Abstract

This article investigates the main roots of tension between Iran and the United States in the post-9/11 Middle East. Since 9/11 and especially after the 2003 Iraqi crisis, Iran's role has sharply risen in the region. The evolution of Iran's role and power in the regional system has led Iran to seek a bigger weight and role more in tune with its acquired stature and capabilities. The conflict between Iran and the United States has been generally attributed to either a political-ideological clash and mutual hatred, or to a simple aggregation of a number of distinct policy disputes including: Iran's nuclear program, Iran's state support for organizations that Washington regards as terrorist groups, human rights issues, and Iranian involvement in the new Iraq, the Levant, and Afghanistan. While accepting these explanations, the author takes a step further and argues that the conflict, especially since 2003, has been essentially focused on a dispute over the growth of the two sides' role in Middle Eastern politics which both regard against each other's national interests and security. The author concludes that complex and interdependent nature of regional security necessitates, on the one hand, Iran's cooperation in the wake of the end of the U.S. combat role in Iraq in Summer 2010, and on the other, that the United States recognize and respect Iran's legitimate security concerns and accept the evolution of Iran's role in the region.

Keywords: Iran-US Relations, Middle East, Persian Gulf, Iraq Crisis, Afghanistan Crisis, Nuclear Program

* Kayhan Barzegar, PhD in International Relations, is a faculty member at the Department of International Relations at Science and Research Campus, Islamic Azad University, Tehran. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Research – CSR (Expediency Council) as well as at the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies. He is also an Associate at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and a Research Affiliate at the MIT International Security Program. His major areas of research and scholarly work include Iran's
foreign policy, Iran-U.S. relations, Iran-Arab relations, and the politics of Iran's nuclear program. He is the editor of Discourse, an Iranian English-language quarterly.

Roles at Odds

Introduction

What is the root cause of the increased level of conflict between Iran and the United States in the post-9/11 Middle East? The conflict has been generally to either a political-ideological clash and mutual hatred, or to a simple aggregation of a number of distinct policy disputes including Iran's nuclear program, Iran's state support for organizations that Washington regards as terrorist, human rights issues and Afghanistan. What is the root cause of the increased level of conflict between Iran and the United States in the post-9/11 Middle East? The conflict has been generally to either a political-ideological clash and mutual hatred, or to a simple aggregation of a number of distinct policy disputes including Iran's nuclear program, Iran's state support for organizations that Washington regards as terrorist (2). While accepting such arguments, I maintain that especially in post-invasion Iraq, has been essentially focused on a dispute over growth of the two sides' role in Middle Eastern politics which both regard against each other's national interests and security. Iran seeks a bigger weight and role commensurate with its acquired stature and capabilities. Iran's increased role is due to its geopolitical shifts in the region, other's national interests.
and security. With the geopolitical shifts in the region, bigger weight and role commensurate with its acquired stature and bigger weight and role commensurate with its acquired stature and strategic position in proximity with Iran's increased role is due to its geo-strategic position in proximity with such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine, along with its such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine, along with its accorded actual manifestation and dynamic Shia ideology; elements that have accorded actual manifestation and Iran's regional role. At the same time, the United States, as the sole, as the sole er with global hegemonic reach, and vast engagement in the affairs er with global hegemonic reach, and vast engagement in the affairs — and the Persian Gulf — continues a dogged policy of refusing policy geared in action to containing and to recognize Iran's regional power status; a policy geared in action to containing and role and influence in the region.

The confrontational outlook and policies of the Bush administration, especially in post-invasion Iraq, did as a matter of fact create a new level of political strategic discrepancy in the Iran now regard the growth of each other's role in the region contrary to their national interests and security. All indications are that the Obama administration, contrary to initial positive gestures and pronouncements, the confrontation outlook and policies of the Bush administration, invasion Iraq, did as a matter of fact create a new level of political. The confrontation outlook and policies of the Bush administration, invasion Iraq, did as a matter of fact create a new level of political-strategic discrepancy in the Iran-U.S. relations, which accordingly, the two countries now regard the growth of each other's role in the region contrary to their national interests and security. All indications are that the Obama administration, contrary to the fact, the two countries now regard the growth of each other's role in the region contrary to their national interests and security. All indications are that the Obama administration, contrary to positive gestures and pronouncements, is threading along the same path and on the same path and
continues the same approach and policy for all practical purposes. States' determination on minimizing Iran's adoption and pursuit of an dichotomous situation and role policymakers in Tehran and Washington. Iran’s increased role in the region, Washington risks disrupting the natural power equations, potentially exacerbating the conflict. Accept Iran’s role in the region’s new security architecture Gulf area, and change its policy of castigating Iran as the main source of threat for the region, Washington and Tehran can ultimately reach a practical rapprochement and find an accommodation that will advance the interests of both states in the region. continues the same approach and policy for all practical purposes. The United States' determination on minimizing Iran's regional role has led in actuality to the adoption and pursuit of an oppositional posture and role on the part of Iran dichotomous situation and role-playing has important implications for foreign policymakers in Tehran and Washington. If the United States continues to ignore Iran's increased role in the region, Washington risks disrupting the natural power equations, potentially exacerbating the conflict. If, however, the United States can accept Iran's role in the region's new security architecture, especially in the Persian Gulf area, and change its policy of castigating Iran as the main source of threat for the region, Washington and Tehran can ultimately reach a practical rapprochement and find an accommodation that will advance the interests of both states in the region. This has important implications for foreign If the United States continues to ignore Iran's increased role in the region, Washington risks disrupting the natural power. If, however, the United States can the Persian Gulf area, and change its policy of castigating Iran as the main source of threat for the region, Washington and Tehran can ultimately reach a practical rapprochement and find an accommodation that will advance the interests of both states in the establishing mutual economic cooperation with its neighbors commensurate In light of the political developments in post-defining a new role for itself system, building a coalition of friendly states and establishing mutual economic cooperation the political developments in post-invasion Iraq, Iran desires to define a new role for itself aiming at integrating into the regional political system, building a coalition of friendly states to preempt future security challenges, In this article, I seek to examine how Iran’s current quest region is to firstly tackle the new security challenges, and secondly economic, cultural and political opportunities transformation into a new political caused either by the United borders as a new external “balancer” or the region’s geopolitical
changes. The new changing political-security environment that regional crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, and L to increasingly influence the political climate of the Middle East. Dealing with security challenges and creating opportunities have led Iran to seek a proper role in the regional issues. Iran architecture disproportionate interests of the United States Living in an unstable gain and opportunity for Iran. of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and new security challenges posed by the presence of foreign powers, especially the United States, across Iran's national In this article, I seek to examine how Iran's current quest for a role in the to first tackle the new security challenges, and secondly to create economic, cultural and political opportunities in the course of the region's transformation into a new political-security order. The security challenges are caused either by the United States' presence in the immediate proximity of Iran's borders as a new external "balancer" or the region's geopolitical changes. The new security environment that has emerged in the wake of regional crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon has simultaneously enabled Iran to increasingly influence the political climate of the Middle East. Dealing with security challenges and creating opportunities have led Iran to seek a proper role in the regional issues. Iran currently perceives the region's existing political architecture disproportionate, aiming at excluding Iran and only serving the of the United States, its traditional allies in the Arab world, and Israel. Living in an unstable neighborhood has been costly in the past, without appropriate gain and opportunity for Iran. The most prominent examples are the empowerment of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and new security challenges posed by the presence of foreign powers, especially the United States, across Iran's national boundaries. for a role in the to create in the course of the region's security order. The security challenges are proximity of Iran's borders as a new external "balancer" or the region's geopolitical changes. The new has emerged in the wake of the ebanon has simultaneously enabled Iran to increasingly influence the political climate of the Middle East. Dealing with
security challenges and creating opportunities have led Iran to seek a proper role in
security aiming at excluding Iran and only serving the and Israel. appropriate The most prominent examples are the empowerment of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and new security challenges posed by the presence of n a l b o u n d a r i e s. invasion Iraq, Iran desires to -security challenges, commensurate
85-114. 87
with its sources of power and geo-political posture. The major source of difficulty appears to emanate from the Iran-U.S. hostile relations and its negative with its sources of power and geo however, appears to emanate from impact on Iran's regional role and interaction Iran's political-security energy for the sake of tackling U.S. threats with a host of other smaller regional power seem to have been considered contrary to time strategy of maintaining a balance of power in the region Persian Gulf. Likewise, the growth of the U.S. Iran's immediate borders, combined with its long term strategy of establishing military bases in and around the neighborhood national security threat. In the course of the new political therefore, the two opportunities in the region as a source of threat and thus attempt to prevent thwart it. The current challenges then become traditional policy of how can the two parties reach a compromise regarding each other's new regional role? impact on Iran's regional role and interaction which have, among others, sapped security energy for the sake of tackling U.S. threats as well as dealing source of difficulty, and its negative have, among others, sapped as well as dealing with a host of other smaller difficulties. Perceiving — and recognizing - Iran as a seem to have been considered contrary to the United States' long time strategy of maintaining a balance of power in the region, particularly in the. Likewise, the growth of the U.S. active military presence and ediate borders, combined with its long term strategy of establishing in and around the neighborhood, is perceived by Iran as a matter of national security threat. In the course of the new political-security developments, therefore, the two sides envisage each other's increase of role, influence, and opportunities in the region as a source of threat and thus attempt to prevent it. The current challenges then become: can the United States overcome its traditional policy of labeling Iran as the main source of threat in the region how can the two parties reach a compromise regarding each other's new regional Iran as the United States' long, particularly in the active military presence and role in ediate borders, combined with its long term strategy of establishing is perceived by Iran as a matter of security developments, ideas envisage each other's increase of role, influence, and opportunities in the region as a source of threat and thus attempt to prevent and can the United States overcome its Iran as the main source of threat in the region? And how can the two parties reach a compromise regarding each other's new regional
The Balance Shifts

terrorist acts, active logistical cooperation in the ousting of the Taliban, and subsequent diplomatic engagement in negotiations in Bonn on the formation of the new Afghan government, to almost everybody's surprise, including some U.S. officials, when in the State of the Union address in late January 2002, George W. Bush included Iran in the "Axis of Evil" along with Iraq and North Korea. With the new hostile outlook, the United Bush included Iran in the
“Axis of the United
85-114.
States itself became the "new balancer" of Iran's power in the region lived sentiments of appreciation were replaced States itself became the "new balancer" of Iran's power in the region, and the sentiments of appreciation were replaced with concerns and anxieties. The short-

The and opposing force to the prevalent regional order and international security stated in 2003 by George W regional orders and global norms in the words of the U.S. Vice great impediment to Israeli and population, efficient geopolitics, energy resources, dynamic society, and thriving economic potentials on the one hand and its other, has been experiencing a rising power, its foreign policy role and expectations in the region still remain unfulfilled. The Islamic Republic of Iran perceives itself believes that mainly due to the or thwarting its role in the region, Iran is not opportunities. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have activated two sub Iran's influence in the region, namely its efficient geopolitics and dynamic Shia ideology. Since 9/11 significant player in two significant aspects of regional and international present: the regional crisis in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and the war against Al Qaeda terrorism. The new significance gave Iran new opportunities to seek a revision in its relations with the United States and seek a proper role in the proportionate to its power and regional status. Security shifts, the Middle East is a competitive region that Iran, as any other major regional actor, plays its role within the framework of its national interest the security threats alongside its national borders as well as opportunities to advance its national goals. Despite the effective role Iran played in the region following the Taliban, in Afghanistan, it was not appreciated appropriately by the United States. To make matters worse, the United States as the protagonist in the region, continued to threaten Iran's security through its confrontational policies. At the same time, Iran, given its significant sources of power such as big size The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have activated two substantial elements of Iran's influence in the region, namely its efficient geopolitics and dynamic Shia 9/11 and especially after the 2003 Iraqi crisis, Iran has become a significant player in two significant aspects of regional and international security at present: the regional crisis in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and the war against Al Qaeda terrorism. The new significance gave Iran new opportunities to seek a revision in its relations with the United States and seek a proper role in the region its power and regional status. Characterized by dramatic political security shifts, the Middle East is a competitive region that Iran, as any other major regional actor, plays its role within the framework of its national interests: tackling the security threats alongside its national borders as well as creating
economic to advance its national goals. Despite the effective role Iran played in the region following 9/11 in battling Al Qaeda terrorism and removing its sponsor, the Taliban, in Afghanistan, it was not appreciated appropriately by the United. To make matters worse, the United States as the protagonist foreign continued to threaten Iran's security through its confrontational. At the same time, Iran, given its significant sources of power such as big size and population, efficient geopolitics, energy resources, dynamic society, and thriving economic potentials on the one hand and its advancing nuclear program on the other. The region still remains the Islamic Republic of Iran perceives itself a regional power, due to the active opposition of the United States in minimizing its role in the region, Iran is not fully benefiting from regional. The George W. Bush administration viewed Iran as a threatening and opposing force to the prevalent regional order and international security by George W., “Iran does not act in congruence with the existing regional orders and global norms.” Major elements of Iran's influence in the region, namely its efficient geopolitics and dynamic society That negative outlook was further accent in the words of the U.S. Vice-President: “[n]ot only Iran is meddling in Iraq and is a great impediment to Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but by pursuing a nuclear Iraqi crisis, Iran has become a regional security at present: the regional crisis in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and the war against Al Qaeda terrorism. The new significance gave Iran new opportunities to seek a region characterized by dramatic political-security shifts, the Middle East is a competitive region that Iran, as any other major actor continued to threaten Iran’s security through its confrontational. At the same time, Iran, given its significant sources of power such as big size and population, efficient geopolitics, energy resources, dynamic society, and thriving advancing nuclear program on the in its national power. Yet, despite this rising power, its foreign policy role and expectations in the region still remain a regional
power, yet opposition of the United States in minimizing benefiting from regional as a threatening and opposing force to the prevalent regional order and international security. As “Iran does not act in congruence with the existing. That negative outlook was further accentuated not only Iran is meddling in Iraq and is a Palestinian peace process, but by pursuing a nuclear
Roles at Odds: The Roots of...

program is endangering the entire regional and global security."  

From this perspective, therefore, not only should Iran's role in the region's different political, program is endangering the entire regional and global security." perspective, therefore, not only should Iran's role in the region's different political, cultural, and economic domains be pressured through international economic, political, and cultural institutions and even United Nations sanctions – to revise its administration kept assert Iran would not be will which continues to lie at the root of the conflict between the two sides, goes beyond the current levels of strategy designed to deny Iran's regional role and relative power. From this perspective, therefore, not only should Iran's role in the region's different political, cultural, and economic domains be opposed and/or diminished, but also it must be ed through direct threats and various other instruments – such as economic, political, and cultural institutions and even United Nations to revise its approach and conduct. Even as a last resort, the Bush asserting on various occasions that force should be employed if Iran would not be willing to reconsider its policies. This threat description of Iran, lie at the root of the conflict between the two sides, certainly current levels of mutual rhetoric. It is rather suggesting a long-term strategy to deny Iran's regional role and relative power diminished, but also it must be such as economic, political, and cultural institutions and even United Nations conduct. Even as a last resort, the Bush force should be employed if Iran is willing to reconsider its policies. This threat description of Iran, certainly is rather suggesting a long-term

9/11: Divergence or Convergence?

Although the roots of back to decades ago, starting the advent of the 1979 continuity of mutual threat flanking Iran as well as their strategic goal to establish military bases alongside Iran's immediate borders in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf, the United States became an imminent threat to Iran's national security regional enemies in its eastern and western borders, the United States replace them and act 9/11 episode and the subsequent regional crises in Afghanistan and Iraq made clear to both sides that they region: the climax of those com of the Taliban and Ba'athist regimes and secondly through cooperation formation of post-invasion situations to and Iraq. Although the roots of the on-going conflict between Iran and the United States date back to decades ago, starting with the August 1953 coup and reaching its peak with conflict between Iran and the United States date and reaching its peak with 1979 Islamic Revolution, the 9/11 event is a turning point in the continuity of mutual threat-based relations. With the presence of the U.S.
forces event is a turning point in the U.S. forces as well as their strategic goal to establish military bases alongside Iran’s ediate borders in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf, the United States as well as their strategic goal to establish military bases alongside Iran’s ediate borders in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf, the United States became an imminent threat to Iran’s national security. Having removed regional enemies in its eastern and western borders, the United States came to replace them and act as a new balancer and security threat. At the same time, and the subsequent regional crises in Afghanistan and Iraq made that they have common strategic and geopolitical interests in the he climax of those common interests converged firstly through the removal of the Taliban and Ba’athist regimes and secondly through cooperation towards the invasion situations to restore stability and security in Afghanistan.

At the same time, the subsequent regional crises in Afghanistan and Iraq made it have common strategic and geopolitical interests in the mon interests converged firstly through the removal towards the in Afghanistan.

Iran’s role in shaping the new Afghanistan

Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper political-security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region. Iran played a key role in toppling the Iran’s cooperation with the United States in the Afghanistan crisis was aimed at resolving its strategic issues with the United States so as to acquire a proper security role in the region.

At the domestic level, Alliance for quite a long period unfair to say that the Taliban left Kabul simply bombardments. Fact of the matter is that ground by the Northern Alliance was very much instrumental regional level, Iran, through the Taliban on the one side, and its coordination with other regional players such as Russia and the Central Asia states gradual weakening of the Taliban recognized by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates, and to enjoy tacit endorsement from their original sponsor never endorsed them, and in fact, challenged legitimacy through actively government-in-exile. Iranian diplomats in insecurity and abductions along the country's borders with Afghanistan are only examples of this heavy price. regime and the war against Al Qaeda internationally. At the
domestic level, Alliance for quite a long period unfair to say that the Taliban left Kabul simply bombardments. Fact of the matter is that ground by the Northern Alliance was very much instrumental regional level, Iran, through the Taliban on the one side, and its coordination with other regional players such as Russia and the Central Asia states gradual weakening of the Taliban recognized by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates, and to enjoy tacit endorsement from their original sponsor never endorsed them, and in fact, challenged legitimacy through actively government-in-exile. Iranian diplomats in insecurity and abductions along the country's borders with Afghanistan are only examples of this heavy price. regime and the war against Al Qaeda --- domestically, regionally, and At the domestic level, Iran had supported the Afghan Northern for quite a long period --- politically, financially and militarily. It would be say that the Taliban left Kabul simply because of American. Fact of the matter is that the land operations conducted by the Northern Alliance was very much instrumental to that end. regional level, Iran, through its political, economic, and cultural pressures against the Taliban on the one side, and its coordination with other regional players such as Russia and the Central Asia states on the other, contributed significantly gradual weakening of the Taliban. Despite the fact that the Taliban had been recognized by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates, and appeared to enjoy tacit endorsement from their original sponsor -- the United States ---, and in fact, challenged their regional and international legitimacy through actively supporting Borhanoddin Rabbani and the Afghan domestically, regionally, and supported the Afghan Northern. It would be American aerial the land operations conducted on the. At the international level, Iran, through its political, economic, and cultural pressures against the Taliban on the one side, and its coordination with other regional players such as significantly to the had been appeared --- Iran even paid a heavy price for this policy. The murder of Iranian diplomats in 1998 in Mazar-e-Sharif and the subsequent increase in insecurity and abductions along the country's borders with Afghanistan are only examples of this heavy price. the Afghan Iranian even paid a heavy price for this policy. The murder of increase in tension, insecurity and abductions along the country's borders with
Afghanistan are only engaged with the international coalition against the Taliban. Although the presence of borders was a direct threat against the country, logistical support to these forces in their anti-Taliban operations. Likewise, the Bonn Conference which served as the formation of the new government without Iran’s constructive role. The critical and decisive role that Iran played in convincing the Northern Alliance and the Mujahedin of the war with the Taliban conference to an actual result. Government took shape order to eradicate Al-Qaeda early on. Iran Karzai, a US-designated candidate, establishment of a powerful Iran also engaged with the international coalition against the Taliban. Presence of American combat forces in the vicinity of Iran’s eastern borders was a direct threat against the country, Iran chose to extend intelligence and logistical support to these forces in their anti-Taliban operations on certain occasions. Likewise, the Bonn Conference which served as the basis for the formation of the new Afghanistan government would most probably not have without Iran’s constructive role. The critical and decisive role that Iran played in convincing the Northern Alliance and the Mujahedin as the actual victors of the war with the Taliban to sit at the negotiating table was key to bringing the conference to an actual result. Even once the war was over and the new took shape, Iran collaborated with the central Afghan government in order to eradicate Al-Qaeda and the remnants of the Taliban. Most importantly, quite early on Iran agreed with the United States on the presidency of designated candidate, and lent every support towards the powerful central government in Kabul. It also facilitated the Iran also engaged with the international coalition against the Taliban. Iran’s eastern
intelligence and on certain basis for the not have without Iran's constructive role. The critical and decisive role that Iran as the actual victors was key to bringing the Even once the war was over and the new government in aeda and the remnants of the Taliban. Most importantly, of Hamed wards the Kabul. It also facilitated the
Roles at Odds

Roles at Odds: The Roots of...

repatriation process of the large Afghan refugee community in Iran.

repatriation process of the large Afghan it gave generous financial and logistic state-building efforts and implemented several development the Herat region, such as building the strategic Herat nine years, Iran has supported all attempts directed at political development state-building in Afghanistan, such as the formation of the Loya Jirga elections, and presidential elections. Furthermore, financial and logistical support to the new government building efforts and implemented several development projects, especially in the Herat region, such as building the strategic Herat-Dogharoon road. In the past nine years, Iran has supported all attempts directed at political development in Afghanistan, such as the formation of the Loya Jirga, constitutional elections, and presidential elections. Furthermore, government in its projects, especially in Dogharoon road. In the past nine years, Iran has supported all attempts directed at political development and constitutional.

Iran and the New Iraq

Secondly, through its natural and extended influence population of Iraq, Iran helped significantly in stabilizing security and balance of power in the new Iraq. Iraq's political period was such that the Shiites, comprised role in the power structure. Ba'athist regime afforded the north, a golden Iraqi state (1921) to assert their commensurate with their size and weight in the country settling role in calming the eventual voluntary disarmament during the early years of the crisis is noteworthy have argued elsewhere that civil war in Iraq at that time. The successful cooperation because of the United States' acceptance of Iran's role, demands, and security concerns in the new Afghanistan, could be a good start for comprehensive talks on other regional between the two sides. Time to reflect a certain degree a similar approach and policy as well formation of the new power structure in Iraq can be approached from a number of angles.

Primarily, Iran assisted with the goal of surrounding the Baathist regime regionally, and also adopted on cooperating when necessary with the coalition forces. The successful cooperation between the U.S. and Iran in Afghanistan occurred because of the United States' acceptance of Iran's role, demands, and security concerns in the new Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Iran hoped that this cooperation could be a good start for comprehensive talks on other regional and strategic issues between the two sides. Direct negotiations on the Afghan crisis appeared at the certain degree of optimism inside the Iranian government to a similar approach and policy as well in Iraq.
Iran's cooperating role in the formation of the new power structure in Iraq can be approached from a number of angles. Primarily, Iran assisted with the goal of surrounding the Baathist regime and also adopted—and declared—a policy of positive neutrality based on cooperating when necessary with the coalition forces. Second, through its natural and extended influence among the Shia population of Iraq, Iran helped significantly in stabilizing security and balance of power in the new Iraq. Iraq's political and power structure during the pre-2003 was such that the Shias, comprising at least 60% of the population, had no role in the power structure. The new circumstances following the collapse of the Ba'athist regime afforded the various Shia factions, as well as the Kurdish forces in golden opportunity for the first time since the establishment of the to assert their existence and identity, and claim a political role commensurate with their size and weight in the country. In this regard, Iran's settling role in calming the radical Shia movement led by Muqtada Al-Sadr and their eventual voluntary disarmament during the early years of the crisis is noteworthy have argued elsewhere that this positive role definitely removed the ground civil war in Iraq at that juncture and Iran in Afghanistan occurred because of the United States' acceptance of Iran's role, demands, and security. Meanwhile, Iran hoped that this cooperation and strategic issues appeared at the of optimism inside the Iranian government to pursue in the formation of the new power structure in Iraq can be approached from a number of angles. Primarily, Iran assisted with the goal of surrounding the Baathist regime a policy of positive neutrality based among the Shia population of Iraq, Iran helped significantly in stabilizing security and balance of the pre-2003 population, had no following the collapse of the, as well as the Kurdish forces in since the establishment of the claim a political role. In this regard, Iran’s Sadr and their eventual voluntary disarmament during the early years of the crisis is noteworthy. I've the grounds for March 2008 Iran's successful mediation in late March.
betw een the Al-Maliki government and Shia another sign of Iran's Muqtada Al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army enjoy among certain powerful religious and political quarters in Iran the Mahdi Army and Sadr neighborhood militia the Movement's harsh statements issued on occasions decrying Iraq. Maliki government and Shia militias in Sadr City in Baghdad was another sign of Iran's official supportive policy, especially given the actual support

Thirdly, Iran has extended its support to political decisions and Sadr and his Mahdi Army enjoy among certain powerful religious and political quarters in Iran. Iran's open support for the Iraqi government and the Mahdi Army in Sadr neighborhood militias in Baghdad could perhaps explain the Movement's harsh statements issued on occasions decrying Iranian influence in Thirdly, Iran has extended its support to political decisions and developments in the course of the Iraqi state-building process. One of Iran's early constructive measures was to endorse the Iraqi Provisional Government led by developments in the course of the Iraqi state. constructive measures was to endorse the Iraqi Provisional Government led by Ayad Alavi, despite his secular outlook, and even not This support came at a time when the United States desperately needed to see stability and security in Iraq Iran further supported the process of general elections, Transitional National Assembly, which was responsible for the adoption of Iraq's new Constitution, which was extremely close relations with the United States, his known even not-so-concealed unfriendly sentiments toward This support came at a time when the United States desperately needed to see stability and security in Iraq and to counter terrorist acts and sources of instability. Iran further supported the process of general elections, including the election of Transitional National Assembly, which was responsible for the preparation and new Constitution.

ethno-religious mixture of the population, and hence, dispersion the active political forces and elite in the new Iraq appear to have Due to the ethno of power in Iraq, the realized the inevitability the recent years have shown that the success of a coalition government is dependent on the consent and actual forces and currents parliamentary elections once again revealed the sectarian nature of power and political structure in Iraq. further complicated by the involvement and impact of the concerns, interests, and policies of neighboring countries, whether it be Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, or others, each supporting
the concerns and interests of various, religious forces. Given the size and weight of the Iraqi Shia community and also the long-standing and close relationships with all the major Iraqi political factions, Iran play a vital role in the viability and longevity of coalition governments. An example of this close relationship in action was the invitation of the inevitability of coalition building. Moreover, experiences gained recent years have shown that the success of a coalition government is militias in Sadr City in Baghdad was live policy, especially given the actual support the consent and actual cooperation among the dominant political forces and currents, especially the Shiias. The results of the March parliamentary elections once again revealed the sectarian nature of power and political structure in Iraq. Sadr and his Mahdi Army enjoy among certain powerful religious and against in Baghdad could perhaps explain Iranian influence in

The quite complex political-religious mosaic in Iraq is further complicated by the involvement and impact of the concerns, interests, and policies of neighboring countries, whether it be Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, or others, each supporting the concerns and interests of various, rival ethnic or religious forces. Given the size and weight of the Iraqi Shia community and also the close relationships with all the major Iraqi Shia and Kurdish political factions, Iran has been – and continues to be – in a privileged position to play a vital role in the viability and longevity of coalition governments in Baghdad. An example of this close relationship in action was the invitation of the Thirdly, Iran has extended its support to political decisions and one of Iran’s early constructive measures was to endorse the Iraqi Provisional Government led by, his known towards Iran. This support came at a time when the United States desperately needed to see terrorist acts and sources of instability, including the election of the preparation and and
hence, dispersion new Iraq appear to have gained during recent years have shown that the success of cooperation among the dominant political results of the March 2010 parliamentary elections once again revealed the sectarian nature of power and gious mosaic in Iraq is further complicated by the involvement and impact of the concerns, interests, and policies of neighboring countries, whether it be Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, or rival ethnic or religious forces. Given the size and weight of the Iraqi Shia community and also the and Kurdish situation in Baghdad. An example of this close relationship in action was the invitation of the

IRANIAN REVIEW of Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 85-114. 93
Roles at Odds: The Roots of... 

Representatives of major Iraqi 2010, elections. representatives of major Iraqi Shia factions to Tehran immediately after the 7 A delegation from Al-Iraqiya, led by Alavi, also later visited A delegation from Al-Tehran. At the conclusion of these visits, Iran announced its support for a coalition government, comprising time, Iran has also participated actively in all regional and international conferences on the future of Iraq. Tehran. At the conclusion of these visits, Iran announced its support for a coalition comprising all major Shia, Sunni and Kurdish factions. At the same participated actively in all regional and international conferences on the future of Iraq.

Roles at Odds

Iran, like any other state, has legitimate security concerns situation in its neighborhood, especially in the domain of cultural, political, and economic influence in the region; pursues independent and foreign threats development. Iran, like any other state, has legitimate security concerns which are impacted situation in its neighborhood, especially in the vicinity of its immediate borders; enjoys a natural domain of cultural, political, and economic influence in the region; enjoys a natural domain of cultural, political, and economic influence in the region; preserves itself and independent national security strategies to protect and preserve itself and; and advances its own way of political and socio-economic economic.

As discussed previously, while there exist a range of outstanding tension ridden issues and situations between Iran and the U.S. which need to be addressed, tackled, and finally resolved, the present article argues that the current seemingly irresolvable impasse between the two countries in the heightened state of mutual the Middle East. The discussion in the previous pages has made it abundantly clear that the two countries, acting on interests in the region and in 2003 in eliminating common concern in militating against terrorism, especially the Al Notwithstanding these positive developments which could have helped ameliorate the relations towards a less countries since 9/11 did as a matter of fact move in the other direction much more confrontational than even the early days of the Revolution. The net outcome being that the cooperation between the two on regional crises proved short role in the region served to new shift in the region's power structure in which Iran w Such a shift was deemed to As discussed previously, while there exist a range of outstanding tension ridden issues and situations between Iran and the U.S. which need to be addressed, tackled, and finally resolved, the present article argues that the current root going, seemingly irresolvable impasse between the two
countries is to be traced in the heightened state of mutual distrust of each other’s increased regional role. The discussion in the previous pages has made it amply clear that the two countries, acting on common (or at least similar) geopolitical concerns and interests in the region, did in fact cooperate in 2001 towards toppling the Taliban in eliminating the Ba’athist regime in Iraq. They have also shared common concern in militating against terrorism, especially the Al Qaeda. Notwithstanding these positive developments which could have helped ameliorate the relations towards a less-charged situation, the relations between the two did as a matter of fact move in the other direction, and became much more confrontational than even the early days of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The net outcome being that the cooperation between the two countries on regional crises proved short-lived. Indications are that the evolution of Iran’s served to warn Washington's policy-makers of the emergence of a new shift in the region’s power structure in which Iran would be the main actor deemed to collide with the strategic interests of Washington and its. As discussed previously, while there exist a range of outstanding tension-ridden issues and situations between Iran and the U.S. which need to be addressed, he current roots of the to be traced increased regional role in The discussion in the previous pages has made it amply clear that concerns and toppling the Taliban the Ba’athist regime in Iraq. They have also shared common concern in militating against terrorism, especially the Al Qaeda. Notwithstanding these positive developments which could have helped ameliorate the relations between the two and became Islamic countries he evolution of Iran’s makers of the emergence of a be the main actor. 02 Washington and its
Iran enjoys a natural domain of political, cultural, and economic influence the greater region surrounding it. For a host of reasons, the Persian Gulf region – and will continue to be number of ways; as the main route for Iran's oil exports deemed by Iran to be of Gulf has been – and generally a starting point for Iran's international relations strategic perspective, the area presents a set of critical sources of vulnerability for Iran reasons already discussed, occupies for better or for worse, the U.S. as areas of critical; also as the main route international trade and communications with the West and the number of ways; as the main route for Iran's oil exports deemed by Iran to be of particular vital strategic significance. The Persian and will continue to be – of critical significance for Iran in a Iran enjoys a natural domain of political, cultural, and economic influence the greater region surrounding it. For a host of reasons, the Persian Gulf region allies in the region. cooperation to confrontation. Simultaneously, on the other side, Iran has viewed the policies and measures by Washington since 2003 region with suspicion and damaging to her own position and role. vantage point, the expanded and will inevitably engage another level of regional rivalry allies in the region. That explains why Washington's policies shifted from cooperation to confrontation, aiming at curtailing Iran's regional role and taneously, on the other side, Iran has viewed the policies and measures by 2003 geared towards enhancing the U.S. position and role in the region with suspicion and damaging to her own position and role. From a strategic expanded and intense presence of the United States in the region inevitably engage Iran's political and security stamina and further unleash of regional rivalry -- this time between Iran and the United States. such circumstances of rivalry and consequent tension, actualization of Under such circumstance Iran's [relative] regional lessening of the U.S. presence immediate neighborhood of Iran. United States towards desire and determination talks between the two sides on Iraq short-lived and inconclusive, carried the implicit message that Iran appeared to have accepted the U.S. role in Iraq and also pointed to Iran's actual readiness rhetoric – for cooperation and engagement therefore, undergirding the regional role aims at two simultaneous goals; the United States' security threats on the one hand, and preemption the new security challenges stem regional power becomes dependent on and proportional to the lessening of the U.S. presence – especially active military presence – immediate neighborhood of Iran. Concurrently, advancing cooperation with the towards settling Iraq's insecurity indicates, in practical terms, and
determination to undergird its regional role, as best reflected in the direct talks between the two sides on Iraq in 2006-2007. These talks, which again proved lived and inconclusive, carried the implicit message that Iran appeared to have accepted the U.S. role in Iraq and also pointed to Iran's actual readiness—for cooperation and engagement. From the Iranian perspective, therefore, undergirding the regional role aims at two simultaneous goals; the United States' security threats on the one hand, and preempting the new security challenges stemming from the recent geopolitical changes on the other. Washington's policies shifted from role and power, simultaneously, on the other side, Iran has viewed the policies and measures by position and role in the. From a strategic intense presence of the United States in the region, it further unleashes this time between Iran and the United States, actualization of becomes dependent on and proportional to the in the advancing cooperation with the indicates, in practical terms, Iran's, as best reflected in the direct which again proved lived and inconclusive, carried the implicit message that Iran appeared to have beyond. From the Iranian perspective, therefore, undergirding the regional role aims at two simultaneous goals; tackling the United States' security threats on the one hand, and preempting the new ones on the other. Influence in region and The Persian of critical significance for Iran in a main route with the West and the . And from a both opportunity, for the East, and generally a starting point for Iran's international relations. And from a strategic perspective, the area presents a set of critical sources of both opportunity and vulnerability for Iran's national security and interests. Likewise, Iraq, for the reasons already discussed, occupies a special place in Iran's national security. For better or for worse, the Persian Gulf and Iraq also happen to be considered by a special place in Iran's national security. And Persian Gulf and Iraq also happen to be considered by as of critical interest, hence, offering a point of active challenge challenge.

between Iran as a regional country. As discussed previously, Iran's quest for a regional role commensurate with its actual and potential capabilities the new geopolitical changes in Afghanistan, as well as national quest, however, has had to militate against approach and policies towards Iran presence and engagement region. The decades Iran's role in its vital domain regional role. This has led, in turn, to a similarly unaccommodating posture by Iran that insecurity for Iran "security for all or for none." Revolutionary Guards commander, Iran's insecurity. Its actual and potential capabilities aims at tackling new security threats caused by ica changes in the surrounding region, particularly in Iraq and as well as to promote economic and cultural opportunities. national quest, however, has had to militate against the U.S. confrontational approach and policies towards Iran, bolstered by increased American direct and engagement in the political, military, and economic affairs -old tussle, heightened since 2003, has practically constrained Iran's role in its vital domains of national interest and deprived it of playing its due. This has led, in turn, to a similarly unaccommodating posture by Iran insecurity for Iran is equivalent to insecurity for the region. In other words, "security for all or for none." From this perspective, as pronounced recently by a Revolutionary Guards commander, the region cannot be secured at the expense of Iran. The U.S. pursual of Gulf since the end of the Iran Containment policy, countries, with special emphasis on thwarting and ostracizing Iran of hindsight and looking to a future without debilitating local dis and also free from outside interference and intrigue, t system in the region, reflecting the new realities on the ground, the region's internal security cooperation rather than focusing on the interests of outside others in the region engagement in the regional political tackling new security threats caused by Iraq and and cultural opportunities. Such a confrontational American direct affairs of the has practically constrained and deprived it of playing its due. This has led, in turn, to a similarly unaccommodating posture by Iran. In other words, as pronounced recently by a expense of The U.S. pursual of a balance of power policy in the Persian since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, as best manifested in the "Dual a balance of power policy in the Persian best manifested in the "Dual Containment" policy, has fostered tension and distrust among the regional countries, with special emphasis on
thwarting and ostracizing Iran. With the benefit of hindsight and looking to a future without debilitating local distrust and rivalry, and also free from outside interference and intrigue, the unfolding political among the regional With the benefit trust and rivalry, security should be based on onomic and cultural in the region, reflecting the new realities on the ground, should be based on the region's internal security requirements and inter-regional economic and cultural rather than geared to the preservation of the status quo ante and focusing on the interests of outside powers. To this end, Iran – and for that matter, others in the region - need to opt for and pursue a decisive policy of active engagement in the regional political-security architecture, geared to the preservation of the status quo ante and and for that matter, f active

Aside from political, military and security weight in the region, tremendous economic potential can exporter of a wide range of market. Further promotion of and construction and strengthen Iran's regional economic reach and the country's long-standing and solid position. Aside from political, military and security weight in the region, Iran's size and economic potential can also help the region's economy – both as an exporter of a wide range of goods and products as well as a huge and expanding market. Further promotion of economic opportunities for Iranian manufacturing, and construction and trading companies in the surrounding countries would help regional economic reach and position. That would further buttress standing and solid position at the crossroad of the world's main Iran's size and both as an goods and products as well as a huge and expanding manufacturing, in the surrounding countries would help position. That would further buttress at the crossroad of the world's main

energy production, export, and the region and the world economy. Economic transactions with the countries in the surrounding region, inclusive of the Persian Gulf area, Iraq, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran enjoys the unique position of serving as the crossroad of south energy transit peculiar complications involved and foremost, establish relationships with the neighboring export, and transit routes, where Iran’s economy connects world economy. Besides the growing potentials of expanding economy connects with ge economic transactions with the countries in the surrounding region, inclusive of the the Caucasus, and the Levant, Iran enjoys the unique position of serving as the crossroad of east-west and north transit routes. The realization of such potentials, especially given the peculiar complications involved in the geopolitics of pipelines, would require economic transactions with the countries in the surrounding region, inclusive of the the Caucasus, and the Levant, west and north routes. The realization of such potentials, especially given the establishment and/or strengthening of close political-strategic relationships with the neighboring countries, require, first strategic

Diverging Perspectives on Roles

For Iran, conversely, opportunity, serves as a source of and also enhances the country’s in the region have pursued Chief among the US current concerns is Iran’s nuclear program, and depicting it as a major threat for regional and international security. Iran’s standpoint, pursuit in Article 4 of the Non and that the U.S. opposition sources of relative power a U.S. administrations, triggers nuclear rivalrally-strategically - Israel. The discussion thus far has endeavored to show that the growth of their respective of a new shift in the region’s power structure, interests. The main what they perceive as challenge and opportunity. While the United States Iran’s increased engagement in the region’s affairs Afghanistan, and in a nuclear program, as a threat, Iran perceives them as towards increasing its regional role geared to discussion thus far has endeavored to show that the Iran-U.S. conflict on the their respective role in the region is more centered on the consequences of a new shift in the region's power structure, which collides with their strategic interests. The main bone of contention relates to their diverging standpoints on what they perceive as challenge and opportunity. While the United States Iran's increased engagement in the region's affairs; i.e. in the Persian Gulf, Iraq, in a general sense, in the greater Middle East, or Iran's advancing as a threat, Iran perceives them as windows of opportunity increasing its regional role
geared to promoting national interests. Chief among the US current concerns is Iran's nuclear program, considering it as a major threat for regional and international security. Pursuit of a nuclear program for peaceful purposes as recognized by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) constitutes an inalienable right, and that the U.S. opposition is, in fact, challenging Iran's legitimate rights and sources of relative power and role. From the American perspective, as argued by the U.S. administrations, a nuclear Iran will unbalance the regional power structure, nuclear rivalry and arms race in the region, and will threaten conversely, pursuit of the peaceful nuclear program is an inalienable right, legitimate rights and From the American perspective, as argued by the will unbalance the regional power structure, the U.S the peaceful nuclear program is an a sign of progress, other countries technological
Roles at Odds

Roles at Odds: The Roots of... administration believes that sanctions are necessary in order to negotiate position of strength and thus ought to be considered diplomacy by other means. The Americans seem to believe that coercive and meaningful sanctions will change Iran's nuclear policy, and also deem these sanctions possible war, especially on the Israeli side. To make these multilateral sanctions more effective, the U.S. and other supporters of the UN resolution, mainly Western and European countries, have resorted to further unilateral sanctions. Accordingly, Barack Obama signed the gasoline sanctions adopted by the U.S. From the Iran United States continues regional role, and pushed Security Council.\(^{(40)}\)

advancement without outside opposition, Iranian leaders find the U.S. opposition to Iran's quest for peaceful nuclear capability objectionable and unacceptable. According to the Iranian two main goals: the "peaceful" use of nuclear energy and disarmament, with emphasis on the and diplomatic efforts underline that Iran does not in program. Tehran has cannot be used as a means of deterrence. Khamenei, in a message (17-18 April 2010, (religiously banned) Also at the same conference, Mahmood envisage nuclear weapons as a source of deterrence.\(^{(40)}\)

advancement without outside opposition, Iranian leaders find the U.S. opposition to Iran's quest for peaceful nuclear capability objectionable and unacceptable.\(^{(40)}\)

advancement without outside opposition, Iranian leaders find the U.S. opposition to Iran's quest for peaceful nuclear capability objectionable and unacceptable. The Iranian perspective, the nuclear program finds its provenance in the "peaceful" use of nuclear energy and gradual global disarmament, with emphasis on the Middle East. Iran's political pronouncements diplomatic efforts in support of an all-out nuclear disarmament are meant to Iran does not include the concept of deterrence in its nuclear has argued that nuclear weaponization will not bring security and cannot be used as a means of deterrence. The Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali message addressed to the Tehran Nuclear Disarmament Conference, Tehran),\(^{(40)}\)

decided the use of nuclear weapons - a position that had been taken and announced previously.\(^{(40)}\)

same conference, Mahmood Ahmadinejad reiterated that Iran does not envisage nuclear weapons as a source of deterrence. Iranian vantage point, in spite of Iran's transparent activities, the nuclear program finds its provenance in \(^{(40)}\)United States continues its policy of denying Iran's legitimate nuclear rights and and pushed for a fourth sanctions resolution against Iran in the. According to U.S. official pronouncements, the Obama administration believes that sanctions are necessary in order to negotiate from a
Position of strength and thus ought to be considered diplomacy by other means. The Americans seem to believe that coercive and meaningful sanctions will change Iran’s nuclear policy, and also deem these sanctions essential for preventing a sible war, especially on the Israeli side. To make these multilateral sanctions more effective, the U.S. and other supporters of the UN resolution, mainly Western and European countries, have resorted to further unilateral sanctions. Accordingly, ama signed the gasoline sanctions adopted by the U.S. Congress, among global nuclear political pronouncements are disarmament are meant to its nuclear that nuclear weaponization will not bring security and h Seyed Ali addressed to the Tehran Nuclear Disarmament Conference the use of nuclear weapons haram a position that had been taken and announced previously, reiterated that Iran does not, in spite of Iran’s transparent activities, the legitimate nuclear rights and for a fourth sanctions resolution against Iran in the UN he Obama tiate from a position of strength and thus ought to be considered diplomacy by other means. The Americans seem to believe that coercive and meaningful sanctions will change essential for preventing a sible war, especially on the Israeli side. To make these multilateral sanctions more effective, the U.S. and other supporters of the UN resolution, mainly Western and European countries, have resorted to further unilateral sanctions. Accordingly,


Arab Middle East is another conflict on the evolution of invasion with Syria and Hezbollah, as well as its the creation of a supposed "Shia for influence in the region.

in 2003, Iran’s increasing role in the significant bone of contention Iran’s foreign policy role and regi Iraq, its established prominent position
Iran's increasing role in the affairs of the Arab Middle East is another bone of contention related to Iran-U.S. conflict on the evolution of foreign policy role and regional stature and power. Iran's role in post-invasion policy of alliance with Syria and Hezbollah, as well as in what has been labeled as the creation of a supposed "Shia Crescent", are among the important areas of contention for influence in the region. As already discussed, the United States eliminated Iraq's traditional order in
hoped to replace it with a new strategy and interests in came to be dominated by the emergence development in the new and as a consequence, hoped to replace it with a new order tailored to serve and promote Washington's interests in Iraq and in the greater region. The new order, however, came to be dominated by the emergence of the Shia-Kurdish coalition development in the new governing system that served to increase Iran's role in Iraq as a consequence, in the greater region. In this regard — and in retrospect - it is interesting to note that in early in this regard the U.S. came close to recognizing Iran's regional role. Prepared by the Iraq Study Group, appeared to have arrived at a relatively objective understanding of the regional situation, including the role of Iran (and also Syria), and proposed to utilize such a role towards contributing to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

Political-security issues, the Plan focused on engaging Iran and its positive role towards settling the Iraq crisis concerns in the region that the U.S. would acknowledge Iran's geo analysts viewed the Plan as the best way for the U.S. to engage Iran's role in helping secure Iraq. Moreover, Iran-U.S. relations to enter a new phase both sides to find an exit from out, unfortunately though, the Plan was rejected by the Bush administration and a momentous opportunity came the U.S. came close to recognizing Iran's regional role. The Baker-Hamilton Plan prepared by the Iraq Study Group, appeared to have arrived at a relatively objective understanding of the regional situation, including the role of Iran (and also Syria), and proposed to utilize such a role towards contributing to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Instead of denying Iran's role in Iraq's security issues, the Plan focused on engaging Iran and its positive role settling the Iraq crisis. It even went so far as to address Iran's security concerns in the region (Washington's, however, - in fact, the first time ever since the Islamic Revolution U.S. would acknowledge Iran's geo-political significance. In Iran, many coalition - a Iran's role in Iraq, it is interesting to note that in early 2006 Hamilton Plan, as prepared by the Iraq Study Group, appeared to have arrived at a relatively objective understanding of the regional situation, including the role of Iran (and also Syria), and proposed to utilize such a role towards contributing to the promotion of peace. Instead of denying Iran's role in Iraq's analysts viewed the Plan as the best way for the U.S. to engage Iran's role in helping Moreover, the Plan also came to be seen as a good opportunity for s to enter a new phase - a possible, propitious opportunity for both sides to find an exit from the on-going conflict on regional role. As it turned out, unfortunately though, the Plan was rejected by the Bush administration and a momentous opportunity came to naught. Security issues, the Plan focused on engaging Iran and its positive role address Iran's security in fact, the first
time ever since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, many analysts viewed the Plan as the best way for the U.S. to engage Iran's role in helping as a good opportunity for possible, propitious opportunity for. As it turned out, unfortunately though, the Plan was rejected by the Bush administration and a

The nature of and the rationale behind the close relations between Iran and Iraq, inclusive of the wide special place in Iran's national security, have been discussed in the previous pages. That notwithstanding and b the Shia-Kurdish ruling coalition in Baghdad unresolved outstanding issues between the two countries, mainly related to and remaining from the provisions of the 1975 question of War compensation portend strategic importance countries. Meanwhile, and religion in Iraq are such that The nature of and the rationale behind the close relations between Iran and Iraq, inclusive of the wide-ranging commonalities between them, and hence, Iraq's special place in Iran's national security, have been discussed in the previous pages. That notwithstanding and beyond the close ideological-cultural between Tehran and Kurdish ruling coalition in Baghdad, there still exist a number of outstanding issues between the two countries, mainly related to and 1980-1988 War period, including the issues pertaining to the 1975 Iran-Iraq Treaty and their implementation and the War compensation. These outstanding issues, it should be reckoned, The nature of and the rationale behind the close relations between Iran and ranging commonalities between them, and hence, Iraq's special place in Iran's national security, have been discussed in the previous pages. Between Tehran and a number of outstanding issues between the two countries, mainly related to and including the issues pertaining to the and the. These outstanding issues, it should be reckoned, the two strategic importance for the long-term future relations between the two. Meanwhile, the characteristics of the power structure, politics, culture power structure, politics, culture, inevitably close are such that they all point in the direction of an inevitably
Roles at Odds: The Roots of...

Another bone of contention between Iran and the U.S. on regional engagement and influence concerns the principal motive behind the triangular cooperation relates to the U.S. and their military threat, and friendly relationship with Iran. Viewed in the context of the two countries standing commonalities and strategic interests, the Shia groups in Iraq, for a friendly relationship with Iran long-standing commonalities and strategic instance, have shown a strong propensity to maintaining close fraternal relations with their co-religionists across the border, especially given the clerical rule in Iran. Having been on the margins of the Iraqi society and out of the power structure for all practical purposes since the Iraqi state was established, and also feeling by a not-so-sympathetic not be too difficult to fathom the reasons and rationale for the Iraqi Shia interest if not enthusiasm – in welcoming Iranian engagement in Iraq. have shown a strong propensity to maintaining close fraternal relations religionists across the border, especially given the clerical role in Iran. Having been on the margins of the Iraqi society and out of the power structure for all practical purposes since the Iraqi state was established, and also feeling encircled sympathetic Sunni-dominated neighborhood in the Arab world not be too difficult to fathom the reasons and rationale for the Iraqi Shia interest in welcoming Iranian engagement in Iraq.[90] Over and above the considerations already cited, Iran also has other serious Over and above the considerations already cited, security concerns emanating as well as long-term goals experiences during the past century with hostile outside powers, including the exploitation of neighboring countries’ territories against Iranian national interests, regional stature and role, and even territorial integrity, strong sensitivities in this regard.

Agreements with Iraq emanating from the growth engagement in Iran’s political presence of a hegemonic not only bring national security challenges, but cultural discrepancies in the region. As express agreement at the time was U.S. troops, secondly, the U Iraqi soil for attacking a third country (Iran), and thirdly, the US efforts to confront the “so-called” terrorists groups.

Political-security role in Iraq security and interests and regional security concerns emanating mainly from the United States’ strategies in the region term goals for the future of Iraq. Given Iran’s quite painful experiences during the past century with hostile outside powers, including the exploitation of neighboring countries’ territories against Iranian national interests, regional stature and role, and even territorial integrity, Iran and Iranians harbor strong sensitivities in this regard. Iran’s initial opposition to the U.S. agreements with Iraq (2008) could therefore be understood in light of the concerns from the growth and
Deepening of the U.S. presence and active in Iran’s political-security backyard. From Iran’s viewpoint, the long monic power like the U.S. across Iran’s national boundaries will not only bring national security challenges, but also create political-security and cultural discrepancies in the country’s relations with Iraq and other Arab states in the region. As expressed by Iranian officials, Iran’s main concerns regarding the at the time was related to firstly, setting a timetable for the withdrawal of troops, secondly, the U.S. troops conducted missions and the possible use of Iraqi soil for attacking a third country (Iran), and thirdly, the US efforts to confront called" terrorists groups. Such factors could increase the United States security role in Iraq and in the region – to the clear detriment of countries’ interests, the Shia groups in Iraq, for have shown a strong propensity to maintaining close fraternal relations pecially given the clerical rule in Iran. Having been on the margins of the Iraqi society and out of the power structure for encircled in the Arab world, it may not be too difficult to fathom the reasons and rationale for the Iraqi Shia interest – other serious strategies in the region quite painful experiences during the past century with hostile outside powers, including the exploitation of neighboring countries’ territories against Iranian national interests, Iran and Iranians harbor security of the concerns presence and active, the long across Iran’s national boundaries will security and relations with Iraq and other Arab states in ed by Iranian officials, Iran’s main concerns regarding the to firstly, setting a timetable for the withdrawal of troops conducted missions and the possible use of Iraqi soil for attacking a third country (Iran), and thirdly, the US efforts to confront could increase the United States to the clear detriment of Iran’s security and interests and regional role. Another bone of contention between Iran and the U.S. on regional Another bone of contention between Iran and the U.S. on regional. While the Israeli axis engagement and influence concerns the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah alliance. While the behind the triangular cooperation relates to the U.S.-Israeli axis and their military threat, the Iran-Syria coalition appears to aim at
achieving a more aim at achieving a more
and thirdly, And lastly, the Shia revival in the politics of the region another point of conflict between Iran and the United States in the regional role. As for that Iran's outlook and policy in supporting the Shia communities has been generally of a pragmatic linkage between friendly states and political factions in the region pursuing purely ideological detractors among the Arab Sunni elites quarters, a so-called Shia engage the masses in the region; sympathetic Shia-based governments or political factions in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, the strategic goal in the post-political-security uncertainty and threat Levant for Syria. As to apply to both countries Iranian perspective, depicting and denouncing Iran and Syria as the region's primary sources of threat is myopic, and should be redressed. Judging from actual practice over the past few years, Iran is convinced that the United States is not prepared to genuinely engage Iran in retrospect, the Bush administration appeared to be interested in seeking Iranian assistance and utilizing its privileged position and role in Iraq for tackling daily security challenges. The same around, aiming to use Iran's stature and role to help bring stability in the aftermath of the U.S. troops withdrawal at the end of August concerned about and interested in security reasons, Iran is simultaneously keen about serious talks on long and strategic arrangements, including on such critical issues as the composition of governance in Baghdad remnants of the Ba'athist regime, will be allowed to play a part for sheer Realpolitik reasons. In light of the foregoing, the main bone of contention will revolve around how the new political regional and trans-regional actors; in my view, Iran and the United States in the post-2003 situation; that is, coalition-making in times of uncertainty and threat – in the Persian Gulf for Iran and in the As I have argued elsewhere, as long as this mutual need continues to apply to both countries, the Iran-Syria alliance will persevere. As viewed from an depicting and denouncing Iran and Syria as the region's primary sources of threat is myopic, and should be redressed. Judging from actual practice over the past few years, Iran is convinced that the United States is not prepared to genuinely engage Iran in its own immediate security backyard; that is, in Iraq. In retrospect, the Bush administration appeared to be interested in seeking Iranian assistance and utilizing its privileged position and role in Iraq for tackling daily security challenges. The same approach and motive seems to apply again, this time around, aiming to use Iran's stature and role to help bring stability in the aftermath troops withdrawal at the end of August 2011. While Iran is also concerned about and interested in security in Iraq, for its own national security
reasons, Iran is simultaneously keen about serious talks on long-term future security and strategic arrangements, including on such critical issues as the composition of governance in Baghdad – whether overtly anti-Iranian elements and currents; e.g., remnants of the Ba'athist regime, will be allowed to play a part for sheer Realpolitik reasons. In light of the foregoing, the main bone of contention will revolve around how the new political-security order of the region should be redefined by the main regional actors; in my view, Iran and the United States, astly, the Shia revival in the politics of the region has emerged another point of conflict between Iran and the United States in their respective for the emergence of the so-called Shia Crescent, it can be argued outlook and policy in supporting the Shia communities has been pragmatic nature and more oriented towards establishing a strategic age between friendly states and political factions in the region, rather than ideological/doctrinal ulterior motives, as alleged by some of Iran’s the Arab Sunni elites. Viewed from the vantage point of such Shia Crescent is seen as an attempt by the “Shia” Iran to firstly engage the masses in the region; secondly, to build an ideological belt of based governments or political factions in Iraq, Syria, and making in times of in the Persian Gulf for Iran and in the and thirdly, to expand its regional role and power. continues Viewed from an depicting and denouncing Iran and Syria as the region's primary sources of threat is myopic, and should be redressed. Judging from actual practice over the past few years, Iran is convinced that the United States is not prepared to its own immediate security backyard; that is, in Iraq. In retrospect, the Bush administration appeared to be interested in seeking Iranian assistance and utilizing its privileged position and role in Iraq for tackling daily proach and motive seems to apply again, this time around, aiming to use Iran's stature and role to help bring stability in the aftermath While Iran is also in Iraq, for its own national security term future security and strategic arrangements, including on such critical issues as the composition of reanian elements and currents; e.g., remnants of the Ba'athist regime, will be allowed to play a part for sheer Realpolitik reasons. In light of
the foregoing, the main bone of contention will revolve around n should be redefined by the main has emerged as spective it can be argued outlook and policy in supporting the Shia communities has been establishing a strategic rather than alleged by some of Iran's Viewed from the vantage point of such Iran to firstly secondly, to build an ideological belt of based governments or political factions in Iraq, Syria, and Aside from how Aside from how

85-114. 101
Roles at Odds: The Roots of...

Iran's outlook and policies are analyzed or judged by others in the region, fact of the matter is that recent shifts since has moved in a direction for the Sunni-dominated Arab world. It among the ruling elites of the Arab Shia communities alleged “Shia Crescent, region are more loyal to Iran than their own countries prospects of Iran's growing role counter to the United States' long Iran's outlook and policies are analyzed or judged by others in the region, fact of the matter is that recent shifts since 2003 in the political architecture of the region Iran's outlook and policies are analyzed or judged by others in the region, fact of the matter is that recent shifts since 2003 in the political architecture of the region has moved in a direction favoring Iran and in a general sense, the Shia communities dominated Arab world. It could as well be argued that the key concern elites in the Arab world relates to the somehow natural orientation communities toward Iran, rather than Iran's attempts to build resentment. As once lamented by Hosni Mubarak: “The Shias in the region are more loyal to Iran than their own countries.” As things stand now, growing role in the affairs of the Arab Middle East will run in the greater region. Iran and Obama: Challenges on Roles

As discussed, the United States Iran, especially since discrepancy in Iran each other's role in the region security. The wide range of U.S. policies under the Bush administration aiming at diminishing Iran's role anti-Iranian tendencies in post and also systematic opposition relative detail in previous sections of the present article. Iran, also as discussed previously, has perceived these policies as damaging to its interests and has, as a consequence interests and security and promote its position and role tussle, Iran and the U.S. bent on balancing the greater regional situation United States confrontational outlook and policies - towards since 2003, has created a new level of political-strategic U.S. relations. The two countries have regarded the growth of each other's role in the region running counter to their national interests and anger of U.S. policies under the Bush administration aiming at Iran's role; whether in promoting the position of political currents with Iranian tendencies in post-2003 Iraq, closer alliance with Sunni Arab regimes, and also systematic opposition to Iran's nuclear program, have been discussed in relative detail in previous sections of the present article. Iran, also as discussed previously, has perceived these policies as damaging to its national security and has, as a
consequence, pursued its own policies to safeguard its interests and security and promote its position and role. Looking at the on Iran and the U.S. could, therefore, be seen as two "strategic adversaries", being the greater regional situation against each other, towards strategic the growth of to their national interests and angle of U.S. policies under the Bush administration aiming at; whether in promoting the position of political currents with closer alliance with Sunni Arab regimes, situation to Iran's nuclear program, have been discussed in relative detail in previous sections of the present article. Iran, also as discussed national security and nce, pursued its own policies to safeguard its looking at the on-going two "strategic adversaries".

The end of the Bush era and Barack Obama's victory on a platform of change, including with respect to Iran, appeared to herald the beginning of a new page in U.S.-Iran tenuous relations. Obama's positive pronouncements prior to an in the early months after election outstanding issues without preconditions political ambiance in Iran, and even received similar positive vibes from Tehran. As reported in the press in the spring of The end of the Bush era and Barack Obama's victory on a platform of change, including with respect to Iran, appeared to herald the beginning of a new Iran tenuous relations. Obama's positive pronouncements prior to an in the early months after election – willingness to negotiate with Iran on all outstanding issues without preconditions – did in fact create a generally hopeful political ambiance in Iran, and even received similar positive vibes from Tehran. As in the press in the spring of 2009, even a couple of letters were exchanged The end of the Bush era and Barack Obama's victory on a platform of change, including with respect to Iran, appeared to herald the beginning of a new Iran tenuous relations. Obama's positive pronouncements prior to and willingness to negotiate with Iran on all did in fact create a generally hopeful political ambiance in Iran, and even received similar positive vibes from Tehran. As even a couple of letters were exchanged
between Obama and Iran's Supreme Leader which strengthened the hopes in both countries for a breakthrough and its aftermath changed the situation hesitancy during the early months of the post statements in one direction or another cherished hopes to come to a deal atmosphere suffered a major blow as of late September following the open, heated controversy over Iran's construction of a new nuclear site at Fordou. From then onwards, notwithstanding brief, transient episod engagement and talks on the nuclear issue (e.g., the Geneva meeting in October 2009 and its follow Turkey-Brazil Tehran Declaration in May from bad to worse. The seeming impasse in the process finally came to a head with the passage of the UN Security Council resolution active, months-long political depth of sanctions, by the U.S., Europeans, and a number of other like countries, beyond the UN sanctions, since June this year has further muddied the atmosphere between the two sides. Between Obama and Iran's Supreme Leader which strengthened the hopes in both countries for a breakthrough. However, the June 2009 presidential elections in Iran between Obama and Iran's Supreme Leader which strengthened the hopes in both sides in Iran's obvious changed the situation altogether. Despite Obama's obvious hesitancy during the early months of the post-election crisis in Iran to make clear statements in one direction or another – which seemed to indicate that he still cherished hopes to come to a deal with Iran on the nuclear issue – the political atmosphere suffered a major blow as of late September following the open, heated controversy over Iran's construction of a new nuclear site at Fordou. From then onwards, notwithstanding brief, transient episodes of hope and prospects for active engagement and talks on the nuclear issue (e.g., the Geneva meeting in October – up talks on the enriched uranium swap, and also the Iran Brazil Tehran Declaration in May 2010), the actual situation has moved from bad to worse. The seeming impasse in the process finally came to a head with the passage of the UN Security Council resolution 1929 as a result of the Ulong political - diplomatic campaign. Expansion of the range and the of sanctions, by the U.S., Europeans, and a number of other like countries, beyond the UN sanctions, since June this year has further muddied the atmosphere between the two sides. Election crisis in Iran to make clear which seemed to indicate that he still the political atmosphere suffered a major blow as of late September following the open, heated controversy over Iran's construction of a new nuclear site at Fordou. From then of hope and prospects for active engagement and talks on the
nuclear issue (e.g., the Geneva meeting in October up talks on the enriched uranium swap, and also the Iran has moved from bad to worse. The seeming impasse in the process finally came to a head with as a result of the U.S. diplomatic campaign. Expansion of the range and -minded countries, beyond the UN sanctions, since June this year has further muddled the

Aside from the nuclear issue as the most pressing item on the Obama administration’s agenda with respect to Iran, the political discourse on Iran in the United States has also suffered in the meantime. While the Republicans in general and the NewCons in particular have been pushing Obama and his administration to adopt a harsher approach and policy vis-à-vis political constituencies, including some Democrats, has also stiffened reflected in the shift in Richard Haas’ position. As an almost lonely voice in the State Department under Geo with Iran and counseled against confrontational policies, the retired veteran diplomat and new Chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations made a full turnabout a few months back and considered “regime change” as the only right . The net outcome

60) The net outcome
of such a trend in the States in tandem with a more critical outlook with regard to Iran's domestic situation and political developments, coupled with the toughened sanctions policy, has been to completely shatter all hopes in Iran for negotiations with the Obama administration across the a more critical outlook with regard to Iran's domestic situation and political developments, coupled with the toughened sanctions policy, has been shatter all hopes in Iran for negotiations with the Obama administration across the nuclear issue as the most pressing item on the Obama administration's agenda with respect to Iran, the political discourse on Iran in the has also suffered in the meantime. While the Republicans in general and the NewCons in particular have been pushing Obama and his administration to vis Iran, the outlook among other political constituencies, including some Democrats, has also stiffened – best reflected in the shift in Richard Haas' position. As an almost lonely voice in the age W. Bush who consistently argued for engagement with Iran and counseled against confrontational policies, the retired veteran diplomat and new Chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations made a full angle as the only right The net outcome of such a trend in the States in tandem with a more critical outlook with regard to Iran's domestic situation and political to completely shatter all hopes in Iran for negotiations with the Obama administration across the
board. What appeared to look like hopeful prospects for a "Grand Bargain" back in late 2008 and early 2009 has all but disappeared and given way to total board. What appeared to look like hopeful prospects for a "Grand Bargain" back in late 2008 and early 2009 has all but disappeared and given way to total appointment and ever-increasing venomous mutual acrimony, the prevailing view both in official quarters as well as across the wide spectrum of political currents and in the society at large – seem to have settled for the conclusion that no in the short-term. The U.S. push for the new UN resolution, resort to and support for further unilateral sanctions, and active pursuit of a generally more hostile approach inclusive of a renewed emphasis on the possibility of military option in case of the failure of diplomacy during Obama’s administration. The U.S. push for the new UN resolution, resort to and support for further unilateral sanctions, and active pursuit of a generally more hostile approach inclusive of a renewed emphasis on the possibility of military option in case of the failure of diplomacy (reminiscent of the oft table”) have made it amply clear that two countries is practically out of sight. Contrary to an initial positive outlook, the current Obama policy towards Iran does not seem to augur well for a meaningful change and actual rapprochement. The pressure through a much
expanded sanctions regime and simultaneous lip service to diplomacy and talks can hardly convince Iranians of changing gear. Worse still, frequent allusions by various American military, inclusive of Obama himself, on the possibility of ultimate resort to the military option to “prevent Iran from acquiring military nuclear capability” whether directly by the U.S. or through the Israeli proxy, or jointly — have served to further complicate the picture and render any possible diplomatic solution all the more difficult and out of reach. Placing the above in the bigger context of the strategic relations between the two countries; their respective approach to engagement and role in the region, one Placing the above in the bigger context of the strategic relations between the two countries; their respective approach to engagement and role in the region, one ut come to the conclusion that the current impasse will continue – term. Contrary to an initial positive outlook, the current Obama policy – at least term. Contrary to an initial positive outlook, the current Obama policy towards Iran does not seem to augur well for a meaningful change and actual going U.S. focus on substantial economic and political pressure through a much expanded sanctions regime and simultaneous lip service to diplomacy and talks can hardly convince Iranians of changing gear. Worse still, frequent allusions by various American high-ranking officials, both civilian and military, inclusive of Obama himself, on the possibility of ultimate resort to the military option to “prevent Iran from acquiring military nuclear capability” whether directly by the U.S. or through the Israeli proxy, or jointly — have served to further complicate the picture and render any possible diplomatic solution all the more difficult and out of reach. have served to further complicate the picture and render any
possible diplomatic solution all the

Beyond political pronouncements, gestures and measures of a transient nature in response to changing situations whether necessitating a more accommodating or alternatively a more hostile posture and approach – the crux of the long will continue to revolve, in the final analysis question then becomes, will the U.S., whether under a democratic or republican Beyond political pronouncements, gestures and measures of a transient nature in response to changing situations and/or short-term developments whether necessitating a more accommodating or alternatively a more hostile posture Beyond political pronouncements, gestures and measures of a transient nature in response to changing situations and / or short-term developments whether necessitating a more accommodating or alternatively a more hostile posture. Beyond political pronouncements, gestures and measures of a transient nature in response to changing situations and / or short-term developments whether necessitating a more accommodating or alternatively a more hostile posture – whether necessitating a more accommodating or alternatively a more hostile posture term, strategic conflict between the two sides the crux of the long-term, strategic conflict between the two sides will continue to revolve, in the final analysis, around regional influence. The question then becomes, will the U.S., whether under a democratic or republican, around regional influence. The question then becomes, will the U.S., whether under a democratic or republican.

administration, eventually choose to recognize Iran’s stature, weight and role as a dominant actor in the Persian Gulf and also a major player in the Persian Gulf and also a major player in the Middle East or not. Thus far abortive initiatives, the U.S. strategy has for the main part been geared to pressuring Iran through a combination of political policies and measures, and to constrain Iran’s areas of natural influence in its neighborhood and proximity political-security backyard such as in Iraq, Afghanistan or the Persian Gulf. Consistent U.S. policy of castigating Iran as the major source of security threat against the region — West Arab allies, Israel, or for that matter, Palestinian simultaneously supporting and assisting Iran’s rivals or enemies has been part and parcel of the above overall strategic objective.

Since it takes two to tango, an eventual rapprochement between Iran and the U.S. — which will one day become reality despite all other term or
current mutual nay outlook from both sides. Both Tehran and Washington will have to come to terms with each other’s reality and recognize, at long last, that neither be in a position to totally neglect the other side, nor can cherish the hope of eliminating the other from the area of vital national and security interests and desired role and influence. Such a mutual recognition, while needed, would necessarily lead to engagement and cooperation; the latter requires recognition of “mutual strategic needs.” It has already been discussed in previous sections of the article that the U.S., as an outside force to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf albeit a power with global hegemony, has as a matter of fact found itself in need of concrete Iranian assistance to overcome its self Afghanistan and Iraq, and in a larger sense, in the greater Middle East. That realization has yet to be translated into a positive, engaging strategy and concrete target-oriented policies and measures; needless to say, a strategy and policy quite of a different nature and discourse than the current focus on pressure and ostracism. That is for the American beyond the self-constraining discourse, policies and measures of the past—and search for and define the “strategic needs” with regard to the U.S., be it in the Since it takes two to tango, an eventual rapprochement between Iran and the which will one day become reality despite all odds and regardless of short-term or current mutual nay-saying—will inevitably need an equally accommodating outlook from both sides. Both Tehran and Washington will have to come to terms with each other’s reality and recognize, at long last, that neither side is or will ever be in a position to totally neglect the other side, nor can cherish the hope of eliminating the other from the area of vital national and security interests and desired role and influence. Such a mutual recognition, while needed, would necessarily lead to engagement and cooperation; the latter requires recognition of “mutual strategic needs.” It has already been discussed in previous sections of the article that the U.S., as an outside force to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf albeit a power with global hegemony, has as a matter of fact found itself
in need of concrete Iranian assistance to overcome its self-inflicted predicament in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in a larger sense, in the greater Middle East. That to be translated into a positive, engaging strategy and concrete oriented policies and measures; needless to say, a strategy and policy quite of. Since it takes two to tango, an eventual rapprochement between Iran and the dds and regardless of short-will inevitably need an equally accommodating outlook from both sides. Both Tehran and Washington will have to come to terms a different nature and discourse than the current focus on pressure and ostracism. That is for the American side of the coin. The Iranian side also needs to move side is or will ever be in a position to totally neglect the other side, nor can cherish the hope of eliminating the other from the area of vital national and security interests and desired role and influence. Such a mutual recognition, while needed, would not necessarily lead to engagement and cooperation; the latter requires recognition of “mutual strategic needs.” It has already been discussed in previous sections of the article that the U.S., as an outside force to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf albeit a power with global hegemony, has as a matter of fact found itself in need of inflected predicament in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in a larger sense, in the greater Middle East. That to be translated into a positive, engaging strategy and concrete oriented policies and measures; needless to say, a strategy and policy quite of a different nature and discourse than the current focus on pressure and ostracism. I can side of the coin. The Iranian side also needs to move constraining discourse, policies and measures of the past – and search for and define the “strategic needs” with regard to the U.S., be it in the thus far and search for and define the “strategic needs” with regard to the U.S., be it in the
Roles at Odds: The Roots of...

area of assisting provision and security in Iraq and Afghanistan after the U.S. combat troops withdraw, or to contributing to the cause of peace and security in the larger Middle East in one form or another. area of assisting provision and maintenance of security in the Persian Gulf, stability and security in Iraq and Afghanistan after the U.S. combat troops withdraw, or to contributing to the cause of peace and security in the larger Middle East in one ion and maintenance of security in the Persian Gulf, stability and security in Iraq and Afghanistan after the U.S. combat troops withdraw, or to contributing to the cause of peace and security in the larger Middle East in one

Considering the long catalogue of conflictive issues and situations between the two countries and looking for a possible exit from the current impasse, one might be tempted to speculate that the Iranian nuclear dossier, despite all the complexities involved, could in fact compromise, and a breakthrough towards some sort of rapprochement. On the one hand, if past practice is any indication, the U.S. and the like should realize that mere economic sanctions economy and hurting Iranian people government's change in the course of the current nuclear policy, which is jealously considered by the Iranian polity as a matter of national pride and dignity foreign pressures on this particular issue have proved quite beneficial to the Iranian state's position, at both national and international levels.

Realistic approach on the part of the U.S. towards the nuclear program a different, accommodating approach and premised on genuine dialogue free from pressure and coercion, would most probably serve as a practical, tangible encouragement for Tehran, leading to a practical thaw away from the so “clenched fist.” In the author's estimation, a possible mutually face on Iran’s nuclear program, while there is still time, could indeed serve to undo the seemingly irresolvable impasse between Iran and the U.S. Such an eventuality, albeit appearing distant and beyond reach under the circumstances, could pave the way for the ultimate unfolding of a process of rapprochement piecemeal and even painstaking from decades of animosity and tus other's presence, weight and role in the Persian Gulf and the greater Middle East. the long catalogue of conflictive issues and situations between the two countries and looking for a possible exit from the current impasse, one might be tempted to speculate that the Iranian nuclear dossier, despite all the complexities involved, could in fact contain the essential elements for a compromise, and a breakthrough towards some sort of rapprochement. On the one hand, if past practice is any indication, the U.S.
and the like-minded countries should realize that mere economic sanctions – while damaging to the Iranian economy and hurting Iranian people – would not necessarily lead to the Iranian government's change in the course of the current nuclear policy, which is jealously considered by the Iranian polity as a matter of national pride and dignity. In fact, foreign pressures on this particular issue have proved quite beneficial to the Iranian state's position, at both national and international levels. On the other hand, a more realistic approach on the part of the U.S. towards the nuclear program, anchored on a different, accommodating approach and premised on genuine dialogue free from pressure and coercion, would most probably serve as a practical, tangible encouragement for Tehran, leading to a practical thaw away from the so-hel long catalogue of conflictive issues and situations between the two countries and looking for a possible exit from the current impasse, one might be tempted to speculate that the Iranian nuclear dossier, despite all the fact contain the essential elements for a compromise, and a breakthrough towards some sort of rapprochement. On the one minded countries ging to the Iranian ist."

In the author's estimation, a possible mutually face-saving formula on Iran's nuclear program, while there is still time, could indeed serve to undo the seemingly irresolvable impasse between Iran and the U.S. Such an eventuality, albeit stant and beyond reach under the circumstances, could pave the way for the ultimate unfolding of a process of rapprochement – inevitably gradual, piecemeal and even painstaking – that would convince both sides to move away from decades of animosity and tussle and settle for mutual recognition of each other's presence, weight and role in the Persian Gulf and the greater Middle East. would not necessarily lead to the Iranian government's change in the course of the current nuclear policy, which is jealously y. In fact, foreign pressures on this particular issue have proved quite beneficial to the Iranian On the other hand, a more, anchored on a different, accommodating approach and premised on genuine dialogue free from pressure and coercion, would most probably serve
as a practical, tangible encouragement for Tehran, leading to a practical thaw away from the so-called saving formula on Iran's nuclear program, while there is still time, could indeed serve to undo the seemingly irresolvable impasse between Iran and the U.S. Such an eventuality, albeit stagnant and beyond reach under the circumstances, could pave the way inevitably gradual, that would convince both sides to move away and settle for mutual recognition of each other's presence, weight and role in the Persian Gulf and the greater Middle East.

Conclusions

Almost 32 years after the to be tenuous and conflictive. Besides a political mutual resentment and an equally important aggregation of a number of distinct years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the U.S.-Iran relations continue to be tenuous and conflictive. Besides a political-ideological clash and associated mutual resentment and an equally important aggregation of a number of distinct Iran relations continue ideological clash and associated mutual resentment and an equally important aggregation of a number of distinct
policy disputes, mostly prominently Iran’s disputed nuclear program, the on active strife between the two countries appears to be mainly emanating from competition and struggle over regional influence and role. As argued in detail in this article, the post-9/11 the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq regional actual weight, influence and role, not only in Iran’s immediate neighborhood but also on a larger the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Ba’athist regime in Iraq enemies of Iran and the emergence of pro both countries – served to boost Iran’s reg with the U.S. in both cases appeared at the time to turn a new page in the state of relations between them and place them on a different course that could have opened the way for a process of rapprochement and outstanding differences. The expected change failed to materialize, and the tussle moved instead to a higher “strategic” level; each side endeavoring, in their own peculiar ways, to create difficulty for the other and contain and constrain the other’s role and domain of influence in the region greater Middle East. sputes, mostly prominently Iran’s disputed nuclear program, the on active strife between the two countries appears to be mainly emanating from competition and struggle over regional influence and role. As argued in detail in this 11 developments, particularly the situation in the aftermath of invasion of Iraq, have coalesced, even if inadvertently, to boost Iran’s regional actual weight, influence and role, not only in Iran’s immediate neighborhood but also on a larger scale in the greater Middle East. The removal of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Ba’athist regime in Iraq – as irreplaceable enemies of Iran and the emergence of pro-Iran political and ideological forces in served to boost Iran’s regional position. Iran’s actual cooperation with the U.S. in both cases appeared at the time to turn a new page in the state of relations between them and place them on a different course that could have opened the way for a process of rapprochement and – gradual – resolution of outstanding differences. The expected change failed to materialize, and the tussle moved instead to a higher “strategic” level; each side endeavoring, in their own peculiar ways, to create difficulty for the other and contain and constrain the other’s role and domain of influence in the region – both in the Persian Gulf and the Given the crux of the conflict between the two countries on a wide gamut of Given the crux of the conflict between the two countries on a wide
gamut of issues, situations and policies, and recognizing what each side national interests and security concerns, the article has argued that the way out of the current impasse lies in mutual recognition of the reality on the ground. Iran, as the dominant state in the Persian Gulf region and also as a major player in the greater Middle East, enjoys a certain stature, weight and role, that can simply not be ignored - whether by the countries in the region or others, inclusive of and in particular, the U.S. More importantly, though, Iran’s regional position and once recognized and respected, can indeed be brought to bear to contribute, in mutually-reassuring-reinforcing interactive processes, to the promotion and consolidation of peace and stability in the region instead of the current mutually damaging and corrosive conflict with all its associated negative repercussions for both sides and for the region at large. As for the other side of the coin, the article has likewise argued that since it takes two to tango Iran also needs to bring itself to opt for a different approach and outlook towards the seemingly inevitable issues, situations and policies, and recognizing what each side considers as its national interests and security concerns, the article has argued that the way out of the current impasse lies in mutual recognition of the reality on the ground. Iran, as the dominant state in the Persian Gulf region and also as a major player in the greater Middle East, enjoys a certain stature, weight and role, that can simply not be whether by the countries in the region or others, inclusive of and in particular, the U.S. More importantly, though, Iran’s regional position and influence, once recognized and respected, can indeed be brought to bear to contribute, in spites, mostly prominently Iran’s disputed nuclear program, the on-going, active strife between the two countries appears to be mainly emanating from competition and struggle over regional influence and role. As argued in detail in this reinforcing interactive processes, to the promotion and consolidation of peace and stability in the region instead of the current mutually gand corrosive conflict with all its associated negative repercussions
for both sides and for the region at large. As for the other side of the coin, the article has likewise argued that since it takes two to tango Iran also needs to bring itself to or a different approach and outlook towards the seemingly inevitable particularly the situation in the aftermath of to boost Iran’s regional actual weight, influence and role, not only in Iran’s immediate scale in the greater Middle East. The removal of as irreplaceable Iran political and ideological forces in ional position. Iran’s actual cooperation with the U.S. in both cases appeared at the time to turn a new page in the state of relations between them and place them on a different course that could have resolution of outstanding differences. The expected change failed to materialize, and the tussle moved instead to a higher “strategic” level; each side endeavoring, in their own train the other’s both in the Persian Gulf and the Given the crux of the conflict between the two countries on a wide gamut of considers as its national interests and security concerns, the article has argued that the way out of the current impasse lies in mutual recognition of the reality on the ground. Iran, as layer in the greater Middle East, enjoys a certain stature, weight and role, that can simply not be whether by the countries in the region or others, inclusive of and in influence, once recognized and respected, can indeed be brought to bear to contribute, in reinforcing interactive processes, to the promotion and consolidation of peace and stability in the region instead of the current mutually g and corrosive conflict with all its associated negative repercussions for both sides and for the region at large. As for the other side of the coin, the article has likewise argued that since it takes two to tango Iran also needs to bring itself to or a different approach and outlook towards the seemingly inevitable
Roles at Odds: The Roots of Engagement and role of the U.S. as a supra-regional hegemonic power with global reach and aspirations engagement in its immediate backyard and traditional national security at the neighborhood and traditional national security.

As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences. As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences. As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences. As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences.

Significant regional strategic stakes for both sides call for a bold step forward while there is still time to avoid – and in fact, prevent – military face-off with catastrophic consequences. As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences. As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences. As a final point, the article has argued for interaction and engagement, for in the final analysis and at the end of the day, rivals and adversaries sit down at the negotiating table to resolve disputes and conflicts and smooth out their differences.

Notes


85-114. 109
6. See James Dobbins, "A Slap in the Face from America," 2007; and "Time to Deal With Iran"

7. See Vali Nasr and Ray Takeyh, "The Costs of Containing January / February


9. See for example the remarks made by President Regional Power,


11. See George W Bush’s www.whitehouse.gov

12. See "Vice President’s Remarks to the October 2007, www.whitehouse.gov American Enterprise Institute


15. See William O. Beeman, ‘Follow the Oil Government’s Fault’, August 1998, web

16. Mohsen Milani, Op

17. Mohsen Aminzadeh,

18. After the removal of the Taliban, Iran facilitated the return of Afghan homeland. Some two million Afghans lived in Iran before that the number of Afghan refugees in Iran has increased again during the intervening period due to deteriorating security conditions

19. Iran at the time pledged government, most of which have already been spent on development and construction projects.

20. Ahmadinejad was among the first heads of state who congratulated Hamed Karzi’s victory in the Congratulates Karzian Successful Elections http://kabulpress

Ahmadinejad was among the first heads of state who congratulated Hamed Karzi’s 2009 presidential elections. See Robert Maier, "Ahmadinejad was among the first heads of state who congratulated Hamed Karzi’s." See Op. Cit.


Alternatives: Turkish


See “Iran Energy Data, Statistics and Analysis” Oil, Gas, Electricity, Coal”. 34.

For example, Iran has hosted and participated in most of the different levels of foreign and interior ministers held on Iraq’s security during 2008: May and November Tehran, August 2007 Kuwait (See “Kuwait Conference Stability to Iraq?” kuwait-conference html?Itemid_126). on the situation in Lebanon. Iran’s been, however, an issue For example, Iran has hosted and participated in most of the regional conferences at the different levels of foreign and interior ministers held on Iraq’s security during May and November 2004 in Sharm el-Sheikh, November 2004 and July 2007 in Damascus, November 2007 in Istanbul, and April See “Kuwait Conference: 20 Regional, Int’l Events but did they Bring Security Stability to Iraq?” Iraqi News, 23 April 2008, http://www.iraqinews.com/conferences/conference-20-regional-intl-events-but-did-they-bring-security-stability-toiraq). Iran also actively participated in the Doha conference in May in Lebanon. Iran’s active involvement in these regional processes has however, an issue of concern to Arab countries in the Middle East. See Noam Chomsky “The Iranian Threat,” 29 June http://www.zcommunications.org/the-iranian-threat-by-noam-chomsky, “Iran Tries to Make Up Lost Ground,” Asia Times, 4 February e regional conferences at the different levels of foreign and interior ministers held on Iraq’s security during 2004 and July 2005 in and April 2008 in Int’l Events but did they Bring Security, conferences/toiraq in May 2008 in these regional processes has June 2010, February 2008. Oil, Gas, Electricity, Coal,” 35. Iran’s high-ranking officials have on various occasions emphasized on the interdependency of Iran’s security with the region’s security, and that the US interests become the subject of any military operation. See Persian website www.aftabnews.com ranking officials, both political and military, inclusive of the Supreme Leader, have on various occasions emphasized on the interdependency of Iran’s security with the Supreme Leader, have on various occasions emphasized on the interdependency of Iran’s security with the security, and that the US interests would be attacked if Iran were to become the subject of any military operation. See Persian website www.rajanews.com www.aftabnews.com; see also “Iran: Middle East Security at Risk,” if Iran were to www.rajanews.com; see also “Iran: Middle East Security at Risk,” IRANIAN REVIEW of Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 85-111.
Roles at Odds: The Roots of


39. See Massimo Calabresi, "To Obama's Pile of Woes, Add a Failing Iran January 2010, ixxz0ydulOELM; Kayhan Barzegar, "Nuclear Terrorism Bulletin, 26 April 38. See Alastair Crooke, "The Shifting Sands of State Power in the Middle East," Washington Quarterly no.37. Emphasis on enhancing bilateral and mutual economic and political with the countries in the region, in particular in the Persian Gulf, has been pursued by Iran as a matter of policy. presented at 28 2007), Payvand's Iran News, news/07/dec/1029_former secretary of Ir the World Economic Forum ‘‘Iran unveils a Persian Gulf security plan,’ ‘http://www.atimes.com/enhancing bilateral and mutual economic and political-security cooperation with the countries in the region, in particular in the Persian Gulf, has been pursued by Iran as a matter of policy. See, for instance, President Ahmadinejad’s 12-Point Summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Doha, Qatar, December Payvand’s Iran News, 4 December 2007, http://www.payvand.com/1029.html. Also see the 10-Point Initiative presented by Hassan Rohani, former secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council at the regional meeting of World Economic Forum (Doha, Qatar, April 2007). Also see Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, ‘‘Iran unveils a Persian Gulf security plan,’ ‘Asia Times’, 14 April atimes.com/asia_Middle_East/140404.html. See Alastair Crooke, "The Shifting Sands of State Power in the Middle East," Washington Quarterly, July 2010, pp. 13-15. See Massimo Calabresi, "To Obama's Pile of Woes, Add a Failing Iran Policy," Time, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1956075,00; Kayhan Barzegar, "Nuclear Terrorism, Iran, and the NPR, April 2010, http://www.worldbulletin.net/news_detail.php?id=57644security cooperation with the countries in the region, in particular in the Persian Gulf, has been pursued by initiative December payvand.com/ initiative presented by Hassan Rohani,
stipulates the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Article 4 stipulates the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.


41. For a comprehensive discussion on the roots and politics of Iran's nuclear program see Kayhan Barzegar, "The Paradox of Iran’s Nuclear Consensus,” World Policy Journal.

42. For a comprehensive discussion on the roots and politics of Iran's nuclear program see Kayhan Barzegar, "The Paradox of Iran’s Nuclear Consensus,” World Policy Journal.


Kayhan Barzegar, "Syria will Stick with Iran," 6 November belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18657. An
ence to the remarks made by Hosni Mobarak in April 2006 which
caused anxiety communities in the Arab world and Iran.
Baztab. 21 Farvardin www.baztab.ir (in Persian).
Machinations in Constitutional Revolution in the Gilan Province and the occupation of parts of the country by imposed on Iran by the Ba'athist,
terrorist based Jondollah Group, led by Abdol Malek Rigi, in Iran's
vince. Currently Iranians are seriously concerned about the
Americans' in Persian), 24; also Mashaallah US Differences," November 2008, Eurasian Review of Geopolitics (The which caused anxiety Farvardin 1385/10
56. Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election From Iran: Leaders Warn Against Forming Religious State," Robin
Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election From Iran: Leaders Warn Against Forming Religious State," The Washington Post, 8
57. Saud al-Feisal voiced Saudi Arabia's concern about Iran's increased role in Iraq by saying that, "all Arab countries assisted
Iraq to not be occupied by Iran (in the Iran but now we are
handing the whole country (Iraq) over analysis on Saud al F
neighborhood," transcript/shapiroFeisal voiced Saudi Arabia's concern about Iran's increased role in Iraq by
saying that, "all Arab countries assisted Iraq to not be
occupied by Iran (in the Iran-Iraq but now we are handing
the whole country (Iraq) over to Iran without reason." an analysis on Saud al Faisal's remarks see Edward Gnehem," Iraq: A View from the " 23 February 2006, available at:
http://www.gwu.edu/elliott/news/shapiro5.html. Feisal voiced Saudi Arabia's concern about Iran's increased role in Iraq by saying Iraq War). " For an," Iraq: A View from the
http://www.gwu.edu/elliott/news/
58. See Vali Nasr, "Behind the Rise of the See Vali Nasr, "Behind the Rise of
IRANIAN REVIEW of Foreign Affairs IRANIAN REVIEW of Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 85-114. 113
Roles at Odds


60. Richard Haass, "