Status-Seeking and Iranian Foreign Policy: The Speeches of the President at the United Nations

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Abstract

One of the major manifestations of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the Principlists is its significant changes, particularly in comparison to the eras of reconstruction and reform. This paper seeks to analyze the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this period, utilizing the explanatory capacities of the social identity theory and the analytical concept of status-seeking. The main question of the paper concerns the main reasons behind the change in the foreign policy of Ahmadinejad's government when compared to the governments in the reconstruction and reform eras. There are also some secondary questions: Can we consider a common ground for Iranian foreign policy in all these periods? What is the main difference between the foreign policy in the Principlist period and that of Ayatollah Hashemi and former President Khatami's governments? The first secondary hypothesis argues that Iran has always been a status-seeking state in the regional and international systems. The second secondary hypothesis states that Ahmadinejad's government's foreign policy differed from the two preceding governments simply in its search for status-seeking strategy. The main hypothesis is that the perception of the policy-makers of this period concerning the failure of former governments to attain status goals, political purposes, and U.S. containment policy has been the main reason accounting for the revision of status-seeking strategy in the Principlist period.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ahmadinejad's Government, Status-Seeking, Identity Management Strategies

Introduction

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran underwent fundamental changes with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's coming to power in 2005. These changes are best manifested by the excessive emphasis on the preservation and advancement of nuclear technology; turning away from the West and looking to the East, Muslim countries, Latin America and Africa; intensified hostile attitude towards Israel; and, presence innumerous international meetings--as compared to the former Iranian presidents--, notably the United Nations General Assembly. A comparison of foreign policy in this period, better known as the Principlist period, and the foreign policy of Ayatollah Hashemi's government-reconstruction period-and Khatami's government-reform era-can help to more clearly and profoundly understand the aforementioned changes.

On this basis, the most important question is: what are the main causes of change in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iranin the Principlist period? Naturally, different approaches to foreign policy analysis and international relations theories will offer different answers to the question, in accordance with their theoretical logic and analytical concepts. This paper seeks to answer this question utilizing the findings and insights of the social identity theory and the analytical concept of status-seeking. Before trying to answer the main question, two more questions need to be addressed: First, does Iranian foreign policy, in spite of the undeniable changes and developments in different periods, have certain common ground? What is the main difference between the foreign policy of the Principlist government and those of Ayatollah

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Hashemi and Khatami's governments? In answering these questions, three hypotheses are derived from the social identity theory. The first secondary hypothesis is that Iran has always been a status-seeking state in the regional and international systems, which provides the common ground of Iranian foreign policy in different periods. The second secondary hypothesis indicates that Ahmadinejad's government's foreign policy differed from his two predecessors simply in the status-seeking strategies adopted for this purpose. In other words, all the governments shared the status-seeking indicator, but the status-seeking strategy under the reconstruction and reformist governments was social mobility, whereas Ahmadinejad has adopted the social creativity strategy. The tentative hypothesis in answering the question regarding the causes of this change in strategy is that the perception held by the Principlist policy-makers on the outcomes of the social mobility strategy pursued by the reconstruction and reformist governments in seeking regional status and political goals on the one hand, and a response to U.S. containment on the other, are the main causes of this revision.

The research methodology in this paper is content analysis; as the main focus is on quantitative content, qualitative content analysis has also been utilized for further explanation. The statistical population of the research includes all speeches made by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the UN General Assembly sessions, which take place every year in September in New York and are attended by high-ranking officials of many countries. Since the number of Ahmadinejad's speeches at the UN General Assembly has been seven so far, due to their limited number, the sample population equals the statistical population; thus there is no need for a statistical formula for sampling. The unit of analysis is 'word', which will be counted in the President's speeches.

The paper is organized into three sections and a conclusion. The first section describes the methodology. The second section sets out the theoretical framework, which examines the social identity theory. The third section deals with historical discussions, construction of

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indicators, and the study of the frequency of indicators intended to test the research hypotheses.

I- Theoretical Framework

In this section, we apply the social identity theory and the analytical concept of status in international relations. Neo-realists use the concept of position, which is analytically very close to the concept of status. However, it is also distinct from the concept of status, because it is simply defined based on the material parameters of power. From this perspective, to preserve the status--in defensive terms-- or to promote the position--in aggressive terms--is the main goal of the states in the hierarchical structure of the international system (Donnelly, 2005: 42). Hedley Bull, an advocate of the English school of International Relations, pays special attention to the process of states' struggle for the recognition of their status among the other international actors (Linklater, Suganami, 2006: 44). Despite such proximity, what distinguishes status in social identity theory is an emphasis on its social construction, simultaneously affected by domestic and international factors.

Social groups in the international system are best manifested by the formation of nation-states. Thus, national identities are among the outcomes of grouping and give meaning to the international setting (Clunan, 2009: 25). Since in social identity theory, social group is regarded as tantamount to social identity, ground is provided for manifestation of national identities in such groups as nation-states. This hypothesis arises from the constructivist outlook of the social identity concerning the social construction of reality. In fact, national identity is a type of collective identity, which shapes a specific set of actors as the nation-state. Along with the concept of national identity, the concept of national self-image is needed for more precise understanding of the formation of national identities and their transformation. In principle, the distinction between the concept of self-image and identity is seen in Turner's works. The first means

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"people's perception of themselves in every moment of time," while the second one refers to the more stable perception of self in a more extensive period of time (Quoted in: Demo, 1992: 305). The application of these two concepts at the national level would mean that the discursive political space of every nation-state tends to possess numerous national self-images, which compete in every period of time. Each of the self-images that can continue to dominate the other self-images in a specific period of time would become the national identity of that nation-state. In other words, each of the self-images volunteers to become the national identity and every polity possesses several self-images, while only one of them is the national identity (Clunan, 2009: 20). Like national identity, national self-images are derived from a set of descriptive, normative and evaluative ideas concerning a nation-state's political purposes and international status. When a national self-image finds hegemonic status in a discursive political space, overcoming other self-images, its ideas regarding the state's political purposes and international status turn into national interest. In the meantime, other national self-images do not wither away, but continue to survive in the discursive space and are debated (Clunan, 2009: 20).

Stuart Albert believes that people engage in comparison when they have a negative assessment of the existing conditions. This hypothesis has been verified in numerous works of research (Albert, 1977: 502).According to this literature, an evaluation of the past plays a crucial role in the acceptance or rejection of a self-image as social identity under current circumstances. In addition, periods of social transformation provides the ground for such evaluations as self-images tend to be challenged less frequently under stable conditions (Kaluer et al, 1998: 341-343). Whenever the intensity and range of a social change is more extensive, conditions are riper for challenging the past self-images and the rise of new self-images. The advent of a revolution and change in government are examples of high-intensity and low-intensity social changes.

National self-images and identities are founded upon two axes: political purposes and international status. Political purposes include a set of ideas about the goals, values, principles and symbols which characterize a nation. In addition, political purposes involve the guiding principles and the missions of a country in its foreign policy. For instance, one of the political purposes in the United States is to "expand political and economic freedom in the domestic society and the international system." The Islamic Republic of Iran also has a defined political purpose as the "preservation of independence in all respects"[1] and "support for the oppressed against the oppressor."[2]

International status, as the second axis, involves ideas about the rank and place of a nation in the hierarchical political, military, social, and economic international system. This ranking is assessed in accordance with the power parameters, including material strength as well as the intellectual strength of a nation in comparison to others. Regardless of the assessment of the existing conditions, international status can include ideas concerning the desirable situation; that is to say what the deserved status for a state in the international system would be. For example, the United States defines itself as having the status of the 'leader of the free world'. The Islamic Republic of Iran has also defined its desirable status as attainting the ability to "inspire the Muslim World" and to become a "justice-seeking state in the international system."

Political purposes and international status in national self-images and identity are defined with the goal of attaining a distinct identity for the state as compared to other states and securing national self-respect (Mercer, 1995: 241-243 and Clunan, 2010: 31). By defining these two axes, states realize which groups they belong to or must join. In other words, these statements do not necessarily refer to existing, descriptive conditions, but are defined within the context of a prescriptive goal and cause. The groups in question take shape in accordance with material and intellectual indicators. Some examples of the first category include 'great powers', 'developed states', and

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'advanced industrial nations'; 'Muslim countries' and the 'Non-Aligned Movement' belong to the second category.

By defining political purposes and international status in national identity, states learn if they are status-seekers or status-maintainers. For example, a state that wants to join the group of great powers or advanced industrial nations is a status-seeker; a state that finds itself a great power or an advanced industrial nation will be a status-maintainer. A status-seeking state is mainly identified through the observation that its decision-makers do not consent to their national self-image due to their dissatisfaction with their status in the international system. Hence, these states tend to adopt identity management strategies in order to attain their desired and perceived status in national identity. The assumption inherent in all these strategies is that these states compare themselves with the other states in the international social system by appealing to the status criteria. It is worth noting that these international status criteria are socially constructed. Identity management strategies can be classified in three categories: social mobility, social rivalry and social creativity. The main reasons for their selection includes an assessment of policy outcomes in securing political purposes and international status--in the form of success or failure--and the attitude of external actors towards them (Welch Larson, Shevchenko, 2010: 70-75; and Clunan, 2010: 34-36).

II- Status-Seeking in Iranian Foreign Policy

Based on the discussion above, status-seeking at regional and international levels represents an authentic goal in the foreign policy of every state. Iran is not an exception to the rule as it has always been regarded as a status-seeking state. In the 1960s and 1970s, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi defined his foreign policy based on the national role of "Iran as a superior regional power" in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, the Indian Ocean and even the Horn of Africa. For this reason, the second Pahlavi monarch adopted the

social rivalry strategy in order to consolidate his influence in the aforementioned regions and make other regional actors accept it, as evidenced by Iran's dispatching of troops to Oman in order to suppress Dhofar insurgents, sending of arms to Somalia, Jordan, Morocco, and North Yemen, as well as helping Iraqi Kurds fight the Ba'athist regime (Houshang Mahdavi, 2001: 407). Commensurate with this regional status-seeking, by appealing to historical myths and praising national heroes, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi made efforts to revise Iranian national identity, which was at least deemed a national self-image in that historical period. The festivities marking 2500 years of monarchical rule, coronation festivities as well as festivities marking the 50th anniversary of Pahlavi rule were intended to promote the status of the identity-making source of history vis-à-vis the Islamic doctrine, which rose to rival the extremist nationalism promoted in Iran (Azghandi, 2010: 51).

With the advent of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the influence of revolutionary discourse in the foreign policy discourse,[3] Iran's status objectives were intensified and reinforced. A number of experts argue that the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to pursue the attainment of status-seeking in the Middle East as its status objective (Hunter, 2010: 189). The author accepts this viewpoint, maintaining that the post-revolutionary governments, while sharing this view about the status objectives, have pursued different strategies, given their understanding of the previous policy outcomes and the foreign policies of the great powers. The social rivalry strategy was pursued in the first decade after the Islamic Revolution, the social mobility strategy in the reconstruction and reformist eras, and the social creativity strategy in the Principlist era.

Although Iran's pre- and post-revolutionary status objectives are identical, the outlook of the United States - as the largest extra-regional power in the Persian Gulf - towards this goal-setting has varied. Iran's status-seeking before its Islamic Revolution was absolutely consistent with U.S. foreign policy and defense strategy,

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whereas revolutionary Iran's status-seeking entirely contradicts Washington's interests in the Middle East. In the late 1960s, then-U.S. President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger devised a doctrine according to which protection of Washington's interests was pursued with decreased financial and human costs through the creation of power centers in the world's strategically important areas. On this basis, considering the power vacuum arising from the British withdrawal from east of the Suez Canal and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, Iran and Saudi Arabia were tasked with protecting Washington's interests in this oil-rich region; thus they were equipped with the needed military hardware (Azghandai, 2010: 334-347).

The Islamic Revolution not only deprived the United States of a strategic ally in the Middle East, but also turned Iran into a serious threat to Washington's interests in the region. The Zionist regime's security and interest in ensuring the free transit of oil to the outside world constitute the most important Middle East strategy for the United States (Blackwill & Slococomb, 2011: 4-5) as evidenced by its two wars in the Persian Gulf region (Jafari Valdani, 2009: 35-30). In this relation, with the end of the bipolar system, the Middle East peace process and increased U.S. military presence in the southern Persian Gulf states entered the U.S. agenda. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Oman, all of which have authoritarian governments, have concluded bilateral military-security pacts with the United States in order to remove domestic and foreign threats (Walt, 2009: 113). Furthermore, along with other Middle Eastern states, all of them have covert and overt relations and pacts with the Zionist regime (Lynch, 2011: 25). These two variables have given rise to a particular regional order that severely limits the attainment of the Islamic Republic's status goals in the Middle East setting. Therefore, the Islamic Republic's revisions in its foreign policy, religious democratic political system, and ideology -which threaten the legitimacy of regional monarchies-have resulted in

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challenges to this regional order and as such, bought about conflict between Tehran and Washington's interests (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2008: 299-321). For this reason, the United States, assisted by regional actors, has adopted a containment policy in order to counter the Islamic Republic's status goals.

III- Status-Seeking in Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy

When Ahmadinejad came to office in 2005, the point of departure in his foreign policy was based on the following two pillars. First, an assessment of the outcomes of previous strategies in pursuit of regional-international status and political purposes on the one hand, and the conduct of great powers towards these strategies on the other. In this regard, as mentioned above, states tend to more frequently compare and assess their status in periods of transition and change than in periods of stability. Second, policymakers' perception of regional and international conditions in this period.

Concerning the first item, it is necessary, first, to briefly look at the status-seeking strategies in the reconstruction and reformist eras. The statesmen of the reconstruction period viewed the consolidation of the Islamic Revolution via an economically developed state as a role model for other states as the way to attain superior regional status (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2009: 223). Therefore, by applying the social mobility strategy, the policy-makers in this period sought to normalize relations with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, the European Union and the United States. Rapprochement with the Arab states, adoption of a constructive policy towards the Kuwaiti crisis, holding several rounds of critical dialogues with Europe, efforts made at freeing Western hostages in Lebanon, active participation in international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) are manifestations of this strategy. Commensurate with this status goal, economic growth and development were the most important political

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purposes at home, which could be made possible with the normalization of relations with other nations and utilization of technical and economic capacities of the outside world.

In spite of pacifist and cooperative policies pursued by the Islamic Republic in this period, the United States failed to change its policy towards Iran to a large extent. Excluding the Islamic Republic from the 6+2 security arrangements after the end of the Kuwait war, application of the dual containment policy to simultaneously undermine Iran and Iraq, frequent allocations of budgets for regime change in Iran and the ratification of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act in order to boycott and punish investment in Iran's oil and gas industries are among the salient manifestations of the U.S.A's confrontational policies towards the status goals of the reconstruction governments.

The reformist governments also placed the social mobility strategy atop of their foreign policy agenda, emphasizing détente, confidence-building and intercultural dialogue. Portraying the Islamic Republic as a democratic and politically developed state, statesmen of this period sought to attain status in the region and at the higher international level (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2009: 227). In fact, the main political purposes in the reformist era included enhancing democracy and political legitimacy at home and elevating the Islamic Republic's international prestige abroad. Of course, in the last two years of this period, with the rise of the Iranian nuclear issue at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), efforts at preserving this technology and preventing its securitization also became one of the major political purposes. The Islamic Republic's practical pursuit of the social mobility strategy could be seen in expanded diplomatic relations and economic-security cooperation with the southern Persian Gulf states, enlarged political-economical relations with the European Union, holding several rounds of Iran-EU constructive dialogues, immediate condemnation of the September 11 terrorist attacks, effective presence in the regional and international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, and OIC, active

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participation in nuclear negotiations, and voluntary suspension of all related activities.

In spite of the positive and constructive attitude of the reformist governments towards regional and international matters, the United States was not ready to accept the Islamic Republic's minimum status and political objectives. This was evidenced by confrontational policies such as America's intensified policy of containing Iran in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, renewed sanctions, and allocation of budgets for sabotage and intervention in Iran's domestic affairs as pursued by the Clinton Administration. This confrontational attitude culminated in George W. Bush's Republican administration in such a way that he called Iran along with North Korea and Iraq an "Axis of Evil" after the invasion of Afghanistan, accusing the three countries of sponsoring terrorism and pursuing weapons of mass destruction (Griffith, Callaghan & Roach, 2008: 16).

From the perspective of the Principlist statesmen, this new discourse and placing of Iran along with countries like Iraq and North Korea was an annulment of the reformist governments' efforts[4]to achieve status and prestige at the regional and international levels. They believed that "in spite of, for 16 years, pursuing"[5] the social mobility strategy and norms acceptable to Western states, not only had the Islamic Republic failed to attain its status goals and political purposes, but this trend also caused prestige and status costs for Iran among the Muslim and oppressed nations.[6]According to the findings of the social identity theory, this negative perception of the Islamic Republic's international status on the one hand, and change in government on the other hand, provided the ground for the Principlists' revision of status strategies. The neo-Principlists believed "The United States and the European states have in practice never sought to resolve the problems and reach an understanding with the Islamic Republic[;]"[7]rather they "have acted to exert more pressures on Tehran, further encircling the boycott, and ultimately overthrowing the Islamic Republic."[8]Ahmadinejad's government

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particularly criticized the reformists' confidence-building approach and the way they interacted with Western states concerning the nuclear question.'It is worth noting that the Principlists introduced full acquisition of nuclear energy as the most important national interest and the necessary condition for attaining the Islamic Republic's status aims. In this relation, the head of the Principlist government observes:

"If the Iranian nation acquires the invaluable uranium enrichment technology, it will become a true superpower in the industrial and scientific spheres in a short period of time. … If the Iranian nation succeeds in reaching the summits of knowledge, it will have the capacity to become a role model for free nations and it will become a point of support for the world's free nations."[10]

The policy-makers in this period interpreted the Western states' confrontational and containment policies in general and on the nuclear issue in particular in line with preventing Iran from achieving its status goals. The Iranian Supreme Leader indicated in this regard: "Americans know very well that the production of an atomic bomb in Iran is a myth and is devoid of truth. They are, in fact, concerned about the formation of a powerful independent Islamic Iran, which is advanced and possessing modern technologies."[11]

Ahmadinejad also adds: "In spite of all the pressures and sanctions, Iran has joined the nuclear club and has bypassed all the hurdles. … They do not want Iran to be among the top ten advanced nations of the world. … If we operate this cycle, all world circumstances will change positively for us. There will be a revolution in medicine, nuclear know-how, agriculture, and industry in Islamic Iran and we will find a prominent status politically on the global scale."[12]

In the second axis, the Principlist statesmen perceived the world differently. According to them, "the current world has been entangled in a wide range of disorders"[13] and "the solutions offered by the materialist and atheist schools have not brought about any results

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other than expanded oppression, poverty, and tension."[14]Therefore, "[t]oday's human beings are in a historical turning point in a way that huge developments would be imminent."[15]"The world is looking for a perfect pattern based on justice, peace, and spirituality in this turning point,"[16]"and it demands it from the Islamic Revolution."[17]Hence, the Principlists are tasked with "introducing this perfect pattern to humanity."[18]

Based on these two axes, understanding the new international conditions and negative appraisal of the outcomes of adopting the social mobility strategy, the Principlist policy-makers adopted the social creativity strategy in order to attain their status goals, according to which the indicator of justice was regarded as the basis for states' status and ranking in the international system. In other words, the Principlists seek to replace the indicator of justice with that of military-economic power, thus portraying the Islamic Republic as an oppressed and justice-seeking country that supports the oppressed. In this way, they want to gain a superior status in the region and even in the international system. Therefore, in the Ahmadinejad government, the level of the Islamic Republic's status-seeking has gone beyond the Middle East and the Persian Gulf and the necessity of Iran's partnership in 'managing world questions' is emphasized.[19]The Principlists maintain that only through the application of this strategy may the Islamic Republic attain its national and status interests: "When we speak of justice, we mean justice for the entire humanity. … If justice is established in the world, we have reached the perfect point of our national interest."[20]

Social Mobility Strategy: As mentioned above, the indicators of the social mobility strategy are derived from liberal democratic norms. The social mobility strategy will be operationalized according to a number of indicators including negotiations, confidence-building, transparency, goodwill, multilateralism, cooperation, understanding, democracy, elections, voting, enlightenment, respect for rights, stability, peaceful use of nuclear energy, interaction, and freedom.

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Social Rivalry Strategy: The indicators of social rivalry strategy would include military pressure, military threat, economic sanctions, the necessity of disarmament of great powers, criticizing the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, condemning the Zionist regime's war on Gaza, criticizing the Zionist regime and ideology, support for Palestine, depriving Iran of nuclear technology, monopolistic policies of great powers, emphasis upon continued uranium enrichment, criticizing nuclear apartheid, and Iran's inalienable right to use nuclear energy.

In explaining why concepts like the "U.S. presence in Iraq," "disarmament of great powers", and so forth were selected as the indicators of the social rivalry strategy, it should be noted that Iran views U.S. presence in its surrounding areas as a factor in imposing constraints on and containing its influence. Demand for the disarmament of great powers has been a response to their containment policy regarding Iran's nuclear program.

Social Creativity: Indicators of the social creativity strategy include sustainable order, permanent peace, sustained security, rectifying world political and economical structures, criticizing the United Nations and the need for its rectification, criticizing the UN Security Council and the urgency of amending it, criticizing the right to veto for the great powers in the UN Security Council, the necessity of the veto power for Muslim countries, criticizing global management and the need to rectify it, fundamental changes, justice, spirituality, double standards, discrimination, responsibility for the world, equal rights, equality, and oppression.

Considering the indicators of the social mobility strategy and their case studies in President Ahmadinejad's speeches at the United Nations, the number and percentage of each of these indicators are the following:

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Table No. 1: Frequency of Indicators of Social Mobility in Ahmadinejad's Speeches in the United Nations

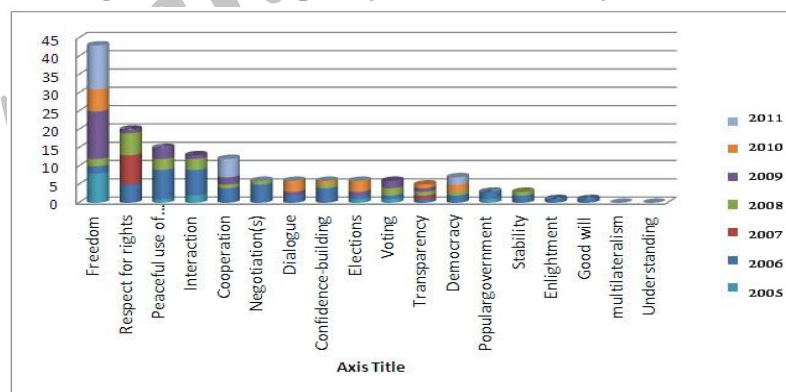| Indicators of Social Mobility Strategy	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	Percent
Freedom	2	0	2	13	8	6	12	43	28
Respect for Rights	5	8	6	1	0	0	0	20	13
Peaceful Use of Nuclear Technology	8	0	3	3	1	0	0	15	10
Interaction	7	0	3	1	2	0	0	13	8
Cooperation	4	0	1	2	0	0	5	12	8
Negotiation(s)	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	4
Dialogue	2	0	0	1	0	3	0	6	4
Confidence-building	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	6	4
Elections	1	0	0	1	1	3	0	6	4
Voting	1	0	2	2	1	0	0	6	4
Transparency	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	5	3
Democracy	2	0	1	0	0	2	2	7	5
Popular Government	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	2
Stability	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	2
Enlightenment	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Goodwill	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Multilateralism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Understanding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	48	9	22	25	14	16	19	153	100

Figure No. 1: Frequency of Social Mobility Indicators

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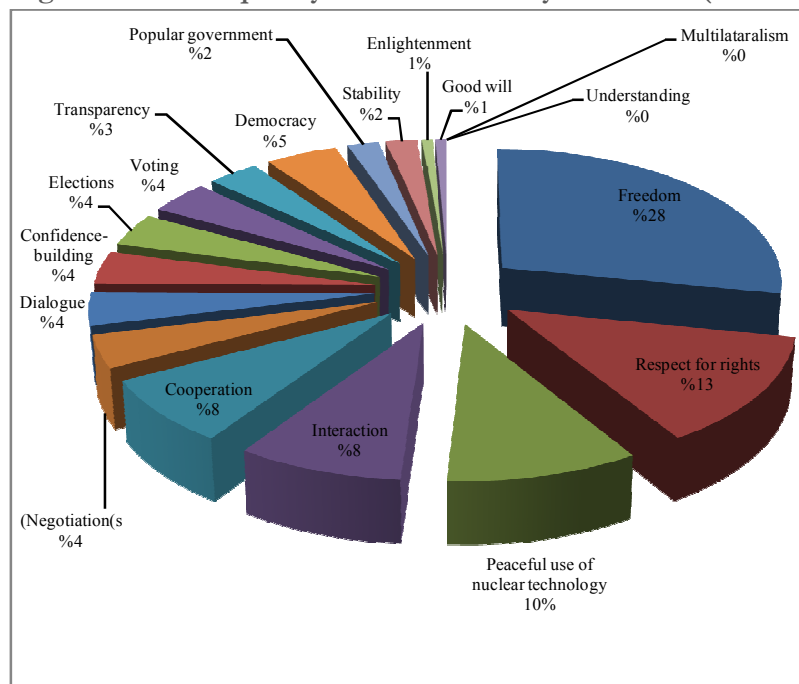**Figure No. 2: Frequency of Social Mobility Indicators (Percent)**

Table No. 2. Frequency of Social Rivalry Indicators in Ahmadinejad's Speeches in the United Nations

Indicators of Social Rivalry Strategy	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	Percent
Support for Palestine	6	9	6	6	5	10	1	43	16
Criticizing Military threat	8	0	9	6	4	3	7	37	14
Criticizing Occupation of Iraq	3	10	6	4	3	3	1	30	11
Ascendency	5	1	2	7	6	6	3	30	11
Criticizing Zionism	2	1	7	6	4	5	3	28	10
Criticizing Military Pressure	0	4	5	4	3	2	2	20	7
Criticizing Occupation of Afghanistan	3	0	0	3	3	4	2	15	6
Necessity of Disarmament of Great Powers	2	0	1	3	1	4	0	11	4

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Depriving Iran of Nuclear Technology	4	1	4	1	0	1	0	11	4
Necessity of Preserving Nuclear Fuel Cycle	5	1	4	0	0	0	0	10	4
Criticizing Monopolist Policies	2	1	2	1	0	2	5	13	5
Criticizing the Zionist Regime's War on Lebanon	0	2	3	1	0	1	0	7	2
Iran's Alienable Rights	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	2
Economic Sanctions	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Criticizing the Zionist Regime's War on Gaza	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	1
Nuclear Apartheid	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
Emphasis on Continued Uranium Enrichment	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Total	47	31	51	43	32	43	25	272	100

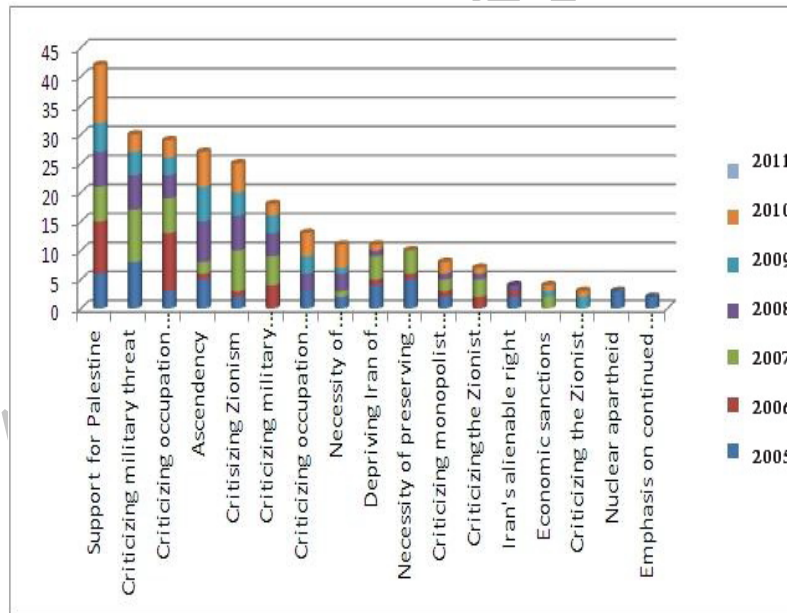**Figure No. 3: Frequency of Social Rivalry Indicators**

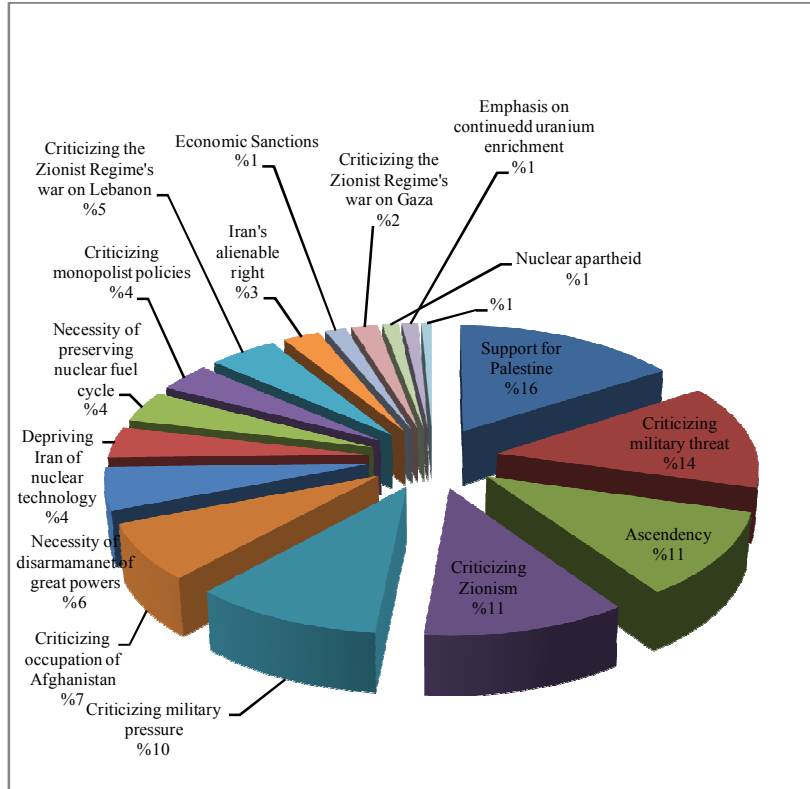## Figure No. 4: Frequency of Social Rivalry Indicators (percent)

Table No 3. Frequency of Social Creativity in Ahmadinejad's Speeches at the United Nations

Indicators of Social reativity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	Percent
Justice, Just	29	38	26	5	27	18	12	163	34
Criticizing the Security Council and the Need to Rectify it	0	33	16	3	2	5	3	62	13
Fundamental Change	3	0	2	0	13	1	1	20	4
Rectifying World's Political and Economical Structures	0	1	6	1	10	5	6	29	6

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Criticizing World Management and the Need to Rectify it	0	0	1	0	0	13	10	24	5
Spirituality	13	0	0	0	5	0	1	19	4
World's future	4	0	4	1	5	1	0	15	3
Discrimination	5	0	1	0	5	3	10	24	5
Permanent Peace	5	0	3		2	2	2	15	3
Oppression	0	5	2	2	6	3	5	18	4
Equal Rights	7	1	1	0	0	0	1	10	2
Sustained Security	0	0	3	1	2	1	3	10	2
Criticizing Veto Power for Great Powers	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	6	1
Sustainable Order	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	5	1
Double Standards	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	4	1
Equality	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	4	1
Responsibility for the World	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
Equity	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	73	88	85	38	86	47	56	474	100

Figure No. 5: Frequency of Social Creativity Indicators

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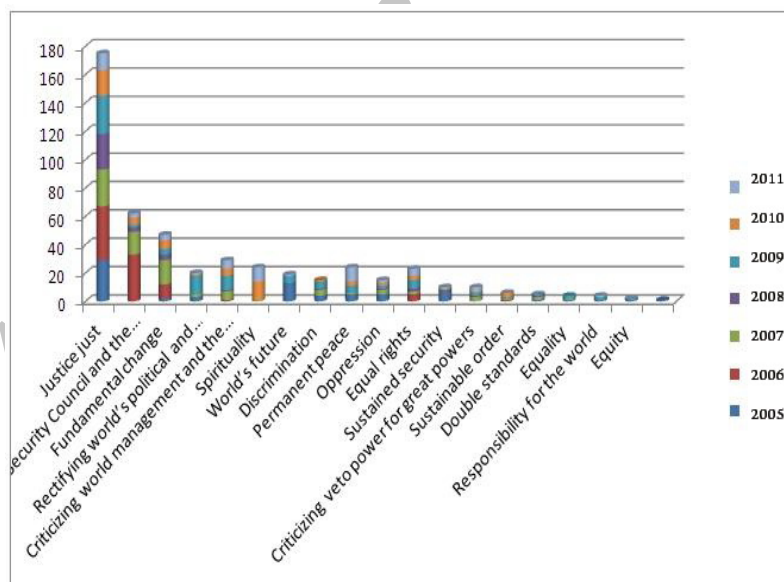
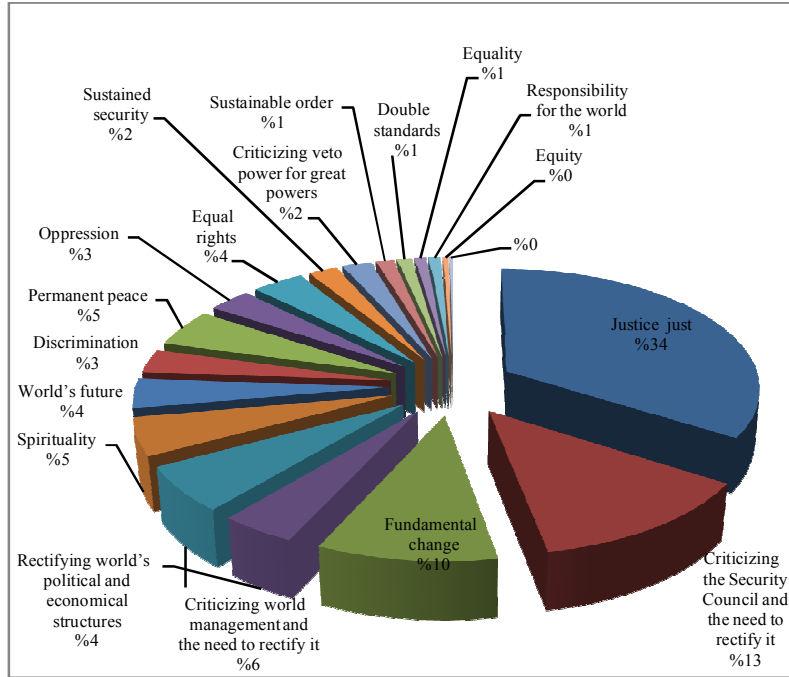**Figure No. 6: Frequency of Social Creativity Indicators (Percent)**

Equality %1
Responsibility for the world %1
Sustained security %2
Sustainable order %1
Double standards %1
Criticizing veto power for great powers %2
Equity %0
Oppression %3
Equal rights %4
%0
Permanent peace %5
Discrimination %3
World's future %4
Spirituality %5
Justice just %34
Rectifying world's political and economical structures %4
Fundamental change %10
Criticizing world management and the need to rectify it %6
Criticizing the Security Council and the need to rectify it %13

Figure No. 7: Relative Comparison of Indicators of Each of the Three Strategies in Ahmadinejad's Speech Each Year

Socila creativity strategy
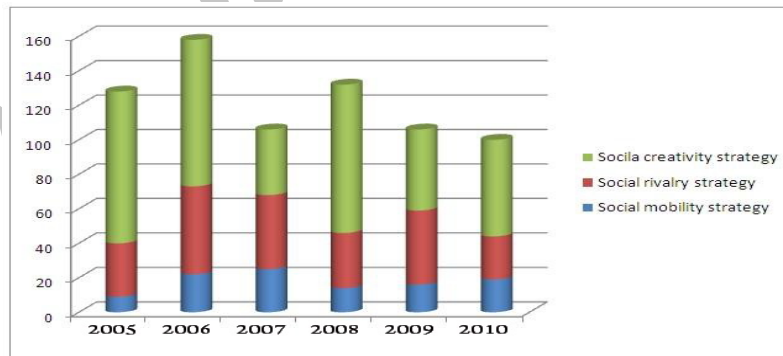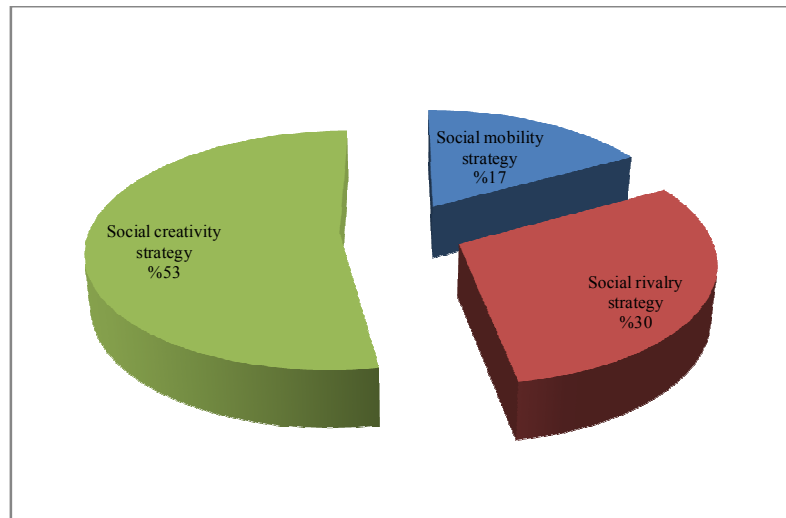Social rivalry strategy
Social mobility strategy

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Figure No. 8: Relative Comparison of Indicators of Each of the Three Strategies in Total Speeches

As shown, utilizing the terms and concepts signifying the social creativity strategy is predominant in President Ahmadinejad's speeches. From 899 of his speech concepts, 474 cases - that is 53% - refer to the indicators of social creativity strategy; the indicator of justice with 163 cases, i.e. 18%, has been the most widely used term by Ahmadinejad.

Conclusion

Iran's foreign policy has witnessed numerous changes under the Principlist rule. A comparison of Iran's foreign policy attitude in this period with those of the reconstruction and reformist governments demonstrates this change more vividly. The author has tried to examine this change, taking advantage of the explanatory capacities of the social identity theory and the analytical concept of status-seeking. Looking at this from this perspective with precision, Iran has consistently been a status-seeking state both before and after the

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Islamic Revolution, and Iranian statesmen have wanted the recognition of their status in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. Thus in order to attain this status goal, a variety of strategies including social mobility, social rivalry and social creativity have been adopted. The difference between the Principlist foreign policy and those of the reconstruction and reformist governments simply came down to a change in strategy. In other words, in spite of the super-structural changes in foreign policy in this period, we see a kind of continuity, which arises from status-seeking being the basic objective of Iran.

What accounts for revision in the Principlist status-seeking strategy includes the perception of the outcomes of previous strategies and the response of Western states, particularly the United States, to these strategies? A glance at the statements made by the decision-makers in this period indicates that from their viewpoint, despite pursuing the social mobility strategy and their acceptable norms, not only did the Islamic Republic fail to attain its status goals and political purposes, but this trend only caused prestige and status costs for Iran among the Muslim masses and oppressed nations. The neo-Principlists believe that the United States and European states in practice do not seek to resolve the problems and reach understanding with Iran, but they also intend to exert further pressures on Tehran, further intensify their blockade, and finally overthrow the Islamic Republic. Based on this negative evaluation, the new government adopted the social creativity strategy in order to promote the concept of justice as the new indicator of regional and international status. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of President Ahmadinejad's statements proves the claim adequately. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social identity theory and the concept of status enjoy a high explanatory capacity in analyzing the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its changes and continuities.

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Notes

1. Article 152, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2. Article 154, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3. Concerning the impact of the Islamic Revolution's discourse on Iranian foreign policy, see: Majid Adibzadeh, *Language, Discourse and Foreign Policy*, Tehran: Akhtaran Publications.

4. See Ahmadinejad's speech in the ninth nationwide meeting of Revolutionary Guard Corps political guides and officials, January 24, 2008.

5. See the ninth government's performance annual report:

http://www.SPK-gov.ir/Repnts.asp?Itemid=22564.p.3

6. See the ninth government's performance annual report:

http://www.SPK-gov.ir/Repnts.asp?Itemid=22564.p.3

7. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the meeting of Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders, September 11, 2007.

8. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the sixth meeting of the Qom Seminary School's teachers, June 21, 2008.

9. For further explanation concerning Ahmadinejad government's appraisal of the reformist governments' nuclear diplomacy, see his statements in the questions and answers meeting with the Council on Foreign Relations, September 20, 2006.

10. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in his meeting with the students of Khorasan Razavi Province, April 14, 2006.

11. Speech in Imam Reza's Holy Shrine, March 21, 2005.

12. Meeting with some students and student organizations, October, 21, 2005.

13. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speech in the Non-Aligned Movement's Session (Cuba), September 15, 2006.

14. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speech in the Summit of Organization of Islamic Conference in Saudi Arabia, December 7, 2005.

15. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, December 5, 2006.

16. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speech in the Summit of Organization of Islamic Conference in Saudi Arabia, December 7, 2005.

17. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, December 5, 2006.

18. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, November 20, 2006.

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19. In Ahmadinejad's speeches in the United Nations, "criticizing the existing management of world system and need to co-administration" has been repeated 24 times.

20. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speech in the meeting of Islamic Republic of Iran's ambassadors and officials of diplomatic missions, August 12, 2008.

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