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**THE SHAH'S CHINA POLICY: FROM HOSTILITY TO RAPPROCHEMENT
(A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST VIEW)**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the development of Iran's China policy under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi during the years between 1949 and 1979. The main theme of this study is based on the question that how, and due to what influences, Iran's foreign policy towards China evolved under the same leader in the context of the Cold War. Along this line, via adopting a neoclassical realist approach, the present study attempts to explain the Shah's China policy by taking into account the role of both systemic and domestic variables. As this paper will argue, the structure of the international system and superpower politics have been the primary determinants of Iran's behavior towards China during the Shah's reign. However, the Iranian monarch's perception of the East-West power play, his understanding of China's position in the international balance of power, and his realistic calculations of the costs and benefits of relations with the PRC have acted as intervening factors that influenced Iran's China policy at that time.

Keywords: Iran, Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Foreign Policy, China, United States, Soviet Union, Cold War, Neoclassical Realism

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the evolution of Iran's China policy under the Shah in the years between 1949 and 1979. It tries to explain how, and under what conditions, the Shah formulated and conducted his country's relations with the communist China during his three decades of reign. This essay also seeks to shed light on the most important forces shaping the Iranian foreign policy towards the PRC at that time. The main argument of this paper is that, both systemic and domestic factors affected the foreign policy directions of the Kingdom of Iran in general and its diplomatic performance towards China in particular.

When examining the context of Iran's China policy during the Shah's era, the centrality of systemic determinants is clear. Therefore, theoretically, the present work is realist in essence. Yet in addition to considering primacy in structure, intervening variables like the perception of the Shah about the international politics, the East-West rivalry, and China's status in the global balance of power played a crucial role in how Iran's behavior towards the PRC operated. Hence, a key assumption on which this study rests is that the Shah, as an absolute monarch and a hands-on

commander, at least for most of his reign, made “every major foreign policy decision and most of the minor ones” (Chubin & Zabih, 1974, p. 10).

With these facts in mind, the present research has found the neoclassical realism as the best available theoretical approach with a significant explanatory power regarding its objectives. Neoclassical realism, as a recent addition to international relations theory, serves as bridging the gaps between classical realism, neorealism, and foreign policy analysis. According to this theory, there are some domestic factors in which decision-makers “arrive at policies and decide on actions” as a response to external constraints (Sterling-Folker, 1997, p. 17). In this context, although the systemic forces generally form the direction of foreign policy, they are not influential enough to determine accurately the state’s actions (Rose, 1998, p. 147). Therefore, a precise explanation of a state’s foreign policy should include “systemic, domestic, and other influences” (Zakaria, 1992, p. 192). On this basis, while neoclassical realism rejects the possibility and advantages of a single-factor analysis, it accepts that the similar intervening variables could have contrary effects in different conditions (Tang, 2009, p. 810). This theory, in fact, attempts to explore different foreign behaviors of a state over time or across different states facing same external limits. That is, “the same causes sometimes lead to different effects, and the same effects sometimes follow from different causes” (Lobell, Ripsman, & Taliaferro, 2009, p. 21).

This study will illustrate that Iran’s foreign policy towards China following the Second World War was clearly based on its respective security concerns. It will discuss the development of Iran’s China policy through two major phases; the first period began following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 lasting up to the mid-1960s within which Iran experienced a changing foreign policy from the “Negative Equilibrium” in the immediate post-war years (Mosaddegh’s time) to the definite pro-Western alliance. During this time, in the context of the fairly rigid bipolar structure, Tehran had substantially no relationship with Beijing. The second phase is the alleviating period of the Cold War since the mid-1960’s; when Tehran, affected by some significant systemic changes such as the Sino-Soviet split, easing of the tensions between superpowers, Britain’s withdrawal from the East of Suez, and the Sino-American reconciliation, distanced steadily from an inflexible Western-oriented foreign policy and demonstrated a more independent posture in its external relations, particularly towards the Communist World. Henceforward, Iran increasingly attempted to desist from its rabid hostility towards China and enhanced its economic, political, security ties with this country. identity in expense of learners” identity turn and negotiation. In fact, these classes have still remained fixed in a decontextualized conception of literacy which is an essentialized culture i.e. modes of meaning making of western culture romanticised as a main path determiner in ELT which seemingly cannot situate learners” sociocultural needs and identities are in the heart of these classes. Such a context seems to be a continuation of neo colonizing discourse of the new

era and has led to enormous inequalities in the education system for the majority of learners. This ignorance has recently been challenged by New Literacy Studies with the perspective of education.

This paper first gives a brief overview of theoretical dimensions of multi-literacies pedagogy and then depict a vignette on how to situate learners' cultural identity in the Iranian classroom discourse to highlight the potential risk of such a construction which cannot lead to achieving a multi-literate person in 21st century in which there are a multi-layered interaction of various cultures if it is just centred on a stereotyped English speaking culture as common in Iran.

THE FIRST PHASE: THE „POSITIVE NATIONALISM“ AND HOSTILE POLICY TOWARDS CHINA (1950S-MID 1960S)

Iran's China policy during the Shah's reign should be examined in the context of the Cold War and the bipolar politics. In the aftermath of the World War II, the United States and Soviet Union, as the two emerging superpowers, leading their satellite states and allies, began a colossal struggle for influence and a massive political, ideological, and economic competition all around the world. They also engaged in a costly conventional and nuclear arms race and a number of deadly conflicts and proxy wars in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Meanwhile, the Middle East was one of the most important areas where the superpowers were either present and had vital interests at stake; a region whose weak actors were increasingly seeking alliance with superpowers in order to be protected from external aggressions

Iran was perhaps the first state in the region the superpowers faced each other and remained geopolitically significant throughout the Cold War. Directly after the Second World War, Iran became the battlefield of increasing rivalry between great powers. Soon, facing with the Soviet's military occupation of its Northern provinces, Iran found itself highly vulnerable not only to the Russians' aggressive behavior but also to their role in inciting sabotage operations and chaos inside the country through their mercenaries. Hence, the Shah, as the chief architect of the Iranian foreign policy, to thwart the threats to the country's survival interests from the Soviet and radical Arab states, particularly Iraq, and to improve Iran's military strength, joined the U.S whom was viewed as the newcomer, helpful, and quite reputable power in the region. As a result, in 1950s, Iran emerged as a member of the conservative regional bloc whose foreign policy was strongly attached to that of the United States (Gheissari & Nasr, 2006, p.56).

It steadily turned into a vital objective of the U.S foreign policy and the closest U.S. ally in the region, whereas Turkey and Israel complete the triad of America's partners (Fathollah-Nejad, 2007, p. 11). Iran also increasingly sought to court the United States by playing the role

of a major bulwark against the Soviet communism in the geopolitically significant Middle East region.

Unquestionably, the intense competition among the two blocs in the context of the bipolar Cold War had deep impact on Iran's China policy at that time. Not surprisingly, in the wake of the Chinese Revolution of 1949, Tehran -to follow the U.S policy- refused to recognize the People's Republic of China and severed its diplomatic relations with Beijing. On the other side, Mao's China based on „leaning to one side“ policy entered into close strategic alliance with the Soviet, which was considered to be the greatest threat to Iran's national security. As a matter of fact, Beijing had almost the same hostile attitude towards Iran as Moscow. Moreover, it actively sought to generate anti-colonial sentiment in the region and promote the Third World states to join the socialist „United Front“ against imperialism. In Mao's view, the world was rigidly divided into two irreconcilable camps within which “the heroes and brave fellows” in the colonies and semi-colonies had no choice but to decide “either line up on the imperialist front and become part of the forces of world counter-revolution, or line up on the anti-imperialist front and become part of world revolution”. To Mao the world's people had to do one or the other, for there was “no third way” (Shichor, 1979, p. 14).

The Pahlavi regime's hostility towards the PRC became even more formidable after the Anglo-American coup d'état of 1953 that overthrew the reformist, nationalist, democratically-elected, Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, who had faced up to the king's authoritarianism at one hand and great powers" influence on the other. This event, in fact, not only brought Iran into an unambiguous close alliance with the U.S and restored the Western monopolized control over Iran's oil industry, but also strengthened the monarch's power by creating a wider arena to prosecute and suppress critics of Pahlavi regime mainly within opposition leftist parties that were in collaboration with Moscow and Beijing. After Mosaddegh's fall, Beijing condemned the coup and state-owned Chinese media described General Zahedi's military regime “as a puppet of the American government” (Taheri-Amin, 1996, p. 217). In effect, during this period, China's propaganda approach toward Iran, to a great extent, followed Russia's lead (Garver, 2006, p. 35).

In the aftermath of the coup, while huge quantities of American military weapons poured into the country, the Shah proclaimed his Positive Nationalism as contrasted with non-aligned policy of the ousted Prime Minister. In Shah's view, Mosaddegh's negative equilibrium policy was a kind of “supine passive neutrality” that actually had weakened the country and made it the victim of communist subversion. In his words, the positive nationalism was instead:

“A policy of maximum political and economic independence with the interests of one's country on the other hand, it does not mean non-alignment or sitting on the fence. It means that we make any agreement which is in our interest; regardless of

the wishes or policies of others...we make no alliances merely for the sake of alliances or of vague principles, but only in support of our enlightened self-interest. We cultivate the friendship of all, and are prepared to take advantage of every country's technical skills if to do so does not prejudice our interests or our independence. This gives us great freedom of action - much more than that enjoyed by any dogma-ridden state" (Pahlavi, 1960, pp. 124-125).

Needless to say that while the Shah's new policy "inclined Iran most favorably toward the West" (Ramazani, 1962, p. 56), it was signally anti-Communist in essence. During this period, the monarch frequently expressed his hate for the communism in various occasions. These anti-communist statements can be understood as bargaining postures and attempts to win further trust from Americans. Communists in the Iranian monarch's view were, in fact, seeking "to exploit not only the political, economic, and social weakness of the emerging lands, but also their military vulnerability". According to the Shah, "if a country fails to secure its defenses, communists play with it as a cat dose with a mouse". During Mosaddegh's premiership, Iran played the "unhappy role of the mouse", maintained the monarch (Pahlavi, p. 156). Based on such view, the Shah doubled the army's size to 200,000 soldiers and tripled its budget from \$42 million in 1953 to \$187 million in 1962 (Gasriowski, 1991, p. 112). In March 1959, while pro- Nasser, anti-Western sentiments among Arab masses had reached its peak, the Shah signed an executive agreement with President Eisenhower that committed the U.S government to continue providing Iran with military and economic support and to assist it in the case of aggression.

Meanwhile, arguably, the Shah's regime could not stand the Chinese rigorous Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, its radical, revolutionary approach to foreign relations, and especially, its support of the Anti-Shah, pro-Soviet Tudeh party (Bin-Huwaidin, 2002, p. 153). On the other hand, Iran's support of the United States and South Korea during the Korean War (1950-53), its joining to the U.S-sponsored, anti-communist Baghdad pact in 1954, its support of the Eisenhower Doctrine, and the growing relations with the nationalist government of Taiwan following the Shah's visit of May 1958 provoked considerable anger in Beijing and deepened the gap between the two states. In consequence, the Chinese leadership, frequently blamed Iran's increasing integration into the Western security initiatives and its violation of Non-Aligned Movement's founding principles (Abidi, 1982, pp. 90-93).

Noteworthy to say apart from strategic and ideological considerations perhaps the Shah's indifference to China at that time was also rooted in his perception of the Western modernity at one hand, and his image of the Chinese society, on the other hand. In the monarch's prism, who was deeply fascinated by the Westernization as the unique model of progress, China was just a less-developed country "where millions of farmers and agricultural laborers" had to live under "a command economy" whereas having "no right even to their own private life or family" that Iran would never be like it. Although such statements might seem arrogant at the first sight, one

cannot say that the Shah's arguments were groundless. As a matter of fact, at the same time that China was in the unpleasant, brutal era of the so called Cultural Revolution, Iran had stepped in the way of economic development, embarked on investing heavily in military hardware, and had turned into an important regional power (Burman, 2009, p. 75). The Shah had achieved all these as a result of close friendship with the West and particularly the United States. "Almost no one has shown any desire to escape from the Free World to communist China", wrote the Shah (Pahlavi, p. 161).

THE SECOND PHASE: THE "INDEPENDENT NATIONAL POLICY" AND RAPPROCHEMENT WITH CHINA (MID-1960S-1979)

In the second half of the 1960s, Iran's China policy, influenced by the Cold War dynamics, began to shift. Undoubtedly, the most important systemic change that affected Iran's behavior at that time was the U.S.-Soviet détente. Rapprochement between the two superpowers led to a considerable decline in Iran's strategic value as an anti-Soviet base, and thus made the Shah increasingly concerned about his regime's security. Seemingly, with better understanding the nature of the Cold War, the Shah stepped up his attempts to make use of the superpower conflict through pursuing a balance policy, as far as possible (Johns, 2007, p. 64). Moreover, the U.S increasing engagement in Vietnam War and its neglect of key regional allies, also, created a wider arena for the Shah to parade his Independent National Policy and to call for Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD).

In these circumstances, while Washington's economic development aids to Tehran were formally ended on November 1967, by pursuing the Independent National Policy the Kingdom of Iran sought to demonstrate a more self-confidence and independency in its foreign relations especially with the Eastern bloc -even though it still remained basically pro-Western. As a matter of fact, loosening of tension between the two superpowers had provided more freedom for diplomatic maneuver for the Shah. Iran's new approach, which has properly been described by Professor Zabih (1970) as „de facto non-alignment within a pro-Western alliance“, was adopted as a result of Tehran's increasing perception of vulnerability towards Moscow pressure at the time of major domestic upheaval. Indeed, the Independent National Policy aimed at two main objectives: first, "to consolidate the regime's control over the policy and launch unprecedented measures of economic reforms", so called „White Revolution“, and second, "to explore the possibilities; cooperation with Soviet Union, more independent policy towards the United States, and more active policy in the Persian Gulf" (Parveen, 2006, p. 111).

In line with his new strategy, in June 1965, the monarch visited Moscow and just a few months later the two countries signed an important economic cooperation agreement. In the coming year he also made several trips to Eastern European countries, such as Poland,

Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Yugoslavia that led to a number of mutual commercial agreements (Irani, 1982, p. 200). Unsurprisingly, the Shah's new approach towards communist states was met with widespread criticism, at the time. In response to the critics the Shah stated that: "if you treat people like diseased people they will act like diseased people; it is better to open the windows and give them fresh air" (Meyer, 2003, p. 135). Two years after his visit to Moscow, when the American government became aware of initiating secret military connections between Iran and the USSR, the Shah claimed that Iran has been forced to purchase Russian armaments as a result of some "new financial and logistical conditions" that were imposed by the United States. He also asserted that Tehran "could not accept that Washington tells it what it wanted" and would turn again to Moscow for such military aids if it were "necessary and reasonable" (Ro'i, 1974, p. 435).

Perhaps, by demonstrating this posture the Shah sought various purposes; He intended, not only to re-attract America's attention for further support of his regime, but also to win more trust in the domestic arena wherein the Iranian people and clergy had begun to show an increasing antipathy towards the regime's dependency to the U.S and Western infiltration into the society. Moreover, seemingly, the monarch had found that by extending cooperation with Moscow from economic into military realm, "he could enhance Soviet tolerance of his policies in a manner that would contribute to an activist foreign policy posture" (Muller, 1997, p. 71). The new approach to foreign policy was clearly illustrated in Prime Minister's speech of February 1967 in the Parliament; Amir Abbas Hodeida stressed:

"Our independent national policy is based on coexistence with all peace-loving nations. On the present disturbed world, our country has certain responsibilities for maintaining peace and stability. Unfortunately, until we have the assurance of a reliable general disarmament, we consider it our foremost duty to protect our cultural and national heritages by strengthening our armed forces... The strengthening of our armed forces is important because we want to be able to protect ourselves from any other country's blunder of entertaining the slightest of aggressive plans. True, we have agreements with some other countries, we accepted certain commitments, and we respect those agreements; but we rely on ourselves alone. It is we who decide for our people in the field of international relations, and this independence in determining and carrying out our nation's will as our best cause and slogan" (Ro'i, pp. 433-436).

Meanwhile, the monarch's independent posture in foreign relations was welcomed by the Chinese leadership; Beijing praised Iran's new approach as "steps in the region toward challenging the West and as a new effort to ward fostering Third World solidarity" (Bin-Huwaidin, pp. 154-155). At the same time, the Sino-Soviet split, following by Beijing's

growing concerns of Khrushchev's Soviet influence in China's internal affairs, made the Chinese decision-makers determined to confront expansionist policies of the Soviet in the Third World while seeking other strategic friends. Such a fundamental change in the Chinese foreign policy provided the main ground for Beijing to take a more moderate stance and improve its relationship with the West. In effect, the shift in China's foreign policy approach relieved Tehran's concerns of the Beijing-Moscow ideological and political axis and shaped a safer context for the Iranian policy-makers to deal with China and use its card in playing between the two superpowers accordingly. Later on, Tehran began to show a more conciliatory attitude towards the PRC. As one of the first steps, in 1965, the Iranian ambassador to United Nations expressed Tehran's positive attitude regarding the recognition of the PRC, stating:

"I would repeat that we fully agree to the admission of the People's Republic of China though we do not maintain diplomatic relations with it. In our view it is inconceivable that the objective of the UN, notably disarmament and control of nuclear weapons, could be attained without the participation of the People's Republic of China" (Abidi, p. 238).

In the mid-1960s, China's turning into the fifth nuclear power increased its strategic importance in the eyes of the Iranian monarch. Besides, the demise of Nasserism following the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967 and shifting the regional balance of power in favor of Iran made the Shah more motivated to concentrate on relations with China. Within this context, the Shah acknowledged de-facto recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1967, and two years later, declared that Iran would support China's membership of the United Nations (Abidi, pp. 47-51). However, despite the late-1960s developments that caused Iran's steadily heading toward a convergence with China, and even with China's efforts to improve its international image, since Beijing still continued -even though with lesser tone- its political, financial supports of anti-Western, revolutionary, liberation movements and the so called „People's War“ within the Third World, Tehran remained ambivalent on launching a real rapprochement with Beijing until 1970. Meanwhile, the bilateral trade between the two countries followed a positive trajectory at that time. In the 1960s, the total value of Iran's unofficial trade with China exceeded \$46 million which was almost twenty times more than that of the previous decade (Bin-Huwaidin, pp. 155, 276).

By the early 1970s, following Britain's decision to extract its forces from the East of Suez, the Shah found wider scope to move Iran toward becoming the regional hegemon in the name of Persian nationalism. Besides, Richard Nixon's rise to power in the United States, whose doctrine was based heavily on the pursuit of peace and stability by means of American regional allies, encouraged the monarch to further assert Iran's candidacy for domination over the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. As a matter of fact, since the Shah believed that greater Washington's

engagement in the region would inflame Moscow, he increasingly sought to keep Americans out of the Persian Gulf, at that time (Ganji, 2006, p. 15). In May 1972, Nixon and his Secretary of State, Kissinger, visited Tehran to proclaim the U.S support of the Iranian king's ambitious regional aspirations by giving him the assurance that "he could buy any and every category of U.S conventional military equipment that he wanted" (Ramazani, 1990, p. 49). Reportedly, they gave also a green light to the Shah's high oil-price policy, which was designed to finance his massive military-economic modernization plans. Moreover, the American policy-makers sustained Tehran's strategy of supporting Kurdish rebels against the Iraqi Government that had severed its diplomatic relations with Iran since December 1971 and made a troublesome territorial claim over the border river of Arvand (Ganji, p. 12). This visit, in fact, led to an even closer alliance with the United States that the Iranian monarch had always wished.

Consequently, as a key element of Nixon's „Twin Pillars“ policy, the Shah, taking advantage of huge oil revenues following the energy shock of the early-1970s, embarked on a vast profligately military buildup. Until 1976, Iran purchased about US\$ 6 billion worth advanced American weaponry while had additional US\$ 12 billion on order (Ramazani, 1989, p. 203). Meanwhile, the USSR was arguably on high alert by Iran's enhanced influence in the Persian Gulf as the „deputy sheriff“ of the United States. However, the close friendship with America relieved the Iranian monarch's concerns about the possible military attack by the neighbors, and gave him more secure feeling in his foreign relations especially with the Soviet Union. In a press conference, was held in July 1975, the Shah, implicitly, warned the Soviets that in the case of war, Iranians will fight to the end and will destroy the country before giving it up to others (Afkhami, 2009, p. 308). "We are now strong enough not to be a Rahat-ul-holqum [a soft sweet] to be swallowed easily," stressed the Shah (p. 272).

The early-1970s developments influenced Iran's China policy and pushed Tehran toward reconciliation with Beijing. While the Shah's grandiose effort to project power into the region was endorsed by the PRC, the monarch began to see China as a potential balancer that could offer Iran an additional security leverage against the Soviet (Chubin & Zabih, 1974, p. 298). As Garver argues, getting closer to the PRC could make the Shah able to "play on Soviet fears by raising in Soviet minds a possible China-Iran anti-Soviet bloc backed by the United States" (2006, p. 33). As a matter of fact, the Soviet's growing penetration in Asia, Middle East, and Africa, through expanding security relations with India, Iraq, and Egypt, had posed quite similar strategic threats for both Iran and China, at the same time. Moscow also had gained a strong position in South Yemen, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan; the approach that had been labeled by the Chinese leadership as the „Socialist Imperialism“. Moreover, Tehran and Beijing shared same hostility to India as a leading, Soviet-ally, regional power, while instead they had understandable reasons for supporting Pakistan, whom had lost its East-wing, Bangladesh, in the war of 1971 with India. Indeed, a powerful and united Pakistan, serving as a good barrier

to India's threat, was in favor of both Iran and China to keep their borders safe and secure. Meanwhile, the Sino-U.S tactical rapprochement, which was basically aimed at the containment of Soviet, demonstrated that Beijing does not intend to pursue a hard-line communist approach anymore. It left no motives for Iran to stay distant from China. Beijing-Washington reconciliation had, in fact, an important implied message for the Shah who was purely following the American foreign policy initiatives and outlines; that is, the main barrier to relationship with China has been removed and enhanced relations with Beijing would not be at the cost of the ties with Washington (Garver, pp. 39-47).

Hence, although Iran was still in close relationship with Taiwan, the leaderships in both countries embarked on shaping "an uneasy alliance" against the Soviet influence (Dillon, 2004, p. 50). Now, in the king's perception, China had turned into "the largest Asian power" that the continuation of disengagement policy towards it would be irrational. "If you think in terms of peace and global equilibrium, how can one speak [of these goals] if 800 or 850 million Chinese, one quarter of humanity, is not involve?" maintained the Shah in an interview (Vaziri, 1995, p. 151). Seemingly, the Shah had understood that in order to realize his pan-Persian Great Civilization and making Iranas the guarantor of Persian Gulf stability who have the final say in the region, gaining China's support is inevitable.

Finally in 17 August 1971, just one month after the visit of U.S National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, to Beijing, Tehran announced its diplomatic recognition of China and suspended its relationship with the Republic of Taiwan; the act that was described by the Iranian government as an ordinary policy change. The Shah stressed this point on 19 October 1971 stating: "the relations between our two countries, whether in the economic or cultural fields, have been long-standing. It is natural that these re-established relations not only should be resumed to the level reached in the past, but should also be further developed" (Bin-Huwaidin, 2002, p. 156). Soon afterward, direct flights between the capitals of the two countries established. Iran started its crude oil export to China and also offered technical assistance for Chinese oil exploration and refining industries.

Meanwhile, the Shah began to use Beijing's card in domestic and foreign politics; in the internal arena, he attempted to employ the Chinese ideological influence within communist groups; the regime's most diehard opponents which had turned their back to Russian Leninism and shifted to Maoism since the Iran-Soviet reconciliation of the mid-1960s. By doing so, the Shah could neutralize a major source of support for his domestic opponents (Chubin & Zabih, pp. 75-76). With this in mind, one can say with no doubt that Tehran's decision to recognize the communist government in Beijing as the sole representative of China in the United Nations was, to some extent, motivated by the domestic concerns. In the instable regional context of the post-Arab-Israeli war of 1973 and growing rivalry between the

superpowers in the Persian Gulf, the Shah, aiming to organize an anti-Soviet alliance, embarked on expanding political and security relations with China that had emerged as a willing partner in this competition (Zabih, 1976, p. 347). The relationship between the two states even extended to nuclear transactions in the late-1970s (Afkhami, p. 358). Iran also expanded its economic-commercial ties with China, even though remained largely reliant on the West. As a result, the total volume of trade between the two countries increased considerably during 1970s; the value of Iran's export to China jumped from \$2 million in 1972 to \$83 million in 1978 while its imports from this country increased also from \$6 million to \$41 million, in the same period (IMF, 1979, p. 159).

The Sino-Iranian friendly relationship remained unchanged until the Shah's fall. From the mid-1970, while Iran's political unrest was intensified, many visits took place by the high ranked Chinese officials from Tehran. Chinese statesmen and media, widely and until the last moment, supported the Pahlavi regime which had faced with a revolutionary movement of nonelite masses against the Western-oriented policies of the Shah. Seemingly, such unwavering support was inspired from the Chinese government's overestimation of the stability of the Shah's royal dictatorship. Perhaps, no one in Beijing anticipated the fall of the Shah who was believed at the time to have the world's fifth strongest army under his control (Garver, p. 56).

CONCLUSION

By looking at Iran's foreign policy and relations with China under the Shah, one can say that it offers a good case study to test the reliability of the neoclassical realist theory of international relations. As this theory suggests, for understanding the way a state see and respond to its external environment, one must examine "how systemic pressures are translated through unit-level, intervening variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and domestic state structure" (Rose, p. 158). On this basis, this paper simultaneously examined the two kinds of correlated systemic and domestic factors that were assumed to play pivotal roles in shaping the Iranian foreign policy in general and its China policy in particular.

As it was argued, the Shah's foreign policy during its first phase (1950s-Mid-1960s), following the failure of Mossadegh's Negative Equilibrium movement, assumed a definite pro-Western course. Through these years, in the context of the quite inflexible bipolar political structure, Iran, evidently, turned into a client state that was highly sympathetic and obedient to the U.S, acting as a bulwark against the Soviet penetration into the region. Meanwhile, Iran's alliance with the United States and the PRC's alliance with Soviet Union in the climax of the Cold War prevented Tehran from establishing relations with the communist government in Beijing. During this period, considering the China as a less-developed country which carries no

weight in international politics, the Shah saw the PRC as an enemy who constantly tries to destabilize his rule through supporting his domestic leftist opponents.

The second phase (mid-1960s-1979) witnessed a substantial shift to disengagement from the inflexible, unambiguous pro-Western foreign policy. A number of systemic variables were involved in such a change; more importantly was Washington-Moscow détente coincided with Britain's withdrawal from the east of Suez that paved the way for the Shah to pursue a balance policy between the superpowers and demonstrate more independency in foreign relations. Meanwhile, the deterioration of relations between the PRC and Soviet Union, China's increased flexibility towards the outside world, and its reconciliation with the U.S affected Iran's China policy, as well. As a result, the hostility to China in the first phase, turned into diplomatic relationship in the second phase. Undoubtedly, along with the changing structural pressures, the Shah's changing perceptions of the international politics, Iran's relative power and position in the regional arena, and China's power played a key role in shaping the Iranian foreign policy and behavior toward the PRC. At this time, while China's joining the world's nuclear club gave additional weight to Beijing in the eyes of the Iranian monarch, the Shah began to see the PRC as potential counterbalance to the Soviet threat and an important state whose friendship could help Iran to assume its regional hegemony.

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