

Radosław FIEDLER

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Hard power dismisses soft power – the United States' relations with the Iranian Islamic Republic in the shadow of the nuclear program

Abstract: In the paper a correlation between hard and soft policy in relations between Iran and US is shown. These two states share a negative heritage (hostage crisis, US interference in Iranian politics, terrorism and nuclear program). Washington has decided to use hard policy methods against Iran, through numerous sanctions, without any effect in changing Iranian behaviour. The ignored sphere of soft policy is presented in the article, upon which America and Iran could achieve much more.

Key words: hard power, soft power, United States, Iran, sanctions, nuclear program, terrorism

This article examines the role of hard power in relations between United States and Iran. For US perceptions of Iran the dominant narrative is of an irresponsible state locked in a fundamentalist ideology, a sponsor of terrorism with dangerous nuclear ambitions. For Iran's government, the perception of the US is of an imperial state with an aggressive policy towards Iran, concentrated on exploiting the resources of the Middle East and an uncritical supporter of Israel. Moreover, for Tehran the US is obsessed with consumption, with no attachment to deeper values.

In the article several research topics will be analysed:

- The correlation between hard and soft power in state policy;
- The reasons for difficulties in relations between Iran and the United States;
- The dominance of hard power in United States policy towards Iran;
- Missed opportunities and United States neglect of soft power in its policy towards Iran.

Following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, relations between Washington and Tehran have been in permanent crisis. Both governments seem uninterested in finding a positive solution and ceasing the accusations and suspicion towards each other. For Tehran, the US is a threat to the continuity of its political system, because of Washington's desire for regime change in Iran. In the last decade, another argument is the Western opposition to Iran pursuing its nuclear program. In spite of their differences, Iran and the US could have similar interests: stabilising Afghanistan, preventing the disintegration of Syria and Iraq and generally stability for the Middle East.

The correlation between hard and soft power in state policy

Power is not a subtle means in international politics. It can be used in different ways, and – if used excessively – giving the opposite effect to that desired. Through the ages the

concept of power has changed its resources from population, military and economy to technology and qualified cadres. In the 18th century it was much easier to measure power, as it was military, territorial and population based. The population was critical, because it provided taxes and recruitment for infantry (Nye, 2004, p. 4). Power at that time was understood rather narrowly in terms of command and coercion. Related to the phenomenon of power was the balance of power. States tried with varying success to reach an equilibrium. During the cold war, the two superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union were using their nuclear arsenals to balancing each other as power assets, and the fear of an enormous nuclear war. There was the balance of mutually assured destruction in the case of a nuclear war. Since the cold war, military power has been overtaken by the economy, financial assets, technological infrastructure, attractiveness for investment and other different issues not related with the military sector. The concept of soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. According to Joseph Nye's definition, soft power in every country stems from three sources: culture (sectors which are attractive to others), political values (when they are consistent with their expectations at home and overseas), and foreign policy, when seen as legitimate and moral (Nye, 2004). The people of the world still believe that the USA is the best place to visit, to live in, and to prosper. Specifically, a country's hard power may include its economic and military power, while its soft power lies in its ideology, cultural and political values and the ability to form international norms and institutions.

In an article published in "Foreign Affairs", *Power and Interdependence in the Information Age*, the concepts of hard power and soft power have been further defined (Keohane and Nye, 1998). Hard power is the power to force someone, through threat or reward, to do something unwillingly. In other words, the application of hard power is to seduce with economic reward or to threaten with military power. Instead of the use of carrot and stick, the soft power in foreign policy is the ability of one country to indirectly influence other countries to follow through the attractiveness of its political and cultural values. In the information age, soft power is the power of attraction. In the book *The Paradox of American Power-Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, Nye criticised US unilateral policy and hegemonic accents in dealing with international challenges (Nye, 2002).

Power, thus divided into two segments, hard and soft, requires a balance to be maintained between them. Relying only on hard power seems to bring faster effects, but these often turn out to be the opposite of what was desired. Soft power is a more nuanced and difficult method in achieving the desired results. Soft power needs time, but its results seem to be more lasting and less harmful.

The reasons for problems and divisions in the difficult Iran-US relations

Before the Islamic revolution, Iran's last monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, viewed the United States as an essential partner, not in only maintaining his rule over Iran but also in protecting the Middle East from communism and radical pan-Arabism. In Kissinger's words: "on all major international issues, the policies of the United States and the policies of Iran have been parallel and therefore mutually reinforcing." According to

his view of the Shah, “he was that rarest of leaders; an unconditional ally and one whose understanding of the world situation enhanced our own” (Bill, 1980, p. 201). Before 1979, Iran was considered by the US to be the main pillar of the ‘two pillar’ policy in the Persian Gulf, the other, of course, being Saudi Arabia. Over the decades of cold war, the United States had three principal aims in pursuing its policy in the Middle East: 1. containment of the Soviet Union – with Iran as a significant border state; 2. security of the oil route and later flow of petro dollars to the United States and its allies; 3. preservation of the State of Israel (Lubna, 2008, p. 49).

America’s increased influence in Iran began in 1953. At that time, the US helped to put the Shah back on his throne, with a CIA-staged coup against the prime minister of Iran, Mohammed Mosaddeq. The US-backed shah of Iran, Pahlavi, became increasingly unpopular. However, for a quarter of a century the US enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the Shah, who was overtly bent on an alliance with the United States. His regime was considered to be oppressive, autocratic, and pro-Western. From the Iranian society’s perspective the United States was treated as oppressive colonial power, like Russia or Great Britain before them. In the 1960s anti-Western attitudes also had ideological features. A secular intellectual named Jala Al-e Ahmad popularised the term *gharbzadegi*, which can be translated as “Westoxification” or “Westamination” or “Euromania”. His works were an expression of rage, and an attack on the West in all its aspects (Hanson, 1983, pp. 1–23). Such views were followed also by the fundamentalists. However, it was not the secular intellectuals but Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who was the only leader capable of mobilising the great mass of the people. Khomeini was an ardent revolutionary leader, passionately arguing for the overthrow of the Shah (in achieving this aim no compromise was possible), who possessed an implacable anti-Americanism. Khomeini considered, in his Manichean worldview, that the United States, along with Israel and also the Soviet Union, was the source of evil in the world.

The Islamic revolution in Iran brought the fall of the Shah of Iran, and for the United States meant losing an important regional ally and a rising fundamentalist wave of anti-Americanism. In the revolutionary turmoil, the fundamentalists led by Ayatollah Khomeini were the most visible players on the new political scene. Iran’s revolution enabled the Islamic clergy to seize control of all political, judicial, educational and media institutions and systematically suppress any opposition. The taking of American hostages at the US embassy in Tehran by followers of the Islamic fundamentalists was perfectly chosen. The hostage crisis, which lasted for 444 days, was destructive for the strained and difficult American and Iranian relations following the Islamic revolution. The traumatic and humiliating crisis for the US, was for the fundamentalists a propaganda success and a mobilising factor for imposing a theocracy in Iran and spreading their revolutionary idea throughout the Islamic world. As Kenneth Pollack noted: “[t]he hostage crisis has left a terrible scar on the American psyche. [...] We never discuss it openly, but the residual anger that so many Americans feel toward Iran for those 444 days has coloured every decision made about Iran ever since” (Pollack, 2004, p. 172).

Washington accuses Tehran of sponsoring terrorism, supporting such groups as Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran and Hezbollah have a deep and complex relationship. Of all Iran’s attempts to export the Islamic revolution, Hezbollah is by far the most successful. Iranian organisational support was essential to the foundation and later

effectiveness of Hezbollah. The organisation has been an effective proxy for Iran. In Washington's arguments on Iran's role in sponsoring terrorist activity, Iran had not only prior knowledge about Hezbollah's planned attacks but also was partly involved in them, such as the attacks on US marines in Beirut in 1983, the 1988 kidnapping and murder of Colonel William Higgins, a US Marine involved in a UN observer mission in Lebanon, and the 1992 and 1994 bombings of Jewish cultural institutions in Argentina (Thrall, 2007). US officials claimed Iran supported the group behind the 1996 truck bombing of Khobar Towers, a US military base in Saudi Arabia, which killed nineteen US servicemen. Iran still has a price on the head of the Indian-born British novelist Salman Rushdie, for what Iranian leaders call blasphemous writings about Islam in his 1989 novel *The Satanic Verses* (Fiedler, 2008, p 184).

The last difficulty, and the greatest obstacle in relations between Tehran and Washington, is the Iranian nuclear program. Although Iran is a signatory of the NPT regime and signed an Additional Protocol for broader inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) there are several questions about the nature of their nuclear program. The crisis erupted in August 2002 when during a press conference the Mujaheddin Khalq Organisation, a leading opposition group in Tehran, revealed the existence of two unknown nuclear sites, a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and heavy water facility in Arak. In May 2006, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1696 endorsing an offer of diplomatic and economic incentives and demanding that Iran suspend all uranium enrichment programs by August 31. Thereafter, other resolutions were adopted, such as 1737, 1747, 1803, 1835 and 1929. These resolutions imposed sanctions on Iran, but the question of whether Iran will acquire nuclear weapon is still unresolved. Iran claims it is only pursuing a civil nuclear program.

Iran's nuclear program is a giant apparatus that has three main components: a uranium extraction facility in Saghand, uranium enrichment facilities centred in Natanz, and a heavy water production plant in Arak. As Mohammad Mohaddessin notes, in Iran there are three types of nuclear sites: 1. open sites such as Busher, under the monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency; 2. secret sites, such as the uranium enrichment plant in Natanz, heavy water production plant in Arak and the uranium mining project in Saghand; 3. smaller, more disperse sites used for uranium enrichment. These sites not only act as complementary to the principal sites such as Natanz. They will ensure the continuation of enriched uranium production in the event of an air attack (Mohaddessin, 2004, pp. 26–42). There are several questions and doubts about Iran's nuclear intentions. 1. If it is only for civil purposes – why is the program's infrastructure so broad and multi-dimensional? 2. How can they justify enrichment activity? In energy terms, Iran does not currently possess a credible civil rationale for this additional enrichment work (Bowen, Brewer 2011, p. 928). 3. What about covered sites such as Frodow, which finally was declared for IAEA inspection? Iran is most probably pursuing a parallel nuclear program, partly also in secret sites. For Israel, a close ally of the United States, Iran's nuclear ambitions are perceived not only as a threat to the existence of the Israeli state, but Israeli planners also worry that Iran could extend its nuclear deterrence over anti-Israeli groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which could diminish Israel's military superiority and constrain its freedom of action (Halevi, Oren, 2007). Saudi Arabia, an important US ally, sees Iran's nuclear program as a challenge for the security balance in the region. The Islamic

Republic's animosity toward the Arab monarchies is rooted in the historic Persian-Arab rivalry and Tehran's ideology. Once Iran has acquired nuclear weapons, that fact is highly likely to provoke a potentially unstoppable nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

From the Iranian perspective, a nuclear capacity would serve as a deterrent to external threats and is a matter of national pride. The primary purpose of Iran's nuclear weapons would be to deter an American and/or Israeli attack against Iran, not to destroy Israel. Iran's nuclear program is supported by most Iranians. Tehran has several arguments in favour of its nuclear program. 1. In 1983, during Iraqi-Iranian war, Iraq attacked Iran using chemical weapons. The international community did not react properly and Iranian appeals were treated with scepticism and nonchalance. Iran was largely isolated during the war, in part because of the Islamic Republic's anti-Western stance, its holding of US Embassy personnel as hostages, and its attempts to export the Iranian revolution to surrounding countries. Most Western nations and world powers, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union, supported the Iraqi military (Hiro, 1991). For Iran, one of the most important lessons from the war may have been the need for military self-sufficiency. 2. Iraqi plans in the 1990s for developing weapons of mass destruction. 3. The US's more visible presence and involvement in the Persian Gulf since 1990 and the regime change in Iraq in 2003. 4. From Tehran's perspective, nuclear weapons could serve as the ultimate form of deterrence against all potential adversaries and preserving the existence of the regime also on the internal stage.

More stick than carrot. Dominance of hard power in Washington's policy toward Tehran

The hostage crisis from 1979–1981 (52 American diplomats were taken hostage on November 4, 1979) started a long-lasting policy of imposing sanctions on Iran. Carter's administration decided to freeze all assets of the government of Iran in the United States and under the control of US banks, businesses and individuals outside the United States. This action, and related measures taken later, deprived Iran of the use of more than \$12 billion in bank deposits, gold and other property (Fayazmanesh, 2008, p. 13). Washington also cut off most export and other transactions between the United States and Iran.

American strategy towards Iran, especially after the hostage crisis, was dominated by isolating Iran and subverting its theocratic regime. Washington in the 1980s concentrated on three aims: 1. weakening and finally bringing about the downfall of Iran's theocratic regime; 2. diminishing Iran's revolutionary influence on the Middle East; 3. keeping a military balance in the Iraq-Iran war. From 1984 onward Washington imposed numerous sanctions and measures on Iran, concentrated on weakening Iran's military and economical potential.

US sanctions and other actions aimed in Iran in chronological order (Kattan, 2013).

In 1984, the US State Department put Iran on the 'terrorism list', which retroactively triggered bans on US-Iran transactions, including bans on arms sales, export of dual-use technologies, and foreign assistance. In 1996, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act imposed an additional restriction that required the US to vote

against international loans to Iran and to withhold foreign aid to any country selling arms to Iran.

- **Executive Order 12613 (1987): Import Ban.** Bans the import of Iranian goods into the United States.
- **Executive Order 12957 (1995): Iran as extraordinary security threat:** President Clinton declares Iran an extraordinary national security threat and declares a national emergency to deal with it. Every March since 1995, the President renews the declaration of the state of emergency that allows the President to regulate trade with countries considered an extraordinary threat.
- **Executive Order 12959 (1995): Trade Ban:** Expands on the 1987 import ban. It places a comprehensive ban, which is still in place, on US trade with, and investment in, Iran. Food and medical products are exempt.
- **Iran & Libya Sanctions Act of 1996: Sanctions Investment in Iran's Energy Sector:** Later renamed simply the Iran Sanctions Act, this act is one of the core ones in the current sanctions regime. It is intended to choke Iran's energy market by sanctioning entities who invest more than \$20 million in Iranian energy. The sanctions provisioned in this act only terminate in their entirety when Iran is certified to have ceased its efforts to acquire WMD and to no longer pose a significant threat to the US and its allies, and when Iran is removed from the list of terrorism sponsors.
- **Executive Order 13059 (1997): Closing Trade Loopholes with Third Parties:** Prevents US companies from knowingly exporting goods to a third country that will eventually go to Iran.
- **Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000:** Sanctions foreign individuals or corporations that help Iran with WMD development.
- **Executive Order 13224 (2001): Sanctioning Terrorism Supporters:** Authorises the president to freeze the assets of and bar American financial transactions with entities that support terrorism. The order was primarily intended to target entities aiding al-Qaeda, but increasingly became a way to target Iranian firms and other entities.
- **Executive Order 13382 (2005): Sanctioning WMD Proliferators:** Authorises the president to freeze the assets of entities that support WMD proliferators, and to bar those entities' financial transactions with American entities.
- **U-Turn transactions (2006):** The Treasury department banned 'U-turn transactions', or indirect transactions with banks acting on behalf of Iran's Bank Saderat, due to the bank's alleged involvement with Hezbollah. In 2008, this restriction was extended to all Iranian banks.
- **Iran Freedom and Support Act (2006): Democracy Promotion in Iran:** Authorises US financial assistance to pro-democracy and human rights organisations in Iran.
- **Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA): Targeting Iran's Energy & Financial Sectors:** Expands previous energy sanctions by sanctioning the sale of gasoline and gasoline production equipment to Iran. Also expands the sanctions of the 1996 Iran Sanctions Act, sanctions banks that transact with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and blacklists individuals suspected of being involved with human rights abuses related to the June 2009 presidential elections in Iran.

- **Executive Order 13572 (2011):** Blocks the property of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for its involvement with human rights abuses in Syria.
- **Executive Order 13590 (2011):** Targeting Iran's Energy Sector: Further amends the Iran Sanctions Act to sanction foreign firms that provide Iran with equipment or services that could enhance its oil, gas or petrochemical sector.
- **USA Patriot Act, Section 311 (2011):** Under Section 311 of the USA Patriot Act, the Department of the Treasury designates Iran as a money laundering concern, which limits Iranian banks' access to the US financial sector.
- **National Defence Authorisation Act of 2012 (2011):** Imposes sanctions on foreign banks that conduct transactions with Iran's Central Bank. Exemptions can be issued to banks whose parent countries are certified to have "significantly reduced" their purchases of Iranian oil.
- **Executive Order 13599 (2012): Freezing Iran's Central Bank:** Expands on the 2012 NDAA to block all property of the Iranian government and Iranian financial institutions, including the Iranian Central Bank.
- **Executive Order 13606 (2012): Human Rights Violations Through Information Technology:** Sanctions those who aid the regimes in Iran and Syria to carry out human rights abuses through network disruptions, monitoring, and other uses of information technology.
- **Executive Order 13622 (2012):** Sanctions foreign financial institutions who have purchased oil, petroleum, or petrochemical products from Iran. Previously, purchasing oil and natural gas from Iran were not violations of existing sanctions law.
- **Iran Threat Reduction Act (August 2012):** Expands existing sanctions on foreign banks dealing with Iran's energy sectors, as well as on entities involved with human rights abuses in Iran.
- **Executive Order 13628 – October 9, 2012:** Blocks the property of entities determined to be involved with censorship within Iran.
- **National Defence Authorisation Act of 2013 (November 2012):** Sanctions entities providing goods and services to Iran's energy, shipbuilding, shipping, and port sectors, as well as entities who provide precious or semi-precious metals to Iran.

Analysing the impact of the above listed sanctions – their aim is not only to weaken the military and economic potential of Iran but also finally bringing about a regime change. In the 1990s, the US adopted a policy known as 'dual containment' of Iraq and Iran. As Kenneth M. Pollack observed, "[t]he central aim of the Iranian segment of dual containment was merely to constrain Iran's ability to make trouble in the Middle East" (Pollack, 2004, p. 263). Since 2000, the US and Iran's relationship has been extremely antagonistic. It was at an all time low since the conflict between them started. The US placed Iran in the club of the 'Axis of Evil' states that had to be contained to secure the world. For the G. W. Bush administration, influenced by neoconservatives, Iran was perceived as a rogue state sponsoring terrorism and illegally pursuing a military nuclear program. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, dual containment was changed to isolating Iran. Practically, this policy has not changed – the main focus is on isolating Iran, also through internationally imposed sanctions aimed at Tehran's nuclear program. Iran's controversial nuclear program was discussed in the United Nation's Security Council and as a re-

sult several sanctions were imposed. The most far-reaching sanction is UNSCR 1929. Apart from a ban on the sale of heavy weapons and missile technology, it authorises countries to inspect all Iranian cargo if it is suspected of carrying WMD-related materials, imposes financial sanctions on entities working with the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (a government company suspected of financing WMD development) and sanctions additional Iranian entities (Kattan, 2013). In 2012, the European Union, which several years earlier tended to opt for a so-called 'critical dialogue' came to share Washington's view that Iran is pursuing a course of acquisition of nuclear weapons. The most painful sanction for the Iranian economy is the EU oil embargo against Iran. In addition, the EU has banned insurance for oil shipments from Iran, banned trade with Iran in precious metals, and froze the assets of Iran's Central Bank and several other entities.

Imposing even more harmful sanctions can have a limited effect. The Iraq example should be studied more. The Iraqi economy crippled by UNSCR sanctions and their devastating effects on Iraqis themselves, did not bring about regime change. The nuclear program, as mentioned above, is a matter of national pride. Iran claims it needs low enriched uranium for developing a program for civil purposes. As George Perkovich concludes, "[i]t is too politically naive to expect Iran to give up its nuclear program" (Perkovich, 2003, p. 2).

It is a deadlock – for the US and EU it is difficult to withdraw from the policy of sanctions and for Iran it is difficult to resign from the uranium enrichment process. The policy should be measured by its effectiveness. In both examples, the West and Iran should redefine their policies to overcome the crisis.

Missed opportunities and neglected soft power in the US's policy towards Iran

US soft power could have more effect on Iranian society than a hard policy and naming Iran as a rogue state. Although the majority of Iranians get their information on the US from the state media, they can also access other sources of information such as the Internet and satellite television. American cultural influence and admiration of American achievements generally creates a positive image of the United States (Elson, Nader, 2011). Iranians are more positive about the US than any other state in the Middle East, despite the officially nonexistent relations between Tehran and Washington.

After nearly twenty years of the Iranian revolution both sides have missed opportunities: Tehran's and Washington's opportunity for rapprochement was the first term of Muhammad Khatami's presidency. In the late 1990s, this Iranian president and reformist presented a new approach to the West later called a 'dialogue of civilisations'. Khatami noticed some valuable aspects of the Western political heritage, such as pluralism and democracy. In his famous January 1998 interview he praised "the great American people" and a civilisation that rested "upon vision, thinking, and the manner of puritans who desired a system which combined the worship of God with human dignity and freedom." As Ray Takeyh observed, "Khatami's enterprising diplomacy fell victim to the Iranian hard liners' hostility and to American indifference" (Takeyh, 2007, p. 113). Also Washington

was suspicious of Khatami's intentions and did not answer his declarations with bolder gestures. However, K. M. Pollack commented that the US made several gestures, such as liberalising visas, sending wrestlers and other cultural exchanges, putting the MEK on the terrorism list and taking Iran off the counternarcotics list, but probably the reformist camp in Iran needed more visible gestures to strengthen their position in their confrontation with the hardliners (Pollack, 2005, p. 337).

The next chance for starting rapprochement was the spontaneous and sympathetic Iranian reaction after 9/11. There were spontaneous candlelight vigils in Tehran – noticeably the only state in the Middle East to do so. The Iranian government strongly condemned terrorism. Iran declared to help the American military operation (Enduring Freedom) aimed at the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Tehran provided considerable assistance and offered to allow American transport aircraft to start from airfields in eastern Iran to conduct operations in the western part of Afghanistan. It provided intelligence data on Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Iranians also agreed to perform search and rescue missions for downed American airmen who crashed over Iran (Pollack, 2005, p. 346).

In spite of visible collaboration in Afghanistan, unfortunately it did not contribute to further rapprochement. The Karine A incident, with a ship seized by Israeli commandos with 50 tonnes of weapons on board, in January 2002, ended this tactical collaboration. The weapons were being smuggled to the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli authorities claimed they were Iranian weapons on board on Karine A (Whitaker, 2002). In his famous *State of the Union Address* on January 29, 2002, President Bush called Iran, Iraq and North Korea an "axis of evil". With new energy Washington returned to a pattern of a hard policy towards Iran.

Tehran, encircled by US forces and military bases in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan, also returned to the old pattern, portraying the US as an ugly imperialistic state (a Great Satan) which threatens Iran and its revolutionary achievements. In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came into office determined to restore revolutionary sentiments. As president, he put the nuclear program forward as a symbol of national pride. He was the first Iranian president who in a propagandistic manner used the nuclear program as a symbol of power, modernity and declared Iran's right to develop it undeniable. Ahmadinejad's provocative declarations on the Holocaust and threats to wipe Israel off the map, and the alleged pursuit of the nuclear program have given cause for serious international concern (Akbarzadeh, 2005, pp. 25–38).

President Barack Obama inherited a difficult challenge in Iran from his predecessor. As a democratic candidate, he planned talks with Iran without pre-conditions. When he became US president, he stepped out with an important gesture, giving a message to the people of Iran on YouTube on the occasion of the Iranian New Year. In April 2009, president Obama announced an address in Prague that, in trying to stem Iran's nuclear arms efforts, his administration would "seek engagement with Iran based on mutual interests and mutual respect" (Akbarzadeh, 2011, pp. 68–70). As mentioned earlier, even a symbolic and bold gesture would not be enough to break the prevailing hard policy in reciprocal relations.

President Ahmadinejad's policy and the controversies surrounding the presidential elections in Iran in 2009 was not a good backdrop to starting negotiations on the nuclear

issue with Washington. Critics of the Obama administration's policy towards Iran claimed that Washington was failing to support the opposition in Iran through soft power (Lagon, 2011).

Even Washington prefers real politics (in seeking a deal with the Iranian authorities on their nuclear program) to supporting the democratic opposition. Iranian dissidents fear they may be used as a bargaining chip in a game of *realpolitik* between Tehran and Washington. This fear seemed very real in June 2009, as those affiliated with the Green movement chanted: "Obama, are you with us or with the regime?" (Worth, 2009).

Although at the beginning president Obama declared his readiness for direct talks with Tehran on the nuclear problems, Obama's administration, like their predecessors, placed conditions on opening talks with Iran. Additional revelations about a clandestine nuclear facility near Qom, while Iran refused to subject its nuclear program to the full inspection regime of the IAEA and subsequent missile tests (capable of reaching Israel and US military bases in the Middle East) delivered a further blow to the policy of engagement (Sanger, Broad, 2010). A new crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear program began and the US gained support for hard policy (sanctions) in the UN Security Council and in the European Union. An image of Iran's authorities as engaging in deception and misleading statements regarding the nuclear policy was also shared by most member states of the EU.

In June 2013, a new president, Hassan Rouhani, was elected in Iran. After eight years of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency, characterised by a poor climate for dialogue, there is a chance for a change from a hard to a soft power policy. As Mahmoud Reza Golshanpazhooh, an Iranian scholar, noted – despite the problems and dominance of hard power, there are several contributing factors which can help in improving reciprocal relations. As he admits "the general atmosphere has changed, both inside Iran and with regard to international attitudes toward Iran" (Golshanpazhooh, 2013).

In recent months, Iran's nuclear program is not the only problem, besides the more and more bloody and intensive civil war in Syria with the use of forbidden chemical weapons. Iran supports the Bashar el Assad regime. In the case of the US military intervention, it is still not probable that we will see an outbreak of hard policy between Tehran and Washington. Another challenge is of Israeli bombardment aimed at Iran's nuclear sites. Although there are real threats and potential crises, Iran and the US can change hostile relations into more practical and effective ones, for example in stabilising Afghanistan after the NATO withdrawal and combating drug exports from there. Iranians value American virtues and ideas. Some of them, through a reasonable soft policy, can achieve more than relying only on hard policy.

Conclusions

Since 1979, hard power has dominated in relations between Tehran and Washington. During the last three decades and more there have been several opportunities for changing hostility into normal relations. Difficulties arose both from Iran and the United States. The internal Iranian political scene is generally divided into two fractions of reformists and hardliners. The most significant is the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, for giving the general direction in conducting foreign and internal policies.

Direct talks between Iran and the US are still possible, despite the problems and barriers to initiating such a dialogue.

Washington has imposed a condition that Iran must totally abandon uranium enrichment, which is unacceptable for Tehran. Despite the sanctions, Iran is motivated to pursue its nuclear program. The right to develop nuclear power is a matter of national pride, where the population is largely united behind the regime and its achievements in this field.

There will come a moment when the hard policy, though sanctions and coercion, shows its limits and ineffectiveness with Iran. Redefining the policy from hard to soft is desirable and needs engagement from both Tehran and Washington. The price of a deepening crisis between Iran and the US is an unstable region and probable acquisition by Iran of nuclear weapons as a guarantor for preserving the regime. A more isolated and threatened Iran, or a slow but measurable rapprochement with the US – is this the right encouragement for changing hard into soft power?

Literature

- Akbarzadeh S. (2005), *Where is the Islamic Republic of Iran heading?*, “Australian Journal of International Affairs”, 59/1.
- Akbarzadeh S. (2011). *Democracy Promotion versus Engagement with Iran*, “Journal of Contemporary Asia”, 41/3.
- Bill J. M. (1980), *The Eagle and the Lion*.
- Elson S. B., Nader A. (2011), *What Do Iranians Think? A Survey of Attitudes on the United States, the Nuclear Program, and the Economy*, Rand Corporation.
- Fayazmanesh S. (2008), *The United States and Iran. Sanctions, wars and the policy of dual containment*.
- Fiedler R. (2008), *Iran – State Sponsor of Terrorism and its Nuclear Ambitions*, in: *The Terrorists Pandora's Box. Analysis of Chosen Terrorist Issues*, eds. J. Babiak, S. Wojciechowski.
- Golshanpazhooh M. R. (2013), *A Directive for Maintaining Positive Atmosphere in Iran-US Relations*, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/A-Directive-for-Maintaining-Positive-Atmosphere-in-Iran-US-Relations.htm>, 06.2013.
- Halevi Y. K., Michael Oren B. (2007), *Israel's Worst Nightmare*, “New Republic”, February 5, 2007.
- Hanson B. (1983), *The “Westoxication” of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, ale-e Ahmad, and Shariati*, “International Journal of Middle East Studies”, 15, no. 1, February 1983.
- Kattan A. (2013), *Fact Sheet: Iran Sanctions*, *The Center for Arms Control and Non Proliferation*, http://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/iran/articles/fact_sheet_iran_sanctions/, 07.2013.
- Keohane R. O., Nye J. S. (1998), *Power and Interdependence in the Information Age*, “Foreign Affairs”, September–October 1998.
- Lagon M. P. (2011), *The Value of Values: Soft Power under Obama*, “World Affairs” September/October 2011, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/value-values-soft-power-under-obama>, 06.2013.
- Lubna A. (2008), *Historic US – Iran Relations: Revisiting Ideology and Geostrategy*, “Pakistan Journal of American Studies”, vol. 26, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring & Fall 2008.
- Mohaddessin M. (2004), *Enemies of the Ayatollahs the Iranian Opposition and its War on Islamic Fundamentalism*.

- Nye J. S. (2002), *The Paradox of American Power-Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*.
- Nye J. S. (2004), *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*.
- Perkovich G. (2003), *Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Challenge*.
- Pollack K. M. (2004), *The Persian Puzzle. The Conflict between Iran and America*.
- Sanger D., Broad W. (2010), *Iran Remains De?ant, Nuclear Agency Says*, "The New York Times", 6 September, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/world/middleeast/07nuke.html>, 06.2013.
- Takych R. (2007), *Hidden Iran. Paradox in the Islamic Republic*.
- Thrall T. (2007), *How the Reagan Administration Taught Iran the Wrong Lessons*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs", vol. 11, no. 2, June 2007 http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue2/jv11no2a5.html#_edn36, 04.2013.
- Whitaker B. (2002), *The strange affair of Karine A*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jan/21/israel1>, 06.2013.
- Worth R. (2009), *Dissidents Mass in Tehran to Subvert an Anti-U.S Rally*, "The New York Times", 4 November, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/05/world/middleeast/05iran.html>, 06.2013.

Streszczenie

Twarda siła nad miękką – relacje USA z Islamską Republiką Iranu w cieniu atomowego programu

W artykule wskazano na korelację pomiędzy twardą i miękką siłą w relacjach amerykańsko-irańskich. Negatywne doświadczenia dominują we wzajemnych stosunkach pomiędzy nimi takie jak: amerykański interwencjonizm w sprawy wewnętrzirańskie, kryzys z zakładnikami amerykańskimi, terroryzm czy ostatnio irański program atomowy. Waszyngton od dłuższego czasu zajmuje stanowisko, że wobec Teheranu należy stosować twardą siłę m.in. poprzez nakładanie wielu sankcji, co jak się okazuje, nie doprowadziło do pożądanej zmiany w polityce Iranu. Jak dowiedziono w artykule, miękka siła i nie wykorzystywanie tego typu instrumentu w relacjach USA z Iranem mogłoby przynieść znacznie więcej pozytywnych efektów, aniżeli poleganie na twardej sile.

Słowa kluczowe: twarda siła, miękka siła, Stany Zjednoczone, sankcje, program atomowy, terroryzm