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## **Iran – State Sponsor of Terrorism and its Nuclear Ambitions**

### **From Pahlawi to Khomeini**

Under the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlawi, Teheran was building its military hegemonic position in the Gulf area with an assistance of the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Shah had also advanced preparations for nuclear program.<sup>2</sup> However, the inner situation completely changed when Shah was defeated by the mullahs. Iran for several further years had lost its conventional military strength. The new regime set revising most of the previous regime's polices, including its defence and security polices. Many of the defence contracts and these concerning the nuclear plants signed with the United States and other Western countries were cancelled.<sup>3</sup>

Since the 1979 hostage crisis the Iranian-American became unstable and hostile.<sup>4</sup> The situation in the Gulf was shifted toward more unstable and dan-

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<sup>1</sup> During the 1970s, Washington's military alliance with Teheran was a major deterrent to Saddam Hussein's designs on Iran and the Persian.

<sup>2</sup> The Teheran Nuclear Research Institute was established in 1958 and opened in 1967. It was equipped with a US supplied 5 – megawatt light water research reactor. Iran signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1969 and ratified it in 1970; D. Linzer, *Past Arguments Don't Square With Current Iran Policy*, "Washington Post," March 27, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The Islamic revolution deeply worsened internal Iranian situation. Iran's economy was crippled by sanctions, relations with the West became strained, and much of the international cooperation came to halt. For instance, France refused to supply Iran with any enriched uranium, other former Shah's partner, German Kraftwerk-Union fully withdrew from the nuclear power project at Buser, leaving one reactor 50% complete and the other 85% complete, see: *Iran's Nuclear Progress: the Reality, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*, London July 2006.

<sup>4</sup> As noted S. Rob Sobhani "the taking of 52 American diplomats hostage by Iranian students in 1979 and the subsequent Algiers Agreement that ended this hostage crisis in 1980, is used by some within the policymaking community as a basis for refraining from adopting a policy of regime change. The Algiers Agreement calls for noninterference by Washington in the internal affairs of Iran" quotation from S. R. Sobhani, *The Prospect for Regime Change in Iran*, in: *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, H. Sokolowski, P. Clawson (ed. by), The Strategic Studies Institute, January 2006, p. 67.

gerous prospect of flaming the whole area by an ardent Islamic radicalism. However, Teheran cancelled for some period the nuclear program mainly for a sake of mentioned lack of the Western support but also by the ideological reasons. For the Supreme Leader, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the nuclear program was the Shah invention, and like other things related with the former regime had Satan not Islamic roots.

On the other hand, since the revolution, Iran has become one of the world's most active sponsors of terrorism. Tehran has armed, trained, financed, inspired, organized, and otherwise supported dozens of violent groups over the years. Iran has backed not only groups in its Persian Gulf neighbourhood, but also terrorists and radicals in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Bosnia, the Philippines, and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> This support is continuing until now. The mullahs viewed supporting Islamic revolutions overseas as a part of religious duty. Exporting the revolution was a key factor of Teheran's foreign strategy. The Iranian first Supreme Leader, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, shortly after taking power, declared: "We should try hard to export our revolution to the world ... we [shall] confront the world with our ideology."<sup>6</sup>

It is important to understand Khomeini's concept about a new role for clergy. He stepped against the traditional role for the clergy as moral guides and intercessors on behalf of the people with an inherently corrupt political authority. Ayatollah Khomeini proposed that the clergy should assume direct political power, in what would become the first theocracy of the modern age. The new Iranian constitution, which was ratified in 1979, Khomeini's concepts were materialised. His principle of supreme clerical rule – the *velayat-e faqih* was the essence of that constitution. Involvement Iranian clergy in politics, remains the most prominent feature of Iran's political system, do not derive from the popular elections. This office is situated above: executive, legislation and judiciary branches, and can blocked any activity which is a threat for Islamic character of the state.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> D. Byman, *Iran, Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, <http://www.brookings.edu/views/testimony/fellows/byman20050908.pdf>, September 8, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted in A. Ehteshami, *After Khomeini*, Routledge, New York 1995, p. 131. As noted: C. L. Bargerón: "Iran's call for the export of revolutionary ideals, especially to countries within the Persian Gulf, posed an apparently imminent threat to U.S. interests and American-dependent states in the region. The re-emergence of historically, religiously, and culturally authentic vocabulary and constructs of reality powerfully challenged the modernization paradigm which had foretold incremental democratization on the Western model, secularization, and economic globalization as the constitutive elements of a new and modern Middle East;" quoted from: C. L. Bargerón, *The Middle East: some new realities and old problems*, "International Social Science Review," June 22, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> About political and institutional structure of Iran, see more in: *Islamska Republika Iranu – ustrój i instytucje*, <http://www.arabia.pl/content/view/full/283081/96/>.

### **Iranian leaders were aware of dangers for the Islamic theocracy:**

- hostilities with the United States, American diplomatic staff hostages affair, which ensued in breaking down relations and Washington’s sanctions on Teheran;
- neighbourhood up to 1991 with the hostile Soviet Russia on the other flank;
- adding to these threats: in September 1980, Iraq ruled by Saddam Hussein invaded Iran. The Iraqi-Iranian war lasted for eight years, and considerably reduced Iranian ability for spreading its Shiite version of revolution;
- the rest of the Arab Sunni world were suspicious and hostile about Teheran’s theocracy and its aims.

Nevertheless, Iran partly achieved its goals since the Islamic revolution: the main asset was activity of the Shiites movements and religious radicalism in the region. Teheran took these movements under its political and religious umbrella, gave them the ideological frame, organisational and material support. Iran backed Shiite’s groups in Iraq, Bahrain,<sup>8</sup> Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Kuwait, and elsewhere. In the eyes of its founders, however, the Iranian revolution was more than simply a Shiite movement. Tehran saw itself as the champion of the “dispossessed” around the world. Thus it embraced an array of left-wing revolutionary movements, many of which had secular ideologies. From the beginning, Teheran backed Iraqi Shiites, as once Khomeini mentioned: the path to the Jerusalem’s liberation went through Baghdad. In November 1982 Tehran organized various Iraqi Shiite groups under the umbrella of the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). In the Khomeini’s vision Iran was the first step toward creating an Islamic rule.<sup>9</sup>

### **Iranian assistance to the Islamic terrorism**

What terrorist activities have been linked with Iran?

The U.S. government first listed Iran as a terrorist sponsor in 1984. Among its activities have been the following:

- In November 1979, Iranian student revolutionaries widely thought to be linked to the Khomeini government occupied the American Embassy in Teheran. Iran held fifty-two Americans hostage for 444 days.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In 1981, shortly after the outbreak of the Iranian revolution, Tehran aided Shi’a radicals of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain in an attempted coup against Bahrain’s ruling Al Khalifa family; D. Byman, *Iran...*, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Khomeini urged Muslims: “Rise up! Grab what is yours by right through nails and teeth! Do not fear the propaganda of the superpowers and their sworn stooges. Drive out the criminal rulers!... March towards an Islamic government!” If only all Moslems cooperated, they would be “the greatest power on earth.” Quotation from: B. Rubin, *Iran. The Rise of a Regional Power*, “The Middle East Review of International Affairs,” vol. 10, no 3, September 2006, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue3/jv10no3a10.html>.

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. responded by freezing more than \$ 11 billion in Iranian assets on deposit in American banks. Nineteen hostages were released within a short time, but fifty two others were held for 444 days and released on January 21, 1981.

- Observers say Iran had prior knowledge of Hezbollah attacks, such as the 1988 kidnapping and murder of Colonel William Higgins, a U.S. Marine involved in a U.N. observer mission in Lebanon, and the 1992 and 1994 bombings of Jewish cultural institutions in Argentina.<sup>11</sup>
- Iran still has a price on the head of the Indian-born British novelist Salman Rushdie for what Iranian leaders call blasphemous writings about Islam in his 1989 novel *The Satanic Verses*.
- U.S. officials say Iran supported the group behind the 1996 truck bombing of Khobar Towers, a U.S. military residence in Saudi Arabia, which killed nineteen U.S. servicemen.

Of many terrorists groups that Iran has sponsored, none is more effective in terrorism than Lebanese Hizballah.<sup>12</sup> The Hizballah organization is the spearhead for Iran in its use of terrorism in general, and in its fight against Israel in particular.<sup>13</sup> The organisation is rooted in the Shi'ite community of Lebanon.<sup>14</sup> Lebanese Shi'ite clerics began building a radical underground Islamist movement known as al-Dawa (The Call), with the leader, Seikhs Husayn Fadlallah.

Iran and Hizballah have a deep and complex relationship.<sup>15</sup> Of all Iran's attempts to export the Islamic revolution, Hizballah is by far the most successful. Iranian organizational support was essential to the foundation and later effectiveness of Hizballah. The organisation has been an effective proxy for Iran, ad-

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<sup>11</sup> In November 2006, Argentina issued international arrest warrants for Rafsanjani and nine others, including Imad Mugniyah, for their role in the 1994 bombing that killed 85 people at a Buenos Aires Jewish community center. On Tehran Radio, Rafsanjani (the former Iranian president) declared that "Hitler had only killed 20,000 Jews and not six million;" N. Thrall, *How the Reagan Taught Iran the Wrong Lessons*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs," vol. 11, no 2, June 2007, [http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue2/jv11no2a5.html#\\_edn36](http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue2/jv11no2a5.html#_edn36).

<sup>12</sup> Iranian-linked groups frequently use the label "Hizballah." For example, in Iran, "Hizballahis" are associated with pro-Islamic government militias, many of whom fought street battles against rival leftist or other organizations in the early stage of revolution. Hizballah movements are reportedly appeared in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, among other countries. These movements often have links to Iran. Other groups, as for example Turkish Hizballah, are not linked to Teheran.

<sup>13</sup> Iran's ambassador to Syria in the early 1980s, Ali Akbar Mohtasemi, provided financing and support for the creation of Hizballah, G. Sick, *Iran: Confronting Terrorism*, "The Washington Quarterly," Autumn 2003, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, Lebanese Shi'ite clerics had studying at the seminars of southern Iraq, encountered Shi'ite Islamists, including the Ayatollah Khomeini.

<sup>15</sup> As noted Y. Amidor: "The Shi'a-Iran-Syria-Hizballah axis has two connotations. The first is an ideological one, as an active radical force trying to change the Middle East and hoping for change beyond the region as well [...]. Second, this axis is also an actual physical one, which creates an arc starting in Tehran, passing through Baghdad (and when the United States leaves Baghdad, this axis will hold onto Baghdad with great power), and continuing through from Syria to Lebanon," quoted from: Y. Amidor, *The Hizballah-Syria-Iran Triangle*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs," vol. 11, no 1, March 2007, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue1/jv11no1a1.html>.

vancing its position in the Arab world, both through its confrontation with Israel and by forging links with Sunni and Shi'ite terrorist organisations. In 1982, an international peacekeeping force led by the United States and with contingents from Britain, France, and Italy entered to Beirut to oversee the Palestine Liberation Organization's withdrawal and to help stabilize the situation in Lebanon. With support from Iran and also Syria, Hizballah's armed wing launched a war against the Western presence in Lebanon. The first Hizballah's attacks was an April 1983 suicide car bombing against the United States embassy in Beirut that killed 63 and injured 120. In October 1983, twin suicide truck bombers struck the US Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 242 Americans, and a French base 58 French soldiers. In next months Hizballah attacked many times. In 1984, beleaguered by the terrorist attacks, the peacekeeping forces withdrew from Lebanon. The organization began its large-scale terror acts in 1982, when its militants blew up the American Embassy in Beirut, killing 61 people and wounding more than 120. Later, it was behind a series of terror attacks against Western targets, among them: the suicide bombing of the Marines Headquarters in Beirut (October 23, 1983) and the French Military Headquarters in Beirut, in which 241 Americans and 56 French soldiers were killed. In the 1980s, Hizballah activists were involved in the kidnapping of Western citizens in Lebanon whom they held as hostages. In some cases, this was done on Iranian orders, for the purpose of obtaining economic or political concessions from Western governments, such as the release of Iranian or Lebanese terrorists imprisoned in Western Europe. Iran provides financial assistance on a large scale to Hizballah, reaching, according to some estimates, about one hundred million of dollars a year.<sup>16</sup> It also gives tactical assistance in terror attacks against Israel, through the Guardians of the Revolution units posted in the Baka'a Valley. Iran has been Hizballah's main weapons supplier since its establishment. Iranian assistance includes a wide range of weapons and ammunition, such as mortars, Sagger anti-tank rockets, mines, explosives and small arms. As far as is known, the largest arms consignment sent by Iran to Lebanon was in February/March 1992 in the wake of the incidents between Israel and the Hizballah. Since then, there have been no significant arms consignments dispatched by air, probably due to Syrian objection. However, six trucks carrying arms from Iran to Lebanon, were apprehended in Turkey in mid- January 1996. Thus it can be assumed that Iran is now making extensive use of the land route to transfer arms to Hizballah. Iranian assistance to

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<sup>16</sup> Iranian sponsorship of Hizballah is a major reason why Iran consistently tops the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. Although exact figures are difficult to verify, Tehran provides perhaps \$ 100 million per year to Hizballah. In addition, Iranian forces train the movement and provide it with intelligence. Hizballah's operatives enjoy close ties to Iranian intelligence and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is linked directly to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, see more in J. Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, New York 2004.

Hizballah in this field is mostly advice and supervision of the Hizballah's training program, since the basic instruction is carried out by the organization's militants themselves. The Guardians of the Revolution (more explicitly the training arm of the al-Quds Forces) provides higher level training in Iran mainly at the al-Quds Force training base "Imam Ali" in northern Tehran). These include courses for officers, company commanders, commandos, and courses in communications and powered-glidiers.<sup>17</sup>

Hizballah gained many victories in 1984 it forced to withdraw the Western powers from Lebanon and attributed itself Israeli withdrawal in 2000. The summer 2006 Israeli campaign against Hizballah did not succeed in defeating the organization.<sup>18</sup> It envisaged, Hizballah was very good prepared and equipped by Iran and could led regular defence and counter attacks directed against Israel. Hizballah is now better characterized as a guerrilla and political movement that at times uses terrorism than as a pure terrorist group.<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy, Iran is particularly influential with regard to Hizballah activities overseas. Hizballah, for example, stopped its attacks in Europe as part of a broader Iranian decision to halt attacks there.

Except supporting Hizballah, Iran has a long tradition to support other Islamic groups, especially related with Palestinian violence against Israel. For Iran, support for the Palestinians serves several purposes:

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<sup>17</sup> A. Mannes, *Profiles in Terror. The Guide to Middle East Terrorist Organizations*, Boulder 2004, pp. 160–165.

<sup>18</sup> See more in: R. Paz, *The 2006 Lebanon War's Effect on Global Jihad Groups*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs," vol. 11, no 1, March 2007; M. Arens, *Consequences of the 2006 War for Israel*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs," vol. 11, no 1, March 2007.

<sup>19</sup> As noted A. R. Norton: "Hizballah has managed to build an extremely impressive social base in Lebanon. Hizballah is arguably the most effective and efficient political party in the country. Throughout the areas where it enjoys a significant presence, especially the *dahiyah* (suburbs) of Beirut, the northern Beqaa valley, and Baalbek in particular, and in parts of southern Lebanon, including Nabatiyya, the important center of Shii scholarship, Hizballah provides an array of services. Its medical facilities are far better than those available in government hospitals, which the poor would otherwise have to rely upon. Its new hospital in the dahiyah (near Harat Hurayk) is extremely impressive, and a new hospital in Nabatiyya is in operation, although construction still continues. Doctors working in the hospitals report that both Muslims and Christians may and do use the medical facilities, although they are found in areas where many Shii Muslims live. In addition to medical care, a network of schools, companies, community centers and public-assistance facilities (e.g., food distribution centers for the needy) fall under Hizballah's wing. Hizballah maintains its own engineering and construction company, and it has been quick to lend material support and expertise to those whose homes have been damaged or destroyed, whether by Israeli attacks or as a result of internecine clashes within Lebanon. The families of martyred Hizballahis receive regular pensions and other assistance from the party. As these examples illustrate, the party reveals two complementary aspects. It has committed itself to the militant pursuit of its goals, especially expelling Israel from South Lebanon, while working extremely hard to build and sustain a political constituency;" quotation from A. R. Norton, *Hizballah From Radicalism to Pragmatism*, "Middle East Policy Council Journal," vol. V, no 4, January 1998.

- Teheran has a genuine commitment to help Palestinians fight what Iran regards as an illegitimate colonial regime;
- support for the Palestinians enhances Iran’s prestige throughout the Arab world;
- by deepening the Israel-Palestine conflict, Iran is able to prevent its isolation in the Muslim world.<sup>20</sup>

Sunni Hamas is not a barrier to cooperation with the Iranian Shi’ites. Hamas started cooperation with Hizballah. Iran has become a major source of financial and technical support for Hamas.<sup>21</sup> Since acquiring in January 2006 by Hamas the power in Palestinian Autonomy structures, Iran has become one of the most important supporter for PA. The EU and U.S. cut the financial help, because Hamas denied cross out the aim of destruction Israel from its program. The Palestinian organization most loyal to the Iranian revolutionary ideology is the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In spite of it being a Sunni organization, the Iranian revolution sees in it an example to be followed. After the deportation of its leader, Fathi Shqaqi, from the Gaza Strip, the ties between Iran and the organization have been strengthened, particularly in the field of Iranian military assistance. Instructors of the Guardians of the Revolution give regular military instruction courses to the organization’s activists from the Territories and abroad, as well as in the Hizballah camps in Lebanon and Iran. Iran also provides the organization’s activists with logistic support, including Iranian identification papers.<sup>22</sup> The Middle East peace process broke down at the end of the 1990s not because of Iranian opposition but because the Israelis and Palestinians could not overcome their differences. Ending Iran’s violent opposition to

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<sup>20</sup> In that way Teheran is still able to divert U.S. pressure (including efforts at regime change) toward others in the region.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to political ties, Iran also provides Hamas with military assistance. The movement’s activists train on a regular basis at the camps of Hizballah and the Guardians of the Revolution in Lebanon, as well as in Iran. This includes training for suicide attacks. Several Iranian-trained militants succeeded in infiltrating back into the Territories under Palestinian Authority control. Israel has arrested Hamas activists who admitted that they were trained by Iranian instructors in the Beka’a Valley, in Lebanon, and in Iran. The training included the use of light weapons, photography and sabotage.

<sup>22</sup> Iran is the PIJ’s primary benefactor and the PIJ is generally considered to be the Iranian proxy in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. During the Iran-Iraq war, the PIJ was one of the few Sunni Muslim organizations to support Iran over Iraq, Iran was ambivalent about the PIJ, but in the late 1980s the Iranian government expanded its efforts to export its radical Islamist ideology. This decision coincided with the outbreak of the First Intifada, in which the PIJ played a major role. Seeing the PIJ as a possible bridge into the Sunni world. Iran provided them funds, weapons, and training. When the PIJ’s leadership was deported to Lebanon in 1988, they expanded their contacts with Iran and Hizballah. Shortly after Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, Teheran encouraged the PIJ to expand its attacks against Israel. In June 2002 Iran, pleased with the PIJ’s activity in the al-Aqsa Intifada, granted it an independent budget, see more in: A. Mannes, *Profiles in Terror. The Guide to Middle East Terrorist Organizations*, Oxford 2004, pp. 200–202.

Middle East peace is absolutely necessary, but doing so would not be sufficient to see the revival of Israeli-Palestinian peace process. As above was mentioned, Iran has long pursued ties to Sunni jihadists against Israel. Teheran also had contacts with Al Qaida. The 9/11 Commission reports revealed that in 1991 and in 1992 Al Qaida and Iran had several contacts in Sudan, and in Hizballah's training camps in Lebanon in the early 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Several of the 9/11 hijackers transited Iran, taking advantage of its policy of not stamping the passports of those travelling from Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup>

On June 25, 1996, group of Saudi terrorists exploded a bomb at the Al-Khobar Towers apartment complex that housed personnel of the US Air force, killing nineteen American servicemen. A long drawn out investigation ensued during which American investigators on several occasions criticized the Saudi authorities for their failure to provide essential information. According to information released, the attack was carried out by a group of radicals belonging to a hitherto unknown Saudi "Hizballah" organization, whose members were mainly from the country's Shiite minority recruited by an Iranian intelligence official. In the first stages of the investigation, US officials believed the conspirators might have had links to Al Qaida. There was also evidence that some participants in the conspiracy were Sunni Muslims and that preparations for the bombing had taken place in the Biqa' Valley of Lebanon, the stronghold of Hizballah. The bombing involved a complex set of preparations including frequent reconnaissance of the proposed target. The power of the explosion was enormous and required advanced expertise in the manufacture of explosives.<sup>25</sup>

After Bin Laden and Al Qaida were forced out of Sudan, ties with Iran worsened. The Iranian government did not like the fact that Bin Laden was establishing such a close relationship with the Taliban regime, which had proved to be the mortal enemy of Iran's closest allies in Afghanistan. The Taliban had killed Abdul Ali Mazari, the leader of the Iranian backed *Hezb-e Wahdat* (Party of Unity) the main organization of the Hezara, a Persian speaking Shiite ethnic group in Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> While Osama Bin Laden was in Sudan he had a meeting with Sheikh Nomani, an Iranian government representative in Khartoum, which led to further meetings with the Iranians. A few weeks after the first meeting, the Iranians arranged for an Al Qaida team to visit Lebanon to receive training in explosives production and other techniques. According to Gunaratna's investigation, Iran, provided Al Qaida with explosives that were used against East African targets; R. Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, Columbia University Press, New York 2002, pp. 146-148.

<sup>24</sup> This practice hindered Saudi security agencies' ability to detect the terrorists when they later returned to Saudi Arabia, see more in: G. C. Gambil, B. Enrawos, *Bin Laden's Network in Lebanon*, "Middle East Intelligence Bulletin," III, no 9, September 2001, [http://www.meib.org/articles/0109\\_11.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0109_11.htm).

<sup>25</sup> J. Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition*, Washington Institute of Near East Policy, Washington, D.C. 2000, pp. 73-97.

<sup>26</sup> A. F. Fogelquist, *Al-Qaeda and the Question of State Sponsorship*, "International Monitor Organization," August 2002.

Since 9/11, Iran has cooperated fitfully with the U.S. in fighting various Sunni jihadists. At times Iran has provided considerable cooperation, such as sending many jihaidists back to their home countries, where they can be easier detected. Teheran, however, as allowed several very senior Al Qaida figures, such as Saif al-Adel, Saad bin Ladin, and Abu Hafs to remain in Iran.<sup>27</sup> As noted D. Byman:<sup>28</sup> “It is still unclear how are long time Tehran’s intentions regarding Al Qaida. Iran appears to be keeping its options open with regard to the jihadists. On the one hand, it recognizes the heavy price to be paid if it openly backs them. Moreover many jihadists regard the Shi’a as apostates deserving death. Sectarian violence is a growing problem in Iraq On the other hand, the jihadists are a potent weapon for Iran, which historically has tried to keep as many options open as possible.”<sup>29</sup>

### Iran’s growing involvement in Iraq

Before U.S. invasion against Saddam’s Iraq, Teheran and Baghdad had long been rivals for dominance in the Gulf region. Since toppling Saddam Hussein, Iran is taking a strong interest in the fate of Iraq’s Shi’a majority. Teheran also fears that instability in Iraq could spill over into Iran, inflaming its own Kurdish population or leading to a refugee crisis.

According to Rick Brennan there are at least four proofs of Iranian intensifying involvement in Iraq:<sup>30</sup>

1. Information about Iranian involvement is gathering by intelligence community not from Iraqis, but mostly American soldiers and privates in Iraq (sergeants, lieutenants or captains) – they have no reason to distort the information provided.
2. The U. S. military possesses the evidence of using Iranian weapon in Iraq. This evidence included captured rocket propelled grenades, mortar rounds

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<sup>27</sup> A February 11, 2007 *Washington Post* article reported that “Tehran has refused to hand over a number of senior Al Qaida operatives it has claimed to be holding under ‘house arrest’ for years.” The *Post* reported more than three years earlier that U.S., European, and Arab officials had stated that many members of al-Qa’ida’s leadership were operating from Iran under the protection of the Qods, or Jerusalem, Force – the extra-territorial operations wing of the Pasdaran. According to these officials, the al-Qa’ida leadership operating from Iran includes Sa’d bin Ladin, one of Usama bin Ladin’s eldest sons; Sayyif al-Adel, al-Qa’ida’s chief of military operations; Abdallah Ahmad Abdallah, the organization’s chief financial officer; and “perhaps two dozen other top al Qaeda leaders.” “Al-Adel and Abdullah,” the *Post* reported, “are considered the top operational deputies to Osama bin Laden and his second-in-command, Ayman Zawahiri,” K. De Young, *U.S. Keeps Pressure on Iran But Decreases Saber Rattling*, “The Washington Post,” February 11, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> D. Byman – Director, Center for Peace and Security Studies, Georgetown University.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from: D. Byman, *Iran, Terrorism...*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> See more in: R. Brennan, *Iran’s Covert War in Iraq*, “Washington Times,” March 16, 2007.

and rockets. All of these weapons had Iranian markings, serial numbers and dates of production.

3. One of the weapons displayed to reporters in Baghdad (so-called explosively formed projectile) was made from components only known to be produced in manufactures in Teheran. First time this weapon was used by Hizballah which is also receiving support from Iran.
4. The U. S. military had captured Iranian senior members of the elite special forces known as Qods Force operating inside Iraq.<sup>31</sup> (One of captured Iranian senior members: the General Mohsen Chizari – the no. 3 in the Qods force) This force reports to the Supreme Iranian Leader Great Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and is an arm of the Iranian regime.

Muqtada al Sadr is the most influential political Shiite figure in Iraq. He is the main Iranian asset in Iraqi inner and still unstable political situation. Al Sadr accepts the Iranian theocratic model and is deeply against American forces in Iraq. For Teheran it is convenient situation – a nuisance for Americans and friendly political force with al Sadr who draws a massive support from Iraqi's Shi'ites.<sup>32</sup>

The Iraqi future is still unclear but since destructing in Samara the Golden Mosque (Al- Askariya) in February 22, 2006 (In Iraq one of the holiest Shiite shrines) by the Sunni terrorists, the internal war dramatically has erupted, especially between Shiite and Sunni fractions. The threat of disintegration of Iraqi state into three parts: Shiite's zone, Sunni's zone and Kurdish' zone, provoking Iran for deeper and more complex involvement in support for Iraqi Shiites. In Teheran's opinion Iraqi Shiites are nor properly prepared to fight against Sunnis. Many Sunnis (Islamic jihadists, post-Saddam nationalists) terrorists acts are directed against Shiites, their victims taking a massive toll in this internal struggle.

In building a new *Pax Iranica* in the Gulf, Teheran is opting for a weak but friendly/satellite Iraq. This aim is very difficult to achieve, because of enmity rooted in historical and religious background between: Shiites and Sunnis and Arab – Persian world. In Teheran's political strategy the real aim is to support the creating Shiite zone in Iraq, which is the largest in population. Realising this aim would allow in Iranian policy long and deep interfering inside Iraq (an-

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<sup>31</sup> The Qods Force (Jerusalem force) is involved in funding Iraqi extremist cells, training them on Iranian soil, arming them with advanced explosive munitions and other weapons, and in some cases providing advice a Force and direction. While Iranian interference is not the main source of Iraq's turmoil, Tehran appears to have made a strategic decision to fuel instability there in order to weaken the situation of the U.S. forces in Iraq.

<sup>32</sup> See more in: A. W. Samii, *The Nearest and Dearest Enemy: Iran After The Iraq War*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs," vol. 9, no 3, September 2005, [http://media.idc.ac.il/journal/2005/issue3/jv9no3a3.html#\\_edn87](http://media.idc.ac.il/journal/2005/issue3/jv9no3a3.html#_edn87).

other zones), especially after U.S. military departure.<sup>33</sup> Fragmented Iraq will allow by Teheran to achieve a new Pax Iranica in the region.

### Iran and its nuclear ambitions

Iran signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 and ratified it in 1970. After Islamic revolution nuclear program was nearly stopped by more than decade. Iranian cooperation with the West was ceased. After the Iraqi-Iranian war, Teheran became rely on Pakistan, China and Russia as significant allies in rebuilding Iran's nuclear program.<sup>34</sup>

#### **The international crisis related with the Iran's nuclear program:**<sup>35</sup>

- August 2002: Alireza Jafazadeh, a leading critic of Teheran, revealed the existence of two unknown nuclear sites, a uranium enrichment facility in Natantz and heavy water facility in Arak;
- June 2003 Mohamed El-Baradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency stated that inspections revealed that "Iran failed to report certain nuclear materials and activities;"<sup>36</sup>
- October 2003: Iran began to hold negotiations with IAEA members with respect to a more stringent set of nuclear inspections;
- 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003: Iran signed the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- 27<sup>th</sup> July 2004: Iran broke seals placed on uranium centrifuges by the IAEA and resumed construction of the centrifuges at Natantz;
- 31<sup>st</sup> July 2004: Iran stated that it had resumed building nuclear centrifuges to enrich uranium, reversing a voluntary pledge to UK, France and Germany to suspend all uranium enrichment-related activities;

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<sup>33</sup> R. Fiedler, *Atomowy wymiar Pax Iranica zagrożeniem dla bezpieczeństwa regionalnego*, Poznań 2007 – the article in edition. In Iraqi Study Group (Backer and Hamilton) report – its authors noticed that stabilizing Iraq needs Iranian involvement and Washington should engage a cooperation with Teheran; see more in report: [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq\\_study\\_group\\_report/report/1206/iraq\\_study\\_group\\_report.pdf](http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf) and opinions about this report: [http://www.foreignaffairs.org/special/baker\\_report\\_roundtable/](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/special/baker_report_roundtable/).

<sup>34</sup> Iran signed several agreements with China, Pakistan and Russia. For instance due this cooperation Iranian nuclear technicians were trained by China under a secret Nuclear Cooperation Agreement and a number of Iranian students were trained in Pakistan. In 1995 Iran signed a contract with Russia to resume work on the plant in Bushehr. J. Boureston, Ch. D. Ferguson, *Schooling Iran's atom squad*, "Bulletin of Atomic Scientists," May/June 2004, pp. 31–35; see also at IAEA website <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2003/ebsp2003n011.shtml>.

<sup>35</sup> *Nuclear Ambitions: Options for the West*, "Center for Security Studies" (CSS), vol. 1, no 1, November 2006.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/Statements/2003/ebsp2003n011.shtml>.

- 21<sup>st</sup> September 2004: Iran announced that it would continue its nuclear program, converting 37 tonnes of yellowcake uranium for processing in centrifuges;
- 24<sup>th</sup> October 2004: The European Union made a proposal to supply Iran with civilian nuclear technology if Iran terminated its uranium enrichment program permanently. Iran rejected this proposal, reiterating that it would not renounce its right to enrichment technologies;
- 10<sup>th</sup> January 2006: Iran began removing IAEA seals at enrichment-related locations and later announced that it had resumed its nuclear research program;<sup>37</sup>
- In May 2006, the Security Council adopted a resolution endorsing an offer of diplomatic and economic incentives and demanding that Iran suspend all uranium enrichment programs by August 31;
- In December 2006, the UN's Security Council imposed sanctions on Iran's trade in sensitive nuclear materials and technology. Following the IAEA's offer to Tehran of a 60 day grace period where halting of the country's uranium enrichment would be exchanged for suspension of UN sanctions which Iran did not take up;
- Security Council passed Resolution 1747 in March 2007, intensifying the previous sanctions package. Iran has vowed to continue with its nuclear energy program.<sup>38</sup>

Iran also is developing the missile program. Teheran is possessing advanced delivery system, importing in the recent years North Korean, Chinese and Russian technologies. As noticed A. H. Cordesman and K. R. Al-Rodhan – if Iran begins work on the Shahab 5 and the Shahab 6 series, Teheran may acquire delivery systems in a global range.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 1. Estimated Iranian Missile Profiles**

Designation	Stages	Progenitor Missiles	Propellant	Range Kilometres	Payload Kilograms
1	2	3	4	5	6
Mushak-120	1	CSS-8, SA-2	Solid	130	500
Mushak-160	1	CSS-8, SA-2	Liquid	160	500
Mushak-200	1	SA-2	Liquid	200	500

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/2006/prn200602.html>.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/sanction/indxiran.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> See more in: A. H. Cordesman, K. R. Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons? Iran's Missiles and Possible Delivery Systems*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, April 2006; compare with: W. S. Carus, *Iran and Weapon of Mass Destruction*, "Middle East Review of International Affairs," vol. 4, no 3, Fall 2000, pp. 57–67.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Shahab-1	1	Soviet SSN-4, Korean SCUD B	Liquid	300	987-1000
Shahab-2	1	Soviet SSN-4 Korean SCUD C	Liquid	500	730-989
Shahab-3	1	N Korea Nodong-1	Liquid	1,300	760-1158
Shahab-4	2	N Korea Taepodong-1	Liquid	3,000	1040-1500
Ghadr 101	Multi	Pakistan Shaheen-1	Solid	2,500	NA
Ghadr 110	Multi	Pakistan Shaheen-2	Solid	3,000	NA
IRIS	1	China M-18	Solid	3,000	760-1158
Kh-55	1	Soviet AS-15 Kent	Jet engine	2,900-3,000	200 kt nuclear
Shahab-5	3	N Korea Taepodong-2	Liquid	5,500	390-1000
Shahab-6	3	N Korea Taepodong-2	Liquid	10,000	270-1220

Source: GlobalSecurity.org; <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/iran/missile.htm>.

Iran's nuclear program is a giant apparatus that has three main components: a uranium extraction facility in Saghand, uranium enrichment facilities centered in Natantz, and a heavy water production in Arak. As notes Mohammad Mohaddessin in Iran are three types of nuclear sites:<sup>40</sup>

- 1) open sites as Busher, under monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Authority;
- 2) secret sites, such as the uranium enrichment plant in Natantz and the heavy water production plant in Arak and the uranium mining project in Saghand;
- 3) smaller, more dispersed sites used for uranium enrichment. These sites not only act as complementary to principal sites such as Natantz. They will ensure in the case of an air attack to continue enriched uranium production.

In the nearest five years Iran probably will achieve its aim in possessing its own nuclear weapon. The present program is advanced and multi-dimensional, Iran also posses delivery system with different ranges. Probably by 2012 Iranian missiles will be capable to reach U.S. and its allies in different regions in the world.

With the Iranian nuclear capability arises a grave problem regarding Teheran's ties with the Islamic terrorists. In the worst scenario there is a risk with equipping terrorists with a nuclear weapon by Teheran. The other problem is related with a probable nuclear race in the Middle East. The Arab world is in a deep fear about Iran's hegemonic ambitions, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states can also start their own nuclear programs. This nuclear race will de-

<sup>40</sup> M. Mohaddessin, *Enemies of the Ayatollahs the Iranian Opposition and its War on Islamic Fundamentalism*, London-New York 2004, pp. 26-42.

stabilise the security and on the other hand, will make easier in “leaking” such technology and weaponry to the Islamic terrorists.<sup>41</sup>

### Iran – options for the future

Iran is still undeveloped state. It needs a lot of investments and the modern technology. Iran has a high level of corruption and intensive state interference in the economy. A domestic unemployment rate is over 20 percent and is dramatically rising.<sup>42</sup> The nuclear program allows mobilisation of the Iranian society and diverts its attention from difficulties of hard economy situation. The Islamic Republic is a regime with many vulnerabilities, including ethnic divisions, economic mismanagement, and disaffection among both the intelligentsia and the broader population. Economic sanctions have already been discussed in the context of the nuclear diplomacy. The weakness of the sanctions so far imposed is a missed opportunity not only to discredit radical policies but also to exacerbate fissures within the system.<sup>43</sup>

Iranian society expresses contradictory attitudes: from one side is getting more and more sceptical and critical about ruling clergy. Iranians see corruption and nepotism among ayatollahs and political elite. On the other side Iranians are proud of their state’s history, tradition and unique place in the region. However opposition to the regime and society are convinced about a natural Iran right for developing a nuclear program. Therefore Iranian situation is more complex and sensitive – if U.S. would plan a military option as a method to prevent Iran from acquiring its nuclear bomb, Iranian opposition and larger part of Iran’s society would support the regime – facing external threat. In planning a military action – for full success, one has to take into account a political frame and a nation building possibilities and chances. The campaign Iraqi Freedom from the military point of view was a renaissance of the Blitzkrieg idea, but without political frame and more complex strategy of the nation building it

<sup>41</sup> Another threat is the impact of an Iranian nuclear bomb on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime.

<sup>42</sup> A job creation remains insufficient to absorb the 700,000 young people entering the job market each year, see more in: P. Clawson, *Could Sanctions Work against Teheran?*, “Middle East Quarterly,” Winter 2007, <http://www.meforum.org/pf.php?id=1068>.

<sup>43</sup> As critically on US’ sanctions noted M. McFaul, A. Milani, L. Diamond: “Over the past 25 years, the United States has imposed economic sanctions, armed Iraq to fight Iran, supported a variety of opposition groups to the regime, and orchestrated international efforts to isolate it, including a campaign to keep Iran out of the World Trade Organization (WTO). None of these strategies has produced any measurable progress for the core objectives of U.S. policy toward Iran. In many ways, the Iranian regime is in a better strategic situation today than it has been at any time since the revolution”; quoted from: M. McFaul, A. Milani, L. Diamond, *A Win-Win U.S. Strategy for Dealing with Iran*, “The Washington Quarterly,” Winter 2006-07, p. 122.

has appeared a failure and a very cost long term American involvement in Iraq. These bad experiences show that any military action against Iran will be probably the last option, a very reluctantly taking into account.

In the nearest five years term, Iran probably will produce its own nuclear arsenal. In a pessimistic scenario – Iran will be a grave threat for stability in the region, the Western interests, its Arab allies and with its nuclear arsenal, Teheran can dare on greater support for terrorists, harbouring them, without fear of preventive or pre-emptive strikes. On the other hand, in a more optimistic scenario – Iran is under high pressure from Iranians who are more critical about a modest or complete lack of Iran's perspectives for further development. However, hardliners won in elections in 2005 with the new president – Mahmud Ahmadienejad who promised more fair division from oil' revenues for all Iranians, but it has appeared the whole Iranian economy badly needs deep reforms, which can ensure improvement of Iranians material situation. For them it is hard to believe in Ahmadienejad's words that a high rate of inflation ensues from the Western plot against Iran. Erosion of Iranian political system is a fact but the theocracy can survive another twenty or more years.

As notes Ladan Boroumand: "Today the regime promotes the idea of Islamic democracy and claims that this system embodies the will of Iranian people. According to this regime, Islamic democracy – unlike Western democracy – is founded not on human rights but on virtue. To truly identify the will of Iranians, however, one need only look at the demands that are most often put forward in the public debate: freedom of speech, assembly, and association, freedom of conscience and worship, the separation of religious authority from political power, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention. These demands correspond to the model of a secular democracy, for which Iranian people yearn."<sup>44</sup>

Iranian way to democracy is a real chance for stabilisation in the region. Iranian people dissatisfied from the authoritarian theocracy, contributing for a slow but considerable political transformation in Iran.

Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism is a threat not only for Israel but for itself, as well. Terrorists groups can attack not only their enemies but also donors. Iraqi civil war, religious extremism can also be aimed against Iran. Destabilised and fragmented Iraq can be a threat for Iran's border security. The peaceful political and social transformation in Iran is not only a chance for this country but also for the Middle East. A regime change that grows out of Iranian domestic needs and demands, not imposed by an external power is the most desirable option for the international community.

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<sup>44</sup> Quotation from L. Boroumand, *Prospects for Democracy in Iran*, "Politics&Diplomacy," Summer/Fall 2003, p. 105.