 2006, pp.255-256; Sadjadpour, 2008) as Ismail Khan said, "Both the US and Iran, want the same thing in Herat that we want: stability, prosperity, and peace." (Milani, 2006, pp.253).

Apart from Iran's and the West approach in Afghanistan, some scholars emphasize that "major regional conflicts cannot be settled without some level of US-Iranian cooperation." (Monshipouri & Dorraj, 2013, p.145). Rouhani's presidency and shift in domestic policy to some level of moderation, along with some moderate positions in foreign policy (like Khamenei's heroic flexibility) can —aside from the threat of

¹²⁵ Bruno, G., & Beehner, L. (2009). Iran and the Future of Afghanistan. Council on Foreign Relations, Available at: <http://www.cfr.org/iran/iran-future-afghanistan/p13578> (16/06/2014)

outbreak of extremism in the region— provide a good chance for Iran and the US to have cooperation and normalizing their relationship (Ibid).

1.11.4 Iran and fighting against narcotics

Preventing drug trafficking from Afghanistan into Iran is a security and public health priority for Iran, while cutting off drug revenues for insurgents is a counterinsurgency issue for the U.S (Omidi, 2013, P.8). Drug abuse and addiction is a serious problem in Iran because of easy access to cheap drugs smuggled from Afghanistan. Iran is the biggest opium consumer in the world¹²⁶. Heroin is also popular in Iran¹²⁷. According to the U.S State Department, around 35% of Afghan heroin arrives in Iran for domestic consumption and transit to other countries (Rosen, et al., 2014, p.3).

According to official statistics, approximately some 1,350,000 people are drug abusers in Iran and around 800,000 people use illegal drugs occasionally.¹²⁸ Drug abuse is the second greatest cause of unnatural death tolls in Iran after car accidents. In addition, it has caused to 25% of homicides and 55% of divorces in the country¹²⁹. Every year, an average of 109 police/military forces are killed during conflicts with drug smugglers¹³⁰.

Despite the Afghan government's programs and foreign troop's efforts, between 125,000 to 189,000 hectares of the country's area was under opium poppy cultivation

¹²⁶ www.razijournal.com/File.aspx?id=4061 (07/07/2014)

¹²⁷ <http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f2-iran-daily-headlines-drug-abuse-addiction-khamenei-crackdown-leader/24809835.html> (19/05/2014)

¹²⁸ <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13920404000317> (08/07/2014)

<http://isna.ir/fa/news/92083018542/%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%AE-%D8%B4%DB%8C%D9%88%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-58-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%B5%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86>

<http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/361227/society/social-damage> (06/07/2014)

¹²⁹ <http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/361227/society/social-damage> (07/07/2014)

¹³⁰ <http://isna.ir/fa/news/92083018542/%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%AE-%D8%B4%DB%8C%D9%88%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-58-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%B5%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86> (07/07/2014)

in 2012.¹³¹ Afghanistan also is the world's primary source of cannabis (marijuana) and cannabis resin (hashish). (Rosen, et al., 2014, p.I). It seems that spending billions of dollars fighting against drugs has not been effective enough and actually, "based on recent production and trafficking trends, the drug problem in Afghanistan appears to be worsening" (Ibid, p.I). In fact, Afghan farmers are now growing more opium poppies than any time in Afghanistan modern history. This contributes to about 15% of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013¹³². Both Iran and the US are worried about Taliban uprising and drug production because smuggling is an important source of funding for Taliban. According to the UN, the Taliban gains an estimated \$100 million to \$155 million annually through the drug trade, which is more than a quarter of the total Taliban funds (Ibid, p.1).

Iran has 560 miles of shared borders with Afghanistan, which shows the difficulty of campaigning against drug-trafficking. Some scholars suggest that Iran can begin cooperating with NATO and the US about low politics like fighting against narcotics (Omidi, 2013). The President Rouhani's foreign policy approach and especially favorable result in nuclear negotiations can pave the way for further negotiations and possible cooperation.

1.11.5 Iran and Afghan immigrants

"The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to host one of the largest and most protracted refugee populations in the world". According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 840,000 Afghan refugees are living in Iran of which 97% are living in urban and semi-urban areas¹³³. We should also add around 1 million

¹³¹ U.N Afghanistan Opium Survey summary 2012. pdf available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS_report_2012.pdf. (06/06/2014)

¹³² Testimony of John F. Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Before the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, January 15, 2014. Available at: <http://www.drugcaucus.senate.gov/hearing-1-15-14/SIGAR%20John%20F%20%20Sopko.pdf> (07/06/2014)

¹³³ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486f96.html> (04/07/2014)

unregistered Afghan refugees (Carter, 2010, p.983). Iran has granted the refugee population access to “medical services, education for students, literacy classes for out-of-school children and the labour market.”¹³⁴ However, international sanctions and the effects on inflation continue to affect the humanitarian assistance to them.¹³⁵ Some scholars suggest that the refugees put pressure on Iran’s economy which is already under pressure from sanctions by creating competition between refugees and Iranians for scarce jobs and weakening the economy by consuming Iran’s goods and using services which are heavily subsidized by government (Carter, 2010, p.983). Iran receives a modicum amount of money from international organizations related to the refugees. In 2014, UNHCR in Iran set its budget at \$69 million¹³⁶. In comparison, UNHCR’s requested a more than \$1 billion budget for around 600,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan¹³⁷.

Iran and Afghanistan have had some disputes over refugee issue. For example, tensions raised between two countries after the expulsion of 50,000 refugees by Iran in 2007 (Addis, et. al, 2010, p.25). However, between January 2002 and July 2013, the UNHCR assisted over 913,000 Afghans’ return home¹³⁸.

There are some criticisms against Iran’s policy and attitude towards Afghan refugees. Critics suggest Iran uses refugees as a tool to put pressure on the Afghan government (Kagan et al., p.73). In November 2013, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report, which harshly criticized Iran refugee policy towards Afghans. HRW reported “documented violations including physical abuse, detention in unsanitary and inhumane conditions, forced payment for transportation and accommodation in deportation camps, forced labor, and forced separation of families.”¹³⁹ Discrimination against

¹³⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486f96.html> (04/07/2014)

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486f96.html> (04/07/2014)

¹³⁷ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107> (15/06/2014)

¹³⁸ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486f96.html> (17/07/2014)

¹³⁹ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/20/iran-afghan-refugees-and-migrants-face-abuse> (11/05/2014)

Afghan refugees has been reflected in Iran's media. For example, a few months after Rouhani's inauguration Tasnim News, a source close to the IRGC, criticized some of the offensive attitudes and discrimination against Afghan refugees but believes just a handful of low rank managers and officials are responsible for it.¹⁴⁰ In April 2012, some famous Iranian actors, actresses, and directors (including internationally well-known figures like Asghar Farhadi and Niki Karimi) harshly criticized Ahmadinejad administration's refugee policy through a statement.¹⁴¹ However, it seems that the Afghan refugees are optimistic towards Rouhani's administration.¹⁴² Some public figures and activists already asked Rouhani to improve Afghan refugees' conditions which Dr. Sadegh Zibakalam, an Iranian prominent political scientist, called the refugees "without any Islamic, human, ethical, and international rights" through an open letter to the Rouhani shortly before his inauguration.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/193503> (12/06/2014)

¹⁴¹ http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f12_iranian_artists_act_against_afghan_discrimination_in_iran/24564844.html (14/06/2014)

¹⁴² <http://www.dw.de/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C/a-16959039> (17/06/2014)

¹⁴³ <http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/312310/weblog/zibakalam> (12/05/2014)

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Research question

Research questions are the core of all researches. A research question suggests specific questions that we try to answer through research (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008; Warwick, Murray, & Overton, 2003, p.26). The type of researcher's methods depends in part on the specific research questions that they want to answer and put their efforts on understanding (Babbie, 2008, p.314; Bickman & Rog, 1998). A good research question captures reader's attention, leads analytical focus on right issue and shows meaningful gaps in our collective knowledge (Nygaard, 2008, p.79). Unlike a topic, a question needs a verb or an action, which establishes a specific relationship between the specific elements of the topic (Ibid, 80).

The researcher chooses research question according to the researcher's interests or problems she/he detects which come from researcher's professional and/or personal experience. Research questions also come from literature, where a knowledge gap or contradictory and unexplored facts may exist. In addition, the research question presents and phrase the area of interest or problem in a concise, focused and workable manner (Mantzoukas, 2008, p.373). Research questions are a guide to explaining how the research project will be conducted. To elucidate, research questions become the guidepost which direct the study's concepts, populations, context and the methodology / methods that will be used (Ibid, p.372). The research question helps the reader judge the value, rigor and validity of the entire research project (Ibid, p.376).

This study's research question is: "how did the Kayhan and Shargh newspapers represent international forces and their operations in Afghanistan." This question is a

qualitative one and needs to be investigated through qualitative methods. In qualitative research, an initial step to formulate the research is selecting an interesting topic. The topic will refine into a question or problem. Unlike quantitative research, the research question is defined and redefined continually through the research because the researcher's broad question will narrow down and reshape thanks to the emerging data (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008, p. 88). But first, the researcher should choose the philosophical approach to investigate the research question.

2.2 Philosophical considerations

2.2.1 Epistemological issues

Epistemology is the science of knowing which methodology (as a subfield of epistemology) can be called the science of finding out (Babbie, 2008, p.6). Epistemology as the theory of knowledge is a key subject of philosophy. Epistemology tries to answer questions about the nature, sources, scope, and justification of knowledge (Turner, 2006, p.171). One of the most important issues that epistemology addresses is whether the natural science model of research process can be used for social science study (Brayman, 2008, p.4). There are two major approaches in terms of acceptable knowledge for studying phenomena including social science. First is positivism which tries to use the same methods as natural science to study social science. Positivism follows some disciplines: 1- Only phenomena which can be confirmed by senses can be warranted as knowledge. 2- Assessable laws come from testable hypotheses, which are generated by the theory. 3- Gathering facts provides the basis of laws leads to knowledge. 4- Science should be value free. 5- Scientific statements otherwise of normative statements can be confirmed by senses. Second, interpretivism which suggests a difference between people and natural science objectives and therefore, emphasizes grasping the subjective meaning of social science. For interpretivists, a scientific model cannot be used for social world and who have been influenced by it. Interpretivists usually use deep and context-based studies (Ibid,

pp. 13-16). However, some scholars suggest that the research techniques cannot directly infer “from a knowledge of a researcher’s epistemological assumptions” and that “There is no necessary 1:1 relationship between methodology and technique in the practice of social research” (Bryman, 2002, p. 89). The current study mainly uses the interpretivist approach because the nature of the media representation is based on a dynamic context and ongoing human experiences and discourse rather than some defined and specific laws.

2.2.2 Ontological issues

Ontology is the study of the theory of what exists. There are two main approaches in ontology: Realism and Phenomenology. Realists suggest that there is a real world which is independent from our observation and interpretation. In contrast, Phenomenology suggests that all that matters is our interpretations of the world, not an external real world. Positivism uses the realism approach and proposes that science can lead to understanding a world free of social, political, and cultural influences (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008, p.19) where the universal laws of society and human conduct themselves within this world and a structure built by scientists explains it (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003, p.9).

In contrast, constructivism uses phenomenological or constructionist approaches which suggest the world is socially constructed. In this view, peoples’ views and definitions of the world are the key element to understanding the world (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008, pp.19-20). However, sociological ontology is not the same with philosophical ontology, which is concerned with “being” (Turner, 2006). Constructionism advises researchers to consider how social reality is an ongoing accomplishment of social actors rather than being something external and constrained. Social interaction and in particular language build up and constitute the built social world (Bryman, 2008, p.20). This approach can be seen particularly in discourse analysis, which is examined later.

2.3 Method

According to Tuli (2010) “Methodology is a research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into guidelines that show how research is to be conducted and principles, procedures, and practices that govern research” (p.102). There are two main research methods which will be explained in follow shortly.

2.3.1 Qualitative and quantitative researches

Quantitative research employs surveys and experiments as the main research tools. There are other ways which quantitative research uses including the “the analysis of earlier collected data, structured observation with the qualified resulted data and content analysis of the media contents”. Quantitative research discusses variables, control, measurement, and experiment and intends to use natural science model and so, after assessing empirical research, it can be valid knowledge (Bryman, 1988, p.13). Quantitative research is highly structured, and the researcher arranges and introduces variables into the survey instruments. In quantitative research, independent and dependent variables just like experimental and control groups, are part of the preparatory stage (Ibid, p.98).

Qualitative research uses numerical approaches for collecting and analyzing data, which is specifically hard data in the form of numbers, emphasizing objective social structures and their objective relationships with one another (Turner, 2006; Tuli, 2010, p.102).

Unlike quantitative data’s objective approach, qualitative research methods emphasizes the subjective meanings which social actors find through the interactional process in their life (Turner, 2006). Qualitative methodology, based on interpretivist epistemology and constructionist ontology, assumes that meanings are embedded in participant’s interactions and experiences. As such, qualitative researchers often

participate in activities, interview influential people, study histories, make case studies, and analyze cultural material like existing documents (Tuli, 2010, p.102).

Qualitative research articles are not structured like quantitative articles. They have “theory, description of sampling and data collection techniques, summary of results and conclusions. But their formats are different according to their studies; basically, there are different ways of summarizing their results” (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008, p.99).

The current study is focused on qualitative methodology and tries to attain an insider’s view of media and groups behind them, although it also uses some statistics to elaborate upon interpretations. Discourse analysis is heavily related to the words and interpretation of the language in the special context, which is ongoing in Iran.

2.4 Evaluating qualitative research

2.4.1 Dealing with data: Gathering data

In order to know social phenomena, we need data to understand the world and society. Instead, “we can attempt to capture it as data which represent the reality we have experienced, observed, asked questions about or are trying to explain” (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p.42). Our approach to the social world, research question and data’s nature show how to gather and work with data (Ibid). Data can be directly observed or may need to be explored further to discover how and why the statement was made (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Babbie, 2008). Data can include the meanings expressed through the words used. Data can also include the way language is used by data producers to present their meanings and understanding through interactions and communications especially through the media (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008; Amenta, Nash, & Scott, 2012). Data comes in different shapes and forms. A researcher can use two kinds of data: primary data, which is gathered by the researcher and secondary data which are already produced by others (Babbie, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, the researcher should be cautious about the ways in which data selected, gathered and analyzed before (Matthews & Ross, 2010, pp.51-52; Turner, 2006). The

current study is mainly qualitative and tries to analyze mostly primary data. Qualitative data analysis is a nonnumeric inquiry and interpretation of observation which tries to uncover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships (Babbie, 2008). Media, which this study is focused on it, transfers information and symbols to the audience and has meanings underlined within interactions (Amenta, Nash, & Scott, 2012). This study tries to uncover the meanings of media as its case studies.

In order to work with the data, first we should gather them through sampling. Sampling is the selection of some cases from a larger group of potential cases. The sampling approach is related to research design and a used method (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p.153). The key concept is population and the sample as actual group of people in the study and from which the data are collected (Turner, 2006). Samples are always imperfect in order to represent some relevant characteristics which exactly are presented in the populations. Two kinds of error can happen in sampling process: sample error and sample bias. Sample error occurs when a random error is produced by chance. Sample bias means in a specific case, a constant error is produced by the sampling procedure (Ibid, p.530). In sampling, quantitative methods tend to be more reliable and qualitative ones are more valid (Babbie, 2008, p.156). Validity and reliability will be explained further. In the current study, all of the newspapers' volumes in the specific period of time are investigated; therefore, there cannot be a sampling error. In addition, all of the stories related to Afghanistan were investigated to prevent sample bias.

2.4.2 Evaluating data

For qualitative research, just gathering data obviously is not enough. The researcher also should show that her/his research is valid and reliable, and can transfer findings so other researchers can trust and use the research.

2.4.3 Generalizability and transferability

Some researchers depend on a statistical result found from sample to show that the result is more or less applicable for the whole population. In other case, showing that findings in one context or time can be present by relevant theory or other researchers. It is important to bear in mind that qualitative research cannot claim that its findings can be clearly demonstrated in other researches (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p.13). In fact, the researcher should answer the question of how far the results or findings are true for or relevant to the wider population or a different context (Ibid, p.477). A thick and deep investigation and description can help readers to understand, judge the study, and compare it with other research (Brayman, 2008).

2.4.4 Validity

Validity shows whether the researcher accurately measures the concept she/he wants to measure (Babbie, 2008, p.161). As a researcher, we should be able to measure the extent which our data represents the social reality which we are studying (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p.52). Naturally, the more observations and documents means the higher the likelihood of greater validity (Ibid, 214). Not all scholars agree with the concept of validity. Validity is a contest between method and interpretation. Some approaches like postmodernism suggest that it's impossible to reach the truth and ultimate knowledge through a single or collection of methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.205). But this idea is not common and even qualitative researches which are not numerical and well-structured like quantitative ones have their own evaluation criteria although they differ (Bryman, 1988). There are some different forms of validity including criterion-related validity (also called predictive validity), construct validity, and content validity.

Criterion validity is based on some external criterion. Babie (2008) explains this kind of criteria through a simple example: "the validity of College Board exams is shown in their ability to predict students' success in college." In this example college success is the criteria (p.161). In the current study, conservatives and reformists' positions in Iran's political arena regarding the Afghanistan and NATO can be compared with the

produced results. Using construct validity, we consider how the variables in questions, theoretically, are related to other variables (Ibid). In the current investigation, discourse analysis techniques are related to each other theoretically and also related to political factions' attitudes and NATO's operations. Here, the researcher can develop expectations about the research result. For example, conservatives attend to bold "collateral damages" rhetoric as usual incidents and part and parcel of NATO operations which foreigners are unconcerned with. Content validity refers to "how much a measure covers the range of meanings included within concept" (Ibid. p.161). In this research, the researcher tries to explain Iran's political/factional context, which constitutes a noticeable part of the research. He is familiar with the mentioned context through his previous studies and his connections. The measures also are explained in previous studies. Another important point is that a prominent expert in the investigated field is supervisor of this research. However, social researchers should ultimately look to their colleagues and subjects to compromise upon the most relevant meanings and measurements of the concepts of study (Ibid, p.163).

2.4.5 Reliability

Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2003) suggest that Reliability "is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents" (p.177). In fact, the researcher should show that the research process is transparent and understandable and replicable by others (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is important to notice that a social phenomenon in the real world, unlike experiments in the laboratory, cannot be replicated, because it is impossible to replicate the original conditions which data are gathered (Ibid, p.266). However, specificity, training, and practice can prevent unreliability to some extent (Babie, 2008, p.159). One way for judging a research project's fairness and rigor is triangulation, which is gathering data on the same event or phenomenon in different ways (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.44).

The current study tries to use statistics and numerical techniques alongside the qualitative interpretations, although the main part remains nonnumeric.

2.5 Ethical issues

Ethical issues are important considerations of social researches and as a result ethical guidelines and approval processes are developed by various organizations and institutions to help researchers prevent abusing people and data (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p.84; Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008). For example, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) categories ethical issues to three categories: “(a) Scientific misconduct (e.g. falsifying data, plagiarism) (b) questionable research procedures (e.g., keeping inadequate records, careless data collection), and (c) other misconduct (e.g., violating of government regulations, sexual harassment in the workplace). (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000, p.27). In this study, the author tries to avoid ethical violations and uses his positive and negative liberties to do a fair research.

Chapter 3

Theoretical discussion

3.1 Media and reality

One of the oldest questions about media and news is whether or not the media offers a real and exact reflection of actual happenings or does media misrepresent the real world? Some scholars try to explain the issue through de Saussure's theory, which includes the duality between the world of signification and the world of reality. The concepts of 'sign-system' and 'signification' are common among linguistics, structuralism and semiology and inspired mainly by de Saussure. A sign is any 'sound-image' that acts as a 'signifier' of something 'signified' – which is an object or concept in the world of experience. (McQuail, 1983, p. 130).

Some scholars emphasize the role of news workers and news organizations in producing media products. Tuchman argues that a media message is product of “the activities of news workers and news organizations rather than social norms” (Tuchman, 1978, p.123). The aforementioned position led Tuchman to look at the news as a frame “examining how that frame is constituted” (ibid: 1). Gans argues that production of news is a system of power (Gans, 1979). According to Hall, "The ideological concepts embodied in photos and texts in a newspaper do not produce new knowledge about the world. They produce recognition of the world as we have already learnt to appropriate it" (as cited in McQuail 1984, p.141).

Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that the main function of media is to serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to their audiences and integrating them into the structures of the society. Media forms and specific peoples' norms and beliefs could mobilize the public to support the social interests dominating the state. As one of the principal propagators of information, the news is possibly one of the most significant social forces participating in the

socialization process. News provides the cognitive framework for understanding reality, and thus has a role related to the shaping of knowledge. News generates and sometimes amplifies a particular reality that shapes the public's definitions of the world through selection and omission, through emphases and tones, and through all their forms of treatment (Gitlin, 1980).

According to Gramsci's concept of ideology, news functions as a set of beliefs or body of knowledge, but this kind of knowledge is "produced" knowledge rather than knowledge about "truth" and in fact is opposed to "truth" (Sholle, 1988). According to Van Dijk's theory, ideology is not just "false consciousness" and there is a link between ideology and people's tasks, which VanDijk refers to as a mental model. They are very specific basic frameworks of social cognition, with special internal structures, and specific cognitive and social functions. These models need to be analyzed in terms of explicit social psychological theories and Van Dijk emphasizes that they have nothing to do with mentalist reductionism (Van Dijk, 1995, p.21).

3.1.1 Do the media represent reality?

There are some traditional approaches to media studies, which are focused on the individual (such as gatekeepers), and/or approaches that focus on organizational factors causing media misrepresentations. These approaches emphasize on news affects and news itself not the contexts that form the media contents (especially news). This terminological reductionism is criticized by some scholars (Fiske, 1988 ; Slack & Allor, 1983).

Over time, some differences and more radical approaches have formed and matured. These views believe that media not only plays as a propaganda tool for power, but also, it is initially a tool for covertly embedding a hegemonic ideology within people's minds and cannot represent the reality in a proper manner. In this view, media activities all change to the some kind of covert action and propaganda is used to embed an especial idea and manipulate audiences' minds to reach a special aim. These approaches emphasize on media's strong effects on representation or creating a reality. However, knowledge about the world is not just through the media and can be "expressed, conveyed, accepted and shared in discourse and other forms of social interaction." It can spread and be obtained "through talk and text of social institutions such as governments, media, schools, universities and laboratories." (Van Dijk, 2003, p.86) Working on produced knowledge and truth is the base of some famous approaches dedicated to finding the forms of produced knowledge and truth and their functions.

One approach suggests that the mainstream in news media frame the news and through that, they frame the reality. They provide “contextual cues, giving meaning and order to complex problems, actions, and events, by slotting the new into familiar categories or storyline ‘pegs.’” (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p.4). Conventional news frames are important because they supply “consistent, predictable, simple, and powerful narratives that are embedded in the social construction of reality.” (Ibid, p.5).

Fairclough (2000) argues that for example, the power of pro-globalization discourse depicts globalization as an inevitable, natural phenomenon that develops outside human control, design or resistance and states part of this manipulation is implementing by media. Van Dijk (1988) believes that hegemony occurs when one ideological representation of the world assumes to be taken for granted or becomes common sense conception of reality. For him “Ideological dominance and hegemony is perfect ‘when dominated groups are unable to distinguish between their own interests and attitudes and those of dominant groups” (p.102). He proposes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach as an alternative for (especially) studying the news to find these kinds of ideological attempts to dominate (Van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b).

3.1.2 Media as a connection between people and the world

People are becoming increasingly dependent on easy-access and ubiquitous media for information about the world’s incidents and exploring the world’s function. In fact, media has taken the role of old institutions (such as church, trade unions...) in terms of understanding the world for at least some portion of society (Talbot, 2007). Media is accessible and ubiquitous and maybe is the only choice for a majority of people to realize that what happens in the world and how world works. The mass media and popular culture have altered the ways we learn about the world. They tell us how the world is running. This is becoming more visible in foreign policy and international affairs (Altheide, 2007, P.287). People especially have very few direct experiences, if not any, in these arenas and as Slone (2000) shows, media influence increases when the audience’s direct experience to story decreases. Concerning powerful media influence on public, Slone suggests that most people have based their assumptions about security threats on indirect exposure from the media. An examination of the choices media makes helps us understand the media’s priorities by examining which events are minimized or magnified (Chermark & Gruenewald, 2006, p.431).

In fact, policy makers use media to transform the structure and meaning of political issues to society and effect public priorities (Chermark & Gruenewald, 2006). However, these political issues and priorities can be totally fabricated images of things that are supposed to be represented and in fact connect audience to a “built” world. Holmes (2005) suggests that for critical ideas, the media concentrates on a particular event or representation. After repeating the representations over time, the image, which is iconic now, comes to its own life and the events it refers to become secondary. “Indeed the referent may disappear altogether” (p.31). This fabricated reality can become the dominant hegemonic narrative and simply be used to “just to get rid of the rest of the population, to marginalize and eliminate them” (Chomsky, Mitchell, & Schoeffel, 2002, p.121). Thus, the media (especially mass media) is a powerful propaganda tool that can be used initially en route to becoming the inevitable element for recognizing the world.

3.1.3 Policy makers and the media

News coverage could be a powerful instrument in policymaker’s hands and some scholars argue that policymakers can use news media to transform structures and meanings of political issues to the societal arena. In fact, political organizations can use media coverage to affect public priorities. This claim as Beckett (1997) argues, seeks to transform popular sentiment to selective insights of state and society (as cited in Chermark & Gruenewald, 2006, p.432). Indoctrination of people by media happens for all of audiences and even is more powerful for elites to make sure they have the right ideas and know how to serve power (Chomsky, Mitchell, & Schoeffel, 2002).

Until now, all of mentioned approaches including the current study’s view, suggest that media has a powerful effect on the audience and society but it is important the note that not all scholars believe the same idea. Cohen (1967) argues that the media cannot tell to the people how think, although it can be stunningly successful in telling people what to think about. Therefore, “the news media can set the agenda for public thought and discussion.” (McCombs, & Reynolds, 2002, p.1). Some researchers like Klapper (1960) have claimed that the media can only fortify preexisting styles of behavior and cannot create new ones (Bryant, & Zillmann, 2002, p.139). In fact, people control media and their content through various selectivity processes:

“(a) selective exposure, or control over what they watched, listened to, or read in the media; (b) selective attention, or control over which elements of media messages people

would pay attention to; (c) selective perception, or control over how messages were interpreted; and (d) selective recall, or control over how and what was learned from the media” (Perse, 2001, p.25).

3.2 Discourse analysis as a news research

Discourse analysis has been proposed by Van Dijk as an alternative perspective for studying the news (1983, 1988a, 1988b). Discourse analysis is not a new methodology and actually combines various disciplines such as structuralism, semiotics, and cultural or ideological analysis of news texts and is based on the critical concept of news. Discourse analysis sees the news as a discourse which refers to "socially produced groups of ideas or ways of thinking that can be tracked in individual texts or groups of texts, but that also demands to be located within wider historical and social structures or relations" (Turner, 1990, pp.32-33). From the perspective of discourse analysis, news is not simply collected and passively relayed, but pursued in an organized way, and maybe directed. Theoretically, discourse analysis of the news may be divide into two major parts; textual and contextual (Van Dijk. 1988a). The textual component systematically analyzes the various structures of news discourse at different levels such as the sentential or sequential structure, the semantic structure and the formal structure. The contextual part analyzes the cognitive and social factors, the conditions, restrictions or consequences of textual structures, and, indirectly the economic, cultural and historical embedding of textual structures. It has sought to show that there is a systematic ideological bias to the media that is traceable to the kind of language we find there (Matheson, 2005, p.5).

3.2.1 Why critical discourse analysis?

One of the initial roles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is “to account for the relationships between discourse and social power. More specifically, such an analysis should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimized by the text and talk of dominant groups or institutions.” (Carmen Rosa, & Coulthard, 1996, p.84). Through access to the mass media, dominant groups may have access to and therefore partial control over the public at large. (Ibid: 86).

In order to understand dominant groups and institutions, it is necessary to understand ideology and its initial functions in formulating the general contents of the ideological schema of the group:

“who we are (where we come from, what we look like, who can be a member of our group, etc.); what we do and stand for, what our norms and values are, who are friends and enemies are, and what our power resources are, etc.)”. It provides reasons and arguments regarding to group’s general norms and values, and defines what is good and bad, fair or unfair (Van Dijk, 2006p. 133).

Barker and Galasin´ski argue that this is where contemporary critical discourse analysis is particularly useful:

“Though cultural studies has convincingly argued the philosophical case for the significance of language and has produced a large body of textual analysis, it is rarely able to show how, in a small-scale technical sense, the discursive construction of cultural forms is actually achieved . . . [C]ritical discourse analysis (CDA) is able to provide the understanding, skills and tools by which we can demonstrate the place of language in the construction, constitution and regulation of the social world.(Matheson, 2005, p.7).

3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and news

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” (Van Dijk, 2001, p.352).

Meyer (2001) suggests that CDA’s borders are so vast that we can find theories including general social theories, middle-range theories, microsociological theories, sociopsychological theories, discourse theories and linguistic theories (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p.6). Meanwhile, the roots of CDA lie in classical Rhetoric, Textlinguistics and Socio-linguistics, as well as in Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics. The Flexibility and root of this approach helps to CDA scholars to interpret and explain the concept of ideology, power, hierarchy, gender and sociological variables which all of them are relevant to CDA (Ibid, pp.11-12).

CDA sees the news as a discourse, which refers groups of idea or ways of thinking that produced socially. They are traceable through the individual or group of texts but these materials are also need to be located in the wider historical and social structures or relations (Turner, 1990: 32-33). CDA scholars note that traditional approaches like structuralism or semiotic cannot successfully identify the process that ideological works happen in media through them. Barker and Galasinski (2001) suggest that this is where contemporary CDA is useful: “...[C]ritical discourse analysis (CDA) is able to provide the understanding, skills and tools by which we can demonstrate the place

of language in the construction, constitution and regulation of the social world.” (Matheson, 2005, p.7).

Van Dijk suggests that a news report typically follows a hierarchical schema that has a headline, a lead (together forming the summary), an 'events' element which covers the main events of the story, perhaps an element which gives verbal reactions to the story, and a comment element (these last two elements do not always occur as distinct sections), context, history (together forming the background category). Each of these mentioned parts has a dialectic connection with the theme and overall news structure as well as among them (Van Dijk, 1991, p.115 & Fairclough, 1995, p.29).

For analyzing news, Van Dijk has another important principle consisting of microstructure and macrostructure. Microstructures of news discourse are used for analyzing semantic relations between “propositions - coherence relations of causality, consequence and so forth” (Ibid 30). Microanalysis also are used for exploring syntactic and lexical elements of news style (especially in newspapers). This kind of analysis works for analyzing rhetorical features of news reports, such as recognizing distinguishing features which give an atmosphere of genuineness to the reports. Van Dijk uses macrostructure for analyzing news productions and understanding it as well as news structures. For Van Dijk, this holistic structure is needed to interpret of text. (Ibid)

3.3 Media practices

Media offers a symbolic form of society. Media creates context by articulating embedded social values. In fact, media “mediate” symbols, which are socially built and help to form a symbolic society.

However, for some scholars media basically cannot be totally impartial and all of these activities happen in a biased context.

Some techniques and elements for analyzing media practicing:

Van Dijk believes that one who desires to do ideological analysis and find the dichotomy and bias in discourse needs to follow these practical suggestions:

- a. Examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background of a conflict and its main participants
- b. Analyzing groups, power relations and conflicts involved
- c. Identifying positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them

- d. Making explicit the presupposed and the implied
- e. Examining all formal structure: lexical choice and syntactic structure, in a way that helps to (de)emphasize polarized group opinions (1998, p. 61).

Van Dijk has developed some methods and techniques for analyzing media text. Exploring following elements will be useful for analyzing the current studies' samples.

Emphasize our good properties and actions and mitigate our bad properties and actions.

Emphasize their bad properties and actions and mitigate their good properties and actions.

3.3.1 Descriptions

There are various levels of generality or specificity to describe events, which may be described through few or many propositions (Van Dijk, 1977). Many specific and detailed propositions bolden our good actions and their bad actions, while their good actions and our bad actions, if described at all, will be general with no details (Van Dijk, 1998).

3.3.2 Implications

Opinions can be expressed in a proposition or implied. Words, clauses, and other textual expressions can imply concepts or propositions based on background knowledge. (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 114 & Van Dijk, 1998, p. 33). "Theoretically, this means that given an (expressed) proposition P, one or more propositions Q1, Q2, may be inferred from P on the basis of an event model or context model." (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 33). This feature of discourse and communication contains prominent ideological dimensions. Implication can be recognized in several types like: entailments, presuppositions, and weaker forms, such as suggestion and association. In fact, much of the information of a text is implied rather than being explicitly expressed. The unsaid story sometimes gives us more information than what is expressed in the text (Van Dijk, 1991, pp. 113-114).

3.3.3 Disclaimers

"Overall ideological strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation may also be implemented at the local level of sentences and sentence sequences" (Van Dijk, 1998, p.39) Here 'our' could refer to the in-group or its friends and allies and 'their' could refer to out- group and their friends or allies.

3.3.4 Omission

Opinions could impose by omitting some part of news and thus bring notice to specific part of the news. This action could be including omitting agents or even all events.

3.3.5 Counter arguments

Opinions usually need support and strength. Thus, they should be concrete with prior or further justification based on sentiments and values, which make the opinions more rational and conceivable. Similarly, negative opinions could refuted or devalued by counter-arguments against them (Ibid, p.31).

In-depth Discourse Analysis techniques are very useful in finding hidden ideology and manipulation, along with news bias in media, which assumed to be biased.

The study shows that news texts are value and ideology laden and represent a specific political and ideological perspective in terms of economical, ethnic, political and religious views.

In detail, there are some other media details to analyze within the media's content such as the use of specific verbs to show the way authorities and different sides are represented. In addition, over-representation and coverage of stories is important. Also worthy of analysis is the use of opinions from influential people, groups or organizations as a tool for influence on public, embedding commentary into the news story, using numbers as a strategy to intensify or weaken the effect of the news, and generalization of the view of one group to represent a larger one (Chrisophorou, Şahin, & Pavlou, 2010)

3.4 Us and the other side

This study puts forth some crucial elements that separate 'us' and 'others' into some categories and each category includes some subcategories (Van Dijk, 2007; Van Dijk, 1998; Van Dijk, 1991).

'Our side' can be described according to:

- a) Historical and religious position
- b) The position in political or economic relations
- c) The position in the presence and operations of players regard to world order

3.4.1 Foreigners as an other

The media introduces themselves as a means to speak on behalf of the public. As a result, the media claims they are not simply representative of public, but also depicts what is to be represented. As Hall describes, we just establish our identity through the concept of “other”. We are whatever the “other” is not (McQuail 1984). The “other” is not alone on the other side. In fact, some media tries to find other accomplices in Iran among groups, communities and individuals. There are some ways of labeling others, which include emphasizing ideological and economic connections between the others and groups, individuals, and using those connections to categorize them as “Us” or “Others”, but the categorization is not limited to the individuals or groups with the most common things with others. Conclusively, the media distinguish some agents, sympathizers or strategic allies who are ‘others’ among ‘us’. These groups/individuals could be consisted of a spectrum of different or even opposing perspectives.

3.5 Problems and limitations

The major problem is the lack of availability of media materials and persons. In addition, because of time and budget limitations, only most repeated discourses and practices have been chosen.

3.6 Discussions and conclusions

To generalize this study, there needs to be more research in order to reach more precise conclusions.

The process of news coverage by the media can mediate a reality that is largely constructed by media. This is one powerful instrument in the powerful and elites’ hands. This study is focused on two levels of media practice: the first level is the effect of power on media. It means that specific “influential” people, institutions and perspectives can influence the selection of the sources for news and basically choose the events, which are considered news. Besides the aforementioned, effective factors can determine how news represents the mediated world. On the second level, this study tries to illuminate the issues and help understand some techniques that media use for their representations.

These elements eventually help shape two sides of the story. In this reality, the danger comes from the others (and the traitors among “us”) who are the obstacle against solution and reconciliation. Portraying the “others” as inherently bad, means the other(s) cannot be corrected

and the problem with them will remain. The aforementioned others can include others in their own community also. However, the representation of the other side is not always negative and in some instances not so negative.

Chapter 4

Media practice

4.1 The main Issues

As mentioned before, this study works on two cases: the Kayhan and Shargh newspapers. To gather samples, the researcher gathered every news article relating to Afghanistan from two newspapers over a 8 months period. Then, every news piece, which related to or mentioned foreign troops (ISAF, NATO, US,) was separated. At the end, 34 news articles from Shargh and 27 news pieces from Kayhan during the period 27 November 2013 – 22 July 2014¹⁴⁴ were selected and analyzed.

The current study suggests that the aforementioned newspapers present the NATO and foreign troops through three main issues: a. NATO and the US's direct military operations (or their joint operations with the Afghan forces) and / or their casualties; b. The US – Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, President Karzai and his administration's policies; c. Afghanistan's presidential election. Through monitoring and analyzing the selected news articles, the study could draw up a macro structure, which is the position and representation of foreign troops in the two newspapers. Needless to say, analyzing microstructures and texts' details are implied as well.

4.2 NATO and the US military operations

4.2.1 Kayhan: Demonizing them!

Demonization is the rigid, sloppy, and highly categorized thinking about others when it's shaped negatively and wittingly (Shaghasemi & Tafazzoli, 2009). Demonization is used in different fields ranging from behavioral studies to feminism (Chesney-Lind, & Eliason, 2006) to asylum seekers representation in media (Sivanandan, 2001). Goldson (2001) suggests that demonization has tangible influence on law and policy. Keeble (1999) explains how puny third world countries are demonized to justify a series of “quick, risk-free, media-hyped” attacks to cases like

¹⁴⁴ In Persian calendar: 1 Azar- 31 Tir.

“Communists” in Granada (1983), “mad dog” Gaddafi in Libya (1986) or “Saddam Hossein” in (1991). Demonization of “others” has its own political consequences. It causes infuriation and radicalization of the political struggle and also has the risk of distortion and manipulation (Mancini, 2007, as cited in ...).

Kayhan’s news descriptions of NATO operations inspires demonization of the organization. Kayhan has pursued this trend before and has focused, negatively, on American troops. In fact, in the most cases, it uses the phrase “American occupiers” instead of the US troops or even NATO forces or ISAF. In Kayhan’s news, the US is described as “usually kill civilians like Taliban” or “test their weapons on people”¹⁴⁵, Kayhan also uses the verb “Koshtar” to report civilian deaths. The phrase almost equals to “slaughtering” in English. In Persian, the verb is usually used for brutal and/or cold-blooded killing of humans or animals. Furthermore, the name of a “slaughter house” in Persian is “Koshtar-gah (gah:place)”. Therefore, each time the verb is used, Kayhan implies the brutality of Americans thusly: “slaughtering of civilians by American forces, become one of the serious challenges between Afghan government and the White House”¹⁴⁶. In addition, there is no mention of responses or excuses made by NATO to civilian casualties, because it would mitigate “their” bad actions. In fact, Kayhan accuses the other side of being silent about every kind of bad incidents--even their own forces casualties. Kayhan wrote about the death of 12 U.S troops in the following way: “American media usually do not say anything about this kind of news and force to break their silence after several days”.¹⁴⁷ This kind of description of foreign occupiers looks like stories presented during the colonial era. Kayhan especially uses words and verbs that imply certain meanings in Iranian common sense. Almost in all cases, Kayhan describes word “capitulations” which Ayatollah Khomeini used in his famous speech against the American personnel in Iran in 26 October 1964¹⁴⁸. This word is repeatedly used in Kayhan and conservatives’ media despite of existence a Persian equivalent. In Kayhan’s view foreign troop death tolls are possibly the most important element related to the NATO and American troop’s activities. All six

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2838091>

<http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920708/12.htm#N1207> (10/06/2014)

¹⁴⁶ <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920906/12.htm#N1200> (08/06/2014)

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2887989> (08/06/2014)

¹⁴⁸ <http://osolgra.parsiblog.com/Posts/424/%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86+%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84+%D8%B3%D8%AE%D9%86%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A+%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE%D9%8A+%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85+%D8%AE%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A+%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%87+%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%BE%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%3A/> (06/05/2014)

news reports about the death of coalition forces had their own headline and all of them were just besides newspaper's logo on the top of the page (5 besides and one beneath the logo). The location of these news headlines show their importance. Kayhan covers American death using the verb "be halakat residan". This verb in Persian means being killed but is only used in negative context such as for terrorists' casualties and the nation state's enemies like Iraqi soldiers during Iran-Iraq war. Kahan usually uses the same verb for covering Taliban deaths. Kayhan gives low weight to foreign forces operations against the Taliban because it can be construed as a positive action by an "other". Two of the three texts mentions are a single statement without details and at the end paragraph of the news inside another main text. Just in one case does Kayhan mention American troops' operation against the Taliban, which caused two important Taliban commanders' death according to an Afghan commander. The headline of the two brief news statements in the left corner of the newspaper is "U.S drone attack Afghanistan". The headline implies that the US is attacking the Afghanistan state, rather than conducting an operation against the Taliban forces. This presents Kayhan's view of the US as a foreign occupier. Joint operations between NATO forces and Afghan forces also have little representation in Kayhan. All of six news mentioned were brief and single statements. In two news reports with the headlines about operations, there was no mention of NATO forces and operations introduced by the Afghan army. The headline and leads also showed no mentions of NATO. The headline "Afghan army kills 76 Taliban militants in a massive operation" had the lead: "Afghan army killed 76 and captured 9 Taliban militants through a military operation."¹⁴⁹ In fact, Kayhan usually emphasizes the capability of Afghan forces in operations compared with NATO. Kayhan used "massive operation" to describe Afghan forces in five headlines from seven news stories about Afghan forces operations (or joint operations) and in one case used the adjective "massive" in the news lead. The phrase "massive operations" to describe Afghans implies military power and capability, which fortifies other arguments in news. In the mentioned news story Kayhan adds: "meanwhile, Zaher Azimi, spokesman of Afghanistan defense ministry, regard with increasing of Afghan army's capabilities said...Afghan army does not need foreign forces to maintain the security."

4.2.2 Shargh: Keeping low profile

¹⁴⁹ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/6661> (05/03/2014)

In contrast with Kayhan, Shargh does not have any emphasize on international forces operations or casualties. In fact, among the 34 news articles, none of them had a headline (in one case a strap headline) about casualties or deaths caused by foreign operations. However, Shargh allocated two separate short news stories to American casualties but in different way compared to Kayhan. There is no specific adjective used to describe foreign forces like Kahyan uses. In one news article, Shargh gives information about the death of two “American contractors” from ISAF forces according to the Reuters.¹⁵⁰ This information is a small part of the last paragraph inside another news piece. In another news story, Shargh informs the audience about “two American citizens” who have been killed and were “security sector staff” according to BBC through a brief paragraph. In Shargh’s view, American can be “civilians” and “contractors” even when they work for or with international forces. In contrast to Kayhan’s view, which refers to Americans as occupiers who slaughter people without reason or to test their weapons, Shargh’s representation of American citizens who were “employees of security sector”¹⁵¹ is not affected by foreign troops operations in Afghanistan. In its only news piece about the NATO operations with an independent headline, Shargh did not condemn NATO. Instead, the headline “US apologizes from Afghanistan” implies apologetic and responsible feelings from the US and NATO. The article also states the US is “committed to investigate about this event.” The phrase the “US apologizes from Afghanistan” includes apologies not just to the Afghan government but also the Afghan people and society and the issue is just described as an “event” which is far less biased rather than the use of word “slaughtering” in Kayhan’s case. The source is Associated Press. Initially, there is a noticeable difference between Kayhan’s sources and Shargh’s sources that will be investigated later. The US and NATO not only pay attention to their negative actions and promise to investigate their circumstances, but they also pay attention to Afghan casualties. In a short news stories with headlines such as “condemnation of terrorist attack in Kabul” the US and NATO “condemned a Taliban attack to a restaurant in Kabul which left more than 20 dead and several wounded among civilians”¹⁵². The text uses the terrorist attack as a counter argument against the American – Afghan Bilateral Agreement. According to the same article, “Mohammad Omar Daoudzai, Afghanistan’s interior minister, said the deadly attack on a restaurant in Kabul showed that

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.magiran.com/ppdf/nppdf/2387/p0238719510111.pdf> (16/06/2014)

¹⁵¹ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=35393 (15/07/2014)

¹⁵² condemnation of terrorist attack in Kabul, (20 January 2014), No. 1932, p.15

delaying in signing the American – Afghan Bilateral Agreement does not help to start negotiation with the Afghan armed opponents”. Shargh’s theme regarding other countries’ forces is also without Kayhan’s presuppositions and descriptions. In the only news story about the British forces, Shargh in a short news piece, according to BBC writes, “British forces in Afghanistan have announced that they closed or delegate to the Afghan forces all of their bases except their main base. These forces leave Afghanistan until the end of this year”.¹⁵³ Shargh is not opposed to foreign forces staying and their operations in Afghanistan, in fact, it repeatedly suggests that Afghan forces still are too weak to do their job according to Afghan officials and “scholars”. Shargh in a news report with the headline “control of some areas in Southern Afghanistan in Taliban’s hands”¹⁵⁴ writes “Afghan forces say they could re-capture some parts of Helmand province, but despite government’s claim in thwarting militant’s activities, local residents say Taliban militants successfully captured two key areas in Sangin.” Shargh resumes its counter arguments and mitigate the Afghan forces’ gains by stating, “according to released reports, Taliban’s attacks are increased and have become a test to Afghan forces’ performance against them... now, local officials in Southern Afghanistan say it is approved that countries army and police cannot encounter against the Taliban’s activities”. Shargh relates every Taliban’s attack to Afghan’s military weakness: “more than 800 Taliban insurgences attacked military basis in Helmand province, Southern Afghanistan, which shows Afghan security forces’ challenges against the Taliban after foreign forces’ exit”¹⁵⁵

Shargh also publishes pieces, which seek to mitigate Americans’ negative activities in Afghanistan. In two short news articles, Shargh writes about the American secret detention centers in Afghanistan. In one of them, according to the New York Times, “a commission which is established to investigate about the US and UK detention centers in Afghanistan, announced that has found secret jails in two alliance forces’ bases.”¹⁵⁶ There are no details about the commission and its members, which reduces the value of that source. However, immediately after, in the same news article, the Pentagon’s spokesperson says, “All of our detention centers were reachable not only for Afghan government but also for the International Red Cross Committee.” In this argument, all of the sources are clear and in addition to the American and Afghan sides, there is

¹⁵³ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=30578 (08/06/2014)

¹⁵⁴ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=38030 (08/07/2014)

¹⁵⁵ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=37689 (08/07/2014)

¹⁵⁶ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=32873 (07/06/2014)

an international side, which is supposed to be a neutral observer, so the first claim regarding the detention centers is mitigated. The secret detentions are the issue of another short news paragraph in an article in Shargh where according to BBC, “The US officials announced they have freed 12 foreign prisoners from the Bagram detention center. It is said that these individuals were detained without the notice of Afghan officials.”¹⁵⁷ Again, there is a little value without a source and the source is reduced to a rumor.

It seems that the Shargh newspaper has a more moderate position about NATO’s operations in Afghanistan. The newspaper is almost silent about NATO or civilian casualty caused by NATO and is suspicious about Afghan army’s capability to maintain order and security after the foreign troops exit.

4.3 The US – Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, President Karzai and his administration’s policy

4.3.1 Kayhan: Against the agreement

Kayhan suggests that the American-Afghan Bilateral Agreement as an agreement against Afghanistan that US and NATO want to impose on the country. In Kayhan’s opinion, the Afghan people and government are against the agreement and, as aforementioned, Afghan’s Army and security sector can maintain the order without the help of occupiers. Kayhan especially is focused on Hamid Karzai and his “political tact” in his opposition against the agreement.

In Kayhan’s opinion, occupiers want to remain in Afghanistan at any price. Most of the time, Keyhan uses verbs such as “putting pressure” or “threatening” to describe NATO and the US’s positions. Headlines include lines like “US puts pressure on Karzai to sign the security agreement”¹⁵⁸. The word pressure is used along with “threatening” to describe NATO and US’s activities in the headline “US and NATO threatens to cut off the international supports of Afghanistan.”¹⁵⁹ But why do the US and NATO put pressure on Karzai? Kayhan answer, according to “scholars”, is that it is because the “US does not want to go out from Afghanistan completely in any circumstances.”¹⁶⁰ Kayhan’s worries would be more understandable if they saw

¹⁵⁷ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=36808 (07/06/2014)

¹⁵⁸ <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920912/12.htm> (09/06/2014)

¹⁵⁹ <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920914/12.htm> (10/06/2014)

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

the issue from conservatives' eyes, which means seeing possible long-term threats from the US and West in the neighboring country. In addition, from this viewpoint the US is putting pressure on Afghanistan and Karzai, and specifically imposing "capitulation", which some people are against. It is important for Kayhan to mention people's disagreement as well as that of Karzai and Afghan officials. Kayhan has only once, and in one statement, mentions that both the Afghan presidential candidates has publicly announced that they would sign the security agreement and omits the "other's" strong point, which is that both candidates agree with the US's plan. Instead, Kayhan emphasizes Karzai's opposition to the agreement by using headlines like: "Karzai says «no» to American request to sign the security agreement"¹⁶¹ which implies Karzai's "upper hand" and solid position in opposition to US's request instead of implying threats this time. Kayhan suggests this disagreement is because of Karzai's "political tact" which "has put America in trouble,"¹⁶² Karzai is not alone against the agreement. Kayhan even in one headline and through other news claims that the Loya Jirga, which is a mass meeting of influential Afghans in a consultative institution, disagree with the agreement. The headline "Afghan's people and Loya Jirga's opposition with giving judiciary immunity to occupiers"¹⁶³ implies the Loya Jirga's opposition to the security agreement for its constituents. This because usually Judiciary immunity or "capitulation" is an element of the agreement. The reader realizes just in the middle of the text that actually the Loya Jirga endorse the signing of the agreement. Kayhan tries to mitigate "others" political gains here and several times uses descriptions against the signing of agreement. For example, in the same news story they describe that students in the universities "Juzjan" and "Balkh" protest against capitulation to the US forces because it is a violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty. "Students campaigned against the US and demanded occupation forces pull out of the country as soon as possible."¹⁶⁴ Kayhan omits "others" and other players who agree with the "other side". Maybe because there is no positive views presented about the agreement from Afghan officials Kayhan is mostly focused on Karzai. The only time Kayhan reflects positively about the agreement is through an interview with Afghanistan's ambassador in Iran. The ambassador's

¹⁶¹ <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920916/12.htm> (28/05/2014)

¹⁶² <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920918/12.htm> (22/05/2014)

¹⁶³ <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920904/12.htm> (22/05/2014)

¹⁶⁴ <http://kayhanarch.kayhan.ir/920904/12.htm> (22/05/2014)

response about the security agreement was “Honestly, public opinion support signing the agreement, or in sum, majority of people support that.”¹⁶⁵

It seems that Kayhan is against the US-Afghanistan agreement and presents it as an agreement against Afghanistan’s sovereignty. Kayhan has almost no mentioning of supporters of the agreement and bolds Karzai’s disagreement. According to Keyhan’s coverage, people are against the agreement which the occupiers put pressure upon Afghans to sign.

4.3.2 Shargh: Necessary and inevitable

In Shargh’s view, the main discussion about the US-Afghan agreement “is not immunity of jurisdiction or American military bases in Afghanistan. Now, the main discussion is about the time of signing the agreement.”¹⁶⁶ Before the Loya Jirga meeting, Shargh was pretty sure that Karzai will sign the agreement and even according to “some opponents of the agreement” Karzai wanted to be sure about the approval of this controversial agreement through inviting of some like-minded fellows”¹⁶⁷

As was noted above, Shargh presents the idea that Afghanistan needs foreign troops to maintain order. However, Shargh tries to mention both opponents and supporters. Shargh brings some “observers” opinion that believe that “The US is seeking the geopolitical interests” and wants to “putting pressure on Russia and China’s weak points, and in addition [the US] has the easier access to Iran”. But immediately after that, and according an “Afghan expert” supposed to be more familiar with the issue rather than some analysts, it adds “...the US does not have any need to build military base in Afghanistan.” This expert suggests that using Afghanistan [by the US] for access to Iran is a shallow and weak analysis because according to him, the US has bases in countries which are totally against Iran religiously.”¹⁶⁸

Shargh emphasizes the Loya Jirga’s decision to approve the security agreement as the paper reports it several times. In contrast to Kayhan, Shargh’s first news with biggest font was “Loya Jirga ratifies the security agreement with the US” and emphasizes, “the Loya Jirga members’

¹⁶⁵ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/12253/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%87%D8%A7> (24/06/2014)

¹⁶⁶ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=25907 (25/04/2014)

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

demands are in the line with the US.”¹⁶⁹ In Shargh’s view, Americans are not at the end of the “others” on the spectrum. Shargh’s description of foreign forces after 2014 is more descriptive rather than negative. It states, “Soldiers, who remain in Afghanistan after 2014, mostly will be responsible for training Afghan forces and some special forces will participate in anti-terrorism operations.”

After Karzai’s opposition against signing the security agreement, Shargh presented Karzai as a person who does not pursue Afghanistan’s interests and has some suspect reasons to disagree with the Loya Jirga and some Afghan officials. The headline “Loya Jirga ratifies the security agreement with the US” has a small subheading, which says, “Karzai puts conditions”. In the same news article, Karzai is described as somebody who disagrees with the “absolute majority” of the Loya Jirga and who, according to observers, “tries to get a concession from Americans.”¹⁷⁰ Over time, the headline “Karzai’s new conditions for signing the agreement” shows Shargh’s theme changing towards Karzai. Shargh, according to Afghans analysts, writes, “Afghanistan’s President tries to use signing of the agreement as a political leverage for putting pressure on the US and gains its support for his candidacy in the next presidential election.”¹⁷¹ So, Karzai is described as a person who wants to use the agreement for personal purposes. Although according to the Shargh, some analysts think opposition against the agreement is because Karzai “does not trust in Americans,”¹⁷² which is again a personal attitude. Meanwhile, the Loya Jirga already approved the agreement. Shargh makes the issue more personal when it writes, “many believe that Karzai’s most important motivation is that he is investing for after his presidential period. It means he wants to introduce himself as a national and anti-west figure... maybe he wants to be a mediator between the Taliban and new government next year and establish his name as a [peace] broker between them.”¹⁷³

Karzai is also presented as somebody who is not loyal to his statements and makes claims without evidence. This character implies a person who is untrustworthy in dealings with the West and the rest of the world. “Fresh news introduces him as a cyclothymic who humiliates west and threatens to set tens of prisoners free who the west considers as dangerous terrorists... while 15 days ago

¹⁶⁹ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=26137 (21/05/2014) see newspaper’s clip here:
http://sharghdaily.ir/Modules/News/NewsCrop.aspx?News_Id=26137&V_News_Id=&Src=Main

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=26515 (12/06/2014)

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2901814> (14/06/2014)

Hamid Karzai said the Bagram prison is a factory to produce Talibs through a news conference in Kabul.”¹⁷⁴ According to the Washington Post, Shargh writes, “Hamid Karzai, the President of Afghanistan, is suspicious that the US supports terrorist attacks, which are imputed to the Taliban, for weakening his government... Hamid Karzai did not present any reliable evidence”¹⁷⁵

Maybe Shargh finds Karzai desperately resistant towards the future as Shargh writes, “...However, most of [presidential] candidates have announced their tendencies to sign it [security agreement], so it is necessary for Iran to be prepared and adopt a correct approach towards probable Afghanistan’s developments after the election.”¹⁷⁶ Shargh adds “practically, non-Pashtuns winning is more compatible with Iran’s interests...” but there is a better scenario” strong central government without ethnic and religious tendencies is more compatible with Iran’s strategic interests.”¹⁷⁷ As aforementioned, Shargh suggests that all of these developments need order and stability in the country, which now noticeably depends on the security agreement. It seems that at least in this issue, Iran and the US has the same interests in Shargh’s view.

4.4 Afghanistan’s presidential election

4.4.1 Kayhan: No matter what they say

Kayhan sees Afghan election as a good opportunity to show developments in Afghanistan’s security situation. Despite some security problems, Kayhan according to “scholars,” suggests “[high] turnout, sent the message to all active terrorists in Afghanistan that Afghan’s people agree to a democratic transition in the country and against any kind of terrorism.”¹⁷⁸ Kayhan assumes that in the political arena, at least some issues will be solved and Taliban will lose their political positions when writing “Huge turnout, including women, put Taliban terrorists in a hard condition

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2894322> (14/05/2014)

¹⁷⁶ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=31268 (14/06/2014)

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9012/%D8%AD%D8%B6%D9%88%D8%B1-%DA%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%E2%80%8C%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C> (15/05/2014)

and this group will not have any position in Afghanistan’s political arena.”¹⁷⁹ Kayhan does not mention candidates’ programs related to the foreign forces and security agreement (except briefly as a small part of a news story). Some of Kayhan’s descriptions imply that Kayhan is inclined to Abdullah among all the candidates. In news articles, Kayhan usually introduces Abdullah with few more positive words and mentions his relationship with Ahmad Shah Massoud who is a respected figure among all of Iran’s political factions. Lines like “Abdullah Abdullah who was very close to Ahmad Shah Massoud and was his personal physician”¹⁸⁰ and “Abdullah was a mojahid and Ahmad Shah Massoud’s close consultant. He belongs to two Pashtun and Tajik ethnic groups.”¹⁸¹ Kayhan even propogates distorted information in favor of Abdullah. It mentions a survey which suggests 76 percent people said they would chose Abdullah as the president¹⁸² while facts from the institution’s website shows that the number is in fact 48.83 percent.¹⁸³ After the second round, when Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai was announced as the winner, Kayhan recommended that there were some predictions that “the election will be engineered by the US in favor of US’s favorable candidate.”¹⁸⁴ However, there is no more mention of this possibility, maybe because of the further developments and the US brokered deal between two candidates.

¹⁷⁹ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9121/%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D9%BE%DB%8C%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%E2%80%8C%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF> (15/05/2014)

¹⁸⁰ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/8916/%D8%A2%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B4%DB%8C%D9%86-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%A7%DB%8C> (15/05/2014)

¹⁸¹ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/9012/%D8%AD%D8%B6%D9%88%D8%B1-%DA%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%E2%80%8C%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C> (15/05/2014)

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ <http://www.afghanpaper.com/nbody.php?id=69486> (15/05/2014)

¹⁸⁴ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/17882/%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%81-%D8%BA%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C>

The US mediation between the two candidates also has little coverage in Kayhan. Just briefly, in one news story it is mentioned, “according to Afghan sources, the agreement between Abdullah and Ahmadzai resulted after Karzai and Kerry’s mediation.”¹⁸⁵ However, Kayhan almost fails to mention the candidates’ programs and positions towards the foreign forces and the security agreement. As both candidates said before, they are not against the foreign forces, who Kayhan calls occupiers or the security agreement. These issues are simply omitted by Kayhan in news stories probably because they are in contrast with the Kayhan’s view about the foreign forces and their threat against Iran’s security, and its claim that People and Afghan’s society are against the agreement.

4.4.2 Shargh: Issues are related

Shargh pays attention to the relation between foreign troops and the main candidates. Sometimes it does so even disproportionately. In a news article with the headline “beginning of Afghanistan’s election campaign”¹⁸⁶, Shargh allocates more than two-third of the news story to the security agreement and Karzai’s and NATO position towards it. In the brief part directly related to the election, Shargh writes that two members of Abdullah’s campaign were shot dead which again relates to the security issues in Afghanistan and places the security agreement as a necessary step. Shargh is more suspicious, rather than Kayhan, about the result of election and its influence on Afghanistan’s turmoil situation. In an news article the headline reflects this, “Afghanistan’s election, continuation of the ethnic-religious conflict”¹⁸⁷

Shargh suggests that the election not only fails to benefit democratizing the country but the arrangement of candidates and their announced vice-presidents shows “power distribution based on ethnicity share, even more than before.”¹⁸⁸ Shargh recommends, “For Afghanistan’s sake and reducing its big problems, election will not be a solution by itself”¹⁸⁹ because of security issues and therefore, “the minimum stability” depends on “the security agreement.”¹⁹⁰ Shargh also, in contrast

[%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B4%D8%AF](#) (01/06/2014)

¹⁸⁵ <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/18421> (01/06/2014)

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2896521> (01/06/2014)

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2924352> (01/06/2014)

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

to Kayhan, thinks Karzai possibly tried to influence the election and Zalmay Rassoul is maybe “Karzai’s man behind the scene”¹⁹¹, which is understandable with regards to Shargh’s previous news articles about Karzai. However, Shargh has detailed reports about the election, and even in one case calls it “voting ceremony” but often describes the technical issues and statistics, rather than seeing it as a very important event to pave the way for democracy.

One important issue for Shargh is that both Ahmadzai and Abdullah agree with the security agreement. “Abdullah Abdullah said... about the security agreement and signing it, I should say there is no doubt that Afghanistan needs persisted co-operations and needs to international communities including the US. So, regarding this situation, we can reinforce our security institutions and be able to defend ourselves against the terrorist groups and insure our civilian’s security”¹⁹² Shargh considers US mediation as a crucial element to solve the problems between Abdullah and Ahmadzai.¹⁹³ Shargh also mentions positive statements the two candidates made about the US’s role in ending the election crisis as “a well-timed mediation” and the reason the election is now backed by “its legal frameworks”¹⁹⁴

It seems that Shargh accepts the US and foreign forces roles in maintaining security and suggests Iran should be prepared for “Afghanistan’s developments after the election” because foreign forces’ role in Afghanistan is undeniable, according to the presidential candidates’ and people’s representatives (like Loya Jirga) and therefore inevitable.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=39122 (18/07/2014)

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ http://sharghdaily.ir/?News_Id=39433 (25/07/2014)

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The current study investigated the presentation of the NATO (and mostly US) forces role and operations in Afghanistan in two Iranian newspapers. As aforementioned, media present their particular version of reality, which is related to theirs and their supporters' ideological and socio-political approaches and attitudes. As Gans (1970) mentions, the production of news is a system of power. Hall suggests, media provide the cognitive framework for understanding reality. One way to study this kind of presentation of the reality, as media see it, is through studying the presentations, contents, descriptions and news coverage styles of the media. All of these processes takes place in the context of the society and their interactive relationship with it. Policy makers can use news media to transform structures and meaning of political issues to the societal arena. Exactly because of that, and to allow for this analysis, was the context and background of Iranian society and power relation presented in more details in beginning of study.

The study assumed that the political factions in Iran have noticeable differences and tried to trace their differences, in regards to their socio-political approaches, through their presentations of the “reality” about the foreign forces in Afghanistan. Each newspaper provided its own specific version of that reality.

Conservatives are loyal to Islamic and anti-western activism, against the cultural imperialism, and American hegemony. They are more committed to exporting revolution and supporting Islamic activities around the world, compare with the reformists (Gheisari & Nasr, 2006). Khamenei, like most conservatives, is deeply suspicious of western powers (especially the U.S) and thinks they are seeking regime-change in Iran. Therefore, conservatives are so sensitive about the foreign troops in Afghanistan. From foreign policy to human rights, skepticism and conspiracy theory has shaped conservatives' ideas and influenced their actions, which is reflected in their like-minded media.

Unlike conservatives, reformists support reconciliation and normalizing of relationship with other countries and especially western countries. The previous reformist president, Khatami's

government even tried to normalize the relation with the U.S government through the cooperation on Afghanistan and Iraq cases, but the US gave a negative response to this policy.

One interesting issue is the newspaper's use of news sources. The issue of the existence and operation of foreign forces right under Iran's nose is an important national interest issue, with media and power players directly involved. Therefore, media are careful to use their news sources. It seems that Kayhan prefers Iranian conservatives and especially revolutionary groups' narrative, while Shargh chooses western media's narrative (which mostly belong to countries that are involved militarily in Afghanistan). Kayhan did not at all draw on international sources in the studied case, while Shargh did not use any Iranian sources. The matter is not just choosing a source, but probably more for the newspaper to establish frame form where they cover Afghanistan's developments. Almost half of Shargh's sources was the BBC while conservatives and official revolutionary narrative are deeply opposing that news source. BBC's website is filtered out in Iran (both Persian and English) and BBC is frequently accused, by the conservatives, for supporting counter-revolutionaries and subversive ideas/actions. After BBC, more frequent used sources were Agence France-Presse, Associated Press and Reuters, none of them approved by official Islamic Republic's narratives. In contrast, Kayhan used Fars News Agency, close to IRGC, in almost half of the cases. Other frequent sources were Jomhorie- Eslami Agency, an official agency close to the conservatives, and Tasnim, close to the IRGC, Kayhan also used "according to news agencies" several times, which means either there is no specific source or Kayhan does not want to reveal the source.

Use of sources is not a simple choice and shows essential connections among power elite groups and media. Regards to aforementioned differences among factions, relative distrust to special news sources was predictable but the observed difference was more than prediction. The researcher tried to ask a question about the process of choosing news sources in Shargh from Shargh's news staff, to be sure it is not influenced by habits or newsroom routine, but did not receive any clear answer. One former Shargh's news staff said to the researcher, off the record, that it might be because Shargh does not want to provoke anti-west emotions while Rouhani tries to reconcile the relation with the West and besides, anti-west narrative causes them to losing their audiences.

One assumption in discourse analysis is that media try to bold information compatible with their narrative and interpretation of power and mitigate or omit different information / interpretations. This assumption is confirmed through this study. For example Kayhan bolds NATO / US

operations' civilian casualties (along with negative descriptions) and omits the positive view of Afghanistan's presidential candidates about the US-Afghanistan Bilateral Agreement. Although conservatives do not insist on export the revolution like before, they are still loyal to the revolutionary and Islamic values. The fact that Afghans as Muslims and even some figures who got Iran's aid like Abdullah supports the US policies, disturbs conservatives, they still see ideology in foreign policy as an important element. Therefore, Kayhan tries to build its interpretation of reality of Afghanistan's development based on opposition to the US and all positive presentation of it. Meanwhile, Kayhan also is against the main insurgents in Afghanistan, Sunni extremists Taliban and knows the probability of instability after foreign forces exiting so, as an alternative, Kayhan exaggerate Afghan forces capability and continues demonizing foreign forces, specifically the US. At the same time, almost every news story, which approves the international forces' position including presidential candidates' opinions, is omitted. On the contrary, Shargh holds the necessity of security agreement and presidential candidates' positive views about it. Shargh does not present NATO / US operations caused civilian casualties. For reformists, national interests are more important than ideology. In foreign policy, they are more realist than the conservatives are and accept Afghanistan's situation and Afghan's opinions about the foreign forces. In fact, for them foreign forces in Afghanistan can help national interest rather than being a threat. Therefore, for Shargh covering the international forces' negative points is not a priority while there is no opposition against them among Afghan politicians and majority of influential figures and people as well.

Both newspapers frequently presented negative points of opposite groups / individuals or at the end, described some opposite information / approaches briefly and without details and actually buried them among other news stories.

Media do not just present the news. They change the news and information and make them compatible with their ideology and the power players close to them. They do this through selection, categorization, and presentation of news story and draw a specific style to view the world. Conservatives in Iran still support anti-west and revolutionary / religiously narrative that can be traced through Iran's complicated political context. At the same time, as discussed before, they are also to some extent pragmatist in their (especially foreign) policies. So, although they attack the west and consider it as a threat, they also calculate the threat of Sunni extremist Taliban in the neighboring country. Therefore, they are against the Taliban firmly. There is no positive view

about the Taliban in Kayhan and it seems that Kayhan does not peruse the policy “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”.

Reformists are introduced through their realist /pragmatist approach. They believe in interaction with the world and reconciliation with the west, which is the same as the policy of the new government in Iran. They accept the reality of foreign forces existence in the neighboring country and its role to maintain order and stability in Afghanistan (however, with some negative points and mentioning of mistakes) which is supported by the main stem of the Afghanistan’s political arena. They consider their news approach towards Afghanistan in regards to these realities, and thereby Shargh’s position is becoming understandable. The newspaper chose specific topics and cases and emphasized on them, while the rest was not mentioned or not important for it.

Kayhan got the record amount of government subsidies in the previous government while reformist newspapers got only a small share of funding¹⁹⁵. However, in Rouhani’s government the situation is changed. Kayhan, which got 62 billion Rials subsidize in 2009 received in six month of Rouhani’s government just 2.3 billion Rials, This is almost the same amount as Shargh received in the same period with their 1.81 billion Rials¹⁹⁶. One of the main claims of the Islamic Republic has been antagonism against the US. Now, one of the most important and popular reformist newspaper has no disagreement about the US forces existence in Afghanistan and actually sees it as a necessary step towards stability and peace in Afghanistan. Closeness of Shargh to government’s policies and their support for it can be sign of probable dramatic changes in the complicated balance of power in Iran. However, the conservative narrative remain very powerful in Iran.

Selection, categorization and presentation of issues and individuals shows the difference in their views on foreign policy. But we can also assume that they represent different perspectives and approaches of the different players and approaches in Iran’s politic atmosphere (although with different powers) and relative, though restricted, media freedom to present different / opposite approaches.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.dw.de/%DA%A9%DB%8C%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA-%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%86%DA%98%D8%A7%D8%AF/a-17798861> (09/07/2014)

¹⁹⁶ <http://press.farhang.gov.ir/fa/news/126407> (09/07/2014)

The two media's performances in this study are compatible with the mentioned assumption.

CDA allows for a widespread understanding of news structures and the main information and issues they cover. In addition, it shows the relationship between the structure of political power / position and presentation of the issues. So, CDA gives us a comprehensive idea about media presentation in the current study, but given that issue under study is very complex, detailed and time consuming will a short study like the current only draw out the main trends, not the finer analysis.

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