

## Assessing the Course of Annual Threats Imposed by the United States of America Upon Islamic Republic of Iran (2006 to 2011)

Mohamad Abbasi

Department of International Relation, Allame Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran  
[Mohamadabbasi2000@gmail.com](mailto:Mohamadabbasi2000@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** National Intelligence Management of America is a department established after event of September 11<sup>th</sup> and according to the definition presented by September 11<sup>th</sup> Select Commission, its duty is to manage national intelligence programs and to monitor organization involved in this regard. Pondering the Balance of Threat Theory, presented by Stephan M. Walt, the author attempts to provide an answer to “How was the course of threats proclaimed by National Intelligence Council of America against Islamic Republic of Iran from 2006 to 2011?” The first brainstormed answer (or it is better to be called “hypothesis”) is that the general course of annual threats proclaimed by National Intelligence Council of America from 2006 to 2011 tends to increase the perception of threats by Islamic Republic of Iran till 2009, compared to other threats existing; however it shows a decrease in 2010.

[Mohamad Abbasi. **Assessing the Course of Annual Threats Imposed by the United States of America Upon Islamic Republic of Iran (2006 to 2011)**. *Rep Opinion* 2018;10(6):59-63]. ISSN 1553-9873 (print); ISSN 2375-7205 (online). <http://www.sciencepub.net/report>. 9. doi: [10.7537/marsroj100618.09](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsroj100618.09).

**Key words:** content-based analysis, assessment, national intelligence management, Islamic Republic of Iran, threat perception.

### Introduction

The main question which should be posed while assessing security of an issue is: “Security of what is menaced, from what angle and how?” Accordingly, in the realm of strategic security policy making a question can be asked that “How the security of an issue is provided, by which organization and through what devices?” [1]. Studies conducted on national security all have analyzed national security based on the above question and accordingly provided some strategies. Benefiting from realistic attitude, Hans Morgenthau contends that the concern of national security is national interests which tangibly and militarily are under external threats and that in order to remove such threats, national government needs to reinforce its military power in such a way that the invader gets doubtful and even regretful (in case of invasion) [2]. Beside this standpoint, there are other schools and attitudes as well which analyze and interpret concern and source of threat and also confrontation methods along different lines.

Different theories of security, for sure, enjoy different points of view with regard to the concept of threat, its dimensions, and its assessment methods; as the result, there emerges many differing perspectives of threat management methods. While deeply reflecting on the Theory of Threat Equilibrium, by Stephan M. Walt, the current paper makes efforts to assess annual threats of America from 2006 to 2011 applying content-based analysis method.

In the article titled “*Alliance Formation & the Balance of World Power*” in 1985, Stephan M. Walt

states that the factor determinant of countries’ behavior in establishing alliance is the perception of a common threat posed by others. According to him, countries mostly try to establish equilibrium through formation of a alliance against the (perceived) threat. However, those countries which lack possibility of such alliance prefer to join the menace or to get in the same line with the menace. He believes that the countries do not seek equilibrium against the Power; rather all attempts made to establish equilibrium are against the perceived Threat.

However, threats from this standpoint are a function of four variables: power, adjacency, invasion competence, invasive tendencies. Assuming equality of other factors, any increase in one of the above factors makes other countries, big powers in particular, construe holder of these features as a menace and consequently take measures to control such threat through alliance and equilibrium. Accordingly, Walt presents 4 criteria for threat assessment which are: power (including area, population, wealth, economical power, and military might), geographical adjacency (the close the menace is, the more the threat gets serious), invasive competence (power of a country/ actor may have no invasive direction, rather it may enjoy stronger defensive trends) and invasive intentions (if the above mentioned criteria all are supposed positive, decision makers’ will may have no invasive nature, although their capabilities are invasive. In this case, potential for establishing alliance and equilibrium by the rivals increases) [3]. A typical instance of such cases is

nuclear capability of Islamic Republic of Iran. United States of America has intended to create international consensus and establish alliance between big powers against this project and its intentions have been achieved to the large extent. The greater a country's invasive perception of this capability is and the more invasive it interprets intentions of Islamic Republic's authorities and the less it is geographically distant from Iran, the more the likelihood of its involvement in powers alliance will be. That's why Israel is much closer to America in this regard, compared to other countries. Regarding the literature of international relations, although we are told in academic circles that the logic governing the behavior of big powers is neorealism, with respect to nuclear weapon we see that big powers no longer listen to the advice of the father of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz who contends an increase in the number of nuclear governments within the international system enhances its stability [4]. Waltz puts it, "As the history of unclear era reveals, nuclear weapon makes governments alerter. Wayward governments such as China and, Russia at past comply with the pattern as well.... Pacifism is the main feature of nuclear countries, unless with regard to small crises." Over the recent decades, sources of nuclear technology have been given to the countries which do not obtain within the power circle of western countries. However, some countries which started nuclear activities and made considerable progress were forced to leave nuclear activities (so-called "nuclear return") [5]. According to Kenneth Waltz, seven reasons stimulate a government to make attempts to gain nuclear weapon:

1. Big powers' imitating each other to get their hand to nuclear weapon.
2. Fear from nuclear attack of another country, for example Britain's fear of Soviet's nuclear invasion.
3. Having a nuclear enemy and at the same time lacking a nuclear ally like Pakistan.
4. Having a permanent enemy and inevitably having to live with such enemy, for example Israel.
5. For some countries, nuclear weapon is a more reliable and even cheaper alternative to engagement in weaponry contests.
6. Desiring to obtain nuclear weapon for invasive intentions .
7. Wishing to gain prestige through promoting its position in the international system [6]

Due to his methodological approach of positivism, Waltz ignores to the large extent the import of internal and even regional factors. Internal factors which affect to remain a non-nuclear country have been referred to by different authors. Ethel Solingen agrees that the more governments' tendencies to market and open economy, the less their

desire to gain nuclear weapon. The reason is that such countries' maintenance costs of nuclear technology and nuclear weapon are much more than those of countries enjoying introversive economical policies [7].

Second factor, adjacency, indicates the assumed proposition that "to exercise power has reverse relationship with geographical distance." Accordingly, adjacent countries are regarded as greater threat compared to distant countries. On this basis, military presence of America in Iraq which has become a member of the Persian Gulf's security group makes threatening capacity of America greater to Islamic Republic of Iran.

In terms of invasive power, the third factor, countries which benefit from specific military capabilities (such as dramatically mobile forces) and/or political capabilities (like penetrable and invasive potential notions targeting territory integration or political stability of other countries) present much more threat. That is why foreign minister of Egypt construes formation of Islamic sovereignty independent of the West Coast by Hamas as a threat to national security of Egypt on the part of Iran, for the reason that Gaza is located within boundaries of Egypt and at the same time Hamas, in the opinion of Egypt, is supported by Islamic Republic of Iran which its organizing ideology is revolutionary and mostly seeks to establish contact with Islam-oriented movements in Islamic communities rather than governments of such communities like Egypt.

According to the fourth factor viz. invasive aims and intentions, when countries assume that some other countries intend to invade they will be more likely to confront and establish equilibrium. Joining to establish alliance, according to Waltz, mostly happens in two ways: first, to establish equilibrium, that is to say, to confederate against the main source of danger or threat and second, to get in the same line with threat or namely to confederate with the source of threat. If the former is preferred then countries will experience more sense of security since menaces will encounter integrated equilibrator forces. Accordingly, what is of great significance in threat management or threat exploitation in order to create opportunities is the power of actor; and additionally what stimulates an alliance is the power of the menace. Waltz argues that exercising threat arouses much less eagerness to alliance than exercising power to confront such threat [8].

Mental space of game entails a kind of management upon threat perception. Stephan Walt, in his theory of "Threat Equilibrium," argues that actors do not react to the threats but to their perception of such threat. Level of the threat an actor brings about

depends not merely on its total power, but also on its geographical adjacency and invasive intentions [9].

With regard to perception or identification of threats, two major points of view can be examined. One of these two regards it possible to identify threat through introducing it by an actor that enjoys ability to secure (i.e. threat detector actor). For an example, if a non-governmental organization or media or paper has the ability to secure, then it is recognized as a "threat identifier actor." However, some individuals only recognize governments as "threat identifier actor" for introducing the threat not any other organizations.

Second standpoint regarding threat perception and detection is called "threat detection." From this perspective, process of identifying a threat is a professional one which is based on research studies and analysis as well as intelligence and security estimations. Therefore, to detect a threat security decision making actors play a critical role. On this basis, existence or nonexistence of a security threat, owing to its importance and impact on national security of each country, should be confirmed by evidence as well as solid reasoning and argumentation. Only securer actor is not entitled to detect threat since detection of a threat in the form of "proclamation and introduction package" is inefficient and valueless on its own. Threat detection perspective in identification of security threats is mostly reliant on objective threat variables. From first viewpoint a threat can be identified and recognized by a country through its senior officials' formal proclamation or confirmation that they construe such threat as a national security threat against their country. Whereas, from threat detection perspective detection is based on official security estimations done by responsible institutions and then followed by proclamation of the threat as a national security threat. In United States of America, identification of a threat involves a process which is often manifested in documents of national security strategy or other security documents such as those of antiterrorism or of vital infrastructures conservation. Having drawn up by the relevant institutions, these documents are signed by the highest political- security authorities, in particular by the President, then national security threat are identified accordingly. So, it can be concluded that threat detection first is subject to the security estimations; however for a threat to be recognized it needs to be proclaimed by high rank security officials of the country. In the United States, there is another process as well. Not only are security threats identified and proclaimed by high rank officials based on the prior process, but security institutions of America also take measures to prepare some security estimations which need not to be confirmed by high rank political-

security authorities. Of such estimations, we can point to the annual threat assessment of United States conducted by National Intelligence Management of America. National Intelligence Council is a analyzing organization that serves as a Long and Short Term Strategic Decisions Center under supervision of Central Intelligence Director. Assessments of national intelligence are of the strongest written analyses of Central Intelligence Director which are related to national security issues. National intelligence assessments consist of detained analyses of intelligence community that are carried out according to the probable course of coming incidents. National Intelligence Council is obliged to provide clear, precise and detailed intelligence for policy makers [10]. In February of every year National Intelligence Director, together with directors of CIA, DIA, and FBI and also deputy of the Minister of the Interior in intelligence and research affairs, attends the Senate Select Commission and presents annual threat assessment. It is done because the main responsibility of supervision and monitoring intelligence lies with two committees on intelligence. According to the law, the President is responsible for arranging the course of publicity to intelligence committees over intelligence activities including predicted activities. Furthermore, committees need to get informed of clandestine operation projects of the President and also of the importance intelligence failures.

a. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

b. The House of Representatives Select Permanent Committee on Intelligence [11].

The author makes attempts to find an answer to "How was the course of threats proclaimed by National Intelligence Council of America against Islamic Republic of Iran from 2006 to 2011?" Having assessed annual threat of America in the years 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011, the author comes up with an answer (or it's better to be called "hypothesis") that the general course of annual threats proclaimed by National Intelligence Council of America from 2006 to 2011 indicates an increase in the threat perception by Islamic Republic of Iran, compared to other threats existing posed. It is evident that these assessments are closely related to whether threats are construed as security threats or not. Being aware of the course of assessments can be of great help to prevention of security threats occurrence or at the time of security threat occurrence, that is to say, such awareness help a country to effectively prevent security threats or manage it in time.

Statistical community: the entire annual assessments of the Director of American National Intelligence at hand from 2006 to 2011 which have

been presented by National Intelligence Director in an unclassified manner during sessions of the Senate.

**Samples community:** according to the conducted examination, the author found 7 cases of annual assessments from 2006 to 2011 [12]. Owing to the limited number of samples, sample community was selected inclusively and matched the statistical community. Therefore, there was no need to apply statistical formula for sampling.

**Content-based analysis Method:**

This method is based on the notion that the attention mass media pay to social, political, commercial and economical events and the amount of publicity over these events reveal level of their significance. Therefore, by periodic measurement of changes happening in factors such as the volume occupied in columns of newspapers, the time allocated to the event on TV and radio, and number of news presented on internet, predictors are able to assess nature, amount and direction of a specific change. Results of this technique are often presented quantitatively. However, they are only used for qualitative analysis. Accordingly, in this research the author applies content-based analysis method as well [13].

**Analysis unit:** analysis unit of the study is word. Counting number of words or symbols is one of the most widespread ways utilized in content-based analysis. To count words, this study exploits word-counter computer software since computers are capable of conducting numerous counting processes at high pace and with perfect reliability [14].

**General approach:** first period of presidency of Mr. Ahmadinejad was contemporaneous with presidency of George Walker Bush in America. On January 2009, the presidency of was transferred to Barack Obama; however, Mr. Ahmadinejad started second period of his presidency from August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Quantitatively examining volume of annual assessments reveals that the course of assessment volume has had a rising trend from 2006 to 2010, and then it has stabilized and eventually taken a falling trend.

**Position of Iran and other target countries within assessment reports**

In statistical examination presented at the end of the research it is observed that till 2009 there has been an increasing trend of representing Iran as a threat. However, the threat supposedly posed by Iran\_ when compared to that of other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan where United States was intensely involved in the policy of antiterrorism\_ has gained considerably more attention from 2006 to 2009 in such a way that it cannot be compared even with North Korea, despite its nuclear experiments. Only in 2010 and 2011 due to presence of democrats

in the White House with their slogan of “Change”, Iran experienced a decrease in invasive approach toward itself. In these years, menacing image of Iran has paled to some extent. Of course, this change of trend has been seen toward all target countries, although Iran has received much more of this change, compared to other countries.

As the result of examination carried out, 5 common idiomatic words (formal and informal) which are indicative of willingness to establish relationship and to start negotiation and interaction have been elicited (shown in the above table) and reveal the gap between republicans and democrats. In other words, we see more reluctance to start negotiations or interaction with Iran during the previous period.

For the first time in the Obama’s period of presidency, name of Al-Qaeda was mentioned 71 times within the documents of annual threat assessment i.e. more than that of Iran (60 times). From 2006 to 2009, Iran gained the highest frequency and was the holder of record amongst target countries of the U.S and groups of America’ opponents.

In general, while subject-matter examining of the key words related to terror, terrorism, weapons, nuclear weapons, challenge, conflict, etc, the rising trend continues to be sustained up to 2009. And in 2010 frequency of all key words with the exception of terrorism and riot shows a decrease (refer to the final tables).

## Conclusion

In today’s world, intelligence is recognized not only as one of the main resources and assets but it also regarded as a device for effective management of other resources and assets (such as financial resources, manpower, etc). Therefore, intelligence has got special significance and value. However, this value is realizable and achievable only if intelligence is obtained at the appropriate time, with high quality and acceptable security. To assess the future, three approaches are often taken:

- Norm-based or prescribed approach: What future has to be build?
- Analytic approach: What are the possibilities of the future to be built?
- Image making approach: How is future?

Annual global threat assessment of the United States of America that is annually presented in February to the permanent select committee of the White House mostly deals with imagery approach which has a solid relationship with threat perception. The present study found that the trend of threat perception by Iran within the official structure of the U.S. had a rise from 2006 to 2009 and that from 2010 on it started to take an opposite trend to return and decrease. Presence of neo-conservatives in the

executive decision making system of America playing the most affecting part in foreign policy of the U.S. deepened the existing crisis between Iran and America from 2006 to 2009. By posing discussions about Islam and Christianity as well as the concepts of good and evil, neo-conservatives exacerbated political difference of Iran and America into an intense ideological one in such a way that Iran was introduced as the “Axis of Evil” and America as the “Axis of Good.” Continuation of the situation not only turned discrepancy of both countries’ foreign policy into a matter of identity but it also brought that discrepancy to an ideological level. And finally it gave opportunity to the authorities of the U.S. to pose following claims all of which were attributed to Iran within the annual threat assessment:

- Iran supports some groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Crusade, and Peoples’ Front for Liberation of Palestine, Lebanon Hezbollah.
- Opposition to the Middle East Peace.
- Not to recognize Israel and not to consider it legitimate as a country.
- Opposition to America’s mediation in peace agreements between Israel and Palestine or Israel and Syria .
- To take measures to obtain technology, material and expertise necessary to develop nuclear, chemical and microbial weapons and also to achieve missile facilities to apply these weapons.
- The increased number of violation of human rights in Iran; and also not to pay attention to increasing request for democracy inside and outside the country

Under these conditions, any issue or measure would only deepen the criticality of the situation. In the governance period of Gorge Walker Bush (from 2006 to 2009), image making approach toward Iran threat takes a rising trend; however, documents of National Intelligence showed a weak tendency toward negotiation but strong one to threat. Confrontational approach taken by the U.S. against Iran could not be

even compared to that taken against other countries where America has been involved in antiterrorism there and called them as “terrorists’ safe haven” or that against countries which are regarded as “failed state.” The United States of America has unbelievably highlighted Iran threat. Although this course became stable and then took a falling trend during the governance of democrats and that we can see the priority of threat has been given to Afghanistan and Al Qaeda in Obama’s period, still the general approach toward image making Iran threat is considerable, compared to other target countries and to opposing supranational groups of America (with the exception of Afghanistan and Al Qaeda), which indicates continuity of confrontational approach in the foreign policy of America toward Iran.

**Corresponding Author:**

Mohamad Abbasi

Department of International Relation, Allame Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran

[Mohamadabbasi2000@gmail.com](mailto:Mohamadabbasi2000@gmail.com)

**Reference:**

1. Hanover, J. Martin. *New face of security in the Middle East*. Translated by Ghadir Nasri, Tehran, Strategic Studies Research Center, 1994, p. 19.
2. Hans, J. Morgenthau. *Policy among nations*. Translated by Homeira Moshirzadeh, Tehran, Political & International Studies Office, p. 154.
3. Richard, Little, *Changes in theories of balance of power*, translated by Gholamreza Changizadeh, Tehran, Tehran Contemporary Abrar Institute, p. 31-7.
5. Abbasi, Mohammad, *Intelligence commalliance of United States of America in one glance*. Tehran, Farabi Applied Studies Research Center, 2006, p. 12 & 30.
6. Houlst.

6/25/2018