Can the Strait of Hormuz be Closed for Maritime Traffic?

1. INTRODUCTION

While Iran is located in southwest Asia geographically, it is one of the most important actors of the geography called the Middle East. Having obtained a new geopolitical importance with its rich oil resources since the beginning of the 20th century, Iran was located in a place, where the conflict of great powers took place during the World War II and it continued to attract the interest of the same power groups after the war. With the Pahlavi Dynasty coming to power of the the Qajar Dynasty, modernization efforts starting in the early 20th century and economic relationships developed with the Western World due to petrol, common and guiding impact of the traditional structures on the society have turned Iran into a country, where unrests and sometimes power struggles take place. Iran succeeded to establish the most powerful and modern army of the Middle East in 1970s, and it made attempts to have nuclear weapons. The unrest, which started because of the fact that the revenues arising from the oil were not shared with the public, grew due to the provocation of the mullahs, could not be prevented by the Shah of Iran in spite of the measures and as a result the regime changed in Iran. Change of regime that took place in 1979 moved Iran into a new course, and it has become a more active actor in the region due to the raise in the interest to the oil. Iran has become one of the strongest actors in the Middle East especially for the last three decades and it has been able to manage the social problems so far with the help of the basic structure ensured by its strong government tradition. Iran has the fourth biggest reserve for oil and the second biggest reserve for natural gas in terms of the world’s energy reserves and it is one of the leading countries in the world’s energy sector. Iran along with the other Gulf countries (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE) generate around 30% of the world’s oil and have an

There are five rules of war: Assessment, evaluation, calculation, comparison and victory.

Position brings assessing, assessment brings evaluation, evaluation brings calculation, calculation brings comparison and comparison brings victory.

Sun Tzu
Iran has the opportunity to control the Central Asia, the Middle East, Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf geographically. Iran is historically one of the oldest civilizations of the world and it has a rooted government tradition as well. Iranian Government often threaten the western states with closing the Strait of Hormuz, interrupting the maritime traffic and putting pressure on the safety of the region, in order to overcome the problems/difficulties it faces in the region, in order to overcome the foreign policy and/or to make these countries will be disrupted to a large extent, the oil and natural gas obtained from the region will be prevented from reaching to the world markets and an economic crises will take place, in the event that the Strait of Hormuz is closed. In the Strait of Hormuz, there is one entry to the Persian Gulf which is two (2) miles wide and an exit from it which is two (2) miles wide and there is a two (2) miles wide buffer zone between them, in which the vessels can navigate safely. Although the Strait of Hormuz is 21 miles wide in its narrowest point, the vessel traffic can take place in a six (6) miles wide area. According to Iran’s claims; the Strait of Hormuz is not international water, 10,5 miles of the 21 miles width belong to Iran and another 10,5 miles belong to Oman. Such straits are under the supervision of the coastal State pursuant to the international laws. Coastal state has the right to sovereignty both in the sea bed and the airspace.

2. STRAIT of HORMUZ

Strait of Hormuz located between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman is one of the most important waterways, since it connects the Persian Gulf to the open seas and ensures that the oil and natural gas drilled from the Persian Gulf reach to the world markets. There are certain crucial points controlling the vessel traffic in the world. Most of the oil, which is consumed about 88,9 million barrels per day in the world, is being produced in the Middle Eastern countries and it reaches to its consumption points by transporting through some significant maritime traffic points. These are the Strait Hormuz, the Strait of Malaga, the Strait of Bab El Mandeb, the Suez Canal, Turkish Straits (Bosporus and Dardanelles), the Strait of Gibraltar, the Panama Canal and the Danish Canal. The amount of oil transported through the aforementioned straits and canals is shown in the chart.

The width of Strait of Hormuz, connecting the Persian Gulf to the open seas, is for 30 miles and its narrowest point is 21 miles. The Persian Gulf is 989 km long from the river mouth of Shatt al-Arab and has a surface area of 251,000 Km². The Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz have generally shallow waters and the depth of the gulf ranges between 50 to 90 m. and its deepest point is for 126 m² near the island of Abu Musa. Since the depth of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz is not much, the navigation of large-tonnage vessels subject to certain routes and this becomes a benefit for Iran in taking measures, for the vessels are channelled to specific areas. While the fact that the deeper locations in the Persian Gulf are close to the Iran shores makes positive contributions to the efforts of Iran to block navigation on one hand, and affects negatively the traffic of large-tonnage vessels on the other. The commercial channel of the coastal countries to the Persian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran) is subject to the Strait of Hormuz. Foreign trade of these countries will be disrupted to a large extent, the oil and natural gas obtained from the region will be prevented from reaching to the world markets and an economic crises will take place, in the event that the Strait of Hormuz is closed. In the Strait of Hormuz, there is one entry to the Persian Gulf which is two (2) miles wide and an exit from it which is two (2) miles wide and there is a two (2) miles wide buffer zone between them, in which the vessels can navigate safely. Although the Strait of Hormuz is 21 miles wide in its narrowest point, the vessel traffic can take place in a six (6) miles wide area. According to Iran’s claims; the Strait of Hormuz is not international water, 10,5 miles of the 21 miles width belong to Iran and another 10,5 miles belong to Oman. Such straits are under the supervision of the coastal State pursuant to the international laws. Coastal state has the right to sovereignty both in the sea bed and the airspace.

• The Strait of Hormuz is the only water passage used by seven(7) coastal countries to the Persian Gulf in order to reach open seas and international waters.
• On average, one large-tonnage oil tanker passes through the Strait of Hormuz every 10 minutes.
• About 90% of the oil and natural gas drilled from the Persian Gulf are transported to the open seas or world markets through the Strait of Hormuz.
• Around 40% of the world’s oil needs are met by the Persian Gulf.
• Sea route of all kinds of commercial goods imported by the coastal countries to the Persian Gulf has to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Both oil plants and commercial ports of Iran are located in the west side of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran will also be affected, if the Strait is closed.

• Considering the energy demands of the world; estimated amount of oil to pass through the Strait of Hormuz in the year 2030 is thought to be
28.1 million barrels per day. It should also be reminded that there are international legal regulations concerning the control and dominance of the coastal countries to the Strait of Hormuz, Iran and Oman and the passage through the territorial waters, canals and straits. In this context, we can talk about two main international legal regulations regarding the passages through the Strait of Hormuz. First one of them is the 1958 Geneva Convention on Territorial Waters and Adjacent Regions (CTWA) and the second one is 1982 the UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Iran signed the 1982 Convention, however it could not be approved by the parliament and naturally it does not have any legal obligation. Article 14 of the 1958 Convention and Article 17 of the 1982 Convention are about “innocent passage” through the territorial waters. According to these Articles, “vessels of all countries with or without a shore have a right to innocent passage through the territorial waters.” Pursuant to the regulation in these Conventions, the passage is considered as innocent, as long as it does not harm the peace, order and safety of the coastal state. Article 15 of the 1958 Convention and Article 24 of the 1982 Convention also state that the coastal state should not prevent an innocent passage through their territorial waters. Article 16 of the 1958 Convention and Article 25 of the 1982 Convention regulate and determine some conditions with regard to the right of the coastal state to intervene in or to suspend the passage. According to it, “in the event that a certain obligation exists, the coastal state may suspend an innocent passage temporarily and only in some parts of the territorial waters, without discrimination among the foreign ships and provided that the suspension will enter into force after it is duly declared.” Since objective criteria could not be determined with regard to on which conditions an innocent passage will be suspended in the 1958 Convention, the coastal state was granted with a broad discretion, also on which conditions the vessels passing through the territorial waters will be considered as having been violated the innocent passage is not indicated. This situation was tried to be eliminated in the 1982 Convention and the actions which will violate the innocent passage and make it dangerous are listed in Article 19(2) in a clear way.

Even though Iran did not approve the 1982 Convention, it acts under this Convention in principle and it agrees that the right to “transit” offered by this Convention will be valid only for the ones adopted this Convention. In this case, from the point of view of Iran, this right cannot be valid for USA, who did not sign the 1982 Convention. There aren’t any clear regulations in both 1958 Convention and 1982 Convention concerning the innocent passage of the warships through territorial waters. For Iran, passage of the naval forces through the territorial waters is conditioned on prior notice and it is subject to the conditions required for innocent passage. It is stated in Article 37 of the 1982 Convention that “it will apply for the straits used for international navigation being between a part of an open sea or an exclusive economic area and another part of an open sea or an exclusive economic area” and in Article 38, there is a provision indicating that “all vessels and aircrafts shall exercise the right to transit through the straits.” On the other hand, Iranian authorities claim that “all foreign warships need to get a permission in order to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.”

3. PIPELINES

The Strait of Hormuz will maintain its position as the most important transition point in reaching the oil obtained from the Persian Gulf and the coastal countries to the world markets. Around 30% of the world’s oil consumption is produced in the Persian Gulf region and the 90% of the oil obtained is transported by ships. On average, 11 tankers loaded with oil per day leave the Strait of Hormuz and 85% of the transported oil is delivered to Asian countries. There are some alternative pipelines to the Strait of Hormuz, but they are both not sufficient in terms of their capacity, however some pipelines are being used with low capacity and some are not being used at all. However, it is thought that the existing supporting facilities, to which the existing pipelines are connected, are not sufficient.

- The most important one of the alternative routes to the Strait of Hormuz is the Abqaiq-Yanbu line. This line, carrying Saudi oil, has a capacity of 5 million barrels/day.
- Also, there is a pipeline which has a capacity of 190,000 barrels/day and carries liquefied natural gas to the port of Yanbu.
- Kirkuk Ceyhan pipeline is operated at low capacity.
• Strategic pipeline (the line having a capacity of 1.4 million barrels/day and carrying oil to Kirkuk from southern Iraq) is not used, since it needs to be repaired.
• Iraq-Syria-Lebanon pipeline (having a capacity of 700,000 barrels/day) is not used.
• Iraq Saudi Arabia (IPSA) pipeline has a capacity of 1.64 million barrels/day and it is not used.
• Abudabi-Fujairah line was put into service in 2012 and it operates with a capacity of 1.8 million barrels/day.

4. INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN IRAN

a. Political Structure: Political system of Iran is claimed to be operated with democratic principles based on Islamic principles, but it depends on the decisions of religious leaders. Religious leadership both controls all political and appointed positions and the informal decision making mechanism formed by the religious leaders is dominating the official bureaucracy. Members of the parliament, the president, assembly of experts and local administrators in 30 states are assigned with election. In Iran, the religious leader has all authority under the name of “Velayat-e faqih”. According to the Shiite political thought, political and religious authority belongs to the imams, who are the descendants of Ali. However, in 1970s, Khomeini suggested that the political authority needs to be controlled by the religious representatives and he implemented it in 1979, when he came to power. Religious representatives in the Guardian Council and the Assembly of Experts belong to the system in terms of both their roles and powers.

b. Economic Structure: Iran's economy is largely state-controlled and has a system in which there are an inefficient private sector and public institutions dominating the oil. Price controls, subventions and strict policies hinder the development of the private sector. Private sector includes small-scale enterprises, agriculture, some manufacturing and services sector. Black market and corruption is common. In 2007, the most comprehensive economic reform applied to fuel and fuel became rationed. Inflation was 27.1% in 2012. Unemployment in Iran is around 15.5% in the year 2012. In 2012, gross domestic product was $48.9 billion dollars and per capita income was $13,300 dollars. (It was $13,500 dollars in 2010)

agriculture constitutes 11.3% of the country’s economy, industry constitutes 37.6% and services sector constitutes 51%. 25% of the workforce of 17,05 million is employed in agriculture, 31% in industry and 45% in the services sector. Approximately 19% of the Iran's population is below the poverty line.

c. Military decision-making process: Another issue in Iran is the process of security-related decision-making. Leaders of Iran's security and military forces have active roles in the decision making processes in the formal and informal structures within the government. First and foremost security aspect is the possibility of being attacked from outside and first duty of the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (AGIR) and the Basij is to provide internal security. Actual duty of the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (AGIR) is to protect the religious leader and the “velayat-e faqih” system from the internal and external enemies. This task is more important than protecting the territory of Iran. In case of a crisis, the religious leader may appoint these forces, if he deems necessary. The task of the regular army is to protect the country against external enemies. Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (AGIR) and the regular army receives same type of training and practice the same exercises, but their duties are different. And in fact, their duties coincide with each other while the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (AGIR) protects the regime and the regular army defends the country. Since the command echelon of these two armies of Iran included in the high security council, they play an active role in the formal and informal decision making processes. Commander of the Army of the Guardians has close ties with the religious leader.

d. Iran’s Nuclear Activities: Iran’s attempt to become a nuclear power goes down to 1957, the beginning of USA’s studies against the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union after the Second World War. A research reactor of five (5) megawatts was provided for the University of Tehran in 1968 with the contribution of USA. The economic opportunities which were offered by the oil crisis in 1973 provided new opportunities for Iran in terms of these objectives and the studies accelerated. Upon
the attempt of the Shah of Iran to establish 23 nuclear power plants with the USA until 2000, European and American companies engaged in a nuclear race in Iran, and in 1974, Iran and Germany decided to establish a power plant with the capacity of 1200 Megawatts in Bushehr, Iran. Regime change took place in 1979 has been a pausing point for the nuclear studies. The most important factor for the suspension of the nuclear programme was that this new regime was anti-western and anti-USA and that programme was dependent to the western states, moreover, the nuclear programme was inconvenient due to religious reasons. Administratives of the Islamic regime did not find the nuclear power studies right, since Iran has already rich oil and natural gas reserves, and they suspended them on grounds that it was too costly and also due to the Iraq War. Despite the economic hardships caused by the war, nuclear studies resumed in 1985. Just after, Iran engaged in cooperation with Iran, Argentina and China, established its first major collaboration with Russia after 1989, and in 1992, it signed the nuclear cooperation agreement. The decision making authority in this respect is the “religious leadership” much the same it is in almost every other issue in Iran. Iran explicitly states that it wants to have nuclear energy. According to Iran, having nuclear energy is a right and they do not want to give up this right. Iran characterizes nuclear energy as the basis for the technologic development, and especially medicine and agricultural and electricity production and it wants to have this energy with the aim of using it for peaceful purposes. And Iran insists that it does not seek to produce nuclear weapons. According to Iran, producing nuclear weapons is not true in terms of Islam and it points out that Iran, as an Islamic regime, does not accept manufacturing nuclear weapons. From Iran's point of view, having nuclear weapons is something that the religion does not approve and therefore it falls outside of the intention and will of Iran. Although Iran expresses that it does not want to have nuclear weapons, it should be considered that these explanations are “hypocrisy” . Because, Iran is not acting in a transparent way with regard to the nuclear activities. Another issue that creates the suspicion that Iran might want to produce nuclear weapons is that Iran does not want to give up uranium enrichment technology. These substances in question allow production of nuclear weapons. Iran explicitly expresses that it has the said technologies and it will not give up this power. In addition, there are some aspects lying behind Iran's situation as a nuclear power. Some of them can be listed as: lack of trust of Iran to the international community, Israel and Pakistan having nuclear power; Saudi Arabia's struggles to become a nuclear power in the future, its struggles to strengthen its Shiite Sharia regime, its desire and persistence to export the regime it implements to the other Muslim countries, Iran's will to meet its electric energy need with low costs, the tension between Iran and USA emerged since the mullahs came to power and the possibility to engage in a war with Israel, due to their support to Hezbollah.

5. IRAN'S ARMED FORCES

Iran is a remarkable country in Middle East, with its area of 1,648,195 km and with a population of nearly 80 million people. People between 0-25 years old constitute 43.6%, between 25-54 years old constitute 45.3% and people over 55 constitute 11.2% of the population. Iran Armed Forces, which recruit its personnel based on compulsory military service system, will not have a problem to recruit personnel in both peace times and expeditionary times. There are 2(two) armed forces, which may be considered to be parallel to each other, in the Islamic Republic of Iran. First of them is the regular army (ARTESH), which has been existing since the time of Shah of Iran, before 1979 revolution, and the other one is the Iranian Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (AGIR-PASDARAN) established upon the instructions of Ayatollah Khomeini. There is also a police force, affiliated to the Ministry of Interior, comprising up to 60 thousand people. According to the Iranian Constitution, the duty of the regular army is to protect the country's territorial integrity, independence and order against the potential external threats. The army, under the control of the religious leader, is dependent to the Islamist ideology. After Khomeini came to power in 1979, staff of the regular army made retired, some of them was laid off and actions in the regular army that may be counter-revolution was prevented by starting a mass Islamization campaign and the army made dependent to the political leader. Although the regular army was
suppressed, the religious regime established its own army, the Revolutionary Guards, in order to feel more comfortable\textsuperscript{16}. Both armies have been competing with each other, as of their dates of establishment.

a. Iran’s Military Doctrine:

In 1992, under the title of “Regulation of Iran’s Military Forces”, Iran founded its military doctrine on completely defensive grounds, based on manpower, in a way to make use of the geographical advantages and on Khomeini’s nationalist feelings, by re-arranging armed forces, which was exhausted with the effect of the international embargos and economic conditions, after the war it engaged in against Iraq. While In the following years, in order to protect the regional effectiveness, Iran made some changes in its doctrine due to the threats it perceived in the region, it considered USA military forces as the first threat to itself. Another issue that makes Iran discontent is the fact that its neighbours are of Sunni and Arab ethnic origin. Iran’s defence doctrine is based on defending itself against the terror actions supported by the foreign forces, border conflicts and a probable attack by the USA or a neighbouring country. While Iran was taking softer measures at the beginning of the crisis, in the second stage there are strict measures (interfering with the guns and long-range missiles). Since Iran is in poor condition when its forces are compared with its neighbouring countries’ in the region, it thinks that it needs mass destruction weapons in order to be stronger. Iran will probably make use of its conventional forces during the military action it will take in order to blockade the Strait of Hormuz. It is thought that Iran took lessons from the local war against Iraq between 1980 - 1988, the wars between the USA and Iraq from 1991 to 2003 and the wars in Afghanistan and it organized its forces accordingly. It is commonly thought that it is not possible for Iran to prevent USA and the western armed forces from invading its territory and in case of an armed conflict, the USA and/or a western force will be superior from the beginning. The reason lying behind Iran arming itself is to be superior and to show off force to its neighbours and to restrict the impact of a probable attack by the western forces and to deter them from attacking. It is also remarkable that Iran is developing its asymmetric forces while improving its conventional systems. Iran is giving priority to improve it asymmetric power and adding ballistic missile systems to its inventory and this is perceived as a threat by its neighbouring countries and does not comply with the military doctrine based on defence. Most of the weapon systems in the inventory of Iranian Armed Forces were procured before 1979 and they are out of use since they are old and lacking maintenance and spare parts. In addition, armoured units of its weapon systems and long-range air defence systems of the aircrafts need to be modernized. Iran is supplying weapons from the North Korea, China and the Russian Federation, despite the pressures and preventions of the USA. Some of the systems that Iran is supplying from the Russian Federation are aircraft, air-to-air missiles, anti-tank missiles, ballistic missile systems, submarines, torpedoes; it also supplies missile systems and mines from China and submarines from the North Korea. It is understood from its propaganda and the official explanations of the authorities that Iran is giving importance to improving its asymmetric forces in order to eliminate its military weakness. In this way Iran is thought to,

\begin{itemize}
  \item challenge its enemies,
  \item cheats its enemies,
  \item try to deter its enemies,
  \item show off to its enemies and
  \item give the message to Iranian people indicating that they are powerful.
\end{itemize}

b. Regular Army (Artesh):

It is organized as the land, marine and air forces. Its organization is thought to be in a better condition than the Revolutionary Army in terms of weapons and equipment. Iranian Armed Forces has about 545 thousand personnel in total and its defence budget is 10.687 billion Dollars\textsuperscript{18}.  

1. Land Forces: Land forces has about 220 thousand personnel and 4(four) armoured division, 6(six) infantry division, 2(two) commando division and independent infantrymen, armoured, airborne, commando and artillery brigade, in its
inventory there are about 1800 tanks, 750 armoured combat vehicles, 640 armoured personnel carriers, 2 thousand 300 cannons, 900 multiple rocket launchers, more than 5 thousand mortars, about 1200 anti-aircraft weapons, lots of shoulder fired anti-aircraft missile and anti-tanks.

2. Marine Forces: Naval forces affiliated to the regular army has around 18 thousand personnel and it is deployed in 4(four) different bases. In its inventory there are 26 submarines (Iran has 17 domestic production class Kadir submarines which is able to shoot torpedoes), 4(four) frigate, three(3) covettes, 24 patrol boats carrying guided missiles, 270 patrol boats, 12 coast guard missile launcher, around 200 missiles, sea mines and 32 helicopters.

3. Air Forces: Air forces of the regular army in Iran have about 52 thousand (12 thousand air defence personnel) personnel. The force deployed in 14 air forces has 19 combat squadrons, 1(one) reconnaissance squadron, 10 transport/tanker fleet, and 200 combat aircrafts, 9(nine) reconnaissance aircrafts, 120 transport aircrafts and 4(four) tanker aircrafts in its inventory. Most of the combat aircrafts are F-4, F-1A, F-5E supplied from the USA and MIG-29 aircrafts from the Russian Federation in 1970s. Iran has 18 military and 22 civilian air spaces.

4. Air Defence Forces: Air Defence Forces established in 2009 as a separate command and it has about 12 thousand personnel. Also It is organized as one headquarter and 5(five) air defence sectors. Iran has an air defence unit about comprising of 16 battalions and it has Rapier, Tigercat, FM-80, SA-2, SA-5, SA-7 guns in these units.

C. Iranian Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution-AGIR-Pasdaran
AGIR was established in order to protect the Iranian Revolution and its achievements and to prevent a potential coup which is thought to be attempted by the regular army which is tied and loyal to the Shah of Iran. During the Iraq-Iran war, it constituted the main element of the Iranian forces. It has been working efficiently in suppressing the counter-revolutionary opposition in the country and supporting the non-governmental organizations in other countries.

Being more ideological and political than the regular army, AGIR plays the most important role in Iran's military economic activities and it directly reports to the religious leader. Its top level managers have a relationship with the religious leaders by affinity. AGIR, whose estimated number of personnel is about 125 thousand, controls the long range surface-to-surface missile systems and also organizes nuclear activities. Since they are also implementing Iran's chemical and biological weapon programmes, AGIR thinks that these units can be used, in the event that Iran has nuclear weapons. Organization of AGIR includes a land, marine and air forces just as the regular army and the Qods Forces affiliated to this army and whose duty is to engage in anomalous fights.

1. Land Forces: It is known that there are battalions under divisions, it has a different organization than the regular army and it has two (2) armoured divisions, five (5) mechanized divisions, 18 infantry division, one (1) special forces division, 15-20 independent brigades and one (1) airborne brigades.

2. Air Forces: In the air forces of AGIR three(3) SHAHAB-3 medium range missile units are present, and the presence of chemical and biological weapons is not confirmed. While the combat formation of the Air Forces is uncertain, is has 10 EBM 312’s and 45 PC 7 training aircrafts and gliders are claimed to be manufactured.

3. Marine Forces: There are about 20 thousand personnel in the marine forces of AGIR, included the naval infantry unit of 5 thousand people. Duty of this force is to organize attacks to the enemy ports, facilities and territorial waters. It is operational in the coasts and the bases in islands of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

4. Qods Force: The Qods Force, being under the AGIR, was started to be founded during the war with Iraq. Personnel of this forces, which takes its orders and instructions directly from the religious leader, is working in the representatives abroad, charitable foundations and religious centre and is in close relationships with the Shiite diaspora. Along with their paramilitary operations, they also perform duties such as creating uproars in the unsupportive countries, training the anti-regime groups in these countries,
aiding arms and equipment and supporting them, and to support the groups that are close to Iran by all means etc24. It is indicated that personnel number of Qods Force was about 5,000 in 2007, however Iran Supreme National Security Council has been considering increasing it up to 15,00025. Taking units received the unconventional combat training (Qods Forces, Basij, commandos and airborne troops) into account, an eerie picture (around one million personnel) comes up.

5. Basij Troops: Just like other regimes coming to power through revolutions, Iran is also largely affiliated to the “people's army”, in order to eliminate the weakness of the armed forces. Defence force of the people, the Basij, which was founded after Iran's Revolutionary Guards, includes manpower of 20 million against the potential foreign dangers. The Basij maintained order in the early years of the revolution, when there were not enough police force, it organized the data gathering network and performed its duty in the front line during the oppression of Kurdish rebellions and the war with Iraq. The personnel working in the Basij were recruited from the schools and mosques. The Basij is the third strongest military force with its 1 million personnel constituting 740 battalions26. While AGIR is highly dependent on the Basij, they are not given the required importance, since these troops are not as professional as the revolutionary guardians. If USA were to invade Iran, the Basij will support AGIR in defending the country in small troops27. Basij forces are interested in all sorts of military operations, except from defending the Strait of Hormuz.

The article will continue on next issue.

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Footnote
1http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=IR (Iran has 9% of the world oil reserves with its oil reserve of 154 million barrels and ranks second in the world in terms of natural gas resources after Russia, with its 1.188 trillion cubic feet natural gas resources.)
2 csis.org/files/.../070326_iranoil_hormuz.pdf pp. 2
3 Los Angeles Times 28 January 2011 (Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi stated that “If interventions will be applied against Iranian oil, they will not let even a drop of oil through the Strait of Hormuz” and Iranian Marine Forces Commander Habibollah Sayyari said that “Closing the Strait of Hormuz for maritime traffic is far easier than drinking a glass of water, the Arabian Sea is also under our control, we can control the transit passages.”)
4 http://www.eia.gov/cfapps/ipdbproject/EDIndex3.cfm?tid=5&pid=5&aid=2
5 http://www.eia.gov/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=wotc&trk=p3
6 www.persiangulfstudies.com
7 www.iranaffairs.com/iran-affairs/2008/08/straits of hormuz
8 www.eia.gov The report dated 06 February 2007
9 http://tr.wikisource.org/ Birleşmiş Milletler1958 ve 1982 Deniz Hukuku Sözleşmeleri
10 Persian News Agency, 04 January 2011
11 https://www.strausscenter.org/hormuz/alternate-export-routes.html
12 http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=4430
13 Velayat-e faqih, refers to “faqih administration” and faqih means religious law scholar.
16 Daniel Byman/ Shahram Chubin,... Iran's Security in the Post Revolutionry Era, RAND, 2001, pp. 32-33
18 http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=Iran
19 Antony Cordesman/Alexander Willer, Iran and the Gulf Military Balance, CSIS, Dec. 01, 2011 pp. 41
20 www.globalresearch.ca
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22 Claire Taylor, Iran: Conventional Military Capabilities, House of Commons, 2009, pp 7
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25 Antony Cordesman, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Al Quds Forces and Other Intelligence and Paramilitary Forces. CSIS, August 2007, pp. 8
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Geçmişten geleceğe miras...