



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE
UNION
DIRECTORATE B
- POLICY DEPARTMENT -**

NOTE ON



Iran

FOR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERNAL USE ONLY

This note was requested by the European Parliament's Delegation on Iran.

This paper is published in the following language: English (original)

Author: Sandro D'Angelo
(section 4 with Milda Galubickaite)

Directorate-General External Policies
Policy Department
sandro.dangelo@europarl.europa.eu

Manuscript completed in October 2008.

This note is available on the [intranet](#) of the Policy Department of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union.

This note is also available in the catalogue of the European Parliament's [Library](#).

Copies can be obtained through: E-mail: xp-poldep@europarl.europa.eu

Brussels, European Parliament, 28 October 2008.

Any opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.
--

Iran

CONTENTS

1 Global and regional security	4
2 Nuclear non-proliferation and energy.....	9
3 Human rights and protection of minorities	11
4 EU/Iran Cooperation on the Fight against drug trafficking	14
Annex I: Note on the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation (MKO), and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)	16
Annex II: Map of Iran.....	19

Background Note for the
Delegation for Relations with Iran
3rd Interparliamentary Meeting

1 Global and Regional Security

Iran remains accused of being a state sponsor of terrorism due to its open or suspected support of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

From Iran's perspective, Hizbollah and Hamas are not terrorist groups but legitimate freedom fighting organizations that have the legitimacy and support of their respective populations.

Because Iran is wary of stoking sectarian tension, it will not take a strong public stance against al-Qaeda, but it could be a silent partner in preventing its potential rise in places like Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan.

In 2007, the United States considered declaring the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) a terrorist organization, and Interpol approved arrest warrants for a number of senior IRGC and Iranian government officials for their alleged roles in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish cultural centre in Argentina.

- PEOPLE'S MUJAHEDIN ORGANISATION OF IRAN (PMOI)¹
The European Court of First Instance verdict on 23 October 2008 dissolved a decision taken by EU states in December 2007 to keep the People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) on its blacklist, saying UK evidence against the group was invalid. However, the PMOI, the country's leading opposition group, will stay on the EU's terrorist register despite the second European court ruling, as EU member states outpace the courts with fresh decisions every few months.

- IRAQ²
Instability provides more fertile ground for radical Salafist groups—such as al-Qaeda—that are violently opposed to American, Iranian, and Shi'i influences. State failure would likely create an influx of Iraqi refugees to Iran.

Democracy

Given Iraq's Shi'i majority, Iran feels confident that elections in Iraq are the best vehicle to further its interests. Fearing Shi'i ascendancy in Baghdad, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait are far less supportive of a democratic Iraq.

Despite overlapping interests, Iran's role in Iraq has been at best schizophrenic and at worst nefarious. Given the nebulosity of post-war Iraq, and the stealth with which

¹ For a picture on the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation (MKO) and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) see the Note attached.

² http://carnegieendowment.org/files/us_iran_policy.pdf

Iran operates via Iraqi proxies, the precise scope of Iranian involvement is difficult to know.

Nevertheless, Tehran has been accused of financing, arming, and training militia groups—such as those of Moqtada al-Sadr and the Jaish al- Mahdi—that have targeted both military objectives and Iraqi civilians.

From Tehran’s perspective, given that one of US’s declared purposes of the Iraq war was to change the political culture of the Middle East, Iran had little reason to play a passive role in Iraq. On the contrary, Tehran believed that US sought to install a pro-American puppet regime in Baghdad that would be sympathetic to Israel and hostile to Iran, and then possibly shift its regime change ambitions eastward to Tehran.

For this reason, Iran felt compelled to simultaneously teach America an expensive lesson in Iraq and ensure that its allies secured positions of power there.

- AFGHANISTAN³

Having accommodated over 2 million Afghan refugees, Tehran does not stand to gain from continued strife in Afghanistan. It has sought to play a leading role in the country’s reconstruction, ranking among the top ten aid donors.

Counter-narcotics

With one of the highest incidences of drug addiction in the world and a strict penal code prohibiting drug use, Iran has been highly vigilant in policing drug trafficking along the Afghan border.

Support for the Karzai government

Though it has not abandoned its support for other allies in Afghanistan, Iran has been supportive of the Karzai government and made numerous pledges of security and economic cooperation.

Opposition to the Taliban

Iran nearly fought a war against the inherently anti- Shi’i Taliban in 1998 and supported the opposition Northern Alliance long before September 11, 2001.

Yet, similar to its approach in Iraq, Tehran’s behaviour toward Afghanistan has been at times ambiguous and counter to its own national interests.

At the same time when Iranian officials have publicly avowed support for the Karzai government, Iranian state radio programs broadcast to Afghanistan have simultaneously referred to him as the “stooge of the United States.”

However, according to a US think tank not only Iran played a crucial role in helping to assemble the post-Taliban government and military. Some experts even believe that a greater Iranian role could be an important factor in reducing Pakistani influence and reversing the growing role of the Taliban.

- PAKISTAN⁴

In the past few months Iran and Pakistan have been warming diplomatically along the border that separates the two countries. In recent months a flurry of agreements have brought the two countries closer as they promise to transform the Balochistan region

³ http://carnegieendowment.org/files/us_iran_policy.pdf

⁴ <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1020/p05s01-wosc.html>

into an active transport, trade, and energy hub.

Over the summer, Iran and Pakistan signed four agreements that unveiled a new ground transport route and enhanced cooperation in the mining sector in the area rich in minerals.

The Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline

The Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline proposal is a \$7.5 billion project that would transport gas from the western Iranian Pars gas field to India through Pakistan along a 1,500-mile route.

The pipeline would be a triumph for Pakistan. The country hopes to make itself a major energy player linking the gas in Central Asia and the oil in the Middle East to the fast-growing economies of China and India.

But geopolitical considerations, among others, have so far blocked the proposal from becoming a reality.

The United States, which this month signed a nuclear trade deal with India, opposes the plan that would bind its main rival, Iran, with key allies in the region. Proponents of the deal counter that it could improve security by boosting relations in the often volatile region – and have even dubbed the proposal the "**Peace Pipeline**".

India has signed a nuclear deal with the US and would be more inclined to support American policy in the region, which might mean pulling back from such deals with Iran.

Despite the US nuclear deal, India has not pulled out of IPI discussions. Two days after the US-India nuclear deal was finalized, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki met his Pakistani counterpart in Islamabad and confirmed that the two countries would now begin work of the pipeline bilaterally. "India may join the project whenever it is ready for this," the Iranian foreign minister said.

- The Caucasus⁵

Iran's policy in the region is largely guided by geo-political state interests and less by ideological goals, such as promotion of Islam. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran grasped that a potentially conflict-laden zone had replaced its once stable northern border and that influences from the new states could permeate the internal Iranian arena. From the inception of their independence, Tehran took a very sober attitude toward the establishment of the new Muslim republics, seeing in this development the dangers that emanate from the internal ethnic factor in addition to the opportunities for expanded influence.

The first ground for concern from the point of view in Tehran is the lack of political stability in the newly independent republics. The unstable conditions in those republics could be serious causes of insecurity along the lengthy borders (over 2000 kilometres) Iran shares with those countries.

As Tehran's policies toward Central Asia and the Caucasus are guided chiefly by material state considerations, a change in the regime will not necessarily cause a

⁵ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=10255>

Shaffer, Brenda. "Iran's Role in the South Caucasus and Caspian Region: Diverging Views of the U.S. and Europe." Chap. 2 in *Iran and Its Neighbors: Diverging Views on a Strategic Region*, pages 17-22, Berlin

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=10257>

dramatic change in the nature of its policies toward the region. Tehran will continue to seek the widening of its influence in the area, to deny gains to competing states, to prevent spillover of the conflicts waging in the area, and to attempt to avert events in the Caucasus from affecting co-ethnics inside Iran, especially among the Azerbaijanis there.

A regime change in Iran, especially if this brings a renewal of relations and cooperation with the United States, could actually enlarge the opportunities for Tehran to exert influence in the region. A change in regime in Iran will not affect its basic desire to have strong influence over the policies of the neighboring states in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and particularly to attempt to undermine Azerbaijan's prosperity. However *"an Iranian regime change may lessen Washington's sensitivity to Iran's actions in the area and could lead to Tehran to having more of a freehand in its attempts to influence its neighbors, thus rendering the states of the South Caucasus more vulnerable to Iranian dictates"*.

Not least in order to help limit the US influence in the region, but also to get access to interesting military hardware, Iran cultivates its relations with **Russia**. Iran's current interests and those of Russia are to a big extent similar or complementary, in the geo-strategic area as well as in the economic field. It should be noted that Iran is not, and appears never to have been, a sponsor of Islamist rebels or terrorists in Chechnya and elsewhere in the northern Caucasus. Strategic considerations take precedence and lead Iran to cooperate with non-Muslim Russia.

Strategic considerations also seem to be behind Iran's choice of developing good relations with Russia's best friend in the South Caucasus, notably Christian Armenia, and not with Shia Muslim (albeit highly secularised) Azerbaijan. Cooperation with **Azerbaijan** could expose Iran to destabilising influences, in particular in the region of Azerbaijan on the Iranian side of the border, which is home to far more Azeris than the Republic of Azerbaijan. There is a conflict between Iran and Azerbaijan over the ownership of hydrocarbon deposits beneath the Caspian Sea and Azerbaijan's cooperation with NATO is raising suspicions in Tehran.

Armenia gets help from Iran to limit the isolation it suffers due to the conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the closed border also with Turkey (Armenia's main lifeline is, however, that via its neighbour to the north, Georgia). The first part of a gas pipeline which will increase Armenia's security of energy supply has recently been completed and an agreement on Iranian (non-weapon) supplies to the Armenian military has just been concluded. Armenia must, however, weigh the advantages of further cooperation with Iran against the serious problems with the US that this cooperation can provoke.

- Iran engaging Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Russia to form a Caucasian security grouping

During the visit in Georgia last September (2008), Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said that Tehran was closely following up ongoing events in the Caucasus in order to restore stability and security in the region.

He added that Iran was offering solutions to different parties in the region in order to get out of the current stalemate and help restore stability and security.

Consultations have been held with Russian, Azeri, Armenian, and German officials on mechanisms for restoring stability and security to the Caucasus.

Georgina President Saakashvili, for his part, acknowledging Iran's major status and a significant position in the region, confirmed special importance to expansion of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2 Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Energy

After nearly three years of negotiations with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, Iran declared in 2005 that it would never agree to abandon its uranium enrichment programme, thus ending a negotiated voluntary suspension of enrichment and other fuel-cycle related activities.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) then reported Iran to the UN Security Council, which subsequently passed four resolutions demanding that Iran suspend all enrichment and reprocessing related activities.

The five permanent members of the Security Council, plus Germany, have offered economic, technological, and political incentives to comply.

Iran has spurned these overtures.

Iran has signed and ratified the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#)⁶ and a Safeguards Agreement, through which non-nuclear-weapon states undertake not to acquire nuclear weapons and accept subjecting themselves to certain controls.

Reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement have, however, for the last few years, fuelled suspicions that Iran was carrying out activities that would enable it to make nuclear-weapons as a prelude to developing a nuclear bomb.

In 2004, France, Germany and the UK, together with the EU High Representative, made a concerted effort to bring this situation under control. This resulted in the **Paris Agreement** on suspension by Iran of all enrichment related and reprocessing activities, pending agreement on a long-term arrangement.

However, little progress towards such an arrangement was made and when Mr Ahmadi-Nejad was elected president of Iran in June 2005, the prospects worsened.

After having rejected an EU proposal for a framework for a long-term arrangement, Iran in August 2005 resumed uranium conversion (an enrichment-related activity). It thereby abandoned the Paris Agreement. The IAEA found that Iran had not complied with its Safeguards Agreement and reported this to the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Iran proceeded to enrichment on a limited scale. It then twice ignored deadlines for suspending enrichment set by the UNSC. It also turned down a package of incentives for agreeing to suspension, presented to it in June 2006 by Mr Solana, on behalf of the EU-3 and with the support of the other permanent members of the UNSC.

In December 2006, the UNSC unanimously decided that Iran without further delay must suspend proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities and imposed sanctions: a ban on trade in material and on assistance related to sensitive activities and the freezing of assets of certain entities and individuals. On 24 March 2007, the UNSC decided to add other entities and persons and to prohibit arms sales by Iran.

The UN Security Council on 3 March 2008 adopted a resolution which somewhat expanded the earlier adopted sanctions. The new resolution confirmed the two-track approach, with sanctions but also efforts to reach a diplomatic solution. Iran responded, however, that it regarded the talks with Mr Solana, who has led the diplomatic efforts of the EU-3⁷ and P5+1⁸, as closed.

⁶ A detailed account of Iran's relation to the NPT is given in the study [Iran and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), prepared for the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee in 2006.

⁷ France, Germany and the UK

⁸ The five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, UK and the USA) plus Germany.

On 22 September last, the IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei updated the Board members on the status of verification of Iran's nuclear programme. He said that the Agency has not been able to make substantive progress on the alleged studies and associated questions relevant to possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme.

On 26 September 2008, the UN Security Council reaffirmed three earlier rounds of sanctions against Iran.

- ENERGY⁹

With the world's second-largest oil and natural gas reserves, Iran's importance to the global energy market is self-evident. Yet a variety of factors—mismanagement, sanctions, and political tension—have made Iran a perennial energy underperformer. Its oil output—around 4.2 million barrels per day—is far below the 6 million barrels it produced before the revolution, and though it has 15 percent of the world's natural gas reserves, it accounts only 2 percent of world output.

Iran possesses abundant fuels from which to generate energy, ranking second in the world in natural gas reserves and third in oil reserves. Nevertheless, in 2005 Iran spent US\$4 billion dollars on fuel imports, mainly because of inefficient domestic use. Oil industry output averaged about 4 million barrels per day in 2005 and 2006, compared with the peak output of 6.6 million barrels per day reached in 1976. In the early 2000s, industry infrastructure was increasingly inefficient because of technological lags.

Natural gas output in 2006 was 105 billion cubic meters. A large share of Iran's natural gas reserves are believed to remain untapped, although gas already accounted for nearly one-half of energy consumption. With massive government investments planned, the share of gas in energy production was expected to rise quickly in ensuing years.

By 2004 the addition of new hydroelectric stations and the streamlining of conventional coal- and oil-fired stations increased installed capacity to more than 39,000 megawatts. Of that amount, in 2006 about 50 percent was based on natural gas, 18 percent on oil, and 6 percent on hydroelectric power. In 2004 Iran opened its first wind-powered and geothermal plants, and the first solar thermal plant was to come online in 2009. Demographic trends and intensified industrialization have caused electric power demand to grow, averaging 5 percent per year from 1967 to 2004 and projected to average 7 percent per year from 2005 to 2010. The government's goal of 53,000 megawatts of installed capacity by 2010 is to be reached by building new gas-fired plants financed by independent power producers, including those with foreign investment backing, and by adding hydroelectric and nuclear power generating capacity. Iran's first nuclear power plant at Bushehr, which may be completed in 2008 after years of delays, has received international criticism because of concerns that its enriched uranium and spent fuel can be diverted for the production of nuclear weapons.

⁹ Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, Country profile: Iran; May 2008

3 Human rights and protection of minorities¹⁰

EU publishes an Annual Report on Human Rights which is an assessment of the Human Rights situation in the EU and in the world. In 2007, the Annual Report reached the following conclusion for Iran:

*“Serious violations of human rights have continued to occur in Iran. There has been little or no progress in the EU’s main areas of concern since the last Annual Report, in many respects the situation has worsened. Use of the **death penalty** is frequent, including in the case of child offenders. Freedom of expression is severely restricted. Reports of torture are frequent. Human rights defenders continue to report harassment and intimidation.”*

According to the most important human rights' organizations, under the administration of President Ahmadinejad basic human rights' protection in Iran has deteriorated even further. In particular, journalists, writers, scholars, and women's rights and community activists were subject to arbitrary arrest, travel bans, closure of their NGOs and harassment. Discrimination against women remained entrenched in law and practice.

- Iran still issues death penalty against juvenile offenders

On 18 October 2008, the Iranian government said that a judicial directive banning executions of children under the age of 18 does not apply to the vast majority of cases of juvenile offenders on death row (Hussein Zebhi, deputy for judicial affairs to Iran's prosecutor general, said that the judicial directive only applies to narcotics cases). The statement contradicts a 15 October 2008 announcement that the ban would apply to all offenders under 18, “no matter what the offence.”

A recent judicial ban on juvenile executions in Iran should save more than 130 juvenile offenders currently on death row from execution. An Iranian Judiciary official announced on 15 October 2008 that death sentences for offenders under the age of 18 would be commuted to life imprisonment with the possibility of parole.

Since January 2005, Iran has been responsible for 26 of the 32 known executions of juvenile offenders worldwide. Allegedly six juveniles have been executed in 2008 and between 130 and 140 juvenile offenders are currently on death row.

International law prohibits all executions of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time they committed their crimes, and pressure is growing on Iran (and the four other states known to execute juvenile offenders) to conform to international law.

In particular, in imposing death sentences on people for crimes committed before the age of 18, Iran flouts clear and specific human rights obligations. The imposition of the death penalty for such offences is prohibited under two key human rights treaties that Iran has ratified: the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", and the "Convention on the Rights of the Child".

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iran/humanrights_en.htm
Amnesty International "Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority", 2008
Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1/10/2008; http://www.crin.org/docs/UN_GA_JJ.pdf

- **Discrimination against women**

The Islamic Republic of Iran has yet to ratify the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

Women in Iran face widespread discrimination under the law. They are excluded from key areas of the state – they cannot, for example, be judges or stand for the presidency. They do not have equal rights with men in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

However, not everything in Iran is bad for women. The Islamic Republic of Iran is reported to have made important achievements in women’s education and health since 1990, the baseline year for the Millennium Development Goals. It is likely to achieve benchmarks under Goals 2 (achieve universal primary education), 4 (reduce child mortality) and 5 (improve maternal health).

For instance, the female-to-male literacy ratio in the 15-to-24 age group has increased from 87.9 per cent to 98.6 per cent. The girls’ primary, secondary and tertiary education enrolment ratio has markedly increased, from 79.2 per cent to 94.3 per cent, with female students constituting 64 per cent of all college students.

Access to health care, including reproductive health care, has become nearly universal. Maternal and infant mortality rates have also declined sharply.

As regards education, the government’s focus on it has led to a situation where the majority of university entrants are women. This makes many Iranian women no longer prepared to permit discrimination against women to continue unchallenged. To this end, Iranian women’s rights defenders have courageously launched a campaign demanding an end to legal discrimination against women.

Their efforts are viewed with suspicion by Iranian government authorities, who have launched a campaign of intimidation and repression against them.

- **Protection of minorities**

Population:	69 million (2006 est.)
Ethnic groups:	Persian 51%, Azeri 24%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 8%, Kurd 7%, Arab 3%, Lur 2%, Baloch 2%, Turkmen 2%, other 1%
Religions:	Muslim 98% (Shi’a 89%, Sunni 9%), other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha’i) 2%
Languages:	Persian and Persian dialects 58%, Turkic and Turkic dialects 26%, Kurdish 9%, Luri 2%, Balochi 1%, Arabic 1%, Turkish 1%, other 2%

Sources: U.S. Department of State, *Background Notes* October, 2006; CIA, *World Factbook*, updated on May 15, 2007.

Reports continue to be received about members of the **Baha’i community** being subjected to arbitrary detention, false imprisonment, confiscation and destruction of property, denial of employment and Government benefits and denial of access to higher education. A significant increase has been reported in violence targeting Baha’is throughout the country.

Kurds in Iran have long suffered deep-rooted discrimination. Their social, political and cultural rights have been repressed, as have their economic aspirations. Kurdish regions have been economically neglected, resulting in entrenched poverty. Forced evictions and destruction of homes have left Kurds with restricted access to adequate housing.

The discriminatory *gozinesh system* – a selection procedure that requires prospective state officials and employees to demonstrate allegiance to Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran – **denies Kurds equality in employment and political participation.**

Other minority groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran are reported to have been subjected to a range of human rights violations. For example, members of the Nematollahi Sufi Muslim community, the Sunni community, the Baluchi community, the Azeri-Turk community and the Christian community who have reportedly been subjected to arbitrary arrests and torture, allegedly in connection with peaceful demonstrations for their rights, such as the right to speak their own language and to hold religious ceremonies.

- Rights of minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Constitution explicitly declares Islam to be the State religion, but contains two important provisions concerning religious minorities.

Article 13 states that **Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities** who are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, within the limits of the law, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.

Article 14 also provides protection for non-Muslims, provided they refrain from conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Human Rights Committee expressed its concern at the extent of the limitations and **restrictions on the freedom of religion and belief**, noting that conversion from Islam is punishable and that even followers of the three recognized religions are facing serious difficulties in the enjoyment of their rights.

The Committee was particularly disturbed about the extent of discrimination against followers of non-recognized religions, **notably the Baha'is**, whose rights under the Covenant are subject to extremely severe restrictions.

5 EU/Iran Cooperation on the fight against drug trafficking¹¹

The problem of illegal narcotics is one of the most complex challenges currently facing Iranian society.

Iran is one of the main conduits for illegal substances – mostly opium, hashish, heroin, and morphine-base drugs, originating in Afghanistan and destined for markets in Europe and the Persian Gulf region.

The traffickers are using Iran's territory as the shortest land route for drug transit from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Europe. The major drug producing countries on the eastern border of Iran, together with the lucrative markets of consumption in European countries, have turned the Islamic Republic of Iran into a major drug transit route.

The traffickers operating from every point of the Afghan border, the issues entailed by the cultivation of opium and the subsequent production of heroin in Afghanistan are trans-regional by nature and call therefore for a trans-national solution. It is estimated that roughly 85% of the opium and heroin produced in Afghanistan is channelled through Iran and Pakistan, the remaining 15% being conveyed through the countries of Central Asia.

- International relations

The Governments of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan are intensifying their regional cooperation. On 19 May 2008 Ministers from the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan has concluded in Tehran with agreement on measures to strengthen border cooperation between the three countries in order to stem the flow of drugs from Afghanistan. A trilateral ministerial meeting held as part of the “Triangular Initiative” brokered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), approved practical measures to improve trans-border cooperation to fight drugs and crime.

Iran participates as well in a number of multilateral agencies involved in controlling drug abuse.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) whose Secretariat is based in Teheran, Iran, promotes trade facilitation and economic cooperation, through the Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) provides a structure for strategic discussions on narcotic issues between the 10 ECO member countries¹².

With regard to programmes of international organisations, UNODC¹³ is at the frontline of cooperation with the region. The UNODC Strategic Programme Framework (SPF) for Iran (2006-2008) is designed to assist the Iranian government in reducing the trafficking in narcotics into, within and outside the country. The programme aims at promoting the rule of law through strengthened crime prevention measures and the provision of legal assistance.

¹¹ <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html>; <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu>; <http://www.ecosecretariat.org/>; <http://www.ecodccu.org/new/history.htm>; <http://www4.irna.ir/>
European journal of crime, criminal law, and criminal justice - 1993 - PERI - Kluwer, 2008, v. 16, n. 2, p. 155-170

¹² The member countries of ECO are Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

¹³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html>

- EU - Iran relations

As the EU Member States are one of the main destination countries of the drug trafficking, the EU has a fundamental interest and is a key player in supporting the efforts of Afghanistan and the transit countries to prevent and fight this scourge. The EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012, the EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-2008, as well as the 2006 EU "Action-Oriented Paper to Combat the Production of Drugs in and Trafficking from Afghanistan and along the heroin routes", provide the overall strategic framework for any EC intervention in this area, together with the Paris Pact process in which the EU actively participates and which promotes cooperation between Afghanistan, the countries along the heroin routes and the international community.

Taking into account only the actions linked to the law enforcement and trafficking aspects, the EC maintains sizeable programmes at national and sub-regional levels in Afghanistan, Central Asia, Turkey and Azerbaijan, but has also been supporting the ECO DCCU in Teheran as well as other relatively small drug/crime control actions in Afghanistan, Turkey and Iran for several years.

The EC, in the framework of the Instrument for Stability (IfS) Strategy for 2007-2011 has committed to sustain the fight against illicit trafficking inter alia by targeting trans-regional drugs routes combining institution-building and support for operational capabilities with the facilitation of inter-agency cooperation and the improvement of response in countries situated along a drugs trafficking route (one of the main Initiative is the Programme: "**Fight against trafficking from/to Afghanistan**" amounting to 9,5 million EUR).

Note on the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation (MKO), and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)

This note provides a picture of the MKO and NCRI, as well as an account of the EU's listing of the MKO as a terrorist organisation and the dispute that this has provoked.

The MKO and NCRI

The Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation (MKO)¹⁴ pursues the overthrow of the Iranian regime. It has a long history of carrying out attacks, first fighting the Shah regime and its US sponsor and then targeting the religious regime originally led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Having been suppressed within Iran in the 1980's and having lost, after the US-led invasion of Iraq, also the possibility to use that country as a basis for preparing violent action, the MKO has refocused its activities. It now concentrates on agitation against what it describes as a policy of appeasement in relation to the Iranian regime and on campaigning for being taken off the US and EU list of terrorist organisations.

Brief history

The MKO was founded in Teheran in 1965 by university students, blending Islamic ideas and Marxism. It grew, but was infiltrated by the Shah's security service, the SAVAK, which foiled an attempt to carry out a large attack in connection with a visit of the US President Richard Nixon. In the 1970's, it carried out a number of attacks, inter alia against US personnel in Iran. At the time of the revolution, in 1979, the MKO had been weakened by actions by the authorities as well as infighting. The MKO supported the occupation of the US embassy in Teheran, which started shortly after the revolution.

MKO leaders who were liberated from prison sought to carve out a central role for the organisation in the new political system. The Khomeini regime did, however, consolidate its grip on power. This also affected the first elected President, Mr Abol-Hasan Banisadr, who sought cooperation with the MKO, led by Mr Masoud Rajavi. In June 1981, a major demonstration in Teheran ended in massive bloodshed when the Revolutionary Guard intervened. Mr Banisadr and Mr Rajavi soon after fled to Paris, where they set up the National Council of Resistance. Their cooperation did, however, later end. Today's National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) is widely regarded as a political wing of the MKO, rather than as a parliament in exile representing a broad spectrum of opposition forces, as it claims to be¹⁵. The current leader of the NCRI and 'president elect for the transitional period following the mullahs' overthrow' is Mrs Maryam Rajavi. She is the wife of Mr Masoud Rajavi, who has disappeared and may no longer be alive. For a period, the couple led the MKO together and after Mr Rajavi's disappearance, Mrs Rajavi assumed the leadership¹⁶.

¹⁴ Also called Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) or the People's Mojahedin of Iran (PMOI).

¹⁵ NCRI website: http://www.ncr-iran.org/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/. The MKO also has a website, <http://www.mojahedin.org/>, with several photos of Mrs Rajavi on the front page, but apparently no western language section.

¹⁶ She has an own website:

http://www.maryamrajavi.com/m/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Many MKO activists fled to Iraq, which was at war with Iran. The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, supported the creation of a military wing of the MKO, the 'National Liberation Army' (NLA). The NLA's website¹⁷ proudly displays tanks in parade, while not mentioning how they were acquired. It also contains glorified accounts of military operations, including one launched in July 1988, only a few days after Iran had accepted a cease-fire with Iraq. Setting out 'on the road to Teheran', the NLA managed to advance some 150 km on Iranian territory before being pushed back.

The NLA Ashraf camp near Bagdad, with some 3 500 militants, remained the MKO's main focus until the US-led invasion of Iraq. The MKO militants were then disarmed, but their continued presence is being tolerated and they have been given the status of protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention¹⁸. According to a Human Rights Watch report published in 2005, MKO members in camp Ashraf criticising the MKO leadership or wishing to leave the organisation have been subjected to solitary confinement and torture. The MKO vehemently denies this. After the report was launched, a group of MKO-friendly MEPs visited the Ashraf camp and stated their disbelief of the information in the Human Rights Watch report.

The MKO carried out major attacks in Iran after the organisation was outlawed there. It also attacked Iranian embassies and other Iranian targets abroad. According to the 2005 (still the most recent) annual report of the German Verfassungsschutz (secret service), no 'terrorist action or plans for such action' could be confirmed since attacks against Iranian security forces were carried out in Teheran in on 25 October 2001 and 18 May 2002. The Verfassungsschutz considers that after the events in Iraq, the MKO has entered a phase of reorientation and that the organisation now lacks the capacity to carry out terrorist actions, although it has not given up violent action as an option.

It should be noted that the NCRI in 2002 revealed the construction of an enrichment facility at Natanz and a heavy water production plant at Arak, Iran. As a matter of fact, the NCRI was instrumental in triggering an investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) into Iran's nuclear activities. Information on nuclear activities provided more recently by the NCRI has, however, reportedly been of little value.

The listing as a terrorist organisation

The MKO is on the US as well as the EU list of terrorist organisations¹⁹. The US list also includes the NCRI, but the EU list explicitly mentions that the NCRI is not covered. The EU list is not accompanied by any document stating the specific reasons for the inclusion of individual organisations in the list.

¹⁷ <http://www.iran-e-azad.org/english/nla.html>

¹⁸ Further details on this, as well as on the MKO's attempts to gain recognition in the West, are included in the 2004 annual report of the German Verfassungsschutz (in German): http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/publikationen/verfassungsschutzbericht/vsbericht_2004/vsbericht_2004.pdf

¹⁹ EU list: http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=631&lang=en&mode=g, 'EU list of terrorist organisations', section 2 'Groups and entities', point 27.

The MKO campaigns for being deleted from these lists and has gained support from some members of the US Congress, as well as from groups of members of several parliaments in Europe, not least the EP.

The EC Court of First Instance on 12 December 2006 ruled that the Council's decision to freeze the funds of the MKO (on the basis of the CFSP Common Position that includes the MKO in a list of terrorist organisations), 'does not contain a sufficient statement of reasons and that it was adopted in the course of a procedure during which [the MKO's] right to a fair hearing was not observed'²⁰. The Council in February 2007 sent a (classified) letter to the organisation stating its reasons for the inclusion. The Council considers that by doing this, it has given a sufficient reaction to the court ruling and can maintain MKO on the list. The MKO disputes this and is likely to appeal to the EC Court of Justice.

The NCRI has at several occasions requested meetings with EU officials, but the Council/Council Secretariat and the Commission have always said no.

Mrs Maryam Rajavi has visited the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as guest of its liberal group. In December 2004, she visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg, as a guest of a group of MEPs. The High Representative Javier Solana and the External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner expressed disagreement with the arrangement of the meeting in the European Parliament. Following that, the Conference of Presidents on 24 February 2005 concluded that *'in a spirit of good interinstitutional cooperation, no meeting of this kind should take place, neither within the buildings of the European Parliament, nor in Parliament bodies and/or with official representatives of the Parliament'*.

The Conference of Presidents did, however, on 14 June 2006 modify its earlier decision and permit the EPP-ED group to *'invite Mrs Rajavi, former leader of the MKO and currently president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran'*. The Conference of Presidents noted that this decision *'in no way constitutes a precedent in relation to any other personality belonging to a terrorist organisation included in the Council's list'*²¹.

The front pages of Mrs Rajavi's and the NCRI's websites reflect the importance to them of their contacts in the EP and other parliaments. The Iranian Embassy in Brussels has repeatedly protested against Mrs Rajavi's and other MKO/NCRI representatives' visits to the EP.

Dag Sourander
PolDep / External Relations 13 April 2007

²⁰ <http://curia.europa.eu/jurisp/cgi-bin/form.pl?lang=en&newform=newform&alljur=alljur&juredj=juredj&jurtpi=jurtpi&jurfp=jurfp&alldocrec=allldocrec&docj=docj&docor=docor&docop=docop&docav=docav&docsom=docsom&docinf=docinf&alldocnorec=allldocnorec&docnoj=docnoj&docnoor=docnoor&typeord=ALLTYP&allcommjo=allcommjo&affint=affint&affclose=affclose&numaff=&ddatefs=12&mdatefs=12&ydatefs=2006&ddatefe=&mdatefe=&ydatefe=&nomusuel=Organisation+des+Modjahedines+du+peuple+d%27Iran&do maine=PESC&mots=&resmax=100&Submit=Submit>. The quote is from paragraph 173 of the ruling.

²¹ Like the previous quote, translated from French by the author of this note.

