



# **U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAN AFTER THE NUCLEAR DEAL**



**JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
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# U.S. Policy Toward Iran After the Nuclear Deal

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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While the landmark Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action will be the cornerstone of U.S.-Iran relations for years to come, a new set of policies for engagement between the U.S. and Iran is both possible and necessary if the U.S. wishes to help bring Iran into the international community as a more pragmatic actor. To prevail in this, Washington will need a new, more balanced approach that recognizes Tehran's saber-rattling for what it is, and a groundbreaking cooperative agenda that balances the strategic interests of its allies in the Middle East with the U.S.' overarching objective of stability in the region – both of which Iran is integral to.

This is not to say that the U.S. should at any point overlook Tehran's history of fomenting violence and discord in the region for the sake of compromise; such antagonistic policies must be systematically opposed wherever Tehran seeks to implement them. But at this critical juncture where tensions between Iran and the Arab states are at a fever pitch, Iran will be more likely to sit at the table if the U.S. can convince its allies that their security is best served through diplomatic measures. Moreover, if Iran can be shown that its more aggressive tendencies do more harm than good to its national interests, it may yet shift its attention inward to more cooperative and prosperous endeavors worthy of the regional power it aspires to be.

Reintegrating Iran into the international community will be by no means easy, and hopes for swift reform must be tempered even as a new generation of young Iranians begins to exert a more moderate influence on domestic politics. But if the following U.S. policies can be implemented to deter Iranian actions that destabilize the region, demonstrate commitment to regional allies, and incentivize acceptable behavior from Iran with opportunities for economic and diplomatic integration, ideology may give way to reveal instances of progress toward a more beneficial state of relations between the U.S. and Iran.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Containment*

1. Aggressively enforce all aspects of the JCPOA in conjunction with the IAEA, and immediately re-impose previous U.S. financial sanctions if Iran breaks its commitments to the JCPOA
2. Encourage open diplomatic channels for dialogue between Arab governments and Iran, particularly Saudi Arabia
3. Continue providing economic support funding to Israel through grants for the purchase of military equipment and development assistance, and assure Israel has a qualitative military edge in the region by providing systems for missile defense, enhanced intelligence sharing, and regular joint military exercises
4. Target new avenues of Iranian involvement in terrorism; Improve Counterterrorism Finance Controls (CFTs) that detect terrorist financing on state and institutional levels, and reduce the availability of funding through banking institutions to terror organizations in the U.S. and abroad

### ***Domestic***

1. Work with Iran to create an agenda to continue dropping sanctions dependent upon positive Iranian action, facilitating the introduction of foreign involvement into the Iranian economy
2. Establish student exchange and sister city programs between the U.S. and Iran

### ***Regional***

1. Ensure that Iran continues to be involved in negotiations regarding Syria and convince Iran of the impossibility of its support for Bashar al-Assad; maintain and develop the recent ceasefire agreement with Russia while working with Iran to construct a long-term plan for the Syrian government
2. Invite Iran to play a role in the U.S. campaign against DAIISH<sup>i</sup> and promote the cooperation and inclusion of Sunnis in operations; pressure Iran to cease its support of proxy groups and militias that incite sectarian violence
3. Build programs in coordination with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that seek to provide free access to education for every Afghan citizen, place diplomatic pressure on the Afghan government to modernize the rights of women in Afghan society, and target drug trafficking across Iran's shared border with Afghanistan

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<sup>i</sup> Pronounced "die-esh." Derived from the English transliteration of the group's Arabic name, al-Dawla al Islamiyah fil al-Iraq wa al-Sham.

## I. INTRODUCTION

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With the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the P5+1 now in force, the primary question that remains is what this means for the future of Iran and U.S.-Iran relations at this critical juncture. Full implementation of the agreement will substantially contribute to regional and international security, broaden the economic opportunities available to Iran and its people, and allow Tehran to integrate more fully as a peaceful member of the global community, all of which are critical to U.S. interests in the region. Nonetheless, progress toward these goals will be a slow and difficult process and will be heavily influenced by West's dealings with Iran.

The U.S. in particular will play a critical role in determining whether Iran will seek to temper its more disruptive policies and normalize relations within the region and the rest of the world. While the JCPOA is a positive first step toward that goal, there are many areas of U.S.-Iran relations that the agreement does not address, including Iran's ongoing involvement in terrorism, its record of human rights abuses, and the growing violence that has characterized Sunni-Shia relations in recent events. These areas contain both points of contention as well as opportunities for cooperation, but nonetheless remain as serious obstacles to improving U.S.-Iran relations.

Moreover if U.S. policymakers wish to build a relationship with Iran based on trust, cooperation, and mutual respect, they must regard Iran as it is, with equal measures of both hope and skepticism, not as they wish it to be. Many believe, both in Washington and Tehran, that the JCPOA could rebalance domestic politics within Iran in favor of more moderate elements, opening the discourse to issues that have otherwise been eclipsed for the past decade by economic sanctions and its nuclear program. Iran has indeed changed much since the 1979 Revolution. The Iranian people are well-educated, familiar with democratic processes, and want to be recognized by the world for their accomplishments. Even more promising are the results of this month's countrywide elections, which elevated a significant number of more pragmatic candidates into open seats in both the Iranian parliament and, more critically, the Assembly of Experts that oversees the vetting process for political candidates and appointees throughout government. Hopes that these changes will be the catalyst for swift political reform, however, are misplaced. With isolationist elements led by current Supreme Leader Khamenei an entrenched majority within the government's primary decision-making and tutelary bodies, meaningful political change will come to Iran slowly, if at all.

This means that Washington must be able to differentiate the sporadic saber-rattling – which has allowed Khamenei to appease staunch conservatives opposed to the JCPOA – from actions that have real impact on U.S. interests and respond accordingly. Exhibiting strength will have its place in vigorously enforcing the JCPOA and consistently opposing Iranian aggression and support for terrorism in the region. But disproportionate reactions derived from rhetoric alone serve only to bolster hardliners in Tehran who continue to be hostile to the idea of cooperation with the West. Indeed, Iran's compliance with the deal thus far<sup>1</sup> and its involvement in top-level

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<sup>1</sup> Kerr, Paul K. *Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations*. Washington D.C. Congressional Research Service. Library of Congress. 2016. Web.

talks with the U.S. on confronting the spread of DAIISH (also known in the West as ISIS or ISIL) in Iraq and the conflict in Syria indicate that focus should be placed more so on Tehran's behavior than its bluster.<sup>2</sup>

As relations move forward, the U.S. must know when to appropriately utilize either the carrot or the stick when engaging with Iran. The former can be done through empowering moderates who seek a more prosperous future for Iran by incentivizing acceptable behavior with opportunities for economic integration and a seat at diplomatic negotiations. In accomplishing the latter, the U.S. should work with its allies to prevent and penalize future attempts to disrupt the region by Iran's more conservative elements. This is of course no easy task, but doing so will both advance strategic U.S. interests, and help bring Iran – which has long stood alone – into the international community as a contributing actor.

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<sup>2</sup> Stacey, Jeffrey A. "Bringing Iran In From the Cold: Rewarding Progress and Managing Setbacks." *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 1 (Jan. 2015). Web.

## II. HISTORY & BACKGROUND

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The passage of the JCPOA marked a significant shift in U.S.-Iranian relations. Moving forward, it gives reason for optimism for further cooperation on issues ranging from trade and economic growth to stability in the Middle East. For policymakers, this period can be viewed as the beginning of a transitional period in which the U.S. has the opportunity to develop a new, more effective foreign policy toward Iran.

Before having discussions about future policy, however, it is essential to understand Iran as a state and as a people. What motivates Iran? Why does it support the terrorist organization Hezbollah, or engage in proxy wars? To begin answering these questions, historical context is needed to illustrate how the status quo in Iran came to be.

This introductory section will serve to cover the most important aspects of Iranian history as they pertain to the formation of post-JCPOA foreign policy. Contextualizing the current situation is one of the most important elements of policy development, and is even more important in the case of Iran, as it prevents policy makers from repeating past mistakes while also serving as a guide to produce more effective policy.

## A. IRAN IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Iran has been painted in the American consciousness as a place of extremism, as the antithesis to America, an “axis of evil,” where those that oppose ideals like democracy and freedom reign supreme. In one Princeton study, Americans ranked Iran as their most hated country, surpassing even North Korea.<sup>3</sup> However, these projections of Iran are not accurate. The people of Iran have a much more positive view of the West than many Americans would assume and, as recent elections show, are making slow steps towards becoming more moderate politically.

This is not to say that Iran is a benign force in the world. Hardliners and extremists still control the government and frequently destabilizes the region by funding terrorist groups, supporting Bashar al-Assad’s government in Syria, and is currently fighting a proxy war with Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Yet, when examined under a historical lens, these actions all have legitimate geopolitical motivators. What is forgotten about Iran is that it has a history of democracy and public education, has a large middle class, and is far more aligned with American ideals than one would expect. Iran is a country that the U.S. does not agree with on many issues, but exhibiting a comprehensive understanding of Iranian history while simultaneously recognizing their effect on modern Iranian politics will enable the U.S. to more effectively engage Iran. This will optimistically involve significant cooperation between the two countries and thereby allow for Iran to become more positive influence in the Middle East and beyond.

### i. Ancient History

Iran was once home to one of the world’s oldest and grandest civilizations, and this legacy remains as an influential element of Iran’s psyche even today. The Persian Empire had enormous significance as a world power, leaving a high standard for modern Iranians to aspire to. Founded in 550 BCE by Cyrus the Great, the Persian Empire was the world’s first true superpower. The first rulers established the Achaemenid Dynasty and it was during this period the Persian Empire reached its peak, stretching from Macedonia in the West to the very edge of the Indus valley in the East.<sup>4</sup> Despite the Empire’s expansive army, their military campaigns aimed at capturing the city-states of Greece from 492 to 479 BCE failed, leaving the empire weak and vulnerable. Nevertheless, their impact on Greco-Roman culture and society was immeasurable.

The next major dynasty to come into power was the Sassanid Dynasty, ruling from 224 to 651. The Sassanid Dynasty was able to reunify large swaths of the empire, though it would never return to its previous heights.<sup>5</sup> Under Sassanid leaders, there was a Persian Renaissance in which great works of art and literature were produced, which Muslim Arabs would later adopt in their own works. Modern Iran is built upon the remnants of what was once the envy of the ancient world, a fact that Iranians today are all too aware of. There is sense of discontent that the nation has not followed a satisfactorily prominent trajectory into the modern era, and this seeps into foreign policy and other aspects of government and society.

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<sup>3</sup> Keddie, Nikki R. *Modern Iran*. Yale University Press, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Katouzian, Homa. *The Persians: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Iran*. Yale University Press, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Kinzer, Stephen. *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. Hoboken, NJ: J. Wiley & Sons, 2003.

## ii. Religious History

The main religion of the Persian Empire was Zoroastrianism, one of the first religions to incorporate ideas about the moral struggle between good and evil, as well as ideas of punishment and reward in the afterlife. The Zoroastrian faith holds that the, “sacred responsibility of every human being is to work toward establishing social justice on earth.”<sup>6</sup> This primary focus on equality would later influence Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Rulers only had the right to rule if they had *farr* or moral behavior that sought to serve the needs of the people; if a ruler was unjust, according to Zoroastrianism, the people had the right to remove them.<sup>7</sup> This idea of *farr* has become a reoccurring theme throughout Iranian political culture and served as the basis for a long history of overthrowing unjust rulers. Even though Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion of Persia, the empire had a reputation as being accepting of other religions and allowing different faiths to be practiced and incorporated into society.

One of the most defining moments in Iran’s history was the arrival of Islam, which continues to be a key factor in Iran’s actions as an international actor. Zoroastrianism existed as the dominant religion until the conquest of the Persian Empire by Muslim Arabs in 636 CE. Even though Iran was converted to Islam during the following period, their strong identity as Persians was preserved, remaining distinct from the Arabs. Islamification was a slow process, as there was significant societal pushback as Arabs were looked down upon by the Persians and were seen as barbaric.<sup>8</sup> This element of identity politics remains strong among Iranians even today. Furthermore, components of Zoroastrianism were incorporated into Islamic practices in Iran. The idea of *farr* remained, enforcing the belief that rulers had to be worthy leaders supported by the people.

The death of Islam’s founder Muhammad in 632 ignited a split between what would become known today as the Sunni and Shia sects. Iran would become predominantly Shia, and this has played a monumental part in shaping Iran’s policy, both domestically and internationally. Shia identity in Iran was further developed with the deaths of two figures in Islam, Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law Ali, and Ali’s son Hosain. After being made caliph, Ali was assassinated while praying in a mosque. In the Shia version of the story, he knew that he was going to be killed but allowed it to happen anyway. Becoming a martyr and dying for faith is seen as taking a moral stand that reflects the core struggle of Zoroastrianism. In this recurring theme of martyrdom, Hosain – Ali’s son and the grandson of Muhammad – rejected the rule of the next caliph and launched an attack with a small army of his followers in an attempt to fight for his right to rule. Heavily outnumbered, his mission was doomed to fail, but was seen as a defense of his faith. In Iran, the anniversary of Hosain’s death is a national holiday in which people mourn and grieve for his death and young men march through the streets striking themselves in the back with whips, honoring his sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> What is seen as the wrongful deaths of these two founding figures of Shia Islam contributes to the bitterness between Iran and its Sunni neighbors.

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<sup>6</sup> Kinzer. *All the Sha’s Men*.

<sup>7</sup> Kinzer. *All the Shah’s Men*.

<sup>8</sup> Kinzer. *All the Shah’s Men*.

<sup>9</sup> “History of Iran: Qajar Dynasty.” Iran Chamber Society. Web.

However, it also must be noted that Shiism is not uniquely Iranian; indeed, until the turn of the sixteenth century, Sunnis were the dominant sect in Iran.<sup>10</sup> Today about 90% of Muslims in the world are Sunni, while the majority of the remaining 10% who are Shia live in Iran. However, it was not until 1501 that Shia was declared the official religion of Iran. Since then, however, it has played a major role in shaping the Iranian society, government, and culture.

### iii. Foreign Influence

Iran has had a long history of foreign interference in their domestic affairs, something that has no doubt made them very wary of any outside influence. Starting in the nineteenth century, Iran was the scene of a bitter rivalry between Russia and Britain over its territory and resources. Under the rule of the Qajars, the last of the Persian dynasties, Iran experienced significant losses to foreign powers, both through war and concessions. In 1797, Qajar ruler Fath Ali Shah lost several battles over territory with Russia, eventually ceding territory that encompasses Georgia, much of the Caucasus region, and the Aras region where present day Azerbaijan and Armenia are located.<sup>11</sup>

His successor, Naser o-Dihn Shah tried to use the rivalry over Iranian territory between Russia and Britain to his advantage, but instead ended up making stifling trade concessions to Britain.<sup>12</sup> The twentieth century saw much of the same frustrating losses, as the corruption of the leader Mozaffar o-Din brought significant foreign influence into the government. In 1907 the Anglo-Russian Agreement was signed, dividing significant territory between Iran and Russia. Mozaffar o-Din also signed an agreement in 1901 allowing the British to prospect for oil in return for only 200,000 pounds, 16% of future profits, and a small amount of shares in the British oil company.<sup>13</sup>

The discovery of huge wells of oil in Iran was one of the most influential events in its modern history. Because of previously signed contracts, the British were able to develop huge refineries in the Persian Gulf that produced immense profits. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company (later the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) is a direct predecessor to the modern corporation British Petroleum. Iranians eventually became dissatisfied by the wealth pouring out of their country and into the pockets of the British. Prime Minister Mossadegh was one of the most vocal opponents of British control of Iran's oil, and dedicated his political career to fighting against it. Mossadegh was a firm believer in giving the Iranian people a voice in their own affairs, and was known as being both fair and incorruptible, and rose through the ranks of government to become Prime Minister of Iran in 1951. British officials repeatedly attempted to bribe him into compliance with the status quo, but Mossadegh remained immune to their offers.

Shortly after becoming Prime Minister with unprecedented support from the populace, Mossadegh made the decision to nationalize the Iranian oil industry and effectively cut the British off from access Iran's oil. British officials immediately sought to remove Mossadegh from power but, lacking the domestic resources to foment a coup on their own, they soon turned

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<sup>10</sup> "History of Iran: Qajar Dynasty."

<sup>11</sup> "History of Iran: Qajar Dynasty."

<sup>12</sup> Kinzer. *All the Shah's Men*.

<sup>13</sup> Kinzer. *All the Shah's Men*.

to the U.S. for aid. The U.S. at first rejected the idea, seeing it as being fueled by purely by Britain's imperialistic greed. There was a fear among U.S. officials, however, that Iran could be a potential communist threat. Mossadegh was seen by the U.S. as a leader that could transition Iran into a communist state, a sentiment that would eventually be used to justify his removal. In August of 1953, the CIA-backed coup d'état named Operation Ajax was staged, resulting in Mossadegh's arrest and the installation of the pro-American Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi as Iran's new monarch. For its leading role in instigating the regime-change, the U.S. took the majority of Iranian oil profits. The coup remains one of the main drivers of anti-American sentiment in Iran, as it robbed Iran of a popularly elected and capable leader, vast amounts of oil revenue, and – to a large extent – its right to self-determination.<sup>14</sup>

#### iv. Governmental Evolution

Iran also has a long history of representative forms of government, based on its early Zoroastrian ideals of just-rule. The Constitutional Revolution in the early twentieth century occurred as a result of the masses rising up against the corruption of the Qajar Dynasty. This revolution resulted in the creation of a constitution for the state of Iran, new curbs on royal power, and the establishment of a parliamentary government in 1925. Following its creation, Iran's parliament, called the Majles, officially removed the Qajar Dynasty. The succeeding Pahlavi Dynasty was also subjected to democratic pushback, which culminated in Mossadegh's elections as Prime Minister in 1925.

The Pahlavi dynasty came to an end in 1979, however, after it was topped in the Islamic Revolution led by religious extremists that were unsatisfied with the decidedly pro-American regime. Iran had been a comparably moderate state with a history of democracy until this turning point. Voicing their displeasure with Mohammed Reza Shah and what was viewed as Western manipulation, the revolution included a storming of the American embassy in Tehran in which over sixty Americans were held hostage for 444 days. This crisis was described in American media as the work of "terrorists" and as an act of blackmail. From Iran's point of view, however, this was an act of protection aimed at guaranteeing that their voices would be heard without U.S. interference. This sense of distrust between Iran and the United States cannot be forgotten and must be overcome as the U.S. develops new foreign policy in Iran.

#### CONCLUSION

The fervor of the revolution has receded from Iran since the 1979. President Hassan Rouhani has been open about recent reforms and has acknowledged that many laws that seek to control social mores are simply no longer enforced, especially those pertaining to dress and the arts, leaving many interesting contradictions. Rock music is permitted, but being in a rock band is not. Women must wear a head covering, but standards have become much more relaxed. More importantly, women have significant rights, including the right to vote. There is a large, educated, middle class of politically moderate Iranians who have grown weary of the regimes confrontational policies and possess a considerably more positive view of the U.S. than

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<sup>14</sup> Kinzer. *All the Shah's Men*.

previously though. Although the media is awash with videos of Iranian hardliners chanting, “Death to America,” these images can be more properly interpreted as a desire to see an end of the policies perpetuated by the U.S. that interfere with Iranian autonomy, even as Iranians seeks to become more integrated into the international community.

## B. IRAN AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Iran has been a player in international politics for decades, with a long history of interaction between the United States, Europe, Russia, and China. Far from being isolated, Iran is actively involved in the region and has evolved into one of the most geopolitically significant nations in the Middle East. To understand Iran's strategic importance, it is essential to be aware of Iran's role in past and current relations. The U.S. and Iran's relationship began in the mid 1800's and was characterized by cordiality and mutual benefit for nearly a century. These relations took a drastic turn, however, after U.S. involvement in the 1953 coup d'état that replaced the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh with the monarchical rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The new era of animosity funneled into the 1979 Revolution, which led to the formation of the current Islamic Republic. Decades later, the U.S. and Iran continue a relationship categorized by tension, mistrust, and even conflict. Current U.S.' policy does not seek to normalize relations with Iran while its government continues to exhibit unacceptable behavior, including its state sponsorship of terrorism, anti-Western rhetoric sermonized by hardliners, and its destabilizing interference in Iraq and Yemen. However, the U.S. government stands to build more effective policy by understanding Iran's key motivators and international engagements.

### i. The United States and Iran

The first formal diplomatic interaction between Iran and the U.S. was the signing of the Treaty of Commerce and Friendship in 1856 as Iranians came to appreciate the growing charitable work of American missionaries in the country.<sup>15</sup> Iran and the U.S. would later develop an increased sense of mutual respect after Iran contributed to the Allied effort during World War I.<sup>16</sup> Following the war, U.S. sent financial advisors to aid Iran's shattered economy, building popular sentiment among Iranians that "...the United States was widely regarded as a charitable international power whose foreign policy doctrine was based on protecting the weak."<sup>17</sup> In an era in which both Britain and Russia continually tested Iran's territorial integrity, the U.S. was viewed by Iran as a balancing force committed to protecting Iran's sovereignty.

The U.S. assisted in the rebuilding of the Iranian economy in the post-war period and encouraged democratic processes in an already historically representative government.<sup>18</sup> Under British pressure to see the existing government removed from power, however, the U.S. involved itself in a series of coup d'état attempts. The final successful attempt in 1953 was "the single most pivotal event in shaping Iran-US relations," changing Iran's perception of the U.S. as a nonintrusive and benevolent friend and "[laying] the foundation of the anti-Americanism that ultimately produced the 1979 Islamic Revolution."<sup>19</sup> Many leaders of both the 1979 Revolution were imprisoned and tortured by the Shah's secret police, which only compounded current

<sup>15</sup> Seyed Hossein Mousavian and Shahrir Shahidsaless, *Iran and the United States* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 16

<sup>16</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 22

<sup>17</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 16

<sup>18</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 15

<sup>19</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 24

Iranian leadership's mistrust of the U.S. The U.S.' admission in 2013 that its involvement in the coup was a mistake is one small example of how the U.S. can take actions that will positively impact the U.S. and Iran's relations.<sup>20</sup>

Relations have remained tense with Iran due to its aggressive attempts at spreading its pan-Islamic ideology and destabilize the security of the Middle East. According to the U.S. Department of State, The United States has:

"...long-standing concerns over Iran's nuclear program, sponsorship of terrorism, and human rights record. The United States and the international community have imposed comprehensive sanctions against Iran to compel Iran to engage seriously in discussions with the international community and address concerns over its nuclear program and human rights abuses... The current Iranian government still has not recognized Israel's right to exist, has hindered the Middle East peace process by arming militants, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and continues to play a disruptive role in sustaining violence in the region, particularly Syria."<sup>21</sup>

The U.S. remains understandably wary of Tehran despite its commitment to the JCPOA, and has no plans to resume normal diplomatic relations. There are two aspects to the U.S.-Iran relationship that the U.S. can benefit from understanding better in its approach to engaging with Iran. First, U.S. officials must understand that national pride greatly affects Iran's governmental policies and its stance towards the outside world. Second, U.S. officials must recognize that this national pride feeds into the Iranian governments resentment of the notion that the U.S. seeks a change in the current leadership. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei is concerned with what he perceives as the U.S. agenda of regime change, and fears "Washington's ultimate intention is to topple Iran's Islamic system and subordinate them," as the U.S. did to Iran in the coup of 1953.<sup>22</sup> Iran's intense sense of national pride takes root in their history, and is evermore important to understand as "American policy-makers entirely ignore the pervasive role of 'pride' in Iran's politics."<sup>23</sup> Pride is a part of why Iran "fiercely resists coercive policies, particularly...sanctions." Iran's participation in the JCPOA is partially the result of a change in discourse on the U.S. side from "no enrichment of uranium" to "no nuclear bomb," allowing Iran to retain a significant element of national prestige.<sup>24</sup> The U.S. can improve the efficacy of interactions with the Iranian government by avoiding actions that appear to promote regime change, and adjusting language and communications to account for the role of historic and modern nationalism.

At the same time, U.S. policy makers must also understand that the majority of the Iranian population is young and predominantly supportive of resuming relations with the U.S. Many Iranians are eager to participate in the ever-expanding global economy, and thus support lifting sanctions as a means to propel their families and Iran into the future. In a recent survey by TIME

<sup>20</sup> Byrne, Malcolm. "CIA Admits It Was Behind Iran's Coup." *Foreign Policy*. (2013). Web.

<sup>21</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. "U.S. Relations with Iran," U.S. Dept. of State (2015). Web.

<sup>22</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 162

<sup>23</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 8

<sup>24</sup> Mousavian. *Iran and the United States*. 9

Magazine, 74% of Iranians polled favored rapprochement with the United States.<sup>25</sup> People under 30 make up 70% of Iran's population and share little of their elders' anti-American ideology, having grown up without experiencing the tumultuous period encompassing the 1979 Revolution.<sup>26</sup> These factors show that "the most striking thing about anti-Americanism in Iran today is how little of it actually exists."<sup>27</sup> The modern Iranian population is young, educated, economically driven, and largely pro-American, all hopeful signs of an optimistic future for U.S.-Iran relations.

## ii. The European Union and Iran

In the past Iran enjoyed an active commercial trade with many members of the EU, including Germany and France. However, Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the economic sanctions that came as a result put a halt to these relationships. Between 2010 and 2013, the EU began imposing increasingly restrictive sanctions on Iran as a result of their attempts at covertly developing their nuclear program. More recently, the EU was heavily involved in the negotiation of the JCPOA.<sup>28</sup> Among the EU members, "Britain, France and Germany took the diplomatic lead on nuclear negotiations with Iran."<sup>29</sup> Now that the JCPOA has been signed and economic sanctions lifted, many past business partners in Germany, France, and other EU countries are eager to renew their relationships with Iran, or forge new relationships entirely. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has been traveling in Italy and France negotiating economic deals and making clear Iran's eagerness to renew trade. Iran's recent purchase of 114 Airbus jets<sup>30</sup> shows their interest in building an international business partnership, an effort to revitalize their aging fleet, and a desire for increased opportunities at international travel and tourism. Iran is also currently negotiating contracts with Boeing, providing a major opportunity for U.S.' business to economically integrate with Iran.<sup>31</sup> Economic integration with Iran increases opportunities to share values and increases the likelihood that Iran will engage diplomatically rather than risking its newfound access to trade by resorting to conflict. However, with the world economy also eager to utilize Iran for economic benefits, JCPOA signees may become more hesitant to enforce snap-back sanctions as time goes on.

## iii. Russia and Iran

Russia and Iran have had a mutually beneficial, mostly positive relationship since the waning days of the USSR. Iran has enjoyed longstanding trade with Russia, who became Iran's principle supplier of military and infrastructure related materials after the U.S. cut off relations.<sup>32</sup> Despite U.S. pressure that culminated in a secret pact in 1995 between former Vice President Al Gore

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<sup>25</sup> Vick, Karl. "Is Iran finally ready for change?" *TIMES Magazine* (2015). Web.

<sup>26</sup> Molavi, Afshin. "A New Day in Iran?" *Smithsonian Magazine* (2005). 2

<sup>27</sup> Molavi. "A New Day in Iran?" 2

<sup>28</sup> Posch, Walter. "Iran and the European Union." *United States Institute of Peace* (2016). Web.

<sup>29</sup> Posch, Walter. "Iran and the European Union." *United States Institute of Peace* (2016). Web.

<sup>30</sup> Kamel, Deena. "Iran to Buy 114 Airbus Jets, May Seek Boeings Post-Sanctions," *Bloomberg* (2016). Web.

<sup>31</sup> Kamel. "Iran to Buy 114 Airbus Jets." Web.

<sup>32</sup> Gvosdev, Nikolas K and Marsh, Christopher. *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, vectors and sectors*, (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2014) 317-324

and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to discontinue arms sales to Iran by 1999, Russia never upheld the agreement.<sup>33</sup> By 2002 Iran and Russia “concluded a long-term agreement to develop economic, industrial, and scientific cooperation.”<sup>34</sup> Russia did, however, favor the U.N. Security Council’s passing of sanctions in 2006, and continued to vote in favor of sanctions in the years following. Despite enjoying an economic benefit from weapons sales to Iran, U.S. interests have heavily influenced Russia, and Russia states that it does not want Iran in possession of nuclear weapons.<sup>35</sup> Another important component of Russia and Iran’s relationship concerns their involvement in Syria supporting the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The Obama Administration has focused policy on discouraging Russia and Iran’s role in bolstering embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

#### iv. The People’s Republic of China and Iran

China and Iran have also enjoyed a friendly economic and strategic partnership, with oil and gas serving as the pillar of the relationship. China has been investing in improving Iran’s oil industry in exchange for preferred access, and Iran relies heavily on Chinese purchases of oil for its own economic development.<sup>36</sup> As economic sanctions that have severely hampered Iran’s export of oil begin to lift, China and Iran are “re-energizing their petroleum-based friendship.”<sup>37</sup> Iran is showing a special dedication to rebuilding ties with China, a move that will likely result in a stronger flow of trade between the two countries. China is also a provider of arms to Iran, earning \$171 million annually since 1982 by exporting weaponry to Iran. This revenue combined with renewed oil contracts are an example of how the two nations have pivoted towards each other and become economically intertwined.<sup>38</sup> Despite opposing the 1980 UN arms embargo on Iran, China did support the 2010 economic sanctions, which undoubtedly created tension in Iranian-Chinese relations.<sup>39</sup> China is a part of the P5+1 that agreed to the JCPOA and has signed on to snap-back sanctions should Iran violate terms of the deal. The decades of friendly commercial and cultural interactions between the two countries should be an important factor when considering the Chinese-Iranian relationship in policy. These economic ties will only become stronger over time; under sanctions, Iran was China’s third-largest supplier of crude oil, but Iran is projected to as much as double its crude exports by mid 2016.<sup>40</sup> China’s strong trade partnership with Iran may prove cumbersome should it be forced to uphold its responsibilities and implement snap-back sanctions and other disciplinary actions under the JCPOA.

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<sup>33</sup> Broder, John M. “Despite a Secret Pact by Gore in ’95, Russian Arms Sales to Iran Go On.” *New York Times*. (13 Oct. 2000). Web.

<sup>34</sup> Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*. 318

<sup>35</sup> Katz, Mark N. “Iran and Russia – The Iran Primer.” United States Institute for Peace. (2015). Web.

<sup>36</sup> Simpson, George L. “Russian and Chinese Support for Tehran” *The Middle East Quarterly* (2010). Web.

<sup>37</sup> Groden, Claire. “Iran Ramps Up Oil Deals With China as Sanctions Ease,” *Fortune Magazine* (2015). Web.

<sup>38</sup> Therese Delpech, *Iran and the Bomb: The Abdication of International Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University, 2007)

<sup>39</sup> Simpson. “Russian and Chinese Support for Tehran.” Web.

<sup>40</sup> Groden. “Iran Ramps Up Oil Deals.” Web.

## **CONCLUSION**

Iran's history of political and economic ties with nations around the world – in addition to its recent efforts to expand trade globally with longtime allies and adversaries alike – shows both how integrated Iran once was and how it has continued to harbor its ambitions of being a world power. Iran has shown willingness to compromise to relieve sanctions; as soon as Iran gained economic freedom, it immediately sought to rebuild the trade relations it once enjoyed, demonstrating Iran's aim to integrate both politically and economically. This is an opportunity to improve relations and deter behavior in defiance of international norms - Iran won't want to lose these budding international partnerships. The risk inherent to these partnerships, particularly among European countries, is that as more opportunities for trade with Iran are created, political leaders may come under pressure to refrain from enforcing snap-back sanctions in the advent of noncompliance with the JCPOA. But agreements like the JCPOA are ultimately a chance for the U.S. to guide the course of Iran's integration back into the world community, and allowing past and current tensions to cloud current and future policies will result in many missed opportunities.

## C. IMPACTS OF THE 1979 REVOLUTION

The 1979 Iranian Revolution marked the first modern religious revolution, and the introduction of a new system of governance known today as the Islamic Republic of Iran. Even before the revolution began, many scholars foresaw the inevitable political, economic, and social impacts of such a rebellion. The start of the Revolution was marked by the 1953 coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, and subsequent tensions with the West. This intervention in Iranian politics, ostensibly solely for Western economic gains, began a shift toward anti-western dominated rhetoric that completely changed Iranian history, and its relation to the West. Several interrelated events led to the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty including a lack of effective leadership and reform, reliance on foreign powers, the Shah's divinity mindset and detachment from the population, and underestimation of the opposition. In order to better understand how these issues impacted the outcome of the revolution, an analysis of the original goals, as well as how they shifted and what was to account for that shift, must be understood.

### i. ORIGINAL GOALS

As mentioned, the 1953 coup was a pivotal point in the nation's history. The Shah, for seemingly the first time in Persian history, fled Iran and shifted reliance toward foreign powers; going against Mossadeq, the nationalist party, and a majority of the population. From that point on, he was considered "the suitcase monarch". In a BBC report at the time, many influential political leaders in Iran claimed that the Shah "always had his bags packed, and was ready to go." Even a close friend of the Shah in hind sight stated, "All through his life, he would not stand against strong pressure. When there was no pressure, he was a strong man, but as soon as there was adversity, he would tend to bend."<sup>41</sup>

After the coup and Mossadeq's arrest, massive protesting began in the streets of large cities, including Tehran. In order to attempt to prevent an all-out uprising, the CIA and MI6 intervened, paying Shah supporters to take over the streets of Iran and neutralize the protestors. This event was noted by the CIA in *William J. Daugherty's personal account*, stating:

*"This period culminated in August 1953 with the Shah's flight into a brief exile, CIA's stage-management (under explicit Presidential directive) of the coup against the Prime Minister, and the Shah's return (with US Government assistance) and consolidation of his power. Subsequently the United States, driven by the inexorable forces of the Cold War, increasingly assumed the role of chief protector for Iran and the Shah, leaving many Iranians more convinced than ever that the Shah and their country were simply a dominion of the United States, administered by or through the CIA. The seeds of the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 were being sown."*<sup>42</sup>

To the Iranians, western intervention devastated their chance at a true democracy under Mossadeq; while the Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, felt he was now an elected King, chosen by his people. This began the separation between the people and the monarchy, in their

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<sup>41</sup> *The Last Shah*. Documentary. BBC One, 1982.

<sup>42</sup> Daugherty, William. "A First Tour Like No Other," U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. 1996.Web.

goals, their outlook, and their attitude. It is at this point, it can be argued, that the Shah lost his legitimacy as ruler, and the people began to look elsewhere for a figurehead to lead.

Many argue that the revolution was a religious rebellion from the monarchy's effort to modernize and westernize Iran. In some ways this is what the revolution transformed into, however the revolution did not begin with a religious insurgence, but an uprising by intellectuals against the Monarchy and its oppression of the population. Over time, major political groups, all with differing grievances, joined forces under the religious clergy shifting the protests of many small groups into one powerful movement. To better understand this process, one must examine the major players, their mission, and how they began to overthrow one of the longest lasting empires in history.

## ii. MAJOR PLAYERS

### a. *National Front Party*

The National Front Party (NF) existed long before 1979, consisting of mostly middle class, elderly members when the revolution began. The NF criticized the failure of the shah's reforms and particularly the disregard for human rights, enshrined in both the Iranian constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They attacked the Shah's shortages, inflation, and the squandering of oil, and called for fulfillment of the constitution, release of political prisoners, freedom of the press, and free elections.<sup>43</sup>

Primarily, the NF called for a reconstruction of the 1906 Constitutional Monarchy (meaning free elections, a government responsible to the majles, a weak shah, and a committee of mujtahids to veto bills not deemed in accord with Muslim law)<sup>44</sup> that had been terminated by Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925, attempting to reinstitute an equal distribution of wealth by increasing workers benefits, wage increases, and economic independence from foreign nations. In order to reduce the power of the monarchy, which was often referred to as a "repressive dictatorship", the NF felt a breakdown of the Shah's SAVAK network (secret police) was also necessary. Designed and funded by the CIA and MI6, the SAVAK had long been influential enforcers of oppression, jailing whistleblowers and those who politically opposed the Shah. The shah's massive armed forces and secret police were not well trained for mass protests, and other situations they faced<sup>3</sup>, often acting with excessive forces. This went against the foundation of Iran's constitution and yet, the monarchy continued to rely on the police force for security and intelligence information. These criticisms overwhelmed a majority of the NF party, and led to an increase in public dissatisfaction with the Shah; however, they did not act alone.

### b. *Students and Women's Roles*

Additionally, students, including women's rights groups, played a large role in protesting the monarchy and eventually overthrowing the Shah. Most students were too young and idealistic to have been coopted by the regime, and they had many grievances.<sup>3</sup> Though varied in class and ideology, they opposed the Shahs regime and increasingly saw everything the monarchy claimed

<sup>43</sup> Keddie, Nikki and Richard Yann. *Modern Iran*. Vol. 1. Ch. The Revolution. Yale University Press, 2003

<sup>44</sup> Keddie and Yann. *Modern Iran*.

as good to be just the opposite. Because of this, an ironic phenomenon of some women university students from the mid-1970s readopted Muslim modes of dress as a means of stressing their identity with Islam, seen as morally and politically superior to the ways of the regime, and/or of stressed their political opposition to the regime, whether or not they were believers.<sup>45</sup>

Students organized major protests and used their universities to back their cause. An increasing number of students studying abroad also contributed to the awareness of the revolution, as well as the overall corruption of the Shah and his government. In later events, students would take the revolution to the next level and organize a takeover of the American Embassy in Tehran, known today as the hostage crisis.

### *c. Religious Opposition*

Islamic Clergy, known as Ulama, represented the religious opposition to the Shah. Ayatollah Ruhala Mousavi Khomeini led the movement against the monarchy, claiming that the Shah's anti-religious reforms were oppressive and that he was a "puppet of foreign powers". Iranian rulers since the rise of Islam did not go nearly as far as the Pahlavi's in their attempts to glorify the monarchy—attempts that devalued Islam and were bound to arouse Ulama. Reza Shah instituted examinations to qualify for wearing a turban and hence being one of the ulama; secularized the legal and educational systems, thus depriving many ulama of jobs; unveiled women; instituted university coeducation, and took other steps that weakened the ulama and their ideological hegemony<sup>46</sup>. Mohammad Reza went farther to punish religious leaders that opposed him, going so far as to exile Khomeini in November 1964.

Khomeini settled in Iraq and continued publishing articles and declarations denouncing the Monarchy and offering suggestions to a new form of government: Velayat-e faqih (Islamic Government). Religious leaders in Iran passed Khomeini's teachings to his followers and other revolutionary groups, calling on them to continue to protest in the name of Islam.

### *d. Hardliners Take Over*

As the revolution began to gain attention, parts of various opposition groups—the predominantly middle-class and elderly remnants of the National Front, students inside and outside Iran, the workers, and the guerillas—had ties to the growing number of oppositionists who voiced their views in Islamic terms, here called the "religious opposition."<sup>5</sup> These groups joined together, adjusting their individual criticisms, to form one mass movement under the rhetoric of Khomeini and other religious leaders.

As total opposition to the regime spread to new classes of people, there began the crucial stage of the revolution, with massive politico-economic strikes against the shah starting in late summer of 1979, lasting until the end of the Revolution, and virtually paralyzing the economy. For the urban poor Khomeini and his words were supreme guides, and as revolutionary anger, enthusiasm, and activity grew, Khomeini's refusal to make any compromise with the monarchy and his

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<sup>45</sup> Keddie and Yann. *Modern Iran*.

<sup>46</sup> Keddie and Yann. *Modern Iran*.

implication that problems could be solved by a return to Islamic ways had increasing appeal for the Muslim masses. Popular ayatollahs who stressed a return to full implementation of the 1906–07 constitution, whether the moderate Shariatmadari or the socially conscious Mahmud Taleqani (whose arrest and imprisonment by the SAVAK in the summer of 1977 was a further cause of discontent), were bound to lose influence to the more uncompromising Khomeini in revolutionary circumstances.<sup>6</sup> It is at this point that the revolution's objectives shifted from the overthrow of the Monarchy to a complete replacement of government and introduction of an Islamic Republic.

### iii. RESPONSES TO RESISTANCE

With this kind of opposition, one wonders why the shah gave up his power so quickly, rather than attempt to crush the rebellion, much like the present-day leadership. The answer to this question is multifaceted, including lack of international action and the Shahs personal power struggle between himself and his people.

Throughout his lifetime, the Shah had been compared to his father, a strong, pragmatic general who overthrew the Qajar dynasty. Paralleled to this type of figure, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi couldn't live up to political leadership expectations. In a BBC report, many close to the Shah claimed they felt since he became King at such a young age, he had no knowledge of his role, and attempted to keep out of power struggles between political parties<sup>47</sup>. This created a distance between him and his political constituents, which later also constituted a detachment between him and his people. As previously mentioned, the CIA payoff of Shah Supporters added to the misperception of the King, creating a false support system which would later fail to back him. It seems likely that the shah long believed much of his own propaganda and also his toadying aides who assured him he was vastly popular and that the demonstrators were a minority of agitators who had misled people.<sup>7</sup>

Not only did he fail to gain the support of the public when the revolution began, but the Western foreign powers who had previously stepped in and backed the Shah were no longer willing to. The Monarchy had expected the United States and Britain to intervene on his behalf, reestablishing order and stability while cracking down on protestors, as they had during the 1953 coup; however the newly established Carter Administration refused to interfere. Carter disapproved of the Shahs human rights violations and believed as a leader, he was a lost cause. Supporting a democratic government was in the U.S.' interest more so than an absolutist monarchy.

Additionally, during the 1970's the Shah had been fighting a secret battle with cancer. Many believed the treatments wore him down and contributed to his inability to make tough decisions regarding the protesters and revolutionary rhetoric. His attempts at reform only scapegoated other politicians rather than giving the people what they wanted: a less influential, absolutist monarchy. In addition, Iranians had in the past heard many words and promises regarding freedom and especially economic betterment, and were now so resentful about autocracy,

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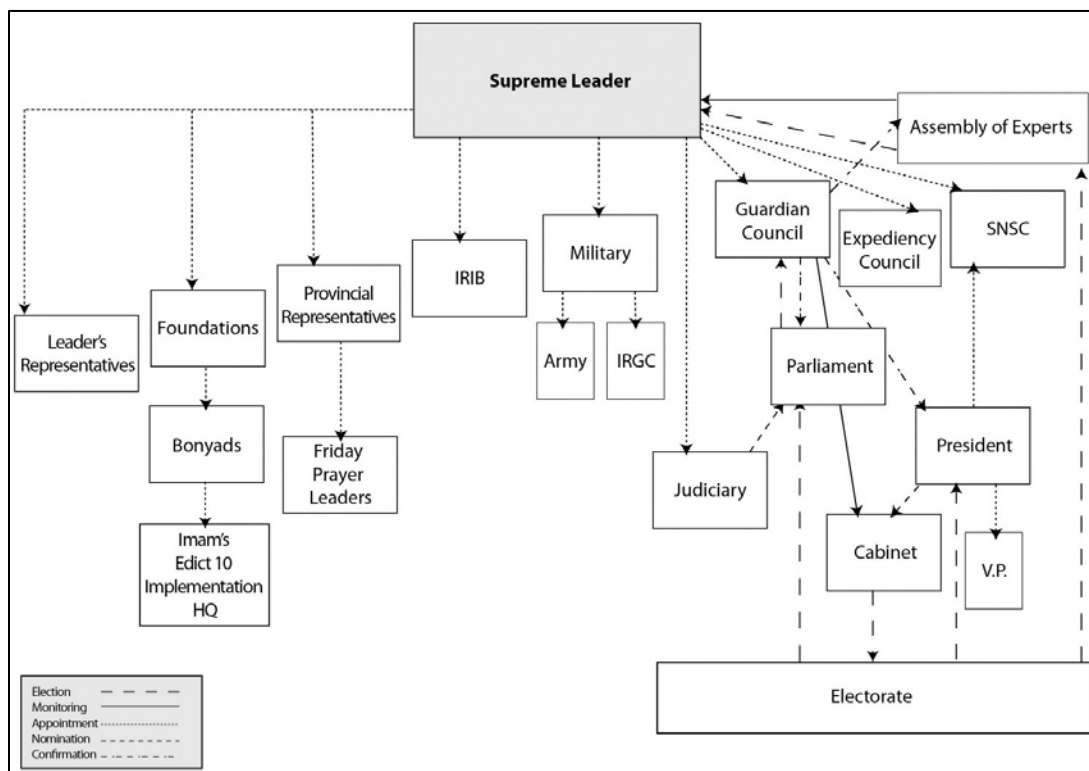
<sup>47</sup> *The Last Shah*. BBC One.

corruption, jailing, torture, and terrorization (which went far beyond those plotting against the regime), that they were unlikely to be impressed by promised concessions<sup>48</sup> or reform.

With all of these factors against him, the Shah refused to order the systematic use of maximum force despite encouragement from hardliners at the time<sup>7</sup>. Because of his obsession with self-image, he didn't want to be remembered as a bloody dictator; in fact he publically stated, "a dictator could kill his people, but a king could not."<sup>7</sup> By the end of 1978, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was preparing to leave Iran indefinitely. Meanwhile, Ayatollah Ruhala Mousavi Khomeini was making arrangements to return to Iran from exile to begin implementation of his new government: The Islamic Republic of Iran.

#### iv. CURRENT STATE OF IRAN

The fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty marked yet another beginning in Iran's political history. The Revolution had brought much economy hardship, social unrest, and political transformation. However, the people's ideals of a new government differed greatly from their new leaders. The Islamic Republic had been organized by Ayatollah Khomeini while in exile and was meant to "preserve and promote Islamic order and law, prevent encroachment by oppressive ruling classes, prevent innovation in Islamic law, and destroy the influence of foreign powers in Islamic lands."<sup>49</sup> Table 6 and 7 compare the pre- and post-revolutionary political structures of the Pahlavi Monarchy and the subsequent Islamic Republic that followed.



**Figure 1.** Post-Revolution Islamic Republic Power Structure under Khomeini.

<sup>48</sup> Keddie and Yann. *Modern Iran*.

<sup>49</sup> Khomeini, Ayatollah Ruhala Mousavi. "Velayat-e Faqih: Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist." The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works. Web.

The current political structure in Iran is rather complex. The head of the government is the Supreme Leader who sets the agenda for the administration and policies of the government. The Supreme Leader has control over the armed forces and intelligence and security. He can decide without any other government branch approval if war is to be waged. Six out of the twelve members of the Council of Guardians are chosen by the Supreme Leader. The judiciary is also overseen by the Supreme Leader. Throughout all sectors of government the Supreme Leader presides over 2,000 representatives who then help extend his power.

Under the Supreme Leader is the president who is responsible for watching over all economic activity in the government. The president has eight vice presidents who also serve under him as well as a cabinet of twenty two ministers. There is also a Parliament, known as Majles, composed of 290 members who are reelected every four years. The Council of Guardians oversees the laws passed by Parliament, ensuring they are congruent with sharia law as well as determining candidates for president, parliament, and Assembly of Experts. The Assembly of Experts chooses the Supreme Leader from their own ranks. The current Supreme Leader, however, normally has a successor in mind who studies under the Ayatollah during his time in power. There is also an Expediency Council who was created in order to mediate any stalemates between Parliament and the Council of Guardians, and also to advise the Supreme Leader. In addition, the elusive Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) is responsible for the gathering of information and intelligence to aid the administration with related government policy.

It must be noted that this new government structure is much more complex and intertwined than the previous monarchy. This is apparent in the charts above, as well as the intricate system of checks and balances previously described. Most branches of government rely and cannot act without the others, with exception of the Supreme Leader. Though he is chosen by the Council of the Guardians, once in power, he has nearly universal power to create and enforce rulings based on Islamic law.

## **v. IMPACTS**

The Post-Revolution period in Iran saw numerous social, economic, and political consequences. With western ties cut and a newly developed theocratic government structure, many were uncertain how Iran would proceed economically, and how Islamic government policies would affect the strong cultural history of the nation. It is necessary to analyze these social, economic, and political consequences in order to better understand the current state of Iran their goals and outlook, and how the Revolution is used today.

### *a. Social*

Throughout the process of revolutionary development, the social structure and culture of Iran changed drastically. Women's rights, cultural freedoms, and Iran's regional standing were all greatly affected and continue to influence not only Iran's society, but external impressions of Iran today.

Though women were an integral part of the rebellion and often wore Islamic garb in order to protest the monarchies ban on the veil, they didn't fully intend to back the Islamic movement.

Many women didn't oppose the banning of the veil, they just didn't feel it was up to the government to decide for them. As previously mentioned, in an ironic turn of events, the Clergy reinstated the veil and enforced strict mandatory Islamic dress laws. "The Family Protection Law of 1967/75 and the slowly spreading practice of coeducation under the Monarchy were opposed in teaching and writing by Ayatollah Khomeini and some Islamic fundamentalists, as were more obviously disturbing signs of Western-influenced "decadence," such as sexy films, dances, and music, forms of women's dress that not only went against old veiling norms but were often tight or revealing, open drinking and gambling (both against Muslim law), and others."<sup>50</sup>

Not only were women targeted by the Clergy, but many cultural freedoms previously enjoyed by the population were now banned and forbidden. The Shah and his father had attempted to westernize the country, increasing U.S. cultural influence on music, dress, and filmography. All of this changed with the implementation of the Islamic Republic. Through anti-foreign and anti-western campaigns, Khomeini and others banned western music, dancing, filmography, and much more, seemingly cutting Iran off from the rest of the world. When subsequent protesting of these bans began, Basiji, (or street "police" and enforcers of Islamic law) yet another product of the revolution, stepped in to prevent yet another revolution and uprising.

This concept brings about yet another societal impact of the 1979 revolution: the idea that the rebellion against the Shah wasn't just a revolution, but an evolution. In an Al Jazeera article on Iran's post-revolutionary impact, Sick said "Iran's revolution is unusual in that it has gone from a revolution to an evolution - "that is, from ultra-radical positions that they took in the first two, three or four years to a much more moderate, pragmatic position. With this recent agreement on the nuclear issue... this is their effort to become a normal country that actually participates in the world."<sup>51</sup> Iran has used this to their advantage not only in terms of the Nuclear Deal, but also as they find their place and assert power within in the region. It can be argued that Iran's revolution set off a series of events that triggered several conflicts in the region, including Iraq's attack on Iran in 1980, described further in the following section.

### *b. Economic*

As previously stated, the revolution virtually paralyzed the Iranian economy. Prior to 1979, American investment in Iran exceeded \$682 million and the U.S. was the second largest supplier of Iran's nonmilitary imports, totaling \$12.7 billion. All of this came to a halt at the overthrow of the monarchy. "The revolution introduced major conceptual changes to Iran's economic structure including: adjusting development goals including agricultural self-sufficiency and terminating the Shah's industrial projects, encouragement of private sector investment, and intervention of labor councils in manufacturing sectors."<sup>52</sup> At the close of the revolution, Iran also experienced a type of "brain drain," losing most of their elites and intellectuals in both private and public sectors. This greatly impacted the economy in terms of investment and overall market influence.

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<sup>50</sup> Keddie and Yann. *Modern Iran*.

<sup>51</sup> Parvaz, D. "Iran 1979: A Revolution That Shook the World." *Aljazeera News*, February 11, 2014. Web.

<sup>52</sup> Fatemi, Khosrow. "The Iranian Revolution: Its Impact on Economic Relations with the United States." *Cambridge University Press*. Web.

It can also be argued that the 1979 Oil and Energy Crisis was due in part to the Iranian Revolution. Protests severely disrupted the Iranian oil sector, with production being greatly curtailed and exports suspended. In November 1978, a strike by 37,000 workers at Iran's nationalized oil refineries initially reduced production from 6 million barrels (950,000 m<sup>3</sup>) per day to about 1.5 million barrels (240,000 m<sup>3</sup>).<sup>13</sup> Very little information is available in regards to the Iranian Oil industry after the revolution, and what information is available is considered highly unreliable. However, new policies were formed to control the oil industry and included these changes: foreign employment was to be shut down, in accordance with the Islamic Republic's anti-foreign laws, Iran restricted foreign investors to technical advisors rather than investors in the National Iranian Oil Company, used Iran's source of supply as a threat to the United States, and a constant demand for higher oil prices within OPEC.<sup>13</sup>

Post-revolution GDP became increasingly reliant on oil revenues, despite the leaderships goal of a more diversified economy. Due to the limited western exportation of capital and consumer goods, as well as the paralyzed economy, Iran had to sell what it had in excess to try and not only pay off the effects of the revolution, but also the newly developed war with Iraq. Table 5 and 4 show the growing dependence on oil and other sectors from pre- and post-revolutionary Iran.

| <b>Table 5</b>                                                                                                                                                                             |                                 |                                  |                                 |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>AVERAGE ANNUAL REAL RATE OF GROWTH OF MAJOR SECTORS OF THE PERSIAN ECONOMY DURING THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS</b>                                                                               |                                 |                                  |                                 |                  |
| (percentage at constant 1974 prices)                                                                                                                                                       |                                 |                                  |                                 |                  |
| <b>Sector</b>                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Third Plan<br/>(1963-67)</b> | <b>Fourth Plan<br/>(1968-72)</b> | <b>Fifth Plan<br/>(1973-77)</b> | <b>(1963-77)</b> |
| Agriculture                                                                                                                                                                                | 4.0                             | 5.5                              | 4.4                             | 4.6              |
| Oil                                                                                                                                                                                        | 11.5                            | 15.0                             | 0.9                             | 9.1              |
| Industries and mines                                                                                                                                                                       | 12.7                            | 14.8                             | 17.4                            | 15.0             |
| Manufacturing and mines                                                                                                                                                                    | (11.9)                          | (14.7)                           | (15.3)                          | (14.0)           |
| Construction                                                                                                                                                                               | (11.2)                          | (14.4)                           | (21.5)                          | (15.7)           |
| Services                                                                                                                                                                                   | 10.3                            | 13.5                             | 19.2                            | 14.3             |
| <i>Gross domestic product</i>                                                                                                                                                              |                                 |                                  |                                 |                  |
| (GDP) at factor costs                                                                                                                                                                      | 9.9                             | 13.1                             | 8.5                             | 10.5             |
| Non-oil GDP                                                                                                                                                                                | 8.5                             | 11.2                             | 15.3                            | 11.5             |
| <i>Source: Bānk-e markazī-e jomhūrī-e eslāmī-e Īrān, Edāra-ye heāsābhā-ye eqtešādī, Hesābhā-ye mellī-e Īrān/Iran's National Accounts, 1338-56/1959-77, Tehran, 1360 Š./1981, Table 16.</i> |                                 |                                  |                                 |                  |

**Table 1.** Post-Revolutionary Composition of Iranian GDP (2002)

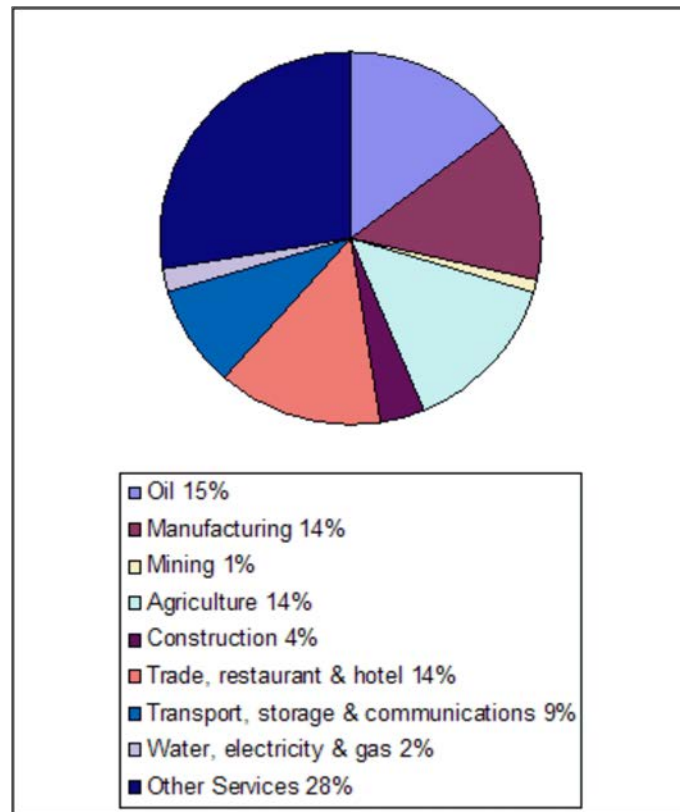


Figure 2. Pre-Revolutionary Composition of Iranian GDP

### c. Political

In addition to the new government structure formed by Ayatollah Khomeini, a new geo-political chessboard began to form between the Middle East and the West. Political tensions grew with anti-western sentiment in Iran and anti-revolutionary sentiment in the United States. Hostility toward the U.S. grew under Khomeini, seemingly reaching a periodic peak during the hostage crisis. Revolutionaries, mostly students, overtook the U.S. Embassy for 444 days, keeping fifty-two Americans hostage. This event changed how the revolution was being fought and perceived by westerners. The U.S. began imposing numerous sanctions, further crippling the economy, and increasing anti-American rhetoric in Iran.

Though only organized and carried out by a small group of hardliners, once the hostage crisis occurred, there was no going back for the U.S. in terms of attempting to improve relations with Iran. To the contrary, the U.S. began building a military presence in the Middle East in the mid-1980s. In part due to the Iran-Iraq war and Saddam Hussein's 1989 invasion of Kuwait, American military presence continued to grow in surrounding countries, and continues to do so to this day. As stated in a report by Aljazeera, "The irony, in turn, is that the United States invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan eliminated Iran's two biggest rivals in the region [the Taliban and Saddam Hussein] and left Iran as the most important player, which is why the Arabs are so scared. And all that started with the revolution."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Parvaz. "Iran 1979: A Revolution That Shook the World."

## CONCLUSION

The Iranian Revolution not only impacted the nation socially, politically, and economically; it transformed the structure of the government and the outlook of the population. Though the uprising began as an opposition to the Monarchy, it quickly transformed into a religious revolution taken over by the clergy and other hardliners. Guided by Ayatollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic was organized and established immediately following the overthrow of the Shah, and has continued to this day. It is important to note, however, that even though the Islamic form of government answers to the Supreme Leader, Iran did not design a dictatorship. There is an ironic western influence within government through the continuation of a prime minister position.

Nevertheless, the revolution was 35 years ago, and though some effects are still felt to this day, this generation seems to have a different view of the revolution and the Islamic Republic altogether. Many young people today were not alive at the time the Shah was overthrown, or they were too young to understand the effects of the shift in government structure. Iran's revolutionaries are aging. Most are in their late fifties, sixties, or seventies. As Robin Wright points out in an article discussing the revolution's midlife crisis, "This generation is worldly. They're educated. They work. They have spending power. They're not dependent on anyone. They have a different range of thinking."<sup>54</sup> With this in mind it is safe to say that Iran's population has evolved over the past decades, and so have the goals of the clergy, creating an opportunity for foreign powers to work with Iranians and rebuild relations with the West.

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<sup>54</sup> Wright, Robin. "Tehran's Promise: Revolution's Midlife Crisis and the Nuclear Deal." *New Yorker*, July 2015. Web.

## D. AN ANALYSIS OF IRAN'S REGIONAL POLICIES AFTER 1979

Since the advent of Iran's Revolution, the Islamic Republic's regional policy has undergone several dramatic shifts. Compared to the Shah's historically amicable relations characterized by minor geopolitical competition with Iraq, the Gulf States, and Israel, the post 1979 leadership has incorporated a powerful and often aggressive ideological component to its foreign policy matrix. The inclusion of religious and national ideologies into Iran's regional objectives, coupled with a significant threat perception, has increased belligerent relations with many neighbors, including several members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Israel. However, despite Iran's attempt to export the Revolution, increase its religious authority, and maintain a balance of power, the state has displayed an ability to work with specific neighbors when strategic interests align, despite significant ideological incongruences. Thus, while the exportation of religious ideas coupled with fears of local rivals has created an atmosphere of hostility throughout the region, Iran has displayed a developing ability to act solely out of strategic concern and work rationally with counterparts when the need arises—presenting an opportunity for the United States to work limitedly with Tehran on matters of shared concern throughout the Middle East and South Asia.

### i. Exporting the Revolution: Establishing Domestic and Regional Security

Having removed the Shah in 1979 and cemented a position of quasi-legitimized authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini began to look outward. Unlike the previous portfolio of the monarchy, which had maintained a foreign policy agenda centered predominantly on traditional geopolitical motivators, the Supreme Leader began to incorporate a strong ideological component centered on the Revolution's Islamic base and the ongoing resistance to imperial colonialism within the Middle East. As Ayatollah Khomeini sought to export the Revolution across the region to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, he argued that “strengthening and expanding of propagation [of the Revolution], especially abroad, is among the most important tasks.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, almost immediately following the Supreme Leader's ascension to power, he began propagating a Pan-Islamic theocracy abroad to further domestic and regional goals.

While personal belief was no doubt an important motivator for Ayatollah Khomeini, other strategic reasons for exporting the Revolution provided strong incentives. Domestically, rhetoric centered on the exportation of the Revolution played an important role in establishing a collective identity, rallying public support, and maintaining regime legitimacy in an economically destitute country with an immense religious and ethnic incongruence that manifested among breakaway Kurdish, Turkish, Azeri, and Arab factions after the Revolution. Thus, as part of the ongoing attempts to renew a collective identity among the Iranians, the Supreme Leader promoted two important concepts in the country's foreign policy portfolio: national dignity and a united resistance to oppression. In advocating the importance of ideological exportation, Khomeini often sought to garner support by reestablishing a sense of national self-esteem and confidence via the ideology and religion of a state shamed by years of

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<sup>55</sup> Ed. Limba, Mansoor and Tehrani, Hamid. 2008. *Imam Khomeini (s.a.) on Exportation of Revolution*. 83.

foreign subjugation. The Ayatollah argued that in the post-Revolutionary landscape the people of Iran had reclaimed “a source of dignity for the nation [which] does not mean that our stomachs have to be filled, [but] that we make progress in our religion and ideology...and will expand our ideology so it would reach all of the Islamic countries.”<sup>56</sup> In doing so, the Khomeini affirmed the importance of the new religious regime while continuously working to establish a new identity for the state based on the continuation of the Revolution abroad through a resistance to colonial powers.

This concept, the idea that the Supreme Leader was fiercely resisting the coercive major foreign states, was equally important. Khomeini’s exportation of the Revolution “was based on the rejection of tyranny, subservience to tyrannical powers, on the negation of domination and domineering, and on the refusal to remain silent and to stay passive.”<sup>57</sup> This appealed to people’s essential sense of social justice, enshrining him as a defender of the weak and oppressed Muslims throughout the region. The display of strength against the Western oppression via the dissemination of the Iranian ideology throughout the region played a key role in legitimizing an assertive foreign policy intended to establish Iran and the regime’s continued survival. Ultimately, the exportation of the Revolution continued to center the people of Iran on a shared Pan-Islamic purpose, giving Ayatollah Khomeini increased support and legitimacy as he prepared to secure Tehran’s position abroad.

Beyond fortifying domestic support and unity, the exportation of the Revolution promised additional geopolitical rewards. Tehran’s strategic position in the Middle East directly following the downfall of the Shah was precarious at best, and ensuring regime survival from neighboring rivals was critical. Many countries, including most of the Gulf States and Israel, were U.S. allies and diametrically opposed to Khomeini’s threatening Revolution. Given that the Iranian economy was destitute and its military in ruins, the Supreme Leader needed a less traditional method of deterrence and political leverage, which he found through revolutionary ideals. In many ways similar to the Soviet Union’s attempts to proliferate communism, Tehran attempted to spread the Revolution in an effort to undermine political-military rivals while building a collection of ideologically congruous regional partners who shared an interest in counterbalancing the U.S. and America’s client states. Moreover, among these states, Iran hoped to achieve political weight as the new preeminent Islamic authority, a concept King Abdullah of Jordan has coined the “Shiite Crescent.”<sup>58</sup> While these goals have been met with limited success, Khomeini’s exportation of the Shiite Pan-Islamic Revolution has played a direct role in the war with Iraq, sectarian competition in the Gulf, and the rise of militant sponsors in Israel.

## ii. The First Exportation: The Iran-Iraq War

The Iran-Iraq war was a defining moment for Tehran in terms of the Revolution. Prior to the rise of Khomeini, the two countries had existed in a state of geopolitical competition. Although minor ideological and racial differences were present, the relationship between the two was

<sup>56</sup> Ed. Limba *Imam Khomeini (s.a.) on Exportation of Revolution*. 28.

<sup>57</sup> Ed. Limba *Imam Khomeini (s.a.) on Exportation of Revolution*. 28. 20.

<sup>58</sup> Black, Ian. The Gaurdian. 2007. “Fear of a Shia Full Moon.” *The Gaurdian Online*.

predominantly characterized by a military and economic rivalry in the Gulf, which was stabilized by U.S. political leverage. Following Britain's withdrawal from the region in the late 1960's and assisted by rising oil revenues as well as U.S. support, the Shah had sought to achieve a regional hierarchy by drastically expanding Iran's military capabilities. In fact, "by the time of the Shah's overthrow in January 1979, the Iranian armed forces had grown from a modest force of some 161,000 in 1970 to approximately 415,000 troops, employing some 1,735 tanks and 447 combat aircraft (compared to 860 and 140 in 1970)."<sup>59</sup> Threatened by the Shah's military enlargement, Saddam sought to increase Iraq's defensive capabilities as well, leading to an arms buildup between the two states. In light of Saddam's competition with Iran, it is not surprising that the leader of Iraq viewed the fall of the Shah as a boon and sought to establish a cordial relationship with the new regime via diplomatic action such as "an invitation to the Iranian premier, Mehdi Bazargan, to visit Iraq in order to improve relations between the two countries."<sup>60</sup> However, Saddam would soon realize that Iraq was to be the first target of Iran's ideological propagation.

Almost immediately after the institutionalization of the Revolutionary regime, the Iranian leadership began to implement the constitutional mandate to "support to the mustad'afiin (freedom fighters)"<sup>61</sup> in Iraq. In June of 1979, the Iranian political and religious leadership began exhorting the Iraqi population, namely the Shiites in the south, to overthrow the secular Baathist regime; a movement supported by large anti-Baathist rallies in Iran. By the end of the year reports indicated that Iran had moved from moral support to directly providing material aid for Kurdish separatists and the Shiite Da'wa secessionists. Eventually, Saddam declared Iran responsible for several terrorist attacks against the Iraqi leadership, including an attempted assassination of Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz on 1 April 1980. In response, the Iraqi leadership increased economic incentives and Pan-Arab unity rhetoric, as well as sponsored Iranian Kurdish and Arab separatist movements.<sup>62</sup> However, when these efforts failed and Iran continued to threaten Saddam's domestic standing, the dictator launched a preemptive war.

Over the next eight years, Iran and Iraq fought a catastrophic war that shaped Iran's regional perspective by increasing the solidarity for propagating Khomeini's ideology and by creating a growing threat perception. While experts agree Saddam's decision was motivated by "a mixture of defensive and offensive calculations...a compound of a preventive war, ambition, and punishment for a regional rival," Iran saw only an opportunistic aggressor attempting to destroy the Revolution.<sup>63</sup> At the time of Iraq's invasion, the Iranian army was in shambles. Khomeini had decimated the officer corps by executing 5,000 officers and imprisoning or exiling thousands more. In comparison, Iraq's military was a highly organized, well trained, and well equipped fighting force that easily devastated the original Iranian resistance, forcing the Revolutionary

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<sup>59</sup> Karsh, Efraim. 1988. Royal Institute of International Affairs. *Military Power and Foreign Policy Goals: The Iran-Iraq War Revisited*. Royal Institute of International Affairs. 84.

<sup>60</sup> Karsh. *Military Power and Foreign Policy Goals: The Iran-Iraq War Revisited*. 87.

<sup>61</sup> "Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran." International Constitutional Law Project. 1989. Web.

<sup>62</sup> Karsh. *Military Power and Foreign Policy Goals: The Iran-Iraq War Revisited*. 87.

<sup>63</sup> Jensen, Kurtis and Klunder, Matthew. 2001. *National War College*. "Saddam Hussein's Grand Strategy During the Iran-Iraq War." National War College.

military to rely “on tactics taken from the Chinese in the Korean War, ‘human waves.’”<sup>64</sup> This was important for two reasons.

First, internally the immense cost of life that expunged a significant portion of the younger generation gave the society an emotional stake in the Revolutionary regime that went quite beyond mere nationalism.<sup>65</sup> The slain were celebrated as martyrs and any challenge to the state’s increasingly extreme policy agendas became an affront to the dead who had defended the Revolution. This emotional stake allowed Khomeini to ameliorate increasingly aggressive policies abroad against other perceived threats while finally blacklisting the more moderate opposition who “believed that the Revolution’s values would be acceptable only within Iran’s borders and that Islamic Iran” should not propagate its ideology abroad.<sup>66</sup>

Second, the war drastically increased Iran’s perception of its neighbors as a direct threat to the continued survival of the State. According to scholars, “Iran perceived the conflict to be an attempt to quash the Revolution, a belief furthered by the [military] support of Gulf States and the United States to Iraq.”<sup>67</sup> The rise of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the U.S.’s increased military backing of Iran’s new rivals, Israel and Saudi Arabia, encouraged Tehran to seek unconventional means of deterrence capable of expanding its regional power. This tactic would largely be carried out by the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (IRGC), who had filled the place of the weakened military officer corps, via the creation of resistance groups such as Hezbollah, as well as an increased rhetorical campaign against the oppressive American backed Sunni regimes in the Gulf. Thus in the end, the Iraq War played a significant role in ending the moderate opposition within Iran by sustaining the Revolutionary fever while instilling a growing threat perception that encouraged the regime to pursue increasingly aggressive rhetorical and clandestine operations against its Sunni-Arab and Israeli neighbors.

### iii. Soft Sectarian and Racial Competition with Saudi Arabia

Similar to Iraq, the pre-Revolutionary regime in Iran was geopolitically opposed to the Saud’s and other Gulf States, while ideological and racial components remained fairly negligible. Both the Saudis and the Shah relied on external U.S. support to guarantee state security and while territorial disputes over Bahrain and competition within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries did exist, the “Iranians and the Saudis...had learned to live together.”<sup>68</sup> However, this balance of power, moderated by external players, was completely upended following the Revolution and the rivalry expanded to include increasingly aggressive geopolitical and ideological areas of competition. Relations first began to sour during the Iran-Iraq war under which, strong rhetorical campaigns centered on a Pan-Arab (with Sunni undertones) nationalism in Iraq and a Pan-Islamic/Shiite (with Persian undertones) ideology in

<sup>64</sup> Polk, William R. 2009. *Understanding Iran*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: Print. 150.

<sup>65</sup> Polk. *Understanding Iran*. New York. 150.

<sup>66</sup> Ed. Limba. *Imam Khomeini (s.a.) on Exportation of Revolution*. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Mabon, Simon. 2013. *Saudi Arabia and Iran*. London: I.B.Tauris. 56.

<sup>68</sup> Mabon. *Saudi Arabia and Iran*. P. 4.

Iran were advanced to ensure internal cohesion. When nautical conflict in the form of the “tanker war” spilled over into the Persian Gulf, several countries—including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE—established the Gulf Cooperation Council “to confront security challenges posed by the Iran-Iraq War and the perceived threat of Iran’s Islamic Revolution.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, during the war, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait and other Arab states openly provided financial support to Iraq, which was coupled with U.S. tactical intelligence.<sup>70</sup> Thus, Tehran’s geopolitical threat perception grew and Khomeini sought to show strength through opposition to the West’s proxies by initiating a soft power rhetorical war with the Gulf States that was saturated in competing ethno-national and ethno-religious identities.

With limited traditional military, economic, or diplomatic forms of political leverage, Iran sought to export its Revolution to the minority Shiite groups in the region, as well as thousands of second-class imported laborers from Pakistan, India, and Palestine, in order to counter the GCC.<sup>71</sup> Initially, Khomeini rarely called on Shiite groups directly, preferring instead to use terms like the “disinherited” or “oppressed” to avoid disparaging Iran’s large Sunni minority in the South East. While to a degree much of Khomeini’s rhetoric was for internal consumption, Al Saud viewed the rhetorical challenges as a threatening attempt to delegitimize the regime and incite insurgency among Shiite minority populations. Moreover, in an attempt to replace Saudi Arabia as the religious leader for Muslim’s in the Middle East, Khomeini challenged Al Saud’s right to Mecca and Medina.<sup>72</sup> This was critical since Al Saud’s highly valued position as the religious leader among Islamic nations stems from its custodianship of the two holy cities, thus Iran’s political-religious challenges required a strong retort.

Such verbal confrontations quickly turned sectarian and centered on a Sunni-Shiite divide as each state unleashed a series of soft power statements aimed at discrediting each other and maintaining internal political cohesion. Events culminated in 1987 when 450 worshipers on a pilgrimage to Mecca were killed in a skirmish with Saudi security forces; of those killed, 275 were Iranian. Khomeini quickly labeled the Sunni leadership in Iran as “disbelievers,” while Saudi Arabia instead claimed that of the 150,000 Iranian Shiite pilgrims “25 percent were Revolutionary gauds, 40 percent were suicide actors, 13 percent [were] members of the generation of the Revolution, and only 22 percent were true pilgrims.”<sup>73</sup> The Iranian people responded by ransacking the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, which resulted in the death of an Arab diplomat and Riyadh ordering a cessation of all diplomatic relations (official diplomacy was restored in 1991). This event and other similarly violent Shiite rallies or attacks occurred frequently over the next decade and resulted in an increasing ethno-sectarian soft power war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>69</sup> Nikou, Semira N. “Timeline of Iran’s Foreign Relations.” United States Institute for Peace. 2016. Web.

<sup>70</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. “Iran-Iraq War.”

<sup>71</sup> Markham, James M. 1979. *The New York Times*. “Arab Countries Fear Spread of Iran’s Shiite Revolt.” New York Times Online.

<sup>72</sup> Mabon. *Saudi Arabia and Iran*. 54.

<sup>73</sup> Mabon. *Saudi Arabia and Iran*. 53.

During this period each state attempted to achieve religious hierarchy and centered the battle on a Sunni-Shiite divide under which Iran came to see itself as the defender of the oppressed Shiites throughout the region. Moreover, as the rhetorical war continued, Iran stepped up its material support to Shiite militants in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, and other states: most prominent among these groups is Hezbollah. While Sunnis and Shiites have fought intermittently throughout history, this soft power competition is in many ways responsible for the current level of sectarian hatred erupting throughout the Middle East today.

#### iv. Revolution and Terror in the Levant

Following the Revolution, the countries of the Levant—Syria, Lebanon, and Israel—quickly came to occupy a prominent position in Iran’s foreign policy. Syria, which had been considered a rival under the Shah, was the first Arab country to recognize the Revolutionary regime and one of the few states to provide military support to Iran during its war with Iraq. In comparison, Israel was publically decried as an inherently expansive Zionist state and puppet of the West, whose military posturing threatened Iran’s strategic interests. As such, Iran officially ended diplomatic ties with Israel by February 18, 1979 and began a substantial rhetorical assault against the Jewish state.<sup>74</sup> However, secretly both states continued to work together out of a shared interest to counterbalance Iraqi aggression and, as Israel had an invested interest in Saddam’s defeat, its “shipment of arms to Iran was based on its own unique strategic imperatives and preceded the Iranian Contra Affair.”<sup>75</sup> Beyond Tehran paying substantial amounts and allowing a significant number of Jews to flee to the West, Israel also hoped to gain greater leverage with the still active moderate groups in Iran through these actions.

However, despite a history of cooperation that predated the Revolution, relations began to sour after Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982. After the occupation Iran quickly deployed 1000 Revolutionary Guards—many of who would later form the elite Quds force (the section of the IRGC responsible for clandestine extraterritorial operations)—to assist in the expulsion of Israeli security forces.<sup>76</sup> In conjuncture with Syria as a basing point, the Quds Force established Hezbollah—a Shiite insurgent group—and while Iranian forces never directly clashed with the Israelis, the newly formed militia “is widely credited with forcing Israeli troops to withdraw from southern Lebanon in 2000.”<sup>77</sup> Khomeini also drastically increased rhetoric against Israel and claimed to be acting in defense of Muslims who were subjected to the aggression of a Western proxy attempting to expand power from the “Niles to the Euphrates.”<sup>78</sup> Following these events, relations between the two countries continued to sour and the former partnership all but vanished.

Over the years, Iran has taken a prominent role in supporting the Palestinian people rhetorically and by supplying terrorist organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization and

<sup>74</sup> Nikou. “Timeline of Iran’s Foreign Relations.” 2016. Web.

<sup>75</sup> Kaye, Dalia D., Nader Alireza, and Roshan, Parisa. 2012. *Israel and Iran*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. 23.

<sup>76</sup> Nikou. “Timeline of Iran’s Foreign Relations.” 2016. Web.

<sup>77</sup> Borghard, Erica D. Rapp-Hooper, Mira. 2013. “Hizbullah and the Iranian Nuclear Programme.” 86.

<sup>78</sup> Ed. Limba. *Imam Khomeini (s.a.) on Exportation of Revolution*. 128.

Hamas (though this relationship has largely ended for the time being due to disagreements over the war in Syria). Iran has also demanded other Muslim countries challenge the ‘Zionists,’ referring to the state as a “cancerous tumor;” Tehran even cut ties with Egypt and Turkey when the states signed peace treaties with Jerusalem.<sup>7980</sup> In turn, due to Tehran’s support of these threatening militants and its former quest for nuclear power, Israel has declared Iran to be an “existential threat” to their continued survival. Thus, while Syria and Iran have grown increasingly close, Tehran and Jerusalem currently retain an extremely belligerent relationship characterized by a political-military competition.

#### **v. Exceptions to the Revolution: Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia**

Even as Iran exported its Revolution by waging war in Iraq, engaging in sectarian competition with the GCC, and conducting clandestine operations in Lebanon, several areas were spared the Revolution due to geopolitical concerns. Compared to Western funded Sunni regimes in the Gulf, Turkey—a Secular Islamic (Sunni) state and Western backed member of NATO—has historically maintained amicable economic and political relations with Iran after the Revolution. The two States are significant bilateral trading partners, with Turkey providing technical and manufactured goods and Iran exporting natural gas and oil via a shared pipeline established in the early 1990’s. Moreover, in 2011 the states agreed to cooperate on counterterrorist operations against Kurdish militant groups: namely the Kurdistan Workers’ Party in Turkey and the Free Life Party in Iran.<sup>81</sup> However, Ankara and Tehran both back different factions in the current Syrian War and have begun to experience a falling out over this particular geopolitical dispute. Though, in spite of this competition, the two states continue to work together towards stability elsewhere.

Iran could have also exported the Revolution in Central Asia by supporting any of the numerous Pan-Islamic movements—such as the Islamist-led United Tajik Opposition or the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan—that exist in opposition to the regions secular dictators. Instead, the state chose to engage economically and diplomatically with these countries, ensuring bilateral trade agreements, as well as counterterrorism and counternarcotic cooperation. Additionally, Iran did not wish to threaten its growing relationships with Russia and China, who were major energy investors and arms contractors in Iran. These two great powers were vested in the stability of the region via the Shanghai Cooperation and Tehran feared that exporting the Revolution to Central Asia could dissolve its relationship with Moscow and Beijing.<sup>82</sup> As such, post-Revolutionary Iran has maintained positive relations throughout most of Central Asia.

In comparison, and in rejection to traditional policies to support Shiite states, Iran remains deeply opposed to predominantly Shiite Azerbaijan and instead supports the Orthodox Christian Armenia. Iran has a significant Azeri population in the Northwest of the country and “asserts that Azeri nationalist movements might stoke separatism among Iran’s large Azeri Turkic

<sup>79</sup> Nikou. “Timeline of Iran’s Foreign Relations.” 2016. Web.

<sup>80</sup> Katzman, Kenneth. 2015. “Iran’s Foreign Policy.” Congressional Research Service. 15.

<sup>81</sup> Katzman. “Iran’s Foreign Policy.” 22.

<sup>82</sup> Gvosdev, Nikolas K. and Marsh, Christopher. 2014. *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*.

population.”<sup>83</sup> Baku and Tehran also currently have territorial disputes over the Caspian Sea. Moreover, Azerbaijan allowed the U.S. to maintain a military presence in country to facilitate supply routes to Afghanistan, while intelligence reports have indicated that Baku may be allowing Israel to base jet interceptors in the country.<sup>84</sup> These and other, geopolitical concerns have led Iran to reject its traditional policy of amicability with Shiite powers, such as Syria, Lebanon, post U.S. invasion Iraq, and Oman.

Similarly, in recent years Iran has limited its attempts to export the Revolution to specific countries based a growing need to seek accommodation within the region and work with the younger more regionally minded generation arising in Iran. Khomeini, who died in 1989, was in many ways the heart of the Revolution and following the Supreme Leader’s death the propagation of Iran’s ideas began to change. The overzealous attempts to liberate the wider Middle East from U.S. domination by instilling revolution in Shiite populations throughout Iraq, the Gulf, and Lebanon, had created a collective opposition to Iran, as demonstrated by the rise of the GCC. As the propagation of ideas proved increasingly ineffective and counterproductive following Khomeini’s death, Iran sought to pursue better relations with specific groups. This is not to say that the exportation of the Revolution ended or that Iran’s means entirely changed. Tehran still rhetorically calls for the exportation of the revolution to legitimize action and maintain popular support in times of strife, as well as supplying militants such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Al-Mukhtar in Bahrain, Houthis in Yemen, and various Shiite and Sunni groups throughout Iraq and Syria.

However, Iran has limited its rhetoric in regards to specific countries—namely Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar—where the Shiite minorities have received greater social equity. Thus, in an effort to repair these relations, Iran has increased diplomatic action with the countries in recent years. For example, in June 2015 “Kuwait’s Amir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah visited Iran...meeting not only with President Hassan Rouhani but also Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei,” while “the Speaker of Iran’s Majles (parliament) visited Qatar” in March 2015.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Kuwait has worked extensively with the Iranian backed government in Iraq and according to public intelligence, has not supported the anti-Assad militants in Syria.<sup>86</sup> While recent events have endangered relations between these parties, Iran has worked to rebuild a limited-partnership with these states in spite of the traditional attempts to export the revolution in the 1980’s. Ultimately, this signals a growing desire to incorporate a greater level of strategic diplomacy with existing states, while reserving the exportation of the revolution for specific threats and competitors. Thus, the ideological propagation of Iran’s pan-Islamic theocracy will remain a powerful tool, but due a precarious regional position and changing internal factors among the younger population, Iran is displaying an ability to pursue less coercive means of interaction with its neighbors based on geopolitical needs.

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<sup>83</sup> Katzman. “Iran’s Foreign Policy.” 22.20.

<sup>84</sup> Bhalla, Reva. STRATFOR. 2015. “Azerbaijani-Israeli Relations and the Iranian Threat (Dispatch).” *STRATFOR: Global Intelligence*.

<sup>85</sup> Katzman. “Iran’s Foreign Policy.” 10.

<sup>86</sup> Katzman. “Iran’s Foreign Policy.” 10.

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the Revolution and Khomeini's rise to power brought many changes not only within Iran but also within the region as a whole. In an effort to secure continued domestic support by fueling the fever of revolution and in order to defend against existential threats, Khomeini had attempted to export the Revolution via rhetoric and aid to insurgent groups. In Iraq this led to war; in the Gulf this led to sectarian extremism; and in Israel this brought about one of the most effective and destructive terrorist groups in history. However, these efforts ultimately failed to create the large-scale social upheaval Khomeini had hoped for. Instead, this only created a greater sequestration of Iran at the political, diplomatic, and economic levels. But, with Khomeini's death in 1989, many parties in Iran have pushed for increased integration in a region void of direct conflict. While Iran still competes with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates through the Revolution and its well developed methodology of exportation, Tehran has been willing to seek limited-partnerships with Turkey, the Central Asian States, Armenia, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar despite ideological differences. Iran's threat perception still exists and the new Supreme Leader Khamenei must still maintain the support of local populations through pan-Islamic ideologies centered on the exportation of the revolution. Years of failed attempts to propagate this ideology abroad, however, have taught Tehran it must at times pursue a softer touch. Consequently, Iran is currently reassessing its position and attempting to devise a new regional policy that will balance out internal and external needs, and while the country is pursuing a lighter touch, it remains doubtful that it will completely forgo its attempts to rock the revolution. However, thirty seven years after the Revolution, Tehran's nuanced interests and increasing desire for stable regional integration provide an opportunity for the United States and Iran to pursue a limited partnership regarding shared concerns in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

### III. CONTAINING THE WORST OF IRANIAN BEHAVIOR

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Iran has made noteworthy strides since Implementation Day of the JCPOA, having dismantled a significant portion of its nuclear infrastructure and drastically reduced the size and composition of its existing enriched uranium stocks, as promised. But the JCPOA is not a comprehensive U.S. policy towards Iran, and Tehran continues to actively and aggressively project its influence abroad under the direction of conservative hardliners. Such behavior cannot be tolerated moving forward. These antagonistic policies threaten not only U.S. allies and hopes for stability in the region, but the very promise of cooperation that the agreement represents. Successful policy towards Iran will require the U.S. to both vigilantly enforce Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, and consistently oppose the very worst of its disruptive behaviors in the region, primarily its sponsorship of terrorism, destabilization of neighboring Arab countries such as Iraq and Yemen, and consistent threats towards Israel.

In many ways Iran continues to see itself as a power in isolation, and continues to employ the disruptive policies it has long relied on to bolster both its sense of identity and security. But this behavior, as strategic as it is ideological, now threatens to keep Iran in isolation unless it finds a better path. In the long-term, as the country becomes more integrated as a member of the international community, these policies will likely join Ayatollah Khamenei and other ideological relics of the 1979 Revolution as more moderate voices gain traction in Tehran.

Until then, the U.S. must seek to systematically contain the worst of Iran's behavior, but it can only do so through a coordinated, multi-lateral effort. Monitoring and targeting financiers of terrorism; strengthening sanctions on providers of ballistic missile technology; affirming the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; coordinating with our allies militarily; these are all areas where the U.S. may lead, and others will follow. This is not merely a matter of providing leadership that is desperately needed in the region, but of providing a sense of security to U.S. allies at this critical time when a single rash decision – regardless of ownership – could potentially escalate the Middle East into further conflict, and Iran will be more likely to sit at the table if others are as well. Moreover, if Iran can be shown that its more aggressive tendencies do more harm than good to its national interests, it may yet turn its attention towards more cooperative and prosperous endeavors worthy of the regional power it aspires to be.

## A. CONTAINING A NUCLEAR IRAN

On January 16th, 2016 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that Iran had limited its nuclear program enough for the JCPOA to be implemented – transitioning from “an ambitious set of promises on paper to measurable action,” as stated by Secretary of State John Kerry in Vienna to mark the occasion.<sup>87</sup> Moving forward, it is important for the U.S. to contain the worst of Iranian behavior by vigorously enforcing the JCPOA, particularly the document’s preface, which states, “under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop, or acquire any nuclear weapons.”<sup>88</sup> The U.S. must make it absolutely clear that it will never allow Iran to advance its nuclear program to a state where it can produce nuclear weapons. Washington must be consistent in verifying that Iran’s nuclear program is strictly limited to civilian applications, both to reassure our allies and to prevent the possibility of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. The U.S. should therefore pursue a four-point plan towards Iran, expanded upon in detail later in this section, as implementation of the JCPOA goes forward:

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Aggressively enforce every aspect of the JCPOA agreement in conjunction with the IAEA through vigorous monitoring and verification of Iranian nuclear infrastructure
2. Move to immediately re-impose previous U.S. and EU economic, banking, and financial sanctions if Iran breaks its commitments to the JCPOA
3. Coordinate with the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Asset Controls to provide dedicated assistance to American and international businesses seeking to trade properly with Iran without incurring fines from sanction regimes still in place post-JCPOA
4. Focus the State Department’s Office of Counterproliferation Initiatives towards targeting and sanctioning providers of technology and materials used in the development of Iran’s ballistic missile program and impose new sanctions on Iran for continuing to test ballistic missiles in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1696 and 1929

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<sup>87</sup> Kennedy, Merrit. “Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted.” *NPR.org*. 29 Jan. 2016. Web.

<sup>88</sup> Department Of State. Bureau of Public Affairs. “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,” July 21, 2015. Web.

## i. Overview of Iran's Nuclear Program

### a. General Timeline

Iran's nuclear history pre-dates the current Islamic government. Its nuclear program was initiated in 1957, when the US and Iran signed the Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Civil Uses of Atoms.<sup>89</sup> But a major breakthrough in the Iranian nuclear field started in the 1970s, when the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and concluded nuclear technology related contracts with the U.S., France and Germany to build nuclear power reactors, an enrichment facility, and a reprocessing plant for spent fuel.<sup>90</sup>

The Shah's main motivation for a nuclear program was to diversify Iran's energy sources by generating 23,000 MWe of nuclear power for Iran<sup>91</sup>. By 1979, Iran had developed an impressive baseline capability in nuclear technologies. But in the wake of the revolution, all nuclear activity was suspended until 1984 when Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini expressed a renewed interest in nuclear power for Iran and sought the assistance of international partners. Khomeini's interests in a revitalized nuclear program did not extend merely to power production. Indeed, why would the one of the most energy sufficient countries in the world want a nuclear program with enrichment capabilities? Ultimately, the nuclear program became important to the current regime as a means to address international and regional security concerns, domestic regime legitimacy, and energy diversification.

### b. Security Concerns

Revolutionary states typically see the world as a malevolent place and tend to act in ways that make it so. In his State of the Union Address to Congress on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush used the expression "Axis of Evil" to include Iraq, Iran and North Korea: "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an Axis of Evil, arming to threaten the peace to the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger."<sup>92</sup> The Axis of Evil metaphor often used by Bush throughout his Presidency represented a new approach of restructuring perceived threats to the international system. It announced a future strategy of preemption and regime change where necessary. This message, broadcasted around the world, re-structured the way the West viewed Iran, and how Iran viewed both the rest of the world and themselves. Iran's sense of threat was particularly heightened after the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, after which Iran's leadership felt that its Islamic regime was in grave danger and that the U.S. would use Iraq as a base to invade Iran and overthrow the Islamic Republic.<sup>93</sup>

Iran's security concerns come from past experiences with foreign powers invading or otherwise interfering in Iran domestically. Faced with the possibility of a permanent U.S. military presence in the region that effectively encircled Iran and constant hints at the possibility of regime change

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<sup>89</sup> Alam, Anwar. *Iran and Post-9/11 World Order: Reflections on Iranian Nuclear Programme*. New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2009. P. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Alam, Anwar. *Iran and Post-9/11 World Order*. P. 6-9

<sup>91</sup> Reardon, Robert. *Containing Iran: Strategies for Addressing the Iranian Nuclear Challenge*. Rand Corp, 2012. P.26

<sup>92</sup> Bush, George W. "President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address." Washington Post. 29 Jan. 2002. Web.

<sup>93</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*. P 72

from the U.S. government, Iranian leaders saw a capability of fissile production for potential nuclear weapons as a useful deterrent against U.S. and Western aggression.<sup>94</sup>

*c. Legitimizing the Iranian Government Through Nuclear Technology*

Iran's desire to join the ranks of nuclear states has two functions: to legitimize the regime domestically and to gain a greater weight internationally and regionally. Iran's principal motive for developing the nuclear sector appears to be the domestic legitimization of the regime.<sup>95</sup> It has promoted the notion that possessing the full fuel cycle reflects cutting-edge technology that no self-respecting nation can afford to forgo. The nuclear program symbolizes the country's self-sufficiency and independence from foreign – especially Western – influence, a core political value in legitimizing principle of the Islamic Republic.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, nuclear development is a metaphor for Iran's quest for greater respect, recognition, and a wider role in the region and the globe. As a result, Iranian leaders have attributed more significance to the attainment of an enrichment capability than potential energy self-sufficiency.

*d. Iran, Oil, and its Nuclear Program*

One of the main arguments against Iran's nuclear program is that Iran, as an oil-rich country, does not need a nuclear energy as a source of power generation. Holding an estimated 10% of global proven oil reserves, Iran boasts the world's third largest proven petroleum reserves following Saudi Arabia and Canada, and has the second largest gas reserve.<sup>97</sup> Iran lacks, however, the domestic refining capacity necessary to meet the domestic need for gasoline and other essential refined petroleum products.<sup>98</sup>

This is further compounded by the fact that Iran's rapid population growth and domestic oil consumption are reducing Iran's oil export revenues. With its population projected at over 105 million by 2050, Iran will have no choice but to seek access to more diversified and secure sources of energy.<sup>99</sup> The number of villages requiring electricity has risen rapidly, from 46,000 in 2015 compared to 4,400 twenty-five years ago, demonstrates this fast growing demand.<sup>100</sup> To satisfy this, Iran cannot rely exclusively on fossil fuels for energy. Therefore, Iran justifies its interest and need in nuclear technology, especially in enrichment technology, by reference to the need to diversify its energy sources and maintain its self-sufficiency status.

*e. Iran's Nuclear Infrastructure*

The core of Iran's nuclear program is based on the enrichment of natural uranium to a concentration of U-235. Natural uranium contains 0.7 percent of the uranium-235 isotope, with light-water power reactors generally requiring enrichment levels of 3 percent to 5 percent (levels

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<sup>94</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*. P 75

<sup>95</sup> Chubin, Shahram. *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006. P. 28.

<sup>96</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*. P 76

<sup>97</sup> Ilias, Shayerah. "Iran's Economic Conditions: U.S. Policy Issues." April 22, 2010. Web.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid Ilias

<sup>99</sup> "U.S. Energy Information Administration - Independent Statistics and Analysis on Iran." Iran. 19 June, 2015. Web.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid U.S. Energy Information Administration

of low-enriched uranium, or LEU).<sup>101</sup> Weapons-grade uranium – also known as highly-enriched uranium or HEU – is around 90 percent. Iran chose to use cascades of high-speed centrifuges, which take uranium in gaseous form of uranium hexafluoride and spin out the gas to separate the heavier U-238 molecules from the lighter U-235 – uranium molecules needed for bombs and energy.<sup>102</sup> Although uranium enrichment is the core of Iran's nuclear fuel cycle effort, the Iranians also have been working toward acquiring the means to produce plutonium. Plutonium is produced by irradiating natural uranium fuel rods in a reactor.<sup>103</sup> The plutonium is then separated from the spent rods through a chemical process known as plutonium reprocessing. The separated plutonium can be used to fuel commercial reactors, but can also be used to produce a nuclear weapon. Therefore, there was significant reason to believe that Iran's intentions for its nuclear program were not restricted to the production of electricity and that Tehran wished to make available the option of quickly producing enough highly enriched fissile material for a nuclear weapon.

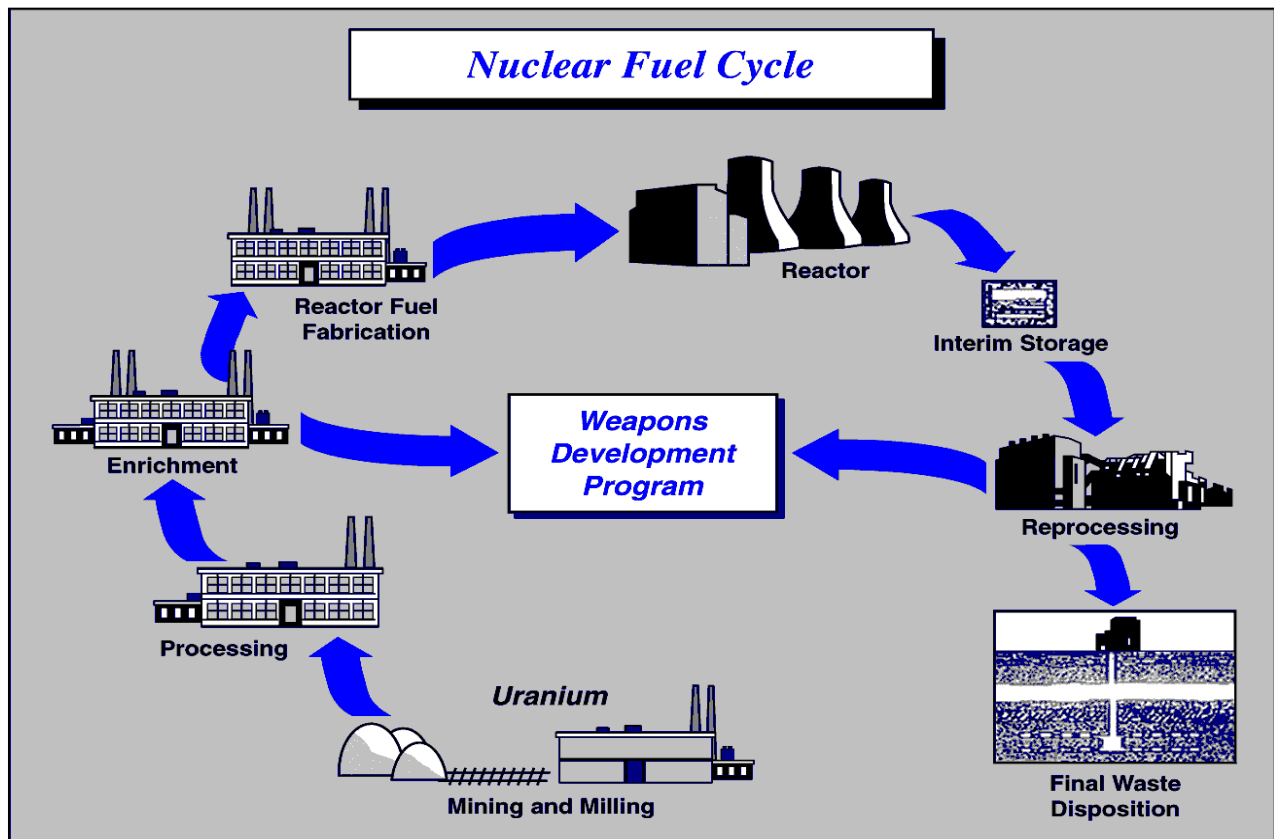


Figure 1. Source: Federation of American Scientists

#### f. Discovering Clandestine Enrichment Plants

The Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) is Iran's industrial-scale uranium enrichment facility at Natanz. At Natanz, first-generation centrifuges (IR-1) purchased from Pakistan spin uranium hexafluoride at great speeds to increase the percentage of uranium-235, the principal ingredient

<sup>101</sup> Bruno, Greg. "Iran's Nuclear Program." Council on Foreign Relations. March 10, 2010. Web.

<sup>102</sup> Pollack, Kenneth M. *Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb, and American Strategy*. New York, 2013. p.36.

<sup>103</sup> Bruno. "Iran's Nuclear Program."

for both power production and weapons capability.<sup>104</sup> The FEP contains two cascade halls: Production Halls A and B, which are intended to hold roughly 25,000 centrifuges, but Iran did not provide details on their intentions for Hall B to the IAEA.<sup>105</sup> After being discovered by Western intelligence agencies in 2009, Iran reported the existence of the Fordow Enrichment Plant, which holds roughly 3,000 centrifuges in 16 cascades.<sup>106</sup> The site's existence raised substantial concerns that there may be more clandestine enrichment facilities. Iran's plutonium program is less advanced than its uranium enrichment program. The Arak IR-40 reactor would be ideally suited to produce roughly 11 kg of weapons-grade plutonium, enough for at least one bomb per year.<sup>107</sup> The IR-40 design is one of the most suspicious aspects of the Iranian nuclear program: there is little justification for the construction of such reactor as part of a purely civilian program.



Source: New Scientist/ Global Security

**Figure 2** Source: New Scientist/Global Security

### *g. Inspections of Suspected Facilities*

While Iran has little justification for failing to declare its enrichment facilities, international inspectors have never found concrete evidence linking Iran's nuclear program to weapons development. After all, enrichment is permitted under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which Iran signed in 1968, and could be related to civilian needs. But for more than a decade, Iran has lied and concealed information from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about its nuclear program in contravention of its Safeguards Agreement under the NPT. The fact that Iran had imported centrifuges without notifying the IAEA was also a violation of its Safeguards Agreement.<sup>108</sup> Under tremendous international pressure and fearing an American invasion, Iran

<sup>104</sup> Bruno. "Iran's Nuclear Program."

<sup>105</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*: P.39

<sup>106</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*" P.41

<sup>107</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*" P.42

<sup>108</sup> Pollack. *Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb, and American Strategy*. P. 39

signed the Additional Protocol in 2003 which allowed the IAEA inspectors much greater access in conducting inspections and monitoring of Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran has refused, however to implement the agreement and allow the inspectors the access they promised.<sup>109</sup> The Iranian inconsistency and failure to comply with the Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol makes the international community doubt Iran's claim that its goal is nuclear power for civilian energy.

#### *h. Iran's Ballistic Missile Program*

Since 1988, Tehran has placed emphasis on developing ballistic missiles, believing that they will be decisive in future conflicts.<sup>110</sup> Iran's motivation to acquire and produce ballistic missiles grew out of its war with Iraq, when Tehran found itself poorly prepared to retaliate against Iraq's missile attacks on Iranian cities.<sup>111</sup> Initially, Iran developed missiles with assistance from North Korea, but over time it has invested heavily in its own industries and infrastructure in order to reduce its dependence on foreign sources. Iran's efforts have centered on the development of medium-range ballistic missiles that are capable of hitting targets anywhere in the region; missiles capable of reaching such ranges have no legitimate function other than for delivering a nuclear payload.<sup>112</sup> The core of Iran's program has been the Shahab series of short and medium-range ballistic missiles; current estimates place Iran's existing stockpile at roughly 200-400 Shahab-1 and Shahab-2 missiles.<sup>113</sup> Although these missiles have poor accuracy, they are based on proven, battle-tested designs with a reasonably high degree of reliability.<sup>114</sup> Iran's arsenal also includes Sajjil missiles, a class of medium-range missiles which use solid fuel that are less vulnerable to preemptive strikes due to a shorter launch time.<sup>115</sup> As it stands, Iran's missile program is relatively constrained, with limited guidance and precision systems and several delays and failures in testing.<sup>116</sup> Even so weapons, systems that rely on conventional warheads and lack high accuracy still have military value; they present the constant risk of a lucky hit.<sup>117</sup>

In the past several years, Iran has improved its ballistic missile force both quantitatively and qualitatively, expanding the range and sophistication of its force such that its medium-range ballistic missiles are assessed to be capable of reaching Europe. Iran also has successfully launched four satellites that use technology similar to guidance systems used in intercontinental ballistic missiles.<sup>118</sup> Iran has built the largest and most diverse ballistic missile arsenal of any Muslim country in the Middle East to date, and continues to develop and test its missiles in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1696 and 1929. Iran's latest test was conducted in October 2015, when it launched a liquid-fueled medium-range missile capable of delivering a

<sup>109</sup> Pollack. *Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb, and American Strategy*. P. 40

<sup>110</sup> Elleman, Michael. "The Iran Primer." Iran's Ballistic Missile Program. August 2015. Web.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid Elleman

<sup>112</sup> Ibid Elleman

<sup>113</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*. P. 44

<sup>114</sup> Reardon. *Containing Iran*. P. 44

<sup>115</sup> Ibid Elleman

<sup>116</sup> Chubin. *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*. P 47

<sup>117</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H. "Iran's Rocket and Missile Forces and Strategic Options." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 7, 2014. Web.

<sup>118</sup> Joseph, Dr. Robert. United States House of Representatives. Committee on Foreign Affairs. June 10, 2015. Web.

nuclear payload.<sup>119</sup> The recent test was intended as a reminder to the world that Iran would develop its missile program in order to maintain deterrence and that no limitations on range or other capabilities would be accepted.

## ii. Understanding the JCPOA

### a. Purpose of the Agreement

The landmark arms control agreement was initially announced on July 14 2015 by its signatories, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the U.S., and five other world powers (China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom).<sup>120</sup> The JCPOA rolls back and temporarily freezes aspects of Iran's nuclear program to ensure that it remains "exclusively peaceful."<sup>121</sup> The purpose of the deal is to increase the amount of time needed for Iran to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon by limiting its enrichment capabilities to practical needs.<sup>122</sup> It is also meant to improve the international community's ability to detect whether or not Iran attempts to cheat on the deal and create a nuclear weapon covertly.<sup>123</sup>

### b. Cutbacks to Iran's Nuclear Program

The deal ultimately reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran seek, develop, or acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>124</sup> It does so by requiring Iran to neutralize thousands of tons of enriched uranium, decommission thousands of centrifuges, render its plutonium plant at Arak harmless, and dismantle and redesign its existing nuclear infrastructure.<sup>125</sup> Tehran must also refrain from reprocessing nuclear fuel or constructing a facility capable of doing so.<sup>126</sup> The deal calls for restrictions on the capacity and location of Iran's enrichment facilities, as well as the size and composition of its enriched uranium stocks, which it reduced by approximately 98 percent.<sup>127</sup> It also calls for the removal of Iran's heavy water reactor at Arak and two-thirds of its centrifuges, leaving 5,060 in place.<sup>128</sup> Iran currently has three gas centrifuge fuel enrichment facilities (the Natanz plant, the Natanz Pilot plant, and the Fordow plant), and will refrain from building new facilities or expanding existing ones under the agreement.<sup>129</sup>

The terms of the agreement will, however, allow Iran to move forward with an indigenous nuclear program consistent with international non-proliferation norms.<sup>130</sup> Upon meeting these standards, the Iranian nuclear program "will be treated in the same manner as that of any non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT."<sup>131</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Chang, Richard, "U.S. Confirms Iran Tested Nuclear-capable Ballistic Missile." Reuters. October 16, 2015. Web.

<sup>120</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." *Congressional Digest* 94, no. 9 (November 2015): 32.

<sup>121</sup> Department Of State. "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action."

<sup>122</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement."

<sup>123</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement."

<sup>124</sup> Wright, Robin. "Tehran's Promise." *The New Yorker*, July 27, 2015. Web.

<sup>125</sup> Department Of State. "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action."

<sup>126</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement."

<sup>127</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement."

<sup>128</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

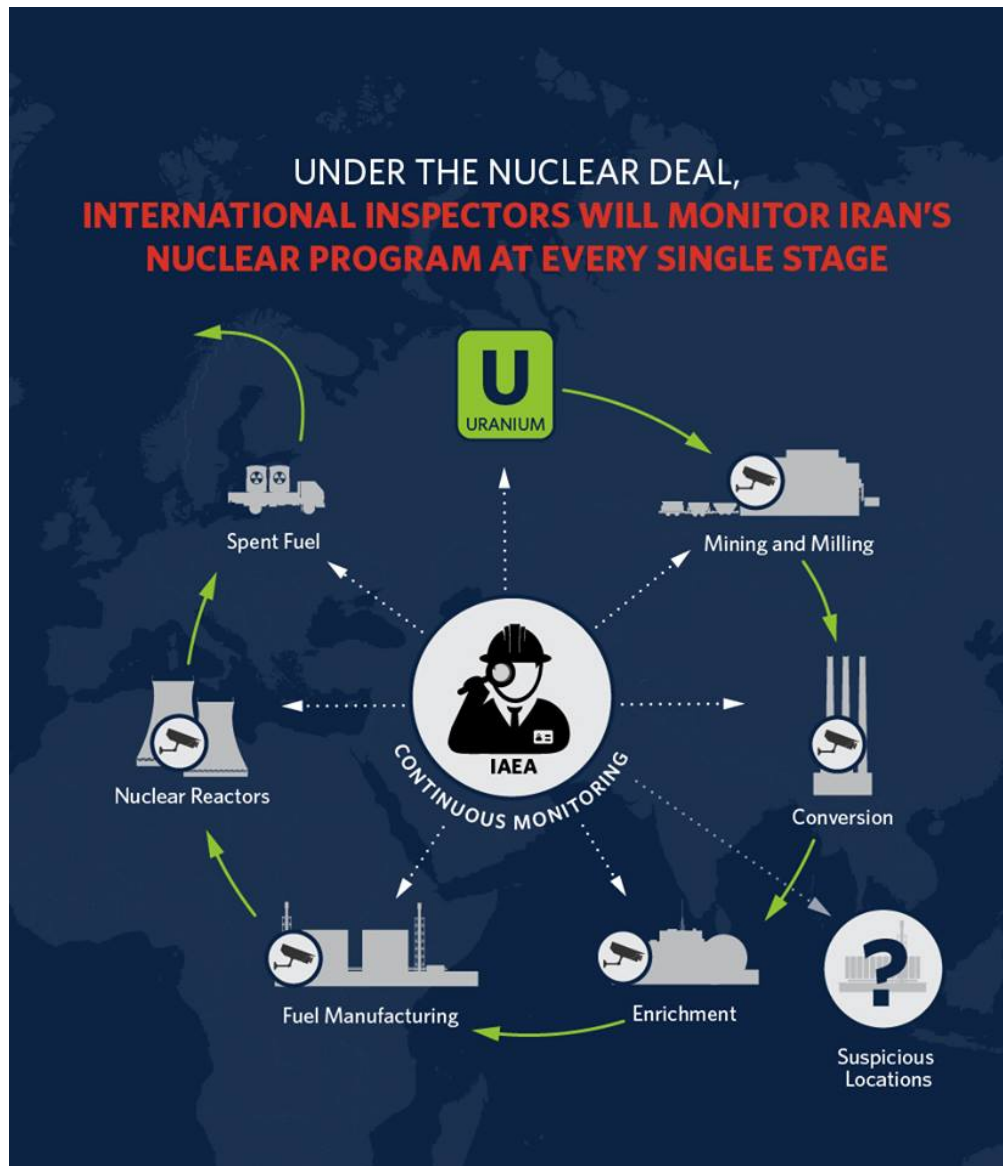
<sup>129</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement."

<sup>130</sup> Department Of State. "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action."

<sup>131</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P. 4

*c. Monitoring and Verification Regime*

The JCPOA also calls for transparency around Iran's nuclear program, subjecting its nuclear facilities to an international inspection and monitoring regime.<sup>132</sup> These inspections will be conducted by the IAEA and will continue indefinitely. In fact, the IAEA's authority has increased significantly under the deal – gaining the ability to perform inspections without being limited by the Iranian government, enter any site it deems suspicious, and demand information from Iran regarding its established and undeclared nuclear facilities.<sup>133</sup> According to code 3.1 of the IAEA safeguards, Tehran must provide design information for any new nuclear facilities as soon as it decides to construct them.<sup>134</sup>



**Figure 3.** “What You Need to Know About the JCPOA” Source: The White House

<sup>132</sup> “Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement.” P. 2

<sup>133</sup> “Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement.” P. 2

<sup>134</sup> “Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement.” P. 2

#### d. Sanctions Removal

The JCPOA calls for comprehensive sanctions relief and is expected to open up billions of dollars of frozen assets within the Iranian economy (estimates range from \$55 billion to over \$100 billion). Of that amount, Iran will likely have close to \$25 billion in immediately usable liquid assets (some will be kept in foreign reserves and some will go toward Iran's preexisting financial obligations).<sup>135</sup>

The agreement allows Iran to return to the oil market, where E.U. member states can now import and sell Iranian oil and gas.<sup>136</sup> The U.S. will no longer sanction non-U.S. citizens who "engage with Iran's energy sector," though the U.S. itself cannot engage.<sup>137</sup> The World Bank estimates that this will eventually add around one million barrels of Iranian oil to the market every day, reducing oil prices by 14 percent.<sup>138</sup> This will help oil importers like the E.U. and the U.S., while hurting oil exporters, especially those in the Gulf countries.

In addition, the U.S. will no longer sanction non-U.S. individuals who engage in financial transactions with the Iranian central bank or its financial institutions, allowing the country to rejoin the international banking system.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, the European Union will allow money to move between its member states and Iran without authorization.<sup>140</sup>

Another change is the lifting of import bans to the U.S. on signature Iranian products such as carpets, caviar, and pistachios. Gold and precious metals can also now be traded between the E.U. and Iran, and the U.S. will no longer sanction non-U.S. citizens who are involved.<sup>141</sup> The E.U. will also allow trade of naval equipment and technology for ship-building to Iran. Ultimately, the aircraft sector is the "only sector in which the U.S. is truly able to do business in the Iranian market," as U.S. companies can now sell commercial aircrafts to Iran, which could earn tens of billions of dollars for Western aircraft manufacturers like Boeing.<sup>142</sup>

Sanctions on Iran for state-sponsored terrorism, regional destabilization, and human rights violations will remain untouched.<sup>143</sup> According to the Lead Coordinator for Iran Nuclear Implementation at the U.S. State Department, Stephen Mull, the JCPOA is meant to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and needs to be disentangled from other flashpoints.<sup>144</sup> According to Mull, "the administration continues to engage Iran on other issues of concern and

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<sup>135</sup> Amir-Mokri, Cyrus. "Windfall for Iran?: End of Sanctions." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 6 (Dec. 2015): 25–32.

<sup>136</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>137</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>138</sup> Devarajan, Shantayanan, and Lili Mottaghi. *Economic Implications of Lifting Sanctions on Iran*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2015. Web.

<sup>139</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>140</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>141</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>142</sup> Kennedy. "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

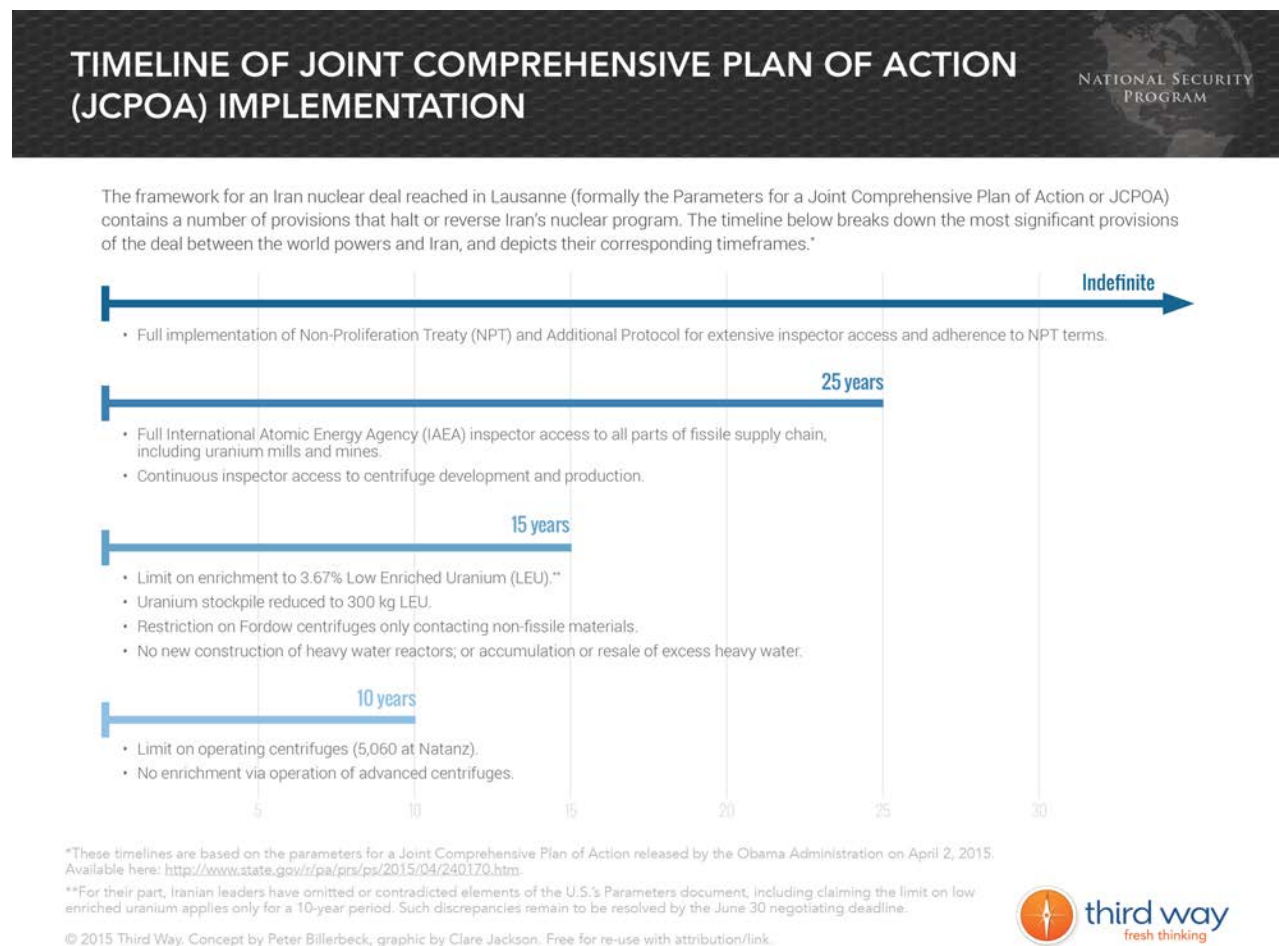
<sup>143</sup> Lorber, Eric and Rosenberg, Elizabeth. "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (July 2015). Web.

<sup>144</sup> "US Department of State's Stephen Mull on Iran Nuclear Deal Implementation." *Atlantic Council*. 17 Dec. 2015. Web.

the deal does not indicate a softening of stance on regional destabilization, terrorism, human rights violations, and the country's missile program."<sup>145</sup>

#### e. *The Sunset Clause*

Iran's path to a nuclear weapon, under the JCPOA agreement, is officially closed for at least 10 to 15 years.<sup>146</sup> However, the agreement features a "sunset clause," or a time limit after which restrictions on its nuclear program will be lifted.<sup>147</sup> Critics fear that Iran will then be able to resume its nuclear research with a stronger economy to support it. Supporters of the deal argue that the JCPOA's monitoring and inspection regime will provide the U.S. and its allies with enough information about Tehran's nuclear program to give confidence that it will remain strictly civilian in its application, and perhaps by that time relations between Iran and the West will have improved.<sup>148</sup>



**Figure 4.** "Timeline of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Dispute Resolution Procedure" Source: Third Way

<sup>145</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

<sup>146</sup> Nephew, Richard. "How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program." *Arms Control Today* 45, no. 7 (20150900): 8–8.

<sup>147</sup> Marcus, Jonathan. "Iran Nuclear Agreement: A Good Deal, for Now?" *BBC News*. 14 July 2015. Web.

<sup>148</sup> Marcus, "Iran Nuclear Agreement: A Good Deal, for Now?"

If Iran comes to believe that any or all of the P5+1 countries are not meeting JCPOA commitments, it can refer to the Joint Commission to try to find a resolution to the conflict, as can the P5+1.<sup>149</sup> The Joint Commission, in either case, will then have 15 days to resolve the compliance issue.<sup>150</sup> If the party is still unsatisfied, the issue can then be referred to the ministers of foreign affairs, who can take an additional 15 days to solve the problem (unless the time period is extended by consensus).<sup>151</sup> If the issue has still not been resolved to the objecting party's satisfaction, the participant can then use it as grounds to stop performing its commitments under the JCPOA in whole or in part, as well as notify the U.N. Security Council that it believes the issue "constitutes significant non-performance."<sup>152</sup>

### iii. Making the Most of the JCPOA

Secretary of State John Kerry appointed Ambassador Stephen Mull as the Lead Coordinator for Iran Nuclear Implementation on September 17th, 2015, stating that Mull would "lead the interagency effort to ensure that the nuclear steps Iran committed to in the JCPOA are fully implemented and verified, and that we and our partners are taking reciprocal action on sanctions."<sup>153</sup> The Departments of State, Treasury, Energy, Homeland Security, Commerce, Justice, and Defense, in coordination with others in the intelligence and law enforcement communities, made up the interagency effort.<sup>154</sup> Since appointed, Mull and Secretary of State John Kerry have verified that Iran has made the necessary changes in order for implementation of the JCPOA to start and sanctions to be lifted. However, several questions remain: How does the U.S. ensure Iran does not pursue a nuclear weapon in spite of the JCPOA agreement? What happens if Iran does cheat on the deal? How should the U.S. approach the Iranian economy, post-sanctions removal? And what should the U.S. do about its ballistic missile program? In the following section, we will detail answers to these questions with our policy proposals.

#### a. Aggressively Enforce Every Aspect of the JCPOA

The U.S. must commit to enforcing all of the nuclear deal's provisions in order to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Iran will be dissuaded only if it views the cost of developing a nuclear weapon to be prohibitively high. The U.S. must remind them of this cost by ensuring that Iran cannot attempt to create a nuclear weapon without risking the re-imposing of sanctions (see second recommendation). The U.S. must also support the IAEA in its verification and monitoring regime to make sure Iran cannot create a nuclear weapon covertly.

Before the JCPOA, Iran had the technology and industrial capacity to produce weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU) and plutonium.<sup>155</sup> Tehran had not mastered all of the necessary technology for building a nuclear weapon, however, so it would have taken two to three months

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<sup>149</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2.

<sup>150</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2.

<sup>151</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2.

<sup>152</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2.

<sup>153</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2.

<sup>154</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2.

<sup>155</sup> "Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement." P 2..

to produce enough HEU for a nuclear weapon.<sup>156</sup> Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman explained in October 2013 that Iran would have needed “as much as one year to produce a nuclear weapon if the government made the decision to do so.”<sup>157</sup>

The goal of the JCPOA was to extend this “break out time,” or the amount of time needed for Iran to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon, to between six months and a year.<sup>158</sup> Now that the agreement has been implemented, the IAEA and U.S. intelligence will likely focus their efforts on detecting Iranian attempts to use cover facilities to produce HEU. U.S. officials are confident Iran has no nuclear facilities that they are unaware of. As C.I.A. Director John Brennan said in March 2015, the U.S. has a “good understanding of what the Iranian nuclear program entails.” However, the JCPOA is based not on trust, but on verification. The IAEA (or the “U.N. nuclear watchdog”) will monitor Iran’s facilities, and the U.S. will remain the main enforcer of the deal in the event of cheating, breaching, smuggling, and double-dealing.<sup>159</sup>

If Iran wanted to cheat on the deal, they would need to obtain access to nuclear materials, equipment to create weapons-usable materials, and time.<sup>160</sup> Under the JCPOA, Iran would be unable to manage this covertly. The terms of the agreement prevent Iran from producing a secret stockpile of uranium from its existing mines by implementing containment and surveillance measures (loosely described as “a combination of seals and cameras”).<sup>161</sup> Iran is also forbidden from obtaining uranium illicitly through other sources.<sup>162</sup>

In order to convert the uranium into a material capable of being enriched, Iran would have to create a cover uranium-conversion plant, which is prohibited under the deal and prevented through IAEA monitoring of stored centrifuges and associated components/infrastructure.<sup>163</sup> The IAEA has been given access to all locations where centrifuge component production could take place, therefore it will know if any of the equipment is being misused.<sup>164</sup>

In addition, the water reactor at Arak, which could permit Iran to maximize plutonium production, has been modified to produce as little as one-eighth the amount of annual plutonium output.<sup>165</sup> If Iran tried to create a new reactor, it would bear unique construction signatures identifiable by satellite imagery.<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, “every day an illicit facility operates is another day for a spy, a wiretap, or a satellite image to catch the proliferator in the act.”<sup>167</sup> Even if Iran managed to obtain the necessary

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<sup>156</sup> “Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement.” P 2.

<sup>157</sup> “Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement.” P 2.

<sup>158</sup> “Iran Nuclear Deal Background: Context of the Agreement.” P. 2.

<sup>159</sup> Wright, Robin. “Tehran’s Promise.”

<sup>160</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>161</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>162</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>163</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>164</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>165</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>166</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

<sup>167</sup> Nephew. “How the Iran Deal Prevents a Covert Nuclear Weapons Program.”

materials for a bomb, U.S. intelligence agencies or the IAEA would detect it rapidly. The U.S. must therefore remain vigilant in monitoring Iran's facilities in coordination with the IAEA in order to ensure that Iran cannot operate any illicit nuclear facilities.

*b. Move to Immediately Re-Impose Previous Sanctions if Iran Breaks the JCPOA*

If U.S. officials believe Iran is violating the JCPOA agreement, they can then bring the allegation to the Security Council, which will automatically re-impose sanctions whether or not members of the council (like China or Russia) rise to Iran's defense.<sup>168</sup> Security Council members can only block the sanctions by passing a new resolution, which could be blocked by a U.S. veto.<sup>169</sup>

The hanging threat of sanctions will likely dissuade Iran from breaking the deal, however, due to the crippling effect past sanctions have had on the Iranian economy. According to the World Bank, sanctions reduced Iranian exports by \$17.1 billion (13.5 percent) from 2012-2014.<sup>170</sup> They also severely hampered Iran's oil, automobile, construction/manufacturing, and financial sectors.<sup>171</sup> Now, as restrictions on financial transactions are being lifted, the Iranian government finally has the opportunity to "put the economy on a path of sustained economic growth."<sup>172</sup> As President Rouhani said on January 17, the day after international sanctions were lifted: "The legs of Iran's economy are now free of the chains of sanctions, and it's time to build and grow."<sup>173</sup>

Foreign investment will likely reach an estimated \$3 - \$3.5 billion in the next few years, double 2015 levels, and the Iranian oil industry is forecast to experience a boost in revenue estimated at \$15 billion during its first year without sanctions.<sup>174</sup> These changes will help Iran recover from its economic recession and hopefully raise its unemployment rate.

Iran ultimately needs approximately \$1 trillion over the next decade to rebuild its economy.<sup>175</sup> Breaking the agreement and risking sanctions would destroy Iranians' opportunity to grow their economy and reduce unemployment following sanctions removal. That being said, the U.S. should not hesitate to do its utmost to rally the international community and re-impose economic, financial, and banking sanctions the moment Iran fails to uphold its responsibilities.

*c. Assist Businesses Seeking to Trade With Iran Without Risk of Fines*

Over the past several years, investors have faced "tremendous uncertainty" in balancing potential earnings from an emerging market with the potential for expensive business losses if they inadvertently violate sanctions. In fact, the U.S. has already imposed billions of dollars in fines against Western investors.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Kennedy "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>169</sup> Kennedy "Implementation Day Arrives: Sanctions On Iran Are Lifted."

<sup>170</sup> Devarajan. *Economic Implications of Lifting Sanctions on Iran*.

<sup>171</sup> Devarajan. *Economic Implications of Lifting Sanctions on Iran*.

<sup>172</sup> Devarajan. *Economic Implications of Lifting Sanctions on Iran*.

<sup>173</sup> Wright, Robin. "Iran Is Back in Business." *The New Yorker*, January 25, 2016. Web.

<sup>174</sup> Devarajan. *Economic Implications of Lifting Sanctions on Iran*.

<sup>175</sup> Amir. "A Windfall for Iran?: The End of Sanctions and the Iranian Economy." P. 25-32

<sup>176</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

U.S. policymakers should coordinate with the Treasury Department and the State Department's Office of Commercial and Business Affairs to encourage the international business community to pursue commerce in the nation and help clarify the legal pathways toward Western investment in Iran. Doing so will limit Iran's ability to claim that the U.S. has violated the agreement, increase Washington's credibility as a "good-faith actor," and provide the U.S. with economic leverage in Iran.<sup>177</sup> Commercial diplomacy will also place pressure on Tehran to become a better financial actor and accelerate its efforts to reduce corruption if it wishes to court international investors.<sup>178</sup>

Ultimately, President Obama should instruct regulators to provide the business sector with guidelines about how to navigate sanctions while doing business with Iran.<sup>179</sup> In addition, the Treasury and State Department should establish an institutionalized system (a dedicated desk or a phone line) clarifying what activities are legal under the sanctions still in place.<sup>180</sup> The Treasury Department should also allow U.S. companies to engage in targeted investment in Iran by increasing the number of general licenses it issues.<sup>181</sup>

#### *d. Target Iran's Ballistic Missile Program*

The U.S. addresses the issue of ballistic missile in the context of its own defense strategy and arms proliferation policies and pursues the policy of the non-proliferation of ballistic missiles in the Middle East. In regards to Iran, it is imprudent to assume that Iran's missile program has no relationship to the development of nuclear infrastructure. The development of its ballistic missile program in parallel with its pursuit of nuclear enrichment suggests that these two programs are linked and its missiles are intended as delivery systems for future nuclear warheads. Moreover, continued testing of ballistic missiles in the face of sanctions suggests that Iran may not be as sincere in its commitment to a peaceful nuclear program as its signing of the JCPOA suggests. Therefore, the U.S. should consider both programs as threats to U.S. security interests and the stability of the region.

Concerns about the objective of Iran's ballistic missile program have given rise to international sanctions. In 2006, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1737, which banned the supply of materials and technology to Iran that might aid nuclear activities or development of nuclear weapon delivery systems.<sup>182</sup> It also asked countries to freeze assets of certain companies and individuals for their involvement with Iran's nuclear and missile programs, but sanctions adopted by the European Union and the U.S. have gone further, targeting not only individuals and firms involved in Iran's ballistic missile program, but also banks and transport companies linked to procurement and financing of this program.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

<sup>178</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

<sup>179</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

<sup>180</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

<sup>181</sup> Lorber, "Dollar Diplomacy in Tehran: How Promoting Business in Iran Boosts the Nuclear Agreement."

<sup>182</sup> "Iran Watch." A History of Iran's Ballistic Missile Program. March 2012. Web.

<sup>183</sup> "Iran Watch." A History of Iran's Ballistic Missile Program.

In the case of Libya, U.S. sought the cooperation of the UN and NATO in denying critical technologies and expertise for a potential Libyan ballistic missile program. International air service to Libya was banned, Libyan assets abroad were frozen and all weapons exports to Libya were outlawed<sup>184</sup>. The collective effort of the UN and European powers to diplomatically and economically isolate Libya was successful in stunting its missile program.

In order to limit Iran's ballistic missile program, the U.S. should enforce the sanctions already in place. Furthermore, it should strengthen multilateral interdiction efforts through mechanisms like the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a global effort that aims to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. The PSI is an important tool to the effort to break up black market trade, detect and intercept WMD materials in transit, and use financial tools to disrupt dangerous trades.<sup>185</sup>

The U.S. should likewise expand and strengthen the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). The Missile Technology Control Regime is an association of countries established by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the U.S., and currently numbers thirty four members which share the goals of non-proliferation of unmanned delivery systems capable of delivering WMD, and which seek to coordinate national export licensing efforts aimed at preventing their proliferation.<sup>186</sup> The member states of this regime commit to establish export control policies and set out criteria for evaluating the sale of materials and technologies relevant to missiles. More sophisticated missiles are dependent on access to a variety of advanced technologies, but through such a control regime, it may be still be possible to significantly slow the process and raise the costs of obtaining such systems.<sup>187</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is the culmination of a decade's worth of effort at arms control and paves the way for the possibility of a closer state of relations between Iran and the West. But no arms control agreement can be considered successful without proper enforcement. The best course of action moving forward for both the U.S. and Iran will lie in strict adherence to their responsibilities under JCPOA. For the U.S. this means verifying at every stage that Iran is indeed committed to a purely peaceful nuclear program with no plans to weaponize it at any point in the future, and remaining willing to reimpose sanctions on Iran even in the face of losses in certain economic sectors. Doing so will be vital to the legacy of the JCPOA and affirm U.S. commitment to nonproliferation and security in the region.

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<sup>184</sup> Crocker, Chester. *U.S.-Libyan Relations: Toward Cautious Reengagement*. Atlantic Council. April 2013. Web.

<sup>185</sup> Department of State "Proliferation Security Initiative.". Accessed February 22, 2016. Web.

<sup>186</sup> "Missile Technology Control Regime." The MTCR. Web.

<sup>187</sup> Carus, Seth. "Missiles in the Middle East: A New Threat to Stability." *Policy Focus*, June 1988. Web.

## **B. CONTAINING THE IRANIAN THREAT TO ISRAEL**

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the regime in Tehran under Ayatollah Khomeini has taken a hostile attitude towards Israel, with no formal relations existing between the two countries. Iran does not recognize Israel's legitimacy or existence and Iranian leaders consistently express anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric - including calls for the "elimination of the Zionist regime"<sup>188</sup> and denial of the Holocaust. Anti-Zionism is a significant tenant of the revolutionary ideology that gained power in 1979.

As a reliable and long-standing ally, the U.S. has a vested interest in reiterating its commitment to Israel's safety in the face of Iranian threats. A show of support for Israel sends a clear message to both America's allies and her enemies that it will not abandon the Middle East in this time of crisis. It is important that U.S. allies in the region are confident that, amidst changing regional dynamics, American support will remain consistent. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the JCPOA is dependent on avoiding any preemptive Israeli military action against Iran. While the possibility for such an attack may seem remote, an Israel that is confident in its relationship with the U.S. is much less likely to take military action against Iran or attempt to undermine the JCPOA by other means.

Iran has shown through both rhetoric and action that it has the means and the will to cause harm to Israel. This hostility has the capability of manifesting itself both through conventional means as well as through proxies. U.S. policy must therefore work to support Israel and address the various threats Iran poses to Israel's security, including the nuclear issue, its expanding ballistic missile program, and its ties to proxy groups hostile to Israel. U.S. policy makers should therefore pursue the following set of actions, expanded upon in detail later in this section, as it strives to address these threats:

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue economic support funding to Israel via grants for purchase of military equipment and development assistance
2. Assure Israel has a qualitative military edge in the region by providing systems for missile defense, enhanced intelligence sharing, and regular joint military exercises
3. Affirm support for Israel against Iranian aggression in international forums such as the United Nations (UN) and exercise the U.S.' Security Council veto power on resolutions that negatively impact Israeli security interests when prudent
4. Take practical steps towards realizing the establishment of a Palestinian state and explore diplomatic opportunities to implement the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative

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<sup>188</sup> Yoong, Sean. "Ahmadinejad: Destroy Israel, End Crisis." The Washington Post. 03.Aug. 2006. Web.

## i. Israeli Security Concerns

### a. *The JCPOA and the Nuclear Issue*

While conservative Israeli political figures, particularly Prime Minister Netanyahu, frequently cite Iran as an existential threat to Israel – many members of the Israeli security establishment don't view the issue in such grave terms. In the debate surrounding the JCPOA, both American and Israeli security experts have stated that while Iran certainly is a threat to Israel, the nature of this threat might not be as credible as rhetoric would imply.

Furthermore, some believe the nuclear agreement may actually enhance Israeli security vis-à-vis Iran. In a letter sent in August 2015, 67 former Israeli intelligence and military officials – including former heads of the Mossad and Shin Bet – urged the Israeli government to acknowledge the JCPOA as an “accepted fact” for the sake of U.S.-Israeli relations.<sup>189</sup> While these officials harbor apprehensions about the JCPOA, many see it as an agreement that increases Israeli security by greatly reducing Iran's ability to rapidly assemble a nuclear weapon in secret. Even current IDF Chief of Staff Gavi Eisenkot noted that while he believes a nuclear Iran is still an existential threat to Israel, the credibility of this threat is “declining” – a subtle acknowledgment of Israel's grudging support for the JCPOA.<sup>190</sup>

### b. *Iran's Ballistic Missile Development*

With a modestly powerful navy, a large standing army, and an expanding ballistic missile program, Iran still poses a threat to Israel through conventional means. Israel – as well as neighboring Arab states – view Iran's refusal to abandon development of its ballistic missile program, even in the face of sanctions, with suspicion and alarm. Given that such missiles have no legitimate military function other than to deliver a nuclear payload, Iran's choice to continue developing the range and effectiveness of its arsenal casts doubt on Israel's claims that its nuclear program is strictly peaceful in nature and that it will abide by the JCPOA. Iran has invested significant resources in its program and has tested missiles as recently as December 2015 capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and hitting any target within the Middle East, including Israel.<sup>191</sup> President Rouhani has called for expansion of Iran's ballistic missile program, while Iranian Army commander-in-chief Ataollah Salehi declared after December's test that, “Our missile program is not a threat against our friends but it is a threat against our enemies. Israel should understand what it means.”<sup>192</sup> Such inflammatory statements only further agitate Israel and the Arab states surrounding Iran. Continuing to pursue and enforce sanctions on entities that supply materials and technology necessary to Iran's ballistic missile program will be key in reassuring the U.S.' allies in the region that it will not allow Iran the pursuit of a nuclear device, nor the means to deliver one.

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<sup>189</sup> “Israeli Nuclear/Security Experts on the Iran Deal.” Americans for Peace Now. Aug. 2015. Web.

<sup>190</sup> Goldberg, J.J. “Israel's Top General Praises Iran Deal as ‘Strategic Turning Point’ in Slap at Bibi.” *The Forward*. 26 Jan. 2016. Web.

<sup>191</sup> Elleman, Michael. “Iran's Ballistic Missile Program | Iran Primer.” United States Institute for Peace. Aug. 2015. Web.

<sup>192</sup> “Iran Army Chief: Missile Program a Threat to Our Enemies, Israel Should Know What That Means.” *Jerusalem Post*. 2 Feb. 2016. Web.

### c. *Iran and Hezbollah*

While the nuclear threat and the possibility of conventional use of force by Iran against Israel does exist, the possibility of conventional warfare between Israel and Iran remains low. The primary threat to Israel is through Iran's use of proxies and state-sponsorship of terror – most notably Hamas and Hezbollah.

The most tangible danger to Israel comes from a strengthened Hezbollah. Hezbollah has been a steady ally of Iran, and is employed by Iran both as a proponent of Shia Islam in Lebanon and a strategic counter against Israel. Hezbollah has engaged in attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets outside of Israel – often with Iranian logistical support or financing.<sup>193</sup> Recently, the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah has been strengthened in the midst of the Syrian civil war, in which Hezbollah has been an active participant.<sup>194</sup>

Most experts view the emergence of another Israel-Hezbollah war as simply a matter of time. Relations between the two have remained in a state of low-level hostilities since their last conflict in the summer of 2006. Possessing an estimated 100,000 rockets and missiles “including a number of long-range systems as well as systems with improved accuracy”<sup>195</sup>, Hezbollah has significantly strengthened its capabilities in the last decade – both in its offensive and defensive capabilities. While the organization's participation in the Syrian civil war has cost it a great deal of casualties, it has also produced a generation of battle-tested fighters.<sup>196</sup> Hezbollah's forces have come less to resemble a rogue terrorist group and become something closer to a standing army capable of drawing Israel into a protracted conflict.<sup>197</sup> More recently, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah even intimated that Hezbollah might use its missile arsenal to target ammonia storage facilities within Israel and create a blast equivalent to that of a nuclear device.<sup>198</sup>

With the lifting of sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program, it is possible that Iran's proxies – Hezbollah included – may be receiving more financial support in the future as a means to expand Iran's influence. However, the 2006 war has brought a measure of safety for Israel as Hezbollah, now the dominant faction within the Lebanese government, has much more to lose in another war. Such a reality should be noted and exploited in efforts to prevent future conflict.

### d. *Iran and Hamas*

Hamas represents the extremist wing of the Palestinian polity. Denying Israel's right to exist and rejecting the two-state solution, Hamas views itself as the leader of the Palestinian resistance. Active in dispatching the suicide bombings of the 1990s in an attempt to foil the 1993 Oslo Accords, and the prime faction behind carrying out attacks during the Second Intifada – Hamas has been an active and violent party in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>193</sup> Levitt, Matthew “Hezbollah Finances.” Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>194</sup> Hamdan, Fouad “Iran as an Occupying Force in Syria.” Middle East Institute. 17 Dec. 2015. Web.

<sup>195</sup> White, Jeffrey “Israel vs. Hezbollah in 2015.” Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 29 Jan. 2015. Web.

<sup>196</sup> Kajjo, Sirwan “Hezbollah Expands Military Presence in Syrian War.” *Voice of America News*. 10 Nov. 2015. Web.

<sup>197</sup> Blanford, Nicholas “Hezbollah Is Now Stronger than Any Arab Army.” *Christian Science Monitor*. June 2014. Web.

<sup>198</sup> Pileggi, Tamir “Nasrallah Threatens to Bomb Chemical Facility” *The Times of Israel*. 16 Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>199</sup> “Suicide and Other Bombing Attacks in Israel Since the Declaration of Principles (Sept 1993).”

Ideologically aligned with Iran in its rejection of Israel's right to exist and a two-state solution, Hamas has received both weapons and financing from Iran dating back to the Madrid Conference of 1991. While less closely aligned with Iran than the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas leaders have met with top-level Iranian officials as recently as the summer of 2015.<sup>200</sup> However, ongoing tensions remain between Iran and Hamas over their respective involvement in the Syrian civil war and the conflict in Yemen. Such tensions should be viewed as temporary, however, and it is likely that renewed hostilities with Israel or an opportunity for Hamas to gain in domestic Palestinian politics will be met with enhanced support from Iran.

Hamas has already fought three wars against Israel since 2009. In addition to threatening Israel with rockets and cross-border tunnels, Hamas stands to gain from the recent unrest in the region. The past several months have seen an increase in Hamas activity in the West Bank, and a further deterioration in the situation there – including the weakening or collapse of the Palestinian Authority – could see Hamas gain influence in the Palestinian polity. If the goal of a two-state solution is to be realized, or at the very least the return of a measure of peace to the West Bank and Israel, steps to reduce the influence and strength of Hamas will be necessary.

## ii. Addressing Israeli Concerns and Strengthening U.S.-Israeli Relations

### a. *Maintaining Foreign Aid and Israel's Quantitative Military Edge*

In order to reassure Israel and send a message to U.S. allies and adversaries alike, foreign aid in the form of military and developmental assistance to Israel should continue. For decades Israel has been the recipient of substantial amounts of U.S. foreign aid on the basis of supporting “Israel and its security; shared strategic goals in the Middle East; [and] a mutual commitment to democratic values.”<sup>201</sup> Despite recent strains in the U.S.-Israel relationship due to specific policy disagreements and tension between the White House and Netanyahu – most notable over the JCPOA and settlement building – these shared commitments still stand. A secure and strong Israel remains an anchor of U.S. policy in the Middle East. With the 10-year memorandum of understanding regarding foreign aid to Israel expiring in 2017,<sup>202</sup> the White House should work in conjunction with the Department of State and the Agency for International Development (USAID) to draft a sensible and effective plan of a continuation of foreign aid to Israel.

A future aid package to Israel should be consistent with the U.S. policy of providing Israel with a ‘Qualitative Military Edge’ (QME) in the region. Such a policy allows Israel to defend itself from both Iran itself as well as Iranian proxies such as Hamas and Hezbollah. According to the Naval Vessel Transfer Act passed by Congress in 2008, QME is defined as:

“... the ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors, while sustaining minimal damage and casualties, through the use of superior military means, possessed in sufficient quantity, including weapons, command, control, communication, intelligence,

<sup>200</sup> Brandenburg, Rachel. “Iran and the Palestinians | The Iran Primer.” United States Institute for Peace. Oct. 2014 Web.

<sup>201</sup> Sharp, Jeremy M. *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2015. Web.

<sup>202</sup> “Signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Israel and the United States.” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 16 Aug. 2007. Web.

surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that in their technical characteristics are superior in capability to those of such other individual or possible coalition of states or non-state actors.”<sup>203</sup>

Israel has viewed developments in the region with a close eye since the beginning of the Arab uprisings in 2011. The situation in Syria, the rise of ISIS, and changing relational dynamics in the region brought on by the JCPOA will present a test for the principle of QME.

U.S. foreign aid should be particularly concentrated on the research and development of anti-missile systems such as the Iron Dome system and the David’s Sling system. Such projects – the outcome of U.S.-Israeli collaboration – have provided Israel with a reliable means of defending itself against rocket and missile attacks. In the face of a strengthened Hezbollah and an Iran likely to use its newfound financial prosperity to arm itself and its proxies, the development and improvement of such systems will be critical to Israeli security.

#### *b. Diplomatic Support in International Forums*

Israel views itself as a diplomatically isolated nation and the U.S. as its most – if not only – reliable ally. Faced with UN resolutions targeting Israel and rhetoric denying Israel’s right to exist being openly aired in the UN General Assembly,<sup>204</sup> Israel sees such activity as alarming and takes seriously the world’s reaction to it. Many in Israel – particularly from the right wing – have attempted to portray the signing of the JCPOA as a sign of U.S. abandonment in the diplomatic sphere and used it as justification for more hawkish policies.

It is in the interest of the U.S. to issue statements of support for Israel and use its influence in the UN and other international bodies to reassure Israelis that the U.S. will continue to stand by Israel during this time of uncertainty. The U.S. delegation should actively condemn anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric in the General Assembly, as well as exercise its Security Council veto on resolutions that unduly target Israel. Such actions are consistent with long-standing U.S. policy of support for Israel and can be accomplished at little cost.

#### *c. Enhancing Intelligence Sharing and Military Cooperation*

In line with its policy of maintaining Israel’s QME, the U.S. should continue to collaborate on intelligence gathering and conduct joint military drills with Israel on a regular basis. Tangible and mutually beneficial, the strengthening of the U.S.-Israeli relationship through close cooperation between military personnel is an exercise in trust with Israel’s defense community. Joint military drills such as the simulation on ballistic missile defenses to be conducted in February 2016 should be a regular component of U.S.-Israeli relations.<sup>205</sup> Likewise, in line with the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014, “. . .the United States and Israel should take steps to increase cyber-security cooperation”<sup>206</sup> in addition to efforts at intelligence sharing.

<sup>203</sup> Pecquet, Julian. "Congress May Re-examine Special Arms Deals with Israel." *Al-Monitor*. 05 Feb. 2015. Web.

<sup>204</sup> Edmunds, Rachel Donna "UN’s Human Rights Council Condemns Israel More than Rest of World Combined." *Breitbart*. 25 June 2015 Web.

<sup>205</sup> "US, Israel to Hold Joint Military Exercise on Ballistic Missile Defenses." *I24 News*. 6 Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>206</sup> Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Ileana. *H.R.938*. Library of Congress. Web.

*d. Promoting Practical Steps Towards a Two-State Solution*

The realization of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that establishes an independent Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel should remain a U.S. goal and interest. While recent failures at the negotiating table, ongoing violence in the region, and intractable Israeli and Palestinian leaderships indicate such a solution may be far-off – certain steps can be taken towards realizing this goal. Furthermore, with attention turned towards the various conflicts that rack the Middle East, opportunities for progress have arisen.

One area in which practical steps can and should be taken to improve the situation is in regards to the Palestinian economy. As of 2015, unemployment in the West Bank was recorded above 25%.<sup>207</sup> The World Bank notes that without improvements to the Palestinian economy, “a return to violence as we have seen in recent years will remain a clear and present danger.”<sup>208</sup> Improvements to the Palestinian economy will help curb the current surge in violence in the West Bank and increase support among Palestinians for the Palestinian Authority.

While certain measures may be taken by the United States to facilitate improvements in the Palestinian economy - such as increasing aid, encouraging private sector investment, and monitoring corruption – the potential for real improvement in the economy lie in actions to be taken by Israelis and Palestinians. The use of U.S. diplomacy to push both sides towards taking or - in Israel’s case – not taking certain actions, may be the most effective option. In regards to Israel, this means discouraging actions that can have drastic effects on the Palestinian economy – such as a closure of the West Bank.

In respect to the broader goal of realizing a two-state solution, new regional realities have created an alignment of interests that may offer new life to negotiations. Iran’s recent attempts to insert its influence into conflicts in the region have created a quiet coalescence of interests between Israel and its Sunni Arab neighbors. While not likely to be accepted as currently proposed, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (API) offers a feasible framework for Israeli-Palestinian relations as part of a broader effort toward peace. The API offers full recognition of Israel and normalization of relations with the Arab States in return for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.<sup>209</sup> This unusual state of closeness prompted by the common threat of Iran may provide the opportunity to reopen the dialogue regarding a two-state solution.

Prime Minister Netanyahu acknowledged this “commonality of interest between Israel and leading Arab states” in his 2014 address to the White House,<sup>210</sup> and the idea of a regional accord has since become accepted across the Israeli political spectrum.<sup>211</sup> The alignment of Israeli and Arab interests vis-à-vis Iran could serve as a point of opportunity and there seems to exist an Israeli willingness to explore a regional accord - the U.S. should try to encourage and facilitate such a diplomatic accord in whatever way it can.

<sup>207</sup> “The World Factbook: Palestine” Central Intelligence Agency. Web.

<sup>208</sup> “Palestinian Economy in Decline and Unemployment Rising to Alarming Levels.” World Bank. 16 Sept. 2014. Web.

<sup>209</sup> “Arab Peace Initiative, 2002.” Al-Bab. 14 Aug. 2015. Web.

<sup>210</sup> “In Meeting with Netanyahu, Obama Calls to Change Israeli-Palestinian status quo” *Times of Israel*. Oct. 2014. Web.

<sup>211</sup> “MK Isaac Herzog at the INSS Conference.” Institute for National Security Studies. 16 Feb. 2016. Web.

## **CONCLUSION**

In tandem with seeking a healthier relationship with Iran, the U.S. must remain steadfast in opposing the worst of Iranian behavior. This will primarily require countering Iran's threats to Israel and reassuring Israel as the U.S.' new relationship with Iran develops. By continuing to supply aid, diplomatic support, and assistance in countering Iranian-backed groups that lie on Israel's borders, the U.S. can maintain Israel as a reliable ally while countering negative Iranian behavior.

## C. CONTAINING IRANIAN INTERFERENCE IN THE ARAB STATES

The nuclear deal has not been a welcome development among the Arab states. Saudi Arabia, perhaps more so than even Israel, is heavily concerned about Iran's more favorable position in the Middle East. This is not without reason, as Iran and the Arab world have been caught in decades of tension founded on Sunni-Shia sectarian lines. The Middle East is currently in a period of heightened violence, tribalism, and an increase in the power of non-state actors, which has left the Arab states unsure of the solidity of their future and security in the coming years. In order to work effectively with Iran, the U.S. must move to promote stability in the region by encouraging open diplomatic channels of dialogue between the Arab states and Tehran and providing Arab allies in the region with the means and support to defend their security against Iranian interference. It is therefore critical that the U.S. adopt the following policies, expanded upon in the subsequent pages, as it seeks to balance relations between Iran and the Arab states:

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Encourage open diplomatic channels for dialogue between Arab governments, particularly Saudi Arabia, and Iran
2. Continue the sale of military equipment such as guided bombs, anti-ballistic missile systems, and air to air missiles,<sup>212</sup> specifically to Saudi Arabia to maintain its defensive capabilities and security in the region
3. Urge all Arab states in the region to continue pursuing non-proliferation of nuclear weapons under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and urge that any state pursuing civilian nuclear technology work with the United States under a 1-2-3<sup>213</sup> Arrangement such as the 2009 agreement between the U.S. and U.A.E.<sup>214</sup>
4. Continue to provide intelligence and logistical support to Saudi operations against Houthi rebels in Yemen while continuing to press for a political solution to the conflict<sup>215</sup>
5. Drastically increase monetary assistance and budget support to sanitation projects, food aid, and education assistance for the influx of refugees into Jordan<sup>216</sup>
6. Maintain and enhance strong sanctions against Iran for their role in promoting terror as a destabilizing force in the region

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<sup>212</sup> "International Arms Transfers." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Web.

<sup>213</sup> "123 Agreements for Peaceful Cooperation." National Nuclear Security Administration. Web.

<sup>214</sup> "Message from the President on the US-UAE Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy Agreement," *Whitehouse.gov*, May 21, 2009. Web.

<sup>215</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. "Daily Press Briefing - January 27 2016," *U.S. Department of State*, (January 27, 2016). Web.

<sup>216</sup> USAID "Addressing Impacts of the Syria Complex Crisis." U.S. Agency for International Development. Web.

## i. IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia has held a position of dominance as the U.S.' major ally in the Middle East since Iran fell into isolation after the 1979 revolution. Its relationship with Iran has always been marked by ideological differences, scrambles over regional influence, and proxy conflicts. The two oil-rich theocracies—one Sunni and the other Shia—have been vying for regional dominance for decades, with Saudi Arabia holding the upper hand due to U.S. support. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has marked a shift in global perceptions of Iran, causing significant paranoia in Saudi Arabia about the safety of its political and economic interests in the region and abroad.

This paranoia has manifested itself in the continually worsening relationship between the two countries since the signing of the JCPOA.<sup>217</sup> This tension climaxed in January 2016 when the countries cut off all diplomatic ties after Saudi Arabia's execution of Shia cleric Nimr-al-Nimr and a group of Iranian's consequently stormed of the Saudi embassy in Tehran.<sup>218</sup> Other Arab states – such as Bahrain and Sudan – have followed suit and cut ties, while the United Arab Emirates has downgraded its diplomatic relationship with Iran.<sup>219</sup> The end of open channels of communication between these countries will only serve to further intensify conflict, both politically and militarily. When Iran and Saudi Arabia last ceased diplomatic relations between 1979 and 1991, the two countries found themselves in conflict on opposing sides of the Iran-Iraq War. This lack of dialogue increases the risk of escalating conflict, and could lead to an increased supply of arms and funding to the rebel groups fighting proxy wars in Yemen and Syria. These groups may prove difficult to control even once tensions have eased.<sup>220</sup>

Iran and Saudi Arabia's declining relationship is already a source of instability in the Middle East and the U.S. must play a substantial role in diffusing tension and improving communication and security if the JCPOA is to have long-lasting success. The U.S. should assure Saudi Arabia that it is still committed to containing Iran's revolutionary ideals and will do so by both helping Saudi Arabia maintain its defensive capabilities through the continuation of arms sales, commitment to economic partnership, and the maintenance of all non-nuclear sanctions placed on Iran.

Equally necessary to the goal of regional peace and stability is a commitment from both Iran and Saudi Arabia to reopen diplomatic channels and avoid escalating the conflicts they are already embroiled in or creating new ones. Without a dialogue, all other measures to protect Saudi Arabia and improve its relations with Iran will be fruitless.

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<sup>217</sup> Cafiero, Giorgio "Worsening Crisis in Saudi-Iranian Relations Further Destabilizes Middle East." *Huffington Post*. 2016. Web.

<sup>218</sup> Fitch, Asa in Dubai, Al Omran, Ahmed in Riyadh, and Leigh, Karen in Beirut, "Saudi Arabia Cuts Its Diplomatic Ties With Iran," *Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2016. Web.

<sup>219</sup> "Saudi Arabia's Allies Bahrain, Sudan and UAE Act against Iran," *BBC News*. 4 Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>220</sup> Siegel, Josh "Saudi-Iranian Crisis Complicates Nuclear Deal, Syrian War," *The Daily Signal*, January 5, 2016. Web.

## ii. IRAN AND YEMEN

The civil war in Yemen between the now deposed Yemeni government and the Shia Houthi rebels who seized control of the country in February 2015 has turned into the main venue for conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>221</sup> Directly neighboring Saudi Arabia, Yemen is of immense geopolitical importance, as the installation of an Iranian-backed Shia government would severely compromise Saudi Arabia's sense of regional security.

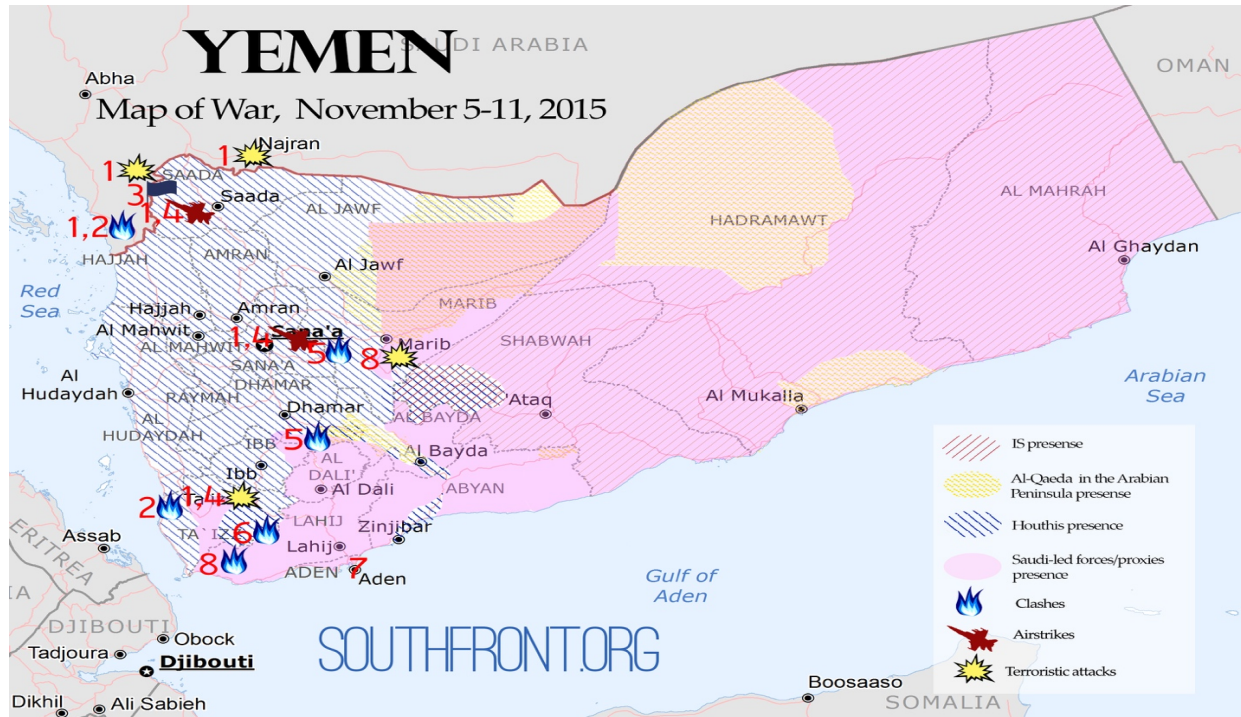


Figure 1. Map of the War in Yemen (2015)<sup>222</sup>

Since Saudi Arabia's intervention in the Yemeni civil war in March 2015, the U.S. and eight other Arab states have pledged to provide intelligence and logistical support against the Houthi rebels. Widespread regional support for intervention is indicative of how seriously the Middle East at large views the threat of Iranian influence, while the increased fighting in 2016 has many Arab states feel increasingly worried.<sup>223</sup> In addition to logistical support for the Saudi's air campaign, the U.S. has also provided military equipment to the Saudis, who bought \$1.29 billion worth of smart bombs for use in Yemen in 2015 alone.<sup>224</sup> The U.S. should continue the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia for use against the Houthi rebels and to reassure them that their security interests are of importance to the U.S.

Iran should not be allowed to sponsor terrorism or interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly when unprovoked. As well as supporting Saudi operations in Yemen, the U.S. must maintain its non-nuclear sanctions on Iran until Tehran demonstrates that it is no longer involved in funding or aiding terrorist activity by arming, protecting, or providing safe

<sup>221</sup> Kaba, Farshori. "Yemen Crisis Bares Rifts Among Muslim Countries," *Asia News Monitor*, April 17, 2015. Web.

<sup>222</sup> "Yemen Map of War - Nov. 11, 2015." South Front: Analysis & Intelligence. November 11, 2015. Web.

<sup>223</sup> Malsin, Jared "Yemen Is the Latest Victim of the Increase in Iran-Saudi Arabia Tension." *Time*. 11 Jan. 2016. Web.

<sup>224</sup> Shalal, Andrea. "U.S. Approves \$1.29 Billion Sale of Smart Bombs to Saudi Arabia," *Reuters*. 16 Nov. 2015. Web.

passage to groups associated with extremist activity.<sup>225</sup> The Arab states should be assured that regardless of the JCPOA, Iran is still considered a state-sponsor of terrorism by the U.S. and will be treated as such even as the U.S. and Iran work towards more positive relations.<sup>226</sup>

### iii. IRAN AND JORDAN

While Jordan has remained largely apart from the conflict on its borders, aiding with the massive influx of refugees that have come across its borders in recent years will open up opportunities for it to act as a positive actor in the Middle East today. Jordan, which has historically preferred to strike a neutral stance in the region through diplomatic solutions,<sup>227</sup> welcomed the JCPOA despite its historically unfriendly relationship with Iran.<sup>228</sup> Unlike Saudi Arabia, the Jordanian government did not cut ties with Iran following the execution of Nimr-al-Nimr, but instead has attempted to promote a diplomatic dialogue between Tehran and the rest of the Middle East.

The U.S. would benefit from assisting and maintaining a close relationship with Jordan. The centrally located Hashemite kingdom has historically preferred to strike a middle ground through diplomatic solutions and lauded the announcement of the JCPOA. Jordan is capable of playing a significant role in moderating conflict in the region. Unfortunately, the Syrian refugee crisis has weighed heavily on Jordan, which has accepted a massive – and growing – number of refugees, and is suffering domestically as it struggles to find the resources to accommodate them.

As of February 2016, Jordan hosts 1.3 million refugees, while King Abdullah II of Jordan himself has referred to the crisis as pushing Jordan to the “boiling point.”<sup>229</sup> Jordan’s fourth largest city, Zaatari, is a refugee camp,<sup>230</sup> while 25% of its national budget is set apart for refugee-related costs.<sup>231</sup> Jordan is under immense financial pressure as it addresses the refugee crisis, leaving less time for playing a mediating role in regional affairs during this difficult period. The Syrian refugee crisis has become a global issue that is now affecting countries with major economies but far fewer refugees. The countries bordering Syria, namely Jordan and Turkey, have taken in the vast majority of the millions of refugees from the civil war. Consequently, this crisis adds to the many existing problems in the region and weakens even states such as Jordan that have been relatively untouched by violence. The U.S. has provided \$730 million to Jordan in aid for the refugee crisis and recently announced \$230 million in development assistance for education of both refugees and non-refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>232</sup> In addition to expanding its efforts to provide relief aid to Jordan, the U.S. should push for a stronger global response to this humanitarian crisis that is crippling the region.

<sup>225</sup> Wihbey, John. “The Iran Nuclear Framework Deal: A Definitive, Research-Based Guide.” Harvard Kennedy School of Government. 15 April 2015. Web.

<sup>226</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. “State Sponsors of Terrorism,” *U.S. Department Of State*. 2009. Web.

<sup>227</sup> Talal, El Hassan bin “The Middle East: Jordan’s Quest for Peace,” *Foreign Affairs*. 23 Feb 2009. Web.

<sup>228</sup> “Jordan Welcomes Iran Deal, Urges Commitment,” *Jordan Times*, July 20, 2015. Web.

<sup>229</sup> Al-Hussein, King Abdullah II bin. “The Burden on Jordan Far Exceeds That on the West. We Need Help,” *Independent*, 2 Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>230</sup> Weston, Phoebe “Inside Zaatari Refugee Camp: The Fourth Largest City in Jordan.” 5 Aug. 2015. *Telegraph*. Web

<sup>231</sup> Al-Hussein. “The Burden on Jordan Far Exceeds That on the West. We Need Help.”

<sup>232</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. “New US Assistance to Respond to Syria Crisis.” *U.S. Department of State*. (February 4, 2016). Web.

#### iv. IRAN AND TURKEY

Iran and Turkey share a complex, yet relatively stable relationship. Turkey welcomed the JCPOA, congratulating the powers that negotiated the deal. Ankara stressed that all parties must be careful to act in a way that “does not encourage disintegration” in the Middle East.<sup>233</sup> Turkey is deeply concerned about Iranian involvement in the sponsorship of terrorism and the funding of Bashar al Assad, but has a strong economic relationship with Iran. This places it in an interesting position between Iran and the Arab states in the wake of the JCPOA.

Turkey may benefit the most economically from the JCPOA. Turkey has helped keep Iran’s economy afloat while under sanctions, importing nearly 30% of its crude oil and 20% of its natural gas from Iran.<sup>234</sup> Following the removal of sanctions regarding Iran’s nuclear program, Turkey aims for trade to reach \$30 billion with Iran in the next two years.<sup>235</sup> Unfortunately, this relationship based on economic opportunity is complicated by the Syrian war.

Turkey and Iran have differing interests in Syria. Though both countries feel threatened by the increasingly autonomous Kurdish population in Iraq and Syria, they are still very much at odds as to how to deal with Assad, with Turkey invested in toppling his regime while Iran views him as a strategic ally. Turkey views Assad’s regime as a threat to its own security after a Turkish F-4 fighter jet was shot down over Syria in 2012 and a series of attacks by various rebel groups resulted in the deaths of over 70 Turkish troops.<sup>236</sup> Iran, however, has a deep interest in keeping Assad in power; his friendly regime has long been an ally to Tehran by providing easy access to Lebanon.<sup>237</sup> There has been a marked increase in tension between Iran and Turkey over the Syrian conflict, but due to centuries of peaceful relations cemented by the sharing of most stable border in the region, this is not likely to change any time soon.

#### CONCLUSION

Mapping the effects of the JCPOA on Iran-Arab relations gives an overview of how interwoven and fraught with complication the Middle East is at this moment. Roiled as it is by heightened insecurity and violence, the Middle East is at a crossroads; either it will devolve further as dialogue is eschewed and sectarian conflict spreads, or positive regional influences will lead in creating a stable, less hostile environment conducive to negotiation. The U.S. will greatly influence the direction of the Middle East in the coming years and may assist in creating a more stable region. But this stability will only come if Iran and the Arab states all strive to engage in open dialogue and make efforts towards deescalating the increasingly violent conflicts they are engaged in, particularly in Yemen and Syria. Open communication channels, combined with non-proliferation and a move away from state involvement in terrorist activities will do a great deal in ensuring greater security and prosperity in the Middle East.

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<sup>233</sup> Dow Jones Business News. “Turkey Hails Iran Nuclear Deal.” *NASDAQ.com*. 17 Jan. 2016.

<sup>234</sup> Razifadeh, Dr. Majid. “Why Turkey and Iran Are Two Odd Allies,” *Al Arabiya English*. 29 Jan. 2016. Web.

<sup>235</sup> “Turkey Eyes Boost in Trade with Iran after Deal,” *Today’s Zaman*. 7 April 2015. Web.

<sup>236</sup> Ayman, S. Gülden. “Turkey and Iran: Between Friendly Competition and Fierce Rivalry,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 6–26.

<sup>237</sup> Ayman. “Turkey and Iran”

## D. CONTAINING IRANIAN SPONSORSHIP OF TERRORISM

Iran has a long history of sponsoring terrorism, both before and since the 1979 Revolution.<sup>238</sup> While the first priority is maintaining the integrity of the JCPOA, followed by the promotion of regional stability, it is important to note that the U.S. is not lifting sanctions directly related to Iranian sponsorship of terrorism. Although a number of recent policies have eased tensions between the U.S. and Iran, the issue of terrorism will continue to be addressed as aggressively and with as much multi-lateral support as possible.<sup>239</sup> While U.S. engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan has changed the political landscape of the region, and possibly motivated Iranian support of terrorist organizations, there must be multi-lateral support of U.S. anti-terrorism policy to strengthen and affirm the global importance of addressing the issue of terror and non-state actors wielding military authority. U.S. relations with Iran will play a significant role in either aiding or stunting strategic interests within the Middle East.<sup>240</sup> Without engagement from the international community, however, unilateral sanctions or intervention by the U.S. could potentially undermine relations with Tehran and the security of the region.<sup>241</sup> The U.S. should therefore adopt the following measures, expanded upon in the subsequent pages, in order to subvert Iranian sponsorship of terror effectively:

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enforce existing sanctions against terror groups and state-sponsors of terror through the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control<sup>242</sup>
2. Work with the Treasury Department's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Agency (TFI), as well as financial institutions and monitoring agencies abroad, to target new avenues of Iranian involvement in terrorism including: funding, supplying weapons, training, and failing to comply with global arrest warrants for known terrorist groups
3. Work multilaterally with international agencies on additional sanctions and repercussions for Iranian sponsorship of terrorism both within the Middle East, and globally
4. Enhance scrutiny on Iranian "grey market" activities such as drug and weapons trade and their ties to terror groups
5. Improve Counterterrorism Finance Controls (CFTs) that detect terrorist financing on state and institutional levels and reduce the availability of funding through banking institutions to terror organizations in the U.S. and abroad
6. Continue to sanction the Revolutionary Guard and associated shell corporations under House Resolution 4312 in order and disable its support of the Assad regime in Syria<sup>243</sup>
7. Work towards multilateral sanctions against Hezbollah and Hamas with the goal of emphasizing more moderate sources of funding

<sup>238</sup> Zabih, Sepehr. "Aspects of Terrorism in Iran." *American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 463 (1982):84–94.

<sup>239</sup> Helfont, Tally. "America and Its Allies in the ME: Bungling Strategic Cooperation." *Orbis* 59, no 4 (2015): 541–56.

<sup>240</sup> Brzezinski Zbigniew, Gates Robert. "Iran: Time for a New Approach." Council on Foreign Relations, 2004.

<sup>241</sup> Kamali Dehghan. "Iran Vice-President Hails New Era after Removal of Sanctions." *Guardian*. 18 Jan. 2016. Web.

<sup>242</sup> "What You Need To Know About U.S. Sanctions." U.S. Department of the Treasury. Office of Foreign Assets Control: U.S. Department of Foreign Assets Control. 11 Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>243</sup> Sherman, Brad. *H.R. 4312*. Library of Congress. 2015. Web.

## i. STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN THE IRANIAN CONTEXT

### a. *Defining State-Sponsored Terror*

Following the Iranian revolution in 1979, one of the main political and ideological goals of the nation became the exportation of the Islamic revolution to Muslim society and beyond. The Iranian model legitimizes and supports the use of violence toward this goal. This has manifested in Iran becoming one of the global leaders in state-sponsorship of terrorism.

In order to discuss terror groups in terms of state sponsorship, it is first necessary to create a working definition for terrorism, define the rhetoric used in discussing the levels of sponsorship and illustrate the ways in which terror is perpetrated. The use of proxies in fighting ideological wars or in protecting national boundaries is not unique, or necessarily synonymous with state-sponsorship of terrorism. However, before further discussion of our policy objectives, these often blurry lines must be defined to what extent is possible.

According to the research done by military historian and former deputy head of the Israeli National Security Council Shaul Shay, terrorism is defined as: “The use or threat to use violence for political aims by an individual or group acting on behalf of or against an existing government. The aim of the activity is to influence a target audience which is broader than the action’s direct victims,”<sup>244</sup> Discerning between criminal and wartime activities and terrorism is important in that the dominant paradigm of terror and case studies on acts of terror sometimes include a cross section of criminal and wartime activities, as well as the common themes of what we consider terror.<sup>245</sup>

In order to adequately define terror, the main cases of commonly accepted terrorism must all be encapsulated. This is not so much a problem as defining where the outer edges of these definitions fall.<sup>246</sup> Philosopher Eric Reitan organizes the parameters of what is commonly considered terrorism in a useful way for the context of this paper. Following the group-target definition of terrorism, there are two characteristics that identify terror as related to Iranian sponsorship of terrorism. Firstly, the perpetrators are “sub-national groups engaged in ongoing ideological conflicts with other groups”<sup>247</sup> and secondly these groups ignore the combatant/noncombatant distinction; perpetrators routinely victimize civilians, or actors outside a defined conflict zone, and outside the regular perception of warfare.<sup>248</sup> The secondary definition of terrorism based on salient characteristics of case studies shows overlapping factors: death of a victim or victims, outside or in addition to typical warfare, and somehow expected to serve a religious, political or ideological purpose or end, despite the perpetrators not being political actors with state credentials.<sup>249</sup>

Defining terrorism is a subjective exercise in futility. However, it is possible to use a set of definitions of terror and terrorism in the context of U.S.-Iran relations, which we can weigh

<sup>244</sup> Shay, Shaul. *Axis of Evil: Iran, Hizballah, and Palestinian Terror*. Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya Projects. 2005.

<sup>245</sup> Reitan, “Defining Terrorism for Public Policy Purposes.” Pg. 269.

<sup>246</sup> Hodgson, Jacque. “Impossibility of Defining Terrorism.” *New Criminal Law Review* 16, no. 3 (July 2013): 494–526.

<sup>247</sup> Reitan, Eric. “Defining Terrorism for Public Policy Purposes.” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (2010): 253–78.

<sup>248</sup> Reitan, Eric. “Defining Terrorism for Public Policy Purposes.” Pg. 270.

<sup>249</sup> Hodgson. “Impossibility of Defining Terrorism.”

against our policy proposals and necessitate courses of action. Further debate over the difference and crossover between terror groups, liberation fighters, proxy actors and state actors is unnecessary and even harmful from the perspective of U.S. policy. The next set of criteria that need to be defined is how to measure the level or extent that a state sponsors terrorism. Shay provides three classifications:

- State Support: Including financial, operational, military, and ideological support.
- State Operation: When a state plans and initiates acts of terrorism, in accordance with national interests through organizations that they sponsor, while still not engaging directly through national agencies.
- State Perpetration: When a state actively engages in terrorism abroad through their own security agencies and political organization.

Iran can be seen to engage in state-sponsored terrorism on all three levels. The fact that they have done so, and continue to do so, cannot be ignored or overlooked by U.S. or international law.

#### *b. Levels of State Involvement in Terrorism*

A further examination of the levels of support that Iran has actively engaged in supporting terrorism, and acting against international norms:

- Ideological Support: The most basic level of support. This relationship does not need to be acted upon, it simply occurs naturally when a state ideology exists within the ideological scope of a terrorist organization. In the case of Iran this is any terrorist organization that promotes jihad, but is not directly supported or funded by Tehran.
- Financial Support: Follows one step further than ideological support in endorsing the organization at hand through financial means.
- Military Support: States offer military assistance and training as well as help in acquiring weapons or the technology, materials, and skills to develop them.<sup>250</sup>
- Operational Support: Can be categorized as systematic operational aid in carrying out specific attacks with a given organization.
- Initiating Attacks: When a state initiates and aids in an attack and uses state power or systems to perpetrate the attacks.
- Use of Proxies: When a state provides terrorist organizations with the means to carry out actions that further state interests without resorting to state military action. This has been seen in operation by the Iranian government in the cases of specific attacks, and assassinations done by proxy organizations.
- Using Government Agencies to Perpetrate Attacks: The use of a diplomatic agency or global embassies in the planning and implementation of attacks, as well as the use of the state military to train and organize the groups.<sup>251</sup>

<sup>250</sup> Ross, Dennis. "State Support for Hamas." In *Hamas*, edited by Matthew Levitt, 171–202. Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad. Yale University Press, 2006.

<sup>251</sup> Ganor, Baz. "State Involvement in Terrorism." In *Global Alert*, 64–72. The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism and the Challenge to the Liberal Democratic World. Columbia University Press, 2015. Web.

Given the current state of affairs, the question becomes, how can we instigate a global system that effectively and comprehensively combats terrorism, terror financing, and state sanctioning of terrorist organizations? Associate professor of National Security at the Naval Postgraduate School Anne Clunan argues that in order to create a world in which these anti-terror mechanisms can be implemented, it is necessary to work towards transparent economies in which state and economic institutions can be placed that eliminate money laundering and effectively combat grey and black market transactions. It is also necessary for the U.S. to take a global lead in underwriting and adhering to anti-terror policies and sanctions since the UN, EU, and other leading nations are likely to back U.S. policy. On these counts the U.S. has excelled in post 9/11 policy since it became an issue of national security.<sup>252</sup>

*c. States and Non-State Actors*

Iran has been involved in creating and sponsoring terrorism regionally and abroad on a variety of levels and to different degrees, including perpetrating terrorism through their own governmental security agencies.<sup>253</sup> The Iranian government has sponsored terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas through aid and training in order to further Iranian political, religious and ideological agendas in the Middle East and abroad. Iran has also sponsored the Palestine Liberation Organization, Syrian militia groups, and fundamentalist Islamic organizations to serve as proxies and in order to protect their own national borders without resorting to direct military involvement.<sup>254</sup> Finally, Iran has repeatedly turned a blind eye on groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and allowed actors from these groups to travel through Iran despite global recognition of their crimes.<sup>255</sup>

Sunni-Shia relations, highlighted by the proxy war in Yemen between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the increasing violence that has characterized recent events in the region at large, also play a significant role in Iran's sponsorship of terrorism. Despite being a Shia majority country, Iran's religious leanings do not appear to supersede its strategic interests when determining whom it will back. Iran has been known to sponsor Sunni groups such as Hamas so long as they are seen to enhance Iranian security by destabilizing state adversaries such as Israel. In order to better understand the social, political, financial, and strategic implications of Iranian involvement with various terrorist actors, this section will discuss each of these groups, their political affiliation, the ways in which Iran supports them, and the level to which they are involved in the region. In gaining a better understanding of the situation, it will become clear how increased sanctions and higher awareness in tandem with a lower global threshold for terror sponsorship is necessary in achieving stability in the Middle East while simultaneously seeking to improve U.S.-Iran relations.

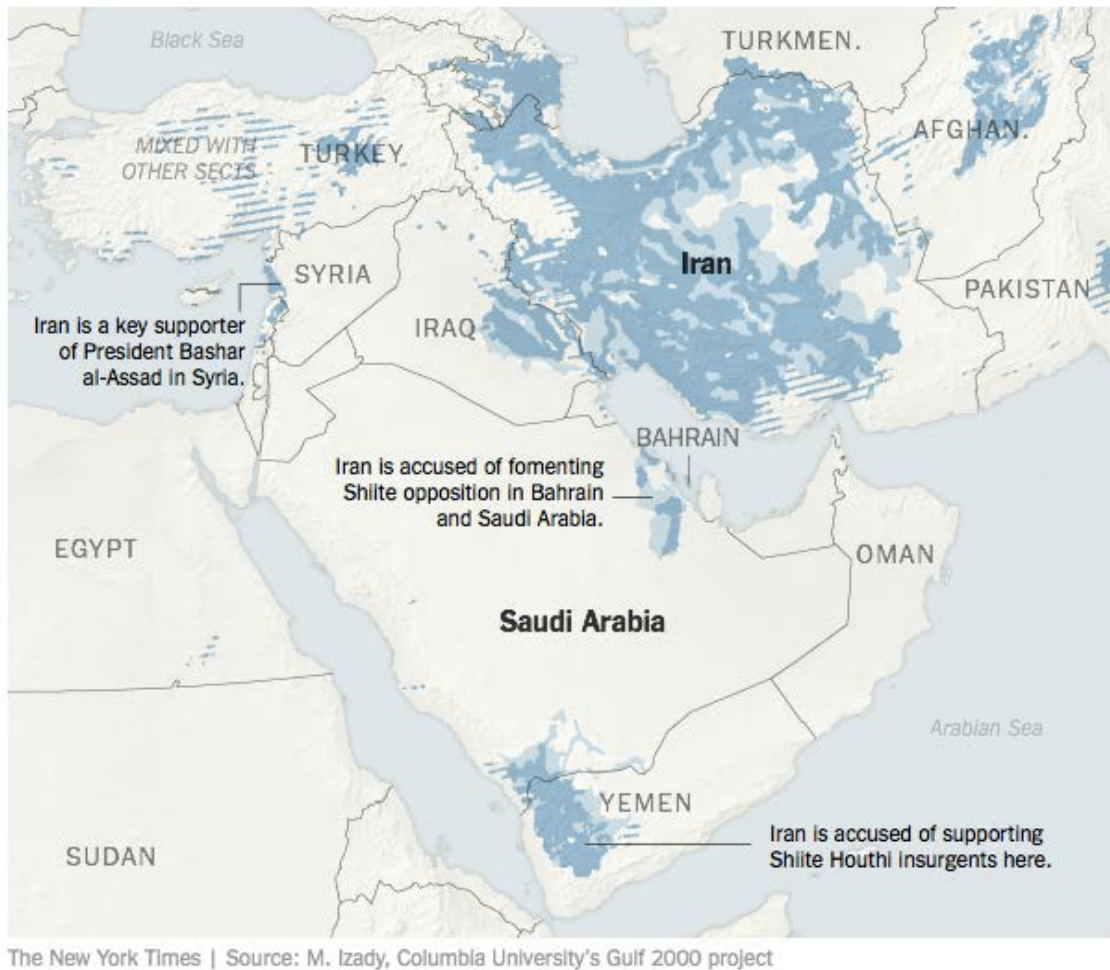
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<sup>252</sup> Giraldo, Jeanne K., and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds. *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

<sup>253</sup> Ganor, "State Involvement in Terrorism." Pg. 69.

<sup>254</sup> Sawyer, Nathan A. "Cultural Background to a Looming Iranian Terror Threat." *FAOA Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 50–52.

<sup>255</sup> "What You Need To Know About U.S. Sanctions."



**Figure 1.** This map, published in a January 2016 *New York Times* article shows the distribution of the Shia population in the Middle East – this divide plays a significant role in many instances of tension in the region. Currently, Iranian funded proxies are accused of fomenting dissent in Yemen, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>256</sup>

## ii. IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORISM

### a. Iranian State Terrorism

The Iranian government has been accused of high levels of state involved terror where not only proxy groups are used, but the Iranian Military, scientists, weapons technicians and embassies become involved. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has been accused and sanctioned by the U.S. specifically for their direct and indirect involvement with Hezbollah, Hamas, Taliban groups, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad via funding, training, and providing materials for these groups. The specific attacks conducted with the help of Iranian involvement have not only served to destabilize Israel, but have led to civilian casualties and the targeting of U.S. and allied troops in the region.<sup>257</sup> The Quds Force (the IRGC's special forces) are responsible for international operations, and report directly to the Supreme Leader of Iran; they too have been sanctioned specifically by the U.S. for their involvement in international and

<sup>256</sup> Peçanha, Sarah Almkhtar Sergio, and Tim Wallace. "Behind Stark Political Divisions, a More Complex Map of Sunnis and Shiites." *The New York Times*, January 5, 2016. Web.

<sup>257</sup> Sherman, *H.R.* 4312.

regional terrorism. The JCPOA does nothing to alleviate or change these sanctions, and on September 15, 2015 the Acting Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence stated that there was no intention of providing sanctions relief to the IRGC<sup>258</sup> or Quds Force or any affiliates.<sup>259</sup>

### *b. Ties to Hezbollah*

Officially founded in 1985 and based within the state of Lebanon, Hezbollah is defined by the U.S. as a terrorist organization and receives more aid from Iran than any other terror group. Possessing considerable military strength, equivalent to that of many regional militaries, they are politically aided by Syria, and are the primary recipient of Iranian aid; financial, military training and strategic cooperation. Hezbollah holds a majority of the Parliamentary seats in Lebanon and is thus very influential on Lebanese politics, while still maintaining an independent army. It is estimated that in one year, Iran will send up to \$25-\$50 million to Hezbollah alone<sup>260</sup>, making Iran the single largest donor to the organization. The legitimacy of the group has suffered since the inception of the Syrian Civil war in which it has become intertwined.

The political and religious affiliations of Hezbollah are closely aligned with Iranian interests, and have been since the beginning of the group's occupation of Southern Lebanon. Iran has continued to fund Hezbollah despite criticism due to their conflict with Israel and support of the Assad regime in Syria. Iran's backing of Hezbollah is in part due to the group's exportation and support of the Shia sect of Islam as well as its opposition to Israel. The aid passed from Iran to Hezbollah goes through legitimate and illegitimate channels and ranges broadly from weapons smuggling, military training in combat and weapons usage, to simply supporting the group financially.<sup>261</sup> The political motive is to "liberate" South Lebanon from Israeli occupation<sup>262</sup> while Iran is essentially waging a proxy war against Israeli forces via the Hezbollah militia.

The extent to which Iran is involved with the operation of Hezbollah's terrorist operations enters the highest level of state sponsored terrorism: using state intelligence institutions to perpetrate global acts of terror. There is evidence that the Iran's Ministry of Intelligence has aided Hezbollah attacks around the world, using diplomatic channels to send money and weapons.<sup>263</sup> These allegations are severe and place Iran at the top of the list of states sanctioning terrorist attacks. The U.S. has condemned and will continue to condemn the aiding of these organizations, especially when under diplomatic or state authority.

### *c. Ties to Hamas*

Founded in 1987 during the Palestinian uprising, Hamas is an "Islamic Resistance Movement" which has been declared a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department. While more independent from Iranian support than Hezbollah, Hamas has nevertheless accepted financial aid

<sup>258</sup> Nunes, Rep. Devin. *H.R. 4257*. Library of Congress. 2015. Web.

<sup>259</sup> Roskam, Rep. Peter J. *H.R. 4258*. Library of Congress. 2015. Web.

<sup>260</sup> Ganor, "State Involvement in Terrorism." Pg. 70.

<sup>261</sup> Winer, Jon "Countering Terrorist Finance." *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618 (2008): 112-32.

<sup>262</sup> Sheikhneshin, Arsalan. "Iran and the US" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 16, no. 1 (2009): 93-113.

<sup>263</sup> Shay, *The Axis of Evil*. Pg. 98.

as well as training from Iranian military advisors.<sup>264</sup> The notable difference between the two groups, besides the fact that Hamas has been less interested in becoming a proxy actor for Tehran,<sup>265</sup> are their religious affiliations. While Hezbollah is Shia and thus serves to export the Iranian religious priority into the Muslim world, Hamas has Sunni affiliations that make them less effective in promoting the Iranian agenda.<sup>266</sup> Despite the religious divide, Hamas remains an important ally due to its alignment with Iran's strategic agendas in Lebanon and Palestine.<sup>267</sup> Former State Department Director of Policy Planning Dennis Ross notes that Hamas has received direct state funding from Iran<sup>268</sup> while executive director of the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism Boaz Ganor reports that Iran has aided Hamas with weapons and military training.<sup>269</sup>

The unification of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hamas in a universal goal to undermine Israeli authority and create instability in an already highly unstable region is fully sanctioned and encouraged by Iranian officials.<sup>270</sup> The ultimate goal of Hamas is to create a Palestinian state in place of Israel without a two state solution or any diplomatic relations, and it is for this reason among others that the U.S. has classified Hamas as a terrorist organization. This type of state support for consolidating and granting legitimacy to terror groups is what U.S. policy must seek to undermine and work against.

#### *d. Ties to Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)*

The Palestine Liberation Organization originated in 1964 in an attempt to organize the scattered leadership of Palestinian groups. While the group is semi-governmental and is not a designated terrorist organization, it is the umbrella group for – and is often seen to represent – groups including the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). These groups are all designated by the U.S. Department of State as terrorist organizations, and thus the sponsoring, aiding, training or financing of these groups goes against U.S. policy.<sup>271</sup> Iran has actively engaged in all of these activities with every one of these groups.

#### *e. Ties to Islamic Jihad Groups and Palestinian Islamic Jihad*

The first Islamic Jihad organization was in Egypt in the 1960's. With the Iranian revolution coming two decades later, the movement gained considerable momentum. Their overarching goal is to replace moderate and secular Middle Eastern governments with fundamentalist Muslim ones. Multiple jihadi groups have been the recipient of Iranian support for their efforts to undermine Israeli presence in the polity of Palestine, though to a lesser extent than Hezbollah and Hamas. PIJ, created in 1979, is a faction devoted exclusively to terrorist acts, and a

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<sup>264</sup> Ross, "State Support for Hamas"; Ganor, "State Involvement in Terrorism."

<sup>265</sup> Ross, "State Support for Hamas."

<sup>266</sup> Shay, *The Axis of Evil*. Pg. 23.

<sup>267</sup> "Iran/Palestine."

<sup>268</sup> Ross, "State Support for Hamas."

<sup>269</sup> Ganor, "State Involvement in Terrorism."

<sup>270</sup> "Iranian Parliament Pleased with Recent Reconciliation between PLO, Hamas." *Asia News Monitor*. April, 2014. Web

<sup>271</sup> Department Of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." May 8, 2009. Web.

considerable amount of their funding and support comes from Iran.<sup>272</sup> The concept of Islamic Jihad is supported and sponsored by the exportation of the Iranian revolution, and the importance of pro-Palestinian sentiment is clear in Iranian political rhetoric and actions. Both groups have accepted training, weapons, and financial support from Iran.<sup>273</sup>

*f. Ties to Semi-Governmental Organizations*

In the complex political, religious and military organization of the Middle East, there are some state actors that engage in terrorism – such as Iran – and there are also some terrorist organizations that hold political power in their host states. Hezbollah for instance has secured considerable influence in the Lebanese parliament. Other groups such as Amal, a Lebanese Shia political party, could be seen as either a political party or a terrorist group. It is in cases like these where the definition of terrorism is important. As far as U.S. policy is concerned, it is imperative that these semi-political actors be continually monitored and designated appropriately as terrorist groups should they overstep lines and become more involved in terror activities.

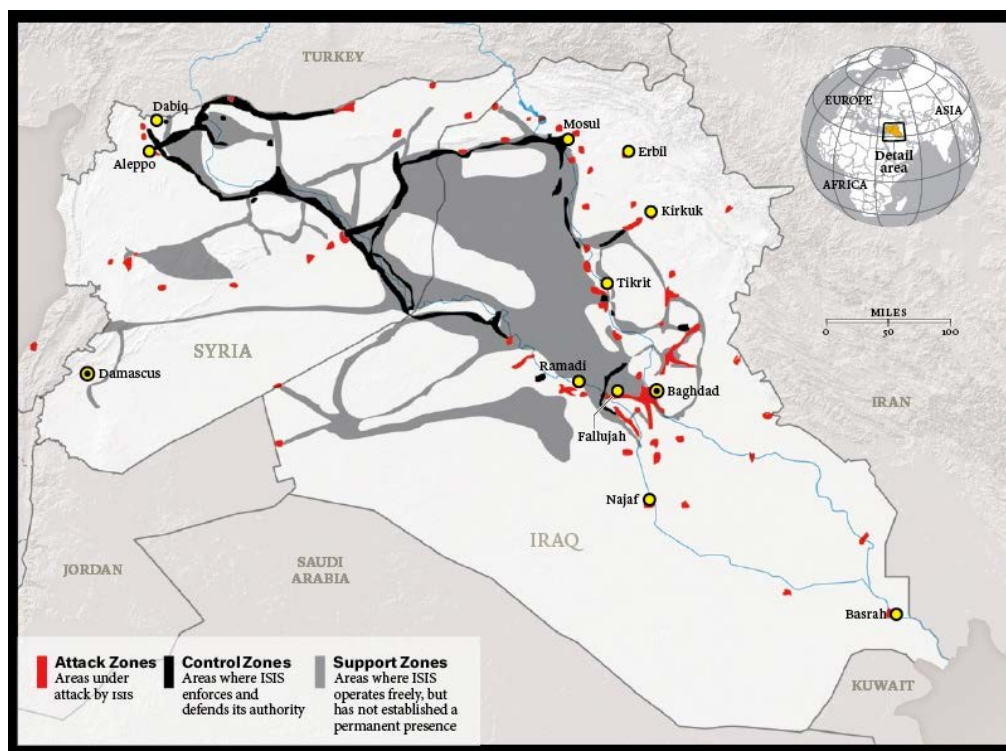


Figure 2. Source: *The Atlantic*

Perhaps the most notable example is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or the Levant) (ISIS/ISIL) or DAIISH, the acronym based on the Arabic transliteration of the group's name, ad-Dawla al-Islamiyah fil al-Iraq wa al-Sham.<sup>274</sup> This Sunni terrorist group maintains firmly rooted control in areas of both Iraq and Syria, as shown in the map below.<sup>275</sup> Founded in 1999, DAIISH has followed the model of statehood by controlling and expanding its borders, collecting taxes,

<sup>272</sup> "What Are Hamas and Hezbollah?" *Slate*, October 17, 2000. Web.

<sup>273</sup> Winer, "Countering Terrorist Finance." Pg. 115.

<sup>274</sup> Tharoor, Ishaan. "ISIS or ISIL? Debate over What to Call Iraq's Terror Group." *Washington Post*, June, 2014. Web.

<sup>275</sup> Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants." *The Atlantic*, March 2015. Web.

and coordinating military operations; however they are nonetheless firmly designated by the U.S. as a terror group. Usage of the term “Islamic State” in reference to the organization only serves to legitimize it as a state actor, therefore in this policy recommendation it will be referred to as DAIISH.

The involvement of Iran in assisting with the training and funding of Syrian militant groups and semi-governmental organizations that promote their regional interest is well documented and accessible.<sup>276</sup> The link between Tehran and support of the Asaad regime and fundamentalist groups is clear cause for U.S. sanctions according to American anti-terror laws.<sup>277</sup>

*g. Ties to Al Qaeda and the Taliban*

Al Qaeda and the Taliban, two high-profile extremist Sunni terrorist organizations, have long been national enemies of the U.S. and have contributed to the perpetration of innumerable global acts of terror. Direct links between Iran and the Taliban and AL Qaeda are difficult to pinpoint, and so there is little policy that can affect their relationship. There are also marked tensions between Iran and the Taliban, especially the Sunni affiliated Afghan Taliban. Historically, there have been several instances of Iranian aggression towards this particular Taliban group as well as skepticism of the security of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, but the entirety of the relationship is not transparent.<sup>278</sup> The most that the U.S. can discuss with Tehran and actively monitor is aid in the form of ease of passage. As a nation state, Iran should be encouraged to adhere to global policies concerning the extradition of terrorists known and wanted by international courts. The cases linking Iran to these organizations is a failure to police borders and stop Al Qaeda and Taliban members from traversing Iran between Iraq and Afghanistan or vice versa. Realistically, however, this tenuous link can only be monitored and border control encouraged. There are currently sanctions against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, restricting their access to finance globally; these policies can be continued, and increased for maximum effect should the need arise.<sup>279</sup>

*h. Iranian Involvement in Proxy Wars*

Iran is not the first state to use proxy groups to fight wars for them,<sup>280</sup> defend their borders, enlist support, or export ideology and engagement into the region and the globe.<sup>281</sup> However, to thwart Iranian involvement in terrorism, countering and understanding their proxy battles is an important step. Currently, Iran is engaged indirectly in conflict with Saudi Arabia, and Israel, two strong allies and proponents of U.S. interests in the region. Besides the regional policies discussed in the two previous chapters, these conflicts can be addressed by engagement with the opposition and arming U.S. allies in the region.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Sawyer, “Cultural Background to a Looming Iranian Terror Threat.”

<sup>277</sup> “What You Need To Know About U.S. Sanctions.”

<sup>278</sup> Tarock, A. “Politics of the Pipeline: Iran and Afghanistan Conflict.” *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1999): 801–19.

<sup>279</sup> “What You Need To Know About U.S. Sanctions.”

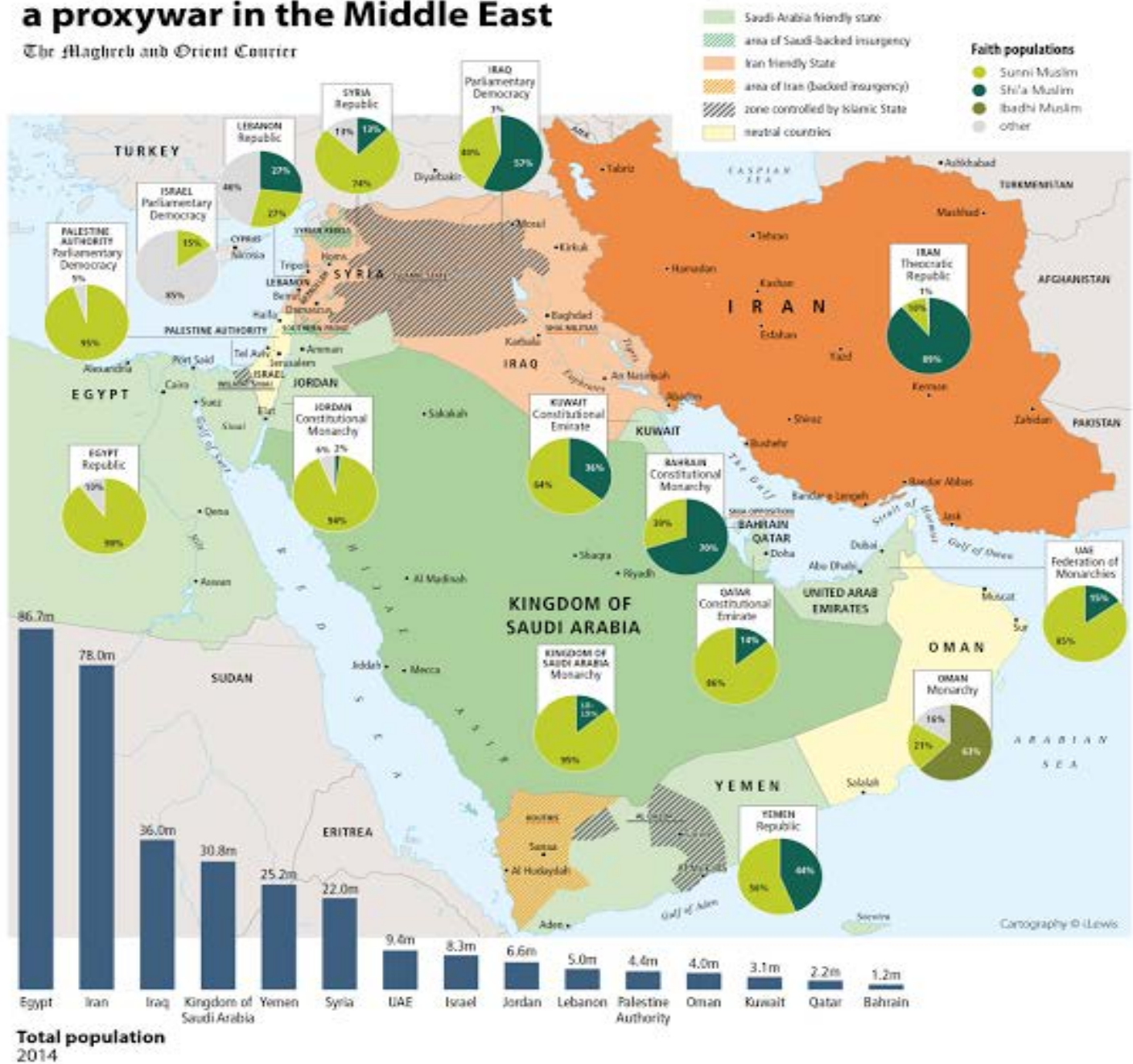
<sup>280</sup> Sawyer, “Cultural Background to a Looming Iranian Terror Threat.”

<sup>281</sup> Ganor, “State Involvement in Terrorism.” Pg. 64.

<sup>282</sup> Cragin, R. “Semi-Proxy Wars and U.S. Counterterrorism.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 5 (May, 2015):

## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia vs Islamic Republic of Iran : a proxywar in the Middle East

The Maghreb and Orient Courier



Top photo credit: AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP/Getty Images

**Figure 3.** Map showing the involvement of Iran and Saudi Arabia in a variety of proxy wars across the Middle East. The dividing lines of religion, and national security interests of the two nations are clear.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>283</sup> Bender et al., "The Brewing Proxy War between Iran and Saudi Arabia." *Business Insider*. 8 Jan. 2016. Web.

## CONCLUSION

Although there is indisputable evidence of Iranian involvement in terror operations at the highest levels historically, recent developments in U.S. – Iran relations give hope for the improving relations and the decreasing criminal activity.<sup>284</sup> Future policy recommendations should allow for improved relations so long as Iran continues to cooperate in regional and global issues at the current level or more. It is unrealistic to infer that terrorism can be eliminated, but anti-terror policy can mitigate the damage done by terrorism.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, it is possible that opening diplomatic channels between the U.S. and Iran can change the regional relations in such a way that extremism (through terrorist groups, or radical political parties) is no longer the most attractive option.

The anti-Israel sentiments of the Iranian political leadership is one of the strongest incentives to provide support to groups whose mission it is to perpetrate attacks against Israel. In this context it is important to support Israel as an American ally, as well as monitor and sanction groups acting against them. For Iran and for the organizations it supports, the relationship is mutually beneficial. Iran is able to further their political aspirations and strengthen their borders and presence throughout the Middle East without deploying troops or engaging in combat. The terrorist groups they support receive valuable aid on several levels in exchange for doing what they intend to do regardless of Iranian involvement.<sup>286</sup> Hezbollah and Hamas are primarily concerned with the Arab – Israeli conflict, and sponsorship of these organizations, while creating regional conflict and instability, do not pose a large threat to international security.<sup>287</sup>

The drivers of Iranian sponsored terror are multi-faceted and not likely to change rapidly. Nevertheless, the U.S. must seek to maintain and improve sanctions on Iranian ties to terrorism, monitor relationships within the Middle East between state and non-state actors, and adapt to new relationships if it wishes to help bring about such change.<sup>288</sup> If it can do so, prospects for stability in the region and more transparent diplomatic relations between Iran and its neighbors will markedly improve and provide a more stable base for U.S. – Iran relations moving forward.

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<sup>284</sup> Brennan, John. "The Conundrum of Iran: Strengthening Moderates without Acquiescing to Belligerence." *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618 (2008): 168–79.

<sup>285</sup> Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances."

<sup>286</sup> Carter, David B. "A Blessing or a Curse? State Support for Terrorist Groups." *International Organization* 66, no. 1 (2012): 129–51.

<sup>287</sup> Freedman, Lawrence, ed. *Superterrorism: Policy Responses*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Pub, 2002.

<sup>288</sup> Kirtzie, Orde F. "Using Stronger Sanctions To Increase Negotiating Leverage With Iran." *Arms Control Today* 39, no. 10 (2009): 18–21.

## IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION WITH IRAN

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The successful implementation of the JCPOA has shown a side of Iran that few knew existed - a state that is open to compromise, seeks regional stability, and is making a concerted effort to enter the global economy. Of course, these new attributes remain accompanied by familiar diplomatic barriers. Iran continues to act aggressively in the region, funding terrorism and conducting military interventions. But this is no longer an era in which a state's missteps in the eyes of global powers preclude it from the possibility of brokering peaceful agreements. The JCPOA, a far cry from the Shock and Awe tactic adopted by past administrations when faced with the threat of a rogue Middle Eastern state, represents the willingness of world leaders to put aside their ideological differences in a new era of diplomacy.

In light of this newfound willingness and ability to cooperate, the final portion of this report will address the opportunities that accompany it. By identifying areas beyond nuclear armament where the mutual interests of the U.S. and Iran coincide, possibilities for the U.S. to extend the working relationship exercised with Iran to negotiate the JCPOA have been uncovered. Opportunities for cooperation abound, especially where the stability of the Middle East is at risk. In Syria, civil war threatens human rights and international borders, and Sunni extremists thrive with Iran and Iraq in their crosshairs. Daesh is gaining power and influence that extends beyond the region, spreading violence and fundamentalism like wildfire. The Taliban continues to threaten fragile Afghanistan. Domestically, the Iranian economy is struggling to survive while moderates fight to gain traction in the government.

That Iran will work with the U.S. to fight these threats is not a guarantee, but there is reason for optimism. Much has changed since the 1979 revolution - the Iranian people are not the anti-everything religious extremists that many assume them to be. The middle-class is highly educated and the political hardliners are aging out of power. The lifting of sanctions in accordance with the JCPOA has opened the door for international businesses to capitalize on the desires of Iranians to improve the economy and work toward political stability.

The challenge rests with the U.S. to capitalize on the emerging moderate culture and the working relationship that has been established with Iran. A difficult and sustained effort lies ahead - integrating Iran into the modern world is a daunting task, and expectations for change and cooperation must be tempered. However even small steps taken toward Iran becoming a positive player in the Middle East serve the interests of everyone involved. By building forward slowly, the U.S. and Iran can continue to grow their diplomatic relationship and work together to continue seeking progress in the region and beyond.

## **A. IRAQ**

The U.S. and Iran have historically been active players in Iraq and have a vested interest in the country. Iraq is currently involved in direct conflict with DAIISH. Considering Iran's history with Iraq, Iran's economic, religious, and political interests, and its past anti-terrorism efforts, the U.S. must pursue the following policies, expanded upon in the subsequent pages, in order to work with Iran to neutralize DAIISH in Iraq:

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Pursue the mending of relations between Iraqi Sunnis and the Iranian and Iraqi governments to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from supporting DAIISH; this entails recognizing the failures of the Maliki government, pressuring the Iranian government to work with Sunnis, and leading a discussion between Iraq, Iran, and other regional powers to create a comprehensive oil revenue sharing agreement
2. Continue airstrikes against DAIISH in Iraq and invite Iran to play a role in the U.S. military campaign; Iranian involvement will include pressuring Iran to cease its support of proxy groups and militias which incite sectarianism, and promoting the cooperation and inclusion of Sunnis in the fight against DAIISH

## i. MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said that DAIISH "is the product of 2 things: the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the feeling of disequilibrium."<sup>289</sup> Though he fails to mention that Iran contributed to the feeling of disequilibrium among Sunnis, Kurds, and Shiites in Iraq, he is accurate that U.S. actions have created divisions among the Iraqi people that proliferate terrorism. The U.S. cannot take full responsibility for the rise of DAIISH in Iraq, but it should accept the integral role it played if it hopes to see a brighter future and a more stable Middle East.

To understand the present situation in Iraq in terms of Iran and the U.S., it is important to revisit the actions of the former Prime Minister of Iraq, Nouri al-Maliki. As a young man fearing Saddam's persecution for his membership in Iraq's Dawa party, Maliki fled Iraq for Syria and Iran. The Dawa party developed a relationship with Iran, setting the stage for Iran's present level of involvement in Iraq. Maliki returned to Iraq in 2003, serving in the transitional government following the U.S.-led overthrow of Saddam. He became involved with de-Baathification, a sweeping process invoked by the American Coalition Provisional Authority that fueled the Iraqi insurgency. The 2006 bombing of the Shiite Askariya mosque signaled the beginning of violent sectarian conflict between Iran-backed Shiite militias, the Iraqi government, Sunnis, and al-Qaeda. The prime minister at the time did not contain the conflict, and the U.S. ushered Maliki into office in May 2006.<sup>290</sup>

Maliki soon began to consolidate his power. Seeing the influential Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi army as a threat, he launched an unplanned offensive against him in Basra in 2008, successfully defeating him. In preparation for the 2010 elections Maliki put measures in place to ensure his victory, forcing Iraq's chief justice to bar political opponents from running – but lost the election to Iraqiya, a diverse pro-Western coalition. The chief justice then granted him the ability to form his own cabinet, ensuring that he could continue strengthening his position – and the U.S. continued to support him. He absorbed the offices of defense minister, intelligence chief, and interior minister and invented the position of Commander in Chief, allowing him to capture and jail his potential political rivals.

Although Maliki is no longer in power, his legacy remains. The climate of political exclusion, power abuse, and sectarian violence in Iraq has fueled the disequilibrium among Iraqis and limited the effect of the international campaign against DAIISH. Sunnis and Kurds in the marginalized Iraqiya party have not been supportive of the Iraqi-Iranian movement against DAIISH in Northern Iraq, where DAIISH has successfully captured Mosul. In the Sunni-populated Anbar region of Iraq, DAIISH has capitalized on the tensions that exist between Shiites and Sunnis, ultimately gaining the support of Iraqi Sunnis to take over parts of the region.<sup>291</sup> Iraq has relied on Iranian-supported Shiite militias in many anti-DAIISH campaigns,

<sup>289</sup> Esfandiary, Dina and Tabatabai, Ariane. "Iran's ISIS Policy," *Chatham House*, International Affairs, 91, no. 1 (2015). Web.

<sup>290</sup> McInnis, J. Matthew. "Iran's Strategic Thinking: Origins and Evolution" (American Enterprise Institute, May 2015). Web.

<sup>291</sup> Tim Arango, "ISIS Fighters Seize Government Headquarters in Ramadi, Iraq," *New York Times*, May 15, 2015. Web.

but the intense tensions in the Anbar region have ruled out this possibility.<sup>292</sup> The use of Shiite militias could create a deeper divide between the Iraqi Sunnis and the Iraqi government, propelling the Sunnis to support DAIISH. The U.S. must attempt to mend the relationships that its actions in Iraq have helped to divide if it wishes to successfully defeat DAIISH.

## ii. APPLYING POLICIES

DAIISH's grip on the Middle East is largely due to the tensions that Iran and the U.S. have unintentionally helped to incite between the two major sects of Islam. The U.S.'s top priority must be to mend these broken relations. The history between Iraq and Iran will not be overcome overnight, but the U.S. can take practical steps that will lead to long-term stability. The first of these steps is to publicly discourage Iran's use of proxy groups and militias and give humanitarian aid to non-combatants, including Sunnis in Iraq - while encouraging Iran to do the same.

### a. Proxy Warfare

After the 1979 revolution, Iran expanded its reliance on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), who has worked with rogue states and terrorist organizations.<sup>293</sup> Iran also often uses Hezbollah to further its interests.<sup>294</sup> The U.S. should encourage Iran to work on developing its army, Artesh, to discourage Iran's support of terrorist action through proxy organizations. Though the Artesh doesn't have as many resources as the IRGC, the U.S. can work with Iran to reshape and train the military.<sup>295</sup> This will help in the fight against DAIISH to regain physical territory and win the support of the Iraqi people.

### b. Iraqi Military

Iraqis, most notably Sunnis, often do not view Iran as trustworthy – for that reason they will be more willing to accept help from the conventional Iraqi military rather than the IRGC or Shia militias. The use of a conventional military is conducive to military cooperation with Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. forces, cooperation that will need to include Sunni forces. Supporting and even pressuring a switch in Iran from a non-conventional military program to a conventional military force is a good first step.

### c. Oil Revenue

Sharing oil revenue will help mend sectarian tensions in Iraq. Iraq has one of the largest oil reserves in the world, but the majority of Sunnis live in an oil-scarce region.<sup>296</sup> Sharing the revenue from oil will improve the average living standard of Iraqis.<sup>297</sup> The U.S. and Iran can agree to support UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq) to facilitate the

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<sup>292</sup> Arango.

<sup>293</sup> McInnis.

<sup>294</sup> McInnis.

<sup>295</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai.

<sup>296</sup> Beehner, Lionel. "Iraq and Oil: Revenue-Sharing Among Regions," *Council on Foreign Relations*. Web.

<sup>297</sup> Philippe Le Billon, "The Contested Politics of Iraq's Oil Wealth," in *The Legacy of Iraq: From the 2003 War to the "Islamic State,"* ed. Benjamin Isakhan, 2015, 36–49. Web.

establishment of an oil-revenue sharing policy that stimulates Iraq's economy.<sup>298</sup> This common thread will bind the Iraqi people together, and the income will allow the pursuit of new opportunities. A strengthened sense of nationalism and continual economic growth will discourage the lure of DAIISH.

#### *d. Soft Power*

The U.S. must continue its current level of involvement in the military campaign against DAIISH in Iraq, but this military action must be accompanied by "soft power" solutions to sectarianism, such as the political inclusion of Sunnis. If this is not accomplished, any military victories against DAIISH will be short-lived. It will behoove the U.S. to invite Iran to participate in these U.S.-led initiatives. Iran is a strong player in the region with historical, religious, geographical, and economic ties to Iraq, and it is essential that it continues to be highly involved with achieving diplomatic solutions. The U.S. must strive to understand Iranian interests to effectively pressure Iran into cooperating with U.S.-led plans, while being careful not to force its hand.

### **iii. IRAN'S REGIONAL INTERESTS**

To capitalize on the opportunity to work with Iran the U.S. must understand Iran's interests and use them to apply calculated pressure. Iran is primarily interested in internal stability, the decline of U.S. influence in the region followed by the rise of Iranian influence, and economic growth. Iran seeks to be a regional power, and therefore needs to be involved in Iraq.

#### *a. Internal Stability*

Iran's internal stability is directly linked to the stability of Iraq.<sup>299</sup> The two countries share a significant border, linking their stability – Iran, somewhat geographically isolated, does not have many other natural allies. Iran considers itself a protector of the Shia faith and retains special interest in the number of important Shia shrines and holy sites in Iraq, namely Karbala and Najaf.<sup>300</sup> Iran demonstrated the importance and fragility of its internal stability and the threat posed to it by Iraq when it left the Iran-Iraq war before achieving its goal of spreading the Islamic revolution.<sup>301</sup> While DAIISH does not control territories in Iraq along the Iranian border, its presence is too close for Iranian comfort.

#### *b. Influence*

Iran wants to increase its regional influence, particularly in Iraq, while decreasing the influence of the U.S, whose presence in the region is a threat.<sup>302</sup> That the U.S. has historically supported government coups has pushed Iran to consider the U.S. "the great Satan of the region."<sup>303</sup> Iran adopted a conciliatory policy in Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion, likely because it felt threatened

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<sup>298</sup> Kane, Sean. "Iraq's Oil Politics: Where Agreement Might Be Found" (Peaceworks, 2010). Web.

<sup>299</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai.

<sup>300</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai.

<sup>301</sup> McInnis.

<sup>302</sup> McInnis.

<sup>303</sup> McInnis.

by the scale of the invasion. Iran prepared to make compromises on its nuclear program and offer support for Palestinian resistance groups as a show of reconciliation.<sup>304</sup> The state also encouraged its allies and proxy groups in Iraq, such as the Badr Brigade, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and the Dawa party, to aid the coalition during the invasion.<sup>305</sup> This strategy was aimed to eventually eliminate the possibility of a Sunni-majority and/or pro-Western government in Iraq after the invasion, and to ensure the installation of a predominantly Shia-controlled government with a close relationship to Tehran.

Iran accomplished this by supporting the SCIRI and Dawa parties in elections and influencing who received important cabinet positions, including Maliki and the current prime minister Haider al Abadi.<sup>306,307</sup> Iran's show of power may have been heavy-handed and intrusive, as some of its allies tried to disassociate from the state. SCIRI took "revolution" out of its name and changed its religious affiliation from Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei to Iraq's more independent Grand Ayatollah Sistani.<sup>308</sup>

Muqtada al-Sadr, head of the Mahdi army, was somewhat rebellious toward his Iranian patrons, perhaps explaining his targeting by Maliki in 2008. Persian condescension toward Arabs and empire-building is a common theme in Iran-Iraq relations, and this has sometimes alienated Shia groups such as SCIRI and threatened Sunnis and religious minorities.<sup>309</sup> In any case, Iran's efforts to dominate Iraqi politics and sponsor fairly radical Shia militias after 2003 have had a destabilizing effect on the country. For example, Tehran tried to infiltrate the Iraqi security and military apparatus by pushing Shia militias such as the Badr Brigade and Mahdi Army into the Iraq Security Forces, the police force, and leadership positions of the ministries of defense and intelligence. The Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force even partnered with Lebanese Hezbollah in order to establish and train terrorist proxies such as the Asa'ib Ahl al Haq (AAH).<sup>310</sup>

It was these groups which, with direction from Tehran and Maliki, would go on to brutally crack down on disenfranchised Sunni protesters, combat American forces, as well as forcibly shape politics along sectarian lines, rendering the ideal chaos necessary for DAIISH to take shape and simultaneously prevent Iraq from being able to stop it. This is important to note in that it reveals Iran's goal of being influential in Iraq and shows that Iran's assertion of influence complicates the situation. The JCPOA was a great first step in mending tensions between the U.S. and Iran, but tensions still exist and will continue as both countries seek to play a role in Iraq.

### *iii. Economic Growth*

To ensure stability and promote an increase in influence, Iran needs a strong and growing economy with fewer sanctions. The sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program made its

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<sup>304</sup> McInnis, 15.

<sup>305</sup> McInnis, 15.

<sup>306</sup> Nader, Alireza. "Iran's Role in Iraq," Product Page, *RAND Corp.* (2015). Web.

<sup>307</sup> McInnis, 16.

<sup>308</sup> Nader, 3.

<sup>309</sup> McInnis, 16.

<sup>310</sup> McInnis, 16.

economy 20% smaller than it would have been otherwise.<sup>311</sup> The U.S. should leverage this interest to encourage Iran to cooperate with U.S. policies in the fight against DAIISH – this will be discussed later in the economic integration portion.

#### iv. ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORTS

When DAIISH began to gain prominence the possibility of a Sunni extremist group infringing on Iranian territory and destabilizing Iraq was unthinkable. Iran's policy toward Iraq at this time reflected this. Early support for Iraq in 2013 was, at least visibly, only advisory. Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi visited Iraq in April of that year to offer to train and equip Iraqi security forces.<sup>312</sup>

As DAIISH has gained power, Iran has increasingly committed resources as visibly as possible, accompanied by something of a PR campaign. When Amerli was besieged in October 2014, the IRGC sent in helicopters to aid locals, while AAH and Iranian news outlets attributed the success of the response directly to Quds force commander Qassem Soleimani.<sup>313</sup> This level of public involvement by Soleimani stands in stark contrast to his much more clandestine operations in Syria, or even prior to 2014 in Iraq. Now, he seeks to characterize the Quds Force and IRGC as defenders of religious minorities against DAIISH with social media campaigns, shaping public opinion in Iran's favor.<sup>314</sup>

In November of the same year, Iran conducted a series of airstrikes against DAIISH targets in Diyala. The strategic value of these targets was questionable, and it is more likely that the airstrikes were a reminder of Iran's influence. Additionally, the airstrikes may have been intended as a show of force to pacify Prime Minister Abadi, who had recently made a number of political decisions which ran counter to Iran's plan for Iraq. For example, Abadi had replaced many military generals hand-picked by Maliki, rejected Iran's pick for Minister of the Interior, and signed off on the formation of U.S.-trained Sunni military units.<sup>315</sup> Clearly, even as Iran was apparently taking active steps to combat DAIISH, it was still jockeying for influence in Iraqi politics.

In August of 2014, Tehran publicly stated that in contrast to its earlier supportive role, Iran would directly intervene if the Shia cities Karbala or Najaf were threatened.<sup>316</sup> However, this official “red line” policy didn't necessarily inform its level of involvement. As previously mentioned, Iran's strategy in the early days of DAIISH was to provide just enough support to groups in Iraq to push back the threat without becoming directly or obtrusively involved - in other words, to commit the least amount of resources for the maximum benefit.

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<sup>311</sup> Stone, Richard. “Iran Nuclear Deal Holds ‘goodies’ for Scientists,” *Science* 349, no. 6246 (July 24, 2015): 356–57. Web.

<sup>312</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 4–5.

<sup>313</sup> Nader, 12.

<sup>314</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 5.

<sup>315</sup> Pollack, Kenneth M. “Iranian Airstrikes in Iraq Are a Warning and a Sign of Progress,” *The Brookings Institution*. Web.

<sup>316</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 8.

Determining an appropriate level of involvement was a delicate task; on one hand, overt action might trigger Iraqi nationalism, reducing Iranian influence. Not enough direct action could similarly strengthen Iraqi proxy groups, reducing their dependence on, and the influence of, Iran. Most important was determining how much Iranian assistance was necessary to defeat DAIISH. By June 2014, the answer seemed to be that quite a lot of Iranian assistance would be necessary. Tehran publicly declared that Qassem Soleimani would be sent to Iraq with a small group of Quds force members to establish a militia to join forces with the fragile Iraqi army. This was a bold action, as Soleimani's previous activities in Iraq and Syria were largely kept secret.

Accompanying this military assistance was, in tandem with the U.S., a total withdrawal of support from Maliki. Iranian support for Maliki extended into 2010, but by August 2014 Tehran recognized that his mismanagement of the government and sectarianism was fracturing the country and empowering DAIISH. Initially, they considered trying to persuade several Shia factions to pressure Maliki to be more inclusive, rather than effectively push Sunnis towards DAIISH. However, when it became clear he wouldn't cooperate, Iran, Ayatollah Sistani, Shias, and the U.S. called for him to step down in favor of a more moderate and inclusive replacement, Haidar al-Abadi.

This was an indication that both Iran and the U.S. are interested in a stable, moderate Iraq. In fact, the two countries' consistent sponsorship of the same Prime Ministerial candidate (first Maliki, then Abadi) might be taken as a sign of possible cooperation with Iran regarding their involvement in Iraqi politics. It clearly does not behoove Iran to sponsor Iraqi leaders which promote sectarian violence, adding fuel to DAIISH's fire.

Tehran has ratcheted up the degree of its support to Iraq as DAIISH has grown. Since as early as November 2013, Iran has provided military equipment to Iraq to aid in the fight against DAIISH, including small arms, tanks, and artillery.<sup>317</sup> Rather, an agreement was signed between Tehran and Baghdad for the provision of these supplies, but officially sanctions do not permit it, so it is unclear whether they were actually delivered. By June 2014, after the fall of Mosul, Iran accelerated their material support to publicly include surveillance drones and regular deliveries of other military equipment.

By July, Tehran returned some Iraqi aircraft that had been retained after the Iran-Iraq war. In September Shia and Kurdish forces took the northern cities of Amerli and Suleiman Beg with Iranian assistance.<sup>318</sup> Tehran's willingness to engage with Kurds to fight DAIISH is encouraging. If it can work with a non-Shia group with that degree of independence, perhaps it would also be willing to incorporate Sunni groups into its strategy. Doing so will be necessary to effectively retake the Sunni parts of Northern Iraq.

Thus far, DAIISH has been unable to hold onto any territory in the Shia or Kurdish parts of Iraq for very long, but retains a strong hold over majority Sunni areas. For example, Kurds and Yazidis retook Sinjar in Northern Iraq with the support of U.S. airstrikes in late 2015. However, this level of efficacy and cooperation has not been applied to cities like Mosul or Ramadi, where

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<sup>317</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 9.

<sup>318</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 9.

DAIISH has been more difficult to remove. The root of the problem is the distrust with which Sunnis in those territories view Iranian-backed Shia militias and the Shia-dominated ISF.

Previously, those militias, especially under Maliki, had committed flagrant abuses of Sunnis in recaptured territories. Sunnis also remember quite poignantly the total political exclusion they suffered under Maliki. Sunni tribes are understandably hesitant to assist or accept help from a government they view as fundamentally hostile to their interests, perhaps even preferring the domination of DAIISH.<sup>319</sup> Indeed, the Sunni tribes who went on to join DAIISH may have felt that, after the U.S. withdrawal, no one would be present to guard against peaking sectarian tensions, such as those that occurred in April of 2013 in Hawija, between Mosul and Baghdad, where Sunni protestors were shot by ISF.<sup>320</sup>

Just as the support of Sunnis was necessary to defeat al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2007, it will be necessary to defeat DAIISH. However, Iran has been reluctant to adopt this strategy. Sunnis might need to be enticed by offering them more inclusive representation in government or even more independence from Baghdad (such as the Kurds enjoy), but this is an outcome to which Iran is not amenable. While Iran has been reluctant to cooperate strategically with the U.S., coordinated offensives have had the most impact. In June 2014 an adviser to President Rouhani admitted that U.S. airstrikes were necessary to substitute an anemic Iraqi air force, and Iranian president Rouhani and Secretary of State Kerry have even suggested that they would be open to some sort of limited cooperation.<sup>321</sup> Seyed Mousavian, former head of the Iranian Foreign Relations Committee, also admitted that the retaking of Amerli that September was made possible by the combination of Iranian support for Kurdish peshmerga, and U.S. air power.<sup>322</sup>

Iran and the U.S. ideally must cooperate to defeat DAIISH as quickly as possible. Fortunately, the two countries have overlapping interests and it is becoming clearer that joint action will be necessary to expediently defeat DAIISH. Iranian attitudes and policies have reflected this to some degree since 2014. A few Western and Iranian officials have vaguely alluded to a possible need for coordination.<sup>323</sup> More overt attempts at cooperation have perhaps been stifled by Iran's (specifically Khamenei's) need to appeal to domestic hardliners.

Military cooperation with the U.S. might open up the possibility of a wider rapprochement, which of course is unacceptable to Khamenei and other aging revolutionaries on the supreme council. In fact, Khamenei personally rejected an invitation to a coalition meeting in Paris in September 2014. However, after the successful signing of the nuclear deal, it bears revisiting. If Iran was prepared to essentially hand over their nuclear program, surely they would agree to some limited military cooperation with the U.S. as well as enfranchising Sunnis in order to defeat DAIISH.

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<sup>319</sup> Boot, Max. "Islamic State's Achilles' Heel: Its Sunni Identity," *Latimes.com*, accessed January 27, 2016.

<sup>320</sup> Powell, Bill. "The Strong Horse," *Newsweek*, December 11, 2014. Web.

<sup>321</sup> Gearan, Anne and Rezain, Jason "Iran, U.S. Signal Openness to Cooperation on Iraq," *The Washington Post*, June 16, 2014. Web.

<sup>322</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 11.

<sup>323</sup> Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 10.

## CONCLUSION

History has created divisions that have allowed for the rise of DAIISH in Iraq. Therefore, unity will be the most important piece of a stable future. The U.S. and Iran must work with the Iraqi government to create changes that will bind together the Iraqi people and push DAIISH out of Iraq. In his 2016 State of the Union Address, President Obama said “America will always act, alone if necessary, to protect our people and our allies; but on issues of global concern, we will mobilize the world to work with us, and make sure other countries pull their own weight.”<sup>324</sup> This stance mirrors the policies suggested against DAIISH in Iraq. First and foremost, the U.S. will be involved in order to protect its people and its allies from terrorism. While doing so, the U.S. will mobilize the world and make sure other countries, most notably Iran, are pulling their weight. Iran is tied in many ways to Iraq and therefore is central to effectively fighting DAIISH in Iraq.

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324 “Remarks of President Barack Obama – State of the Union Address As Delivered,” January 13, 2016. Web.

## **B. SYRIA**

The U.S. and Iran need to work together to diplomatically solve the crisis in Syria. The most pressing shared interest is the defeat of DAIISH, a terrorist organization that threatens global peace and stability. The U.S. must adopt the following policies, expanded upon in the subsequent pages, to work with Iran in Syria:

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure that Iran continues to be involved in negotiations between the Syrian government and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the coalition of opposition groups; this includes having Iran present at all future Geneva talks, as well as any other form of discussion between the two sides
2. Convince Iran that Bashar al-Assad is fueling sectarian violence and the rise of DAIISH, and therefore needs to be removed from power; In order for Iran to enter the international system as a meaningful actor, it cannot be supporting a repressive regime
3. Continue negotiations with Russia on its policy toward Syria; This means the U.S. needs to keep the agreement of a temporary cease-fire, and continue to work toward a long-term cease-fire; The U.S. can enlist Iran for help in negotiations with Russia
4. Work with Iran on the long-term planning for Syria, including the formation of a new, inclusive government; This will ensure that Iran will be able to keep its interests secure in the region while supporting the existence of government that will represent the diversity of the Syrian people

## i. IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT

Syria has been Iran's longest Arab ally, spanning three and a half decades – their alliance has proven particularly durable during negotiations to end the current Syrian war. Syria is majority Sunni, and Iran majority Shia. The countries have different political structures – Syria's Baathist ideology is secular and socialist, while Iran is rigidly religious. Despite these differences, the Syrian-Iranian alliance has endured the increasingly sectarian Middle East dynamic. The defensive alliance was formed after 1979 Iranian revolution and remains today to serve Iranian and Syrian shared objectives in the region, including anti-U.S. and anti-Israel policy and containing Iraq.<sup>325</sup>

Syria has been increasingly dependent upon Iran since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. This dependence gives Iran the upper hand in the alliance, providing an opportunity for the U.S. to negotiate with Iran to achieve shared objectives in Syria. However, Iran's alliance with Syria is beneficial to Iran despite Syria's declining status in the international system. Syria has provided Iran with access to its proxies in the Levant and the Arab-Israeli world (Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad) to send people, money, and weapons to pursue its interests.<sup>326</sup> Hezbollah in Lebanon is particularly important, as it is seen as the only revolutionary success for Iranian clerics.<sup>327</sup> Syria has helped Iran deter Israel from interfering in Iran's proxies or nuclear program, and the alliance has proven to other Arab states that Iran can have an Arab ally in political, economic, and military affairs.<sup>328</sup> Despite the enduring alliance, and the statements from Iran that they, "will remain at the side of the Syrian nation and government until the end of the road," there is still an opportunity for the U.S. to negotiate with Iran on the removal of Bashar al-Assad, although it is important to acknowledge the importance of the alliance with Syria to Iran.<sup>329</sup>

Iran recognizes that the war of attrition between Bashar al-Assad and the opposition to him in Syria since 2011 are fueling Sunni extremists.<sup>330</sup> Assad is no longer recognized by the international community as a legitimate leader and does not have a long-term future in Syria. Iran continues to support Assad because of the fear of the alternative, but has not been included thus far in any assemblies that would influence such decisions – Iran was excluded from the UN-sponsored Geneva I and Geneva II peace talks from 2012-2014.<sup>331</sup> It is essential that U.S. policy toward Iran regarding Syria ensures that Iran is present at all peace talks and included in the process every step of the way. There is no solution in Syria without Iran because of their strong and long-lasting alliance. The U.S. State Department and the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs must tread carefully to work together to find a diplomatic solution for the removal of Assad, as well as a plan for the post-Assad government.

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<sup>325</sup> Goodarzi, "Iran and Syria: The End of the Road?" 7.

<sup>326</sup> Fullton, Will, Holliday, Joseph, and Wyer, Sam. Iranian Strategy in Syria. Institute for the Study of War. May 2013. Pg. 9.

<sup>327</sup> Goodarzi, "Iran and Syria: The End of the Road?" 4.

<sup>328</sup> Fullton, Holliday & Wyer, 9.

<sup>329</sup> Goodarzi. "Iran and Syria: The End of the Road?" 6.

<sup>330</sup> Goodarzi, "Iran and Syria: The End of the Road?" 3.

<sup>331</sup> Goodarzi, Jubin. Iran and Syria: The End of the Road?. Wilson Center Viewpoint 79. Pg. 4. Web.

## **ii. CONSIDERATIONS IN REMOVING ASSAD**

It is necessary to show Iran that the U.S. does not want to play its historical role in supporting government coups or forcefully ousting political leaders in Syria. The U.S. must instead convince Iran and Russia that the removal of Assad is vital to the achievement of their interests and gain their actionable support in the removal process.

It is vital that Iran realizes that it must work toward ending sectarian violence in order to become a member of the international community. The U.S. must convince Iran that it holds an important role in the fight against DAIISH, who is a threat to their sect of Islam. DAIISH gains momentum from the chaos and sectarian violence that is occurring as a result of Bashar al-Assad's refusal to relinquish his power – therefore, Assad must be peacefully removed from power and replaced with a more capable leader, to cease giving DAIISH a place to build its caliphate.<sup>332</sup> Iran and Russia are the only two states that have the ability to do so, and therefore the U.S. needs to continue to work diplomatically to convince them to act. The U.S. must make it clear that Assad fuels DAIISH – there will be no end to DAIISH in Syria while Assad is still in power. If no action is taken, DAIISH will continue to establish its caliphate until an effective state is established in Syria that does not include Assad. The U.S. must provide support to any action Iran and Russia decide to take.

Iran has also supported Syria because it sees the war as a fight against Sunni extremism in the form of Wahhabism and Salafism, especially as the war has increasingly become a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>333</sup> It is essential for the U.S. government to understand the fear Iran has of replacing Assad with a Sunni fundamentalist leader in order to develop and implement policies towards Iran in Syria. The U.S. has to convince Iran that its fears will not come to fruition by ensuring that the postwar planning will not lead to chaos, but instead establish a government that represents everyone's interests, including Iran's. Lastly, the U.S. must convince Iran that defeating DAIISH will only occur if Syria does not become a failed state, which will only occur if Bashar al-Assad is removed from power.

Defeating an ideology takes more than a strong military – it requires state-building that will ensure government inclusion takes the place of sectarian violence. The U.S. must ensure that the post-Assad Syrian government is inclusive, protecting Syria from becoming a U.S.-created failed state and paving the road to defeating DAIISH with minimal unintended consequences.

## **iii. NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA**

Working with Iran to rebuild the Syrian government will require Russian involvement. Like Iran, Russia is an ally to the Syrian government and has been involved militarily since September 2015. Russia's support for Syria stems from Syria's previous alliance with the Soviet Union, and the diplomatic relationship between autocratic leaders Putin and Assad. Syria has also purchased Russian weapons, and Russia's naval base in Tartus is its only base in the Mediterranean.

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<sup>332</sup> McFate, Jessica. The ISIS Defense in Iraq and Syria: Countering an Adaptive Enemy. Middle East Security Report 27. Pg. 7.

<sup>333</sup> McFate, 7.

Russia has recently made significant territorial gains around Aleppo, strengthening the Assad regime. However on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 the U.S. and Russia agreed to a temporary ceasefire to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria. This is the first formal declaration of decreased violence in Syria, although the agreement excludes the fighting against DAIISH and the al-Nusra Front. This is an opportunity for the U.S. to convince Russia that it should continue to use air strikes solely to defeat DAIISH and the al-Nusra Front, and cease targeting U.S.-supported opposition groups that it considers to be terrorist organizations.

If Russia cooperates fully with the ceasefire, it will provide an opportunity for the U.S., Iran, and Russia to peacefully and diplomatically negotiate the removal of Assad and cooperate to achieve the defeat of DAIISH. If Russia does not adhere to the ceasefire, the U.S. has the option of placing more sanctions on Russia to make it economically impossible to continue in Syria, although Russia has continued to provide resources to bolster Assad despite its economic slowdown. Russia is an important player to consider when negotiating with Iran on the removal of Assad – Russia should be included in peace talks, and the ceasefire agreement needs to be closely monitored by the U.S.

#### iv. LONG-TERM PLANNING

Syria needs to become a legitimate state in order to truly defeat DAIISH. In the short-term, the U.S. needs to negotiate with Iran and Russia to achieve the peaceful removal of Assad. In the long-term, the U.S. must work with the international community to create a new Syrian government that is representative of all ethnic and religious groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, and Alawites. The creation of an inclusive government will decrease the sectarian violence that DAIISH and other extremist groups use to gain power.

Iran can play an integral part in the state-building in Syria, where it has been an ally for over thirty years. State-building in a post-Assad Syria will require immense effort by the international community - the Assad regime has ruled by force, dismembering Syria's institutions such as the judiciary and media, and essentially eliminating political parties.<sup>334</sup> Assad put Alawites and Christians into positions of power, disempowering Sunni Muslims. This struggle between different ethnic and religious groups needs to be remembered and evaluated carefully.<sup>335</sup> The Syrian opposition is disunited, and the removal of Assad must not lead to a power struggle among the opposition.<sup>336</sup>

The U.S. must find a balance between different groups and their representation in government in order to decrease the chances of a power struggle and the possibility of another civil war. It is of the utmost importance that government officials be removed slowly in order to limit chaos. The U.S. must assure that the transition from Assad to a new representative government in Syria is smooth, since chaos will only fuel DAIISH and other terrorist groups. In this regard, it is

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<sup>334</sup> Byman, Dani el, and Renanah Miles. 2012. "A Modest Post-Assad Plan". *The National Interest*, no. 122. Center for the National Interest: 48–57. Web.

<sup>335</sup> Byman, Daniel, and Renanah Miles.

<sup>336</sup> Byman, Daniel, and Renanah Miles.

essential that the U.S. learn from its postwar mistakes in Iraq to achieve a successful outcome in Syria that is amenable to the defeat of DAIISH.

## **CONCLUSION**

Iran has continued to support the Syrian regime for fear that if Assad is toppled, Sunni Islamist extremists will take power.<sup>337</sup> Iran has attempted to supply the Syrian government with military advisors, equipment, oil, and aid – but there has been little improvement for the Assad regime. Convincing Iran and Russia of the importance of Assad’s peaceful removal and replacing his government with a carefully planned alternative is vital to U.S. interests. A new and legitimate government in Syria is the only way to truly defeat DAIISH, which thrives off of the chaos that Assad has created by suppressing his opponents.

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<sup>337</sup> Goodarzi, “Iran and Syria: The End of the Road?” 3.

## C. AFGHANISTAN

The U.S. and Iran are both influential in Afghanistan. These two countries have shown that despite their differences, they share an interest in stabilizing Afghanistan.<sup>338</sup> Iran, a majority Shia country, sees itself as the protector of the Shia in Afghanistan who are currently being persecuted, but Iran cannot be successful if it works alone to repair Afghanistan. With the help of the U.S., aid can be provided to Afghanistan in ways that will keep the Taliban and other terrorist organizations from gaining power.<sup>339</sup> It is imperative that the U.S. and Iran work together to pursue the following policies – which are detailed further in the subsequent pages – to support a stable Afghanistan:

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Build programs in coordination with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that seek to provide free access to education for every Afghan citizen under the supervision of USAID's Office of Afghanistan/Pakistan Affairs
2. Place diplomatic pressure on the Afghan government to modernize the rights of women in Afghan society and authorize Afghan Ambassador P. Michael McKinley to initiate talks with Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif urging the Iranian government to do the same
3. Authorize the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to coordinate with Iran's Ministry of the Interior in targeting traffickers moving narcotics across Iran's shared border with Afghanistan

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<sup>338</sup> Nader, Alireza., Scotten, Ali G, Rahmani, Ahmad Idrees, Stewart, Robert, and Mahnad, Leila. *Iran's Influence in Afghanistan Implications for the U.S. Drawdown*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2014.

<sup>339</sup> Sadat, Mir, and James Hughes. "U.S.-IRAN ENGAGEMENT THROUGH AFGHANISTAN." *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 1 (2010): 31-51.

## i. ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

The greatest threat to Afghanistan, the U.S, and Iran, is the possibility of a terrorist organization gaining control of Afghanistan. This threat is presented from several terrorist organizations. As U.S. troops leave Afghanistan, the Taliban gains strength and Kabul is particularly vulnerable.<sup>340</sup> Al-Qaeda, a proven enemy of the U.S., will continue to flourish if Afghanistan is left in its unstable state. DAIISH, known to be more brutal than the Taliban or al-Qaeda, aims to unify the Muslim countries through coercion and torture. Like Al-Qaeda, DAIISH fights the ideology of the Western world and hates the Shia.<sup>341</sup>

DAIISH increasingly conducts attacks on the Shia minority, such as the Hazara tribe, in Afghanistan. The Hazara have endured years of oppression in Afghanistan at the hands of powerful Sunni tribes. Their lands have been taken, they have been excluded from politics, and they have not been allowed in Afghan schools.<sup>342</sup> This persecution from within Afghanistan lends to the unstable climate that allows terrorist powers to take hold. Afghanistan is not strong enough to withstand the pressure of the Taliban without support from the international community. With the help of the U.S., it is feasible for Iran to support Afghanistan and prevent the Taliban from taking control of the government. In turn, this will serve Iranian and American interests by preventing terrorist activities abroad that originate from within Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is no stranger to modernity. After gaining independence in 1919, Amanullah, Afghanistan's sovereign king at the time, tried to modernize the country by implementing reforms based on a European model of development. Prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Afghans were similar to Iranians – at the time, Iran was heavily influenced by the U.S.<sup>343</sup> After the Taliban took over the region, Afghanistan suffered culturally and economically. The Taliban did not allow basic human rights, and war became a way of life. Afghanistan must return to the path to modernization it was taking before the Taliban gained control. The U.S. must join forces with Iran to work with humanitarian organizations to ensure that the basic rights of Afghan civilians are met. This begins with universal access to an education.

## ii. EDUCATION

In Islam, gaining knowledge is a form of worship. It is incumbent upon Muslims to continue learning until the last day of their life. Following years of war and denial of access to school under the Taliban, most Afghans are not educated. The average Afghan citizen is concerned only with providing food and shelter for their family. Without the critical thinking and reasoning tools that are taught in school, Afghans cannot ideologically resist fundamentalism or gain reliable employment.

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<sup>340</sup> Nader, Scotten, Rahmani, et. al.

<sup>341</sup> Fisher, Ian. 2015. *In Rise of ISIS, Many Strands of Blame*. New York Times, Nov 19.

<sup>342</sup> Brower, Barbara., and Johnston, Barbara Rose. *DISAPPEARING PEOPLES? INDIGENOUS GROUPS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010.

<sup>343</sup> Emadi, Hafizullah, and Greenwood Press. *Repression, Resistance, and Women in Afghanistan*. Westport, CT, USA. Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated. 2002.

Access to education must become commonplace in Afghanistan. Working with the Afghan government, the U.S. and Iran can ensure that every Afghan citizen is allowed and able to attend school. This can be achieved by setting goals with the Afghan government that outline basic educational expectations for every child in Afghanistan and provide funding to achieve those goals. Iran and the U.S. can work to fund the construction of schools in areas that lack basic educational infrastructure.

Achieving a high literacy rate must be heavily targeted, especially among women. The Taliban, who have persecuted women into invisibility, forbid women especially from obtaining any education. The Taliban knows that if women become literate, they will understand what Islam truly stands for and resist the power of the Taliban. This is another place where the U.S. and Iran can work with the government and humanitarian organizations to create change. The Afghan government must be pressured to modernize the role of women in its society. Women's rights must be written into law and enforced, and women must be allowed to participate in the work force. Programs that support the victims of domestic violence must be put into place. The equal participation of women in society is a cornerstone of cultures that are strong enough to resist the influence of terrorism, and therefore the coercion and repression of Afghan women must become a thing of the past.

Access to education will give Afghans the tools to resist the persuasions of fundamentalism, which will in turn staunch the flow of terrorism between Afghanistan and Pakistan, denying groups like al-Qaeda and DAIISH the opportunity to launch terrorist attacks from Afghanistan. Education will also discourage domestic conflict, such as the previously mentioned clash between Hazaras and Sunnis. But aid must also be targeted toward providing basic necessities to Afghans. Literacy will have little impact on a person who cannot provide food and shelter for himself and his family. Government and humanitarian organizations that provide economic support must be financed and supported to balance the basic needs that go unmet in Afghanistan with the social progress that must be made.

Another problem that will begin to be resolved by pursuing education is the widespread drug trafficking in Afghanistan, which is problematic for both Iran and the U.S. Consumers of drugs are located everywhere, especially in Iran, which is currently fighting the import of drugs to its citizens from neighboring Afghanistan. Under the Taliban, opium use flourished and Afghanistan became the main source of its production. Distribution of opium and other drugs helps fund the Taliban and other terrorist groups, who use their distribution and the ensuing instability it causes to their advantage.<sup>344</sup> Many Afghans facing financial crisis have joined the prominent drug trade without understanding the implications. If the farmers who have become involved understood the damage that is a direct result of the addiction to their products, many would likely not consider becoming involved. Afghan youth would also benefit – with a proper education, the younger generation will be better able to avoid becoming the victims of addiction.

Skateistan, an outstanding program that is currently being implemented in Afghanistan, can be used as a model for the type of humanitarian effort that can be encouraged and supported by the

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<sup>344</sup> Maley, William. *Afghanistan Wars*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

U.S. and Iran. Skateistan uses skateboarding as a method to reach the youth of Afghanistan, guiding them on a path that empowers and strengthens them and is changing the lives of poverty stricken youth. Girls are able to freely interact, and are no longer constrained by their restrictive culture.<sup>345</sup> The introduction of skateboarding in Afghanistan nurtures children who have known nothing but war, providing a recreational activity that shows them how to act in the modern world and keeps them from turning to drugs. Specifically targeting Afghan youth through programs such as this also discourages involvement in terrorist groups.

## CONCLUSION

The JCPOA has opened the door to continue building the foundation of trust between the U.S. and Iran. By working together to achieve mutual interests in Afghanistan, the two countries can strengthen their diplomatic relationship and create a more stable international climate.<sup>346</sup> Working to support the basic human rights of education and gender equality in Afghanistan will begin to foster a stable economic and cultural climate in the country. Terrorist organizations will struggle to gain power among educated Afghans. If the U.S., Iran, and the Afghan government work together, progress will be made toward stability.

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<sup>345</sup> *Skateboarding into the hearts of Kabul's youth*. Gulf News (Dubai, United Arab Emirates). December 31, 2010.

<sup>346</sup> Sadat, Mir, & Hughes.

## **D. IRANIAN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION**

The growing majority of Iran's population is younger than the revolution and does not share its radical ideology. This bodes well for the continued success of the JCPOA, but steps must be taken to ensure its stability. The Iranian economy is suffering and unemployment is high. It will be beneficial for both Iran and the U.S. to build Iran's standing as a positive player in the regional and world economy. If this can be accomplished, the Iran that emerges from the JCPOA at its expiry will be amenable to diplomatic interests. To increase Iranian involvement in the international economy and continue discouraging the government's radical ideology, the following steps must be taken:

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Work with Iran to create an agenda to continue dropping sanctions dependent on positive Iranian action, facilitating the introduction of foreign involvement into the Iranian economy
2. Establish foreign exchange programs between high schools and universities in the U.S. and Iran to reduce hardliner ideology about Americans among younger generations of Iranians
3. Establish a sister city program between American and Iranian cities to improve relations between Americans and Iranians

## i. ECONOMY

These policies will facilitate the introduction of foreign businesses into Iran's economy and improve Iran's standing as a member of the international community through increased positive actions. They will also provide varying sources of income and begin to repair Iran's economy, which has suffered under international sanctions – the opportunity for economic development was a key incentive for Iran in agreeing to negotiate with the U.S.

### a. *Contingent Sanctions Agreement*

The U.S. must work with Iran to detail a plan to continue dropping the sanctions that remain unaffected by the JCPOA in exchange for Iran taking increasingly positive actions in the eyes of the international community. Iran's capability to develop its economic activity This agreement will also provide incentive for Iran to continue growing its economy.

Qualifying positive actions are those that improve Iran's status as a positive actor seeking regional stability. This could be Iran working with the Iraqi government to improve the situation of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq, such as the mistreatment of Sunnis by the largely Shiite government. It could also be Iran working to improve the rights of its own religious minorities. In turn, these actions would call the sanctions in place against Iran for its poor human rights record into question.<sup>347</sup> Iran's commitment to human rights would also be demonstrated if it joined the International Syria Support Group and began to play a positive role in ending the conflict in Syria.

Given this incentive, Iran's funding of radical Islamic terrorism will decline, building Iran's good standing in the international community. Iran will become focused on its new potential to efficiently develop its economy and less enchanted with the older generation's agenda of spreading its radical revolutionary ideologies. The correlation between categorical positive action and corresponding sanction relief will ensure that the economic growth stemming from increased freedom will not fund actions like terrorism through proxy groups.

This idea that forging economic ties can repair diplomatic relationships is not without precedent. The economic relationship between China and Taiwan has improved despite the strained relationship between the two countries since the Chinese Civil War in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They have markedly improved their working relationship since 2009, increasing investments and flights between the two estranged countries, each gaining access to the other's domestic consumer base.<sup>348</sup>

Molding a stable working relationship with Iran, like that of China and Taiwan, is the goal of this policy. It is important to recognize that these economic agreements are not aiming to create an amiable friendship, but rather a reliable and peaceful dialogue that will allow Iran greater participation in the global economy as a means of pacifying the radical agenda of the Iranian government. The relationship will not be expected to instantly improve by any means, but it will gradually stabilize in the long-term.

<sup>347</sup> *Discrimination Against Religious Minorities In Iran*. Report no. 63. August 2003.

<sup>348</sup> "Banyan." *Economist* [London, England] 9 May 2009: 66. *The Economist Historical Archive*, 1843-2012. Web.

*b. Foreign Economic Involvement*

The pursuit of economic development is a necessity for Iran, whose economy has suffered greatly under international sanctions. The unemployment rate soared from 0.4% to 19.4% between 1976 and 2011, and the country faces a crisis of over-education.<sup>349</sup> However Iran's stable stock market and well-educated, young workforce suggest that if the economy is diversified (beyond the oil and gas sector it currently depends on), it will grow.<sup>350</sup> If smart economic decisions are made, Iran has the potential to be one of the largest, most stable, and well-equipped economies in the Middle East.

Diversifying the economy depends upon international involvement with the continued ease of sanctions, detailed in subsection *i*, because the confusing web of sanctions that were unaffected by the JCPOA and are still in place against Iran will deter foreign involvement in the economy.<sup>351</sup> American businesses will be particularly wary of violating these sanctions and incurring fines from the U.S. government, placing them at a particular disadvantage.

Businesses will also be deterred by the involvement of Iranian government officials in Iran's economy. The sanctions that were in place before the JCPOA forced Iran to become dependent upon its domestic businesses in the absence of foreign competition, resulting in high levels of corruption and state-owned enterprises. This limits the efficiency of the Iranian economy, a problem that foreign companies and investors wishing to become involved will have to face.<sup>352</sup>

A two-pronged approach can be taken to overcome these deterrents. The first aspect is the agreement to continually drop categorical sanctions as a reward for good behavior. This will ease international businesses' fears of unknowingly violating international law. The second aspect is the provision of legal assistance to businesses and individuals who request help navigating the intricacies of sanctions. Because all sanctions will not be immediately dropped, it will be necessary for a combination of these two efforts to facilitate the maximum amount of foreign economic involvement possible.

After solutions to the barriers to involvement are offered, opportunities for international businesses abound. Iran's successful stock exchange provides a straightforward avenue for foreign investment – the Tehran Stock Exchange is one of the most stable investment opportunities in the Middle East. As trade becomes liberalized, corruption will decrease – as the government becomes less involved in its economy, people will not have to pay bribes for the clearance of their shipments, and are more likely to participate in trade using official channels.<sup>353</sup> Increasing

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<sup>349</sup> Habibi, Nader. "Iran's Overeducation Crisis: Causes and Ramifications." *Middle East Brief*, no. 89 (February 2015).

<sup>350</sup> Beattie, Alan. "Natural Resources: Why Are Oil and Diamonds More Trouble Than They Are Worth." *False Economy*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2009.

<sup>351</sup> Myles, Danielle. "Iran's Nuclear Pact: What Happens Next?" *International Financial Law Review*, July 9, 2015. EBSCOhost. Web.

<sup>352</sup> "Corruption by Country / Territory." Transparency International. 2015. Web.

<sup>353</sup> Sarwar, Saima, and Muhammad K. Pervaiz, Prof. Dr. "An Empirical Investigation Between Trade Liberalization And Corruption: A Panel Data Approach." *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 4, no. 3 (2013): 179-89.

competition with more efficient foreign businesses will force Iranian businesses to become more efficient in turn.<sup>354,355</sup>

## ii. CULTURE

The culture in Iran is rapidly changing. The younger generation is increasingly culturally recognizable to the U.S. and the rest of the Western world – Western music and entertainment are commonplace, few young women wear the traditional headscarf, and many are well-educated. The growing middle-class does not share the radical government's anti-Western biases – instead, educated Iranians have becoming increasingly critical of their government's policies and do not harbor hatred against the Western world for the impact of sanctions.<sup>356</sup> As young moderate Iranian voters elect like-minded candidates, the revolutionary Iranian government will age out of power.

Young Iranians differ from their hardliner predecessors in politics as well as culture - Iranians who have no recollection of the 1979 revolution are coming of age, and they do not share the malicious nuclear aspirations of the older revolutionaries. The majority of Iranians now view the country's nuclear program as purely peaceful, and believe that the production and use of WMD is contrary to the principles of Islam and therefore immoral.<sup>357</sup> The upcoming generation of Iranians is willing to continue an open dialogue with the U.S. and bridge the differences between the two countries. This changing ideology indicates that Iranians are more concerned about economic development and becoming a member of the international community than they are with acquiring WMD, which is good news for the international community – the JCPOA rests upon the assumed desire of the Iranian government to use its nuclear program in the future solely for economic development.

The majority of people in Iran, most of whom are young, favored the nuclear deal and support developing the relationship between the Iranian and American governments, including increasing cultural and educational exchanges.<sup>358</sup> The U.S. can capitalize on the growing presence of moderates in Iran who are eager to forge international relationships by working with Iran to design cultural exchange programs.

### a. Sister Cities

Implementing a sister city program between the U.S. and Iran will capitalize on this changing cultural tide. This will create opportunities for American and Iranian businesses to work together - sister city programs often lead to an increase in imported goods in both participating cities as a result of the rich business connections that are made. Sister cities are also known to increase

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<sup>354</sup> Oatley, Thomas. "Trade Promotes Growth v. Trade Does Not Promote Growth." *Debates in International Political Economy*. Boston: Longman, 2010. Web.

<sup>355</sup> Clarke, George. "Bridging the Digital Divide: How Enterprise Ownership and Foreign Competition Affect Internet Access in Eastern Europe and Central Asia." (1999): *EconLit*, EBSCOhost. Web.

<sup>356</sup> Mohseni, Ebrahim, Nancy Gallagher, and Clay Ramsay. *Iranian Public Opinion on the Nuclear Negotiations*. University of Maryland School of Public Policy. June 2015. Web.

<sup>357</sup> Mohseni, Gallagher, & Ramsay.

<sup>358</sup> Wright, Robin. "Inside the Iran Talks." *The New Yorker*. July 27, 2015. Web.

employment and diversify the economic base of participating urban areas.<sup>359</sup> These connections will help assuage any anti-American sentiment in Iran and will deepen the cultural understanding between Americans and Iranians. Intercultural understanding is achieved through sister city activities such as visitations by city government staff members, pen-pal programs, local cultural celebrations, or sending aid to a sister city to help communities in need.<sup>360</sup>

*b. Foreign Exchange Students*

An important program that can be facilitated by a sister city program is a foreign exchange program, providing young Iranians and Americans a readily accessible cultural immersion experience to learn the language and establish relationships. This will improve the economic and political relationship between Iran and the U.S. in the long-term – young students will become more comfortable with their differences and realize their similarities, ensuring that Iranians and Americans who grow up in the age of the JCPOA are equipped to inherit the diplomatic relationship that is being delicately forged today, and raising a generation of culturally sensitive and sensitive world citizens.

**CONCLUSION**

The state of the Iranian culture and economy is amenable to U.S. interests. Iran shows potential for sustained economic progress, especially after foreign businesses are introduced and unemployment goes down among the highly educated middle-class. Radical revolutionaries still retain the majority of power in the country, but they are aging out of the government. The younger, more moderate generation has shown that its main concerns will be economically developing the country and becoming a member of the international community. Through a combination of economic and cultural programs, the U.S. can work with Iran to help mold it into the important and positive player in the region and international community that it needs to be. This will discourage the desire for nuclear armament in Iran and throughout the Middle East, and the U.S. will benefit by positively affecting global and regional stability.

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<sup>359</sup> Cremer, Rolf D., Anne de Bruin, and Ann Dupuis. 2001. "International Sister-cities: Bridging the Global-local Divide". *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 60 (1). [American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc., Wiley]: 377–401.

<sup>360</sup> Cremer, Bruin, & Dupuis, 377-401.

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