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Determinants of Iranian Foreign Policy:  
The Impact of Systemic, Domestic and Ideologic Factors

by

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13. ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to explain the origin of state behavior in international politics. It compares the arguments of state level theorists who emphasize the decisive role that internal attributes, including domestic politics, political elite and regime ideology, to that of structuralists, who focus on the decisive impact of the structure of the international system. The difference is crucial: do we examine domestic politics in order to predict state behavior in international affairs or do we assume that any state, given its place in the international system, will act similarly without regard to these internal factors?

The case study examined is Iran, from the early 1960s to 1989. During this period, the international system remained bi-polar, dominated by the U.S.-U.S.S.R. rivalry. The internal attributes of Iran changed radically, however, as a result of its 1979 revolution. With such a fundamental shift, state level theorists would expect a radical change in Iranian foreign policy. With the continuity of the international system, structuralists would expect essential continuity in Iran's external behavior.

This thesis shows that despite rhetorical changes, Iranian foreign policy remained fundamentally the same under the Shah and the Ayatollah. The structural approach is a more useful guide to understanding state behavior.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis attempts to explain the origin of state behavior in international politics. It compares the arguments of state level theorists who emphasize the decisive role that internal attributes, including domestic politics, political elite and regime ideology, to that of structuralists, who discount these internal attributes, and focus instead on the decisive impact of the structure of the international system. The difference is crucial: do we examine domestic politics in order to predict state behavior in international affairs or do we assume that any state, given its place in the international system, will act similarly without regard to these internal factors?

Iran provides a unique case to compare the expectations of these two theoretical orientations. Following the Islamic Revolution, there was a drastic change in the nature of the internal attributes of Iran. The character of domestic politics changed, the composition of the political elite changed and the ideology of the regime changed. The international system, however, did not change as a result of the Islamic revolution; the bipolar system that characterized the Shah's reign continued for the first ten years of the Islamic Republic. These two orientations, then, would expect radically different types of behavior in international politics from Revolutionary Iran. State level theorists would expect a fundamental change in the nature and substance of Iranian foreign policy while Structural theorists would expect major

continuities, with only stylistic changes from Pahlavi to Islamic Iran.

Structuralists are primarily concerned with important issues dealing with national survival, and the strategies regimes develop to ensure their security. In these issues, they are clearly correct. In issues regarding state survival, neither domestic politics, composition of the political elite, nor regime ideology made any difference. When confronted with destruction of its revolutionary regime by the Iraqi invasion, Iran abandoned its efforts to isolate itself from the international system and sought arms from its most repugnant ideological enemies, the U.S., Israel and the Soviet Union. It engaged in balancing behavior, allying with Syria, a secular state based on Arab nationalism. It sought to market its oil to any nation that would purchase it, often selling on the spot market to American companies, below the posted price. Relations between Islamic Iran and the superpowers waxed and waned depending on the level of threat that Iran perceived was posed by the opposing superpower. Iran sought to undermine the forces arrayed against it in the gulf through conciliatory policies toward regimes such as the U.A.E. and Qatar that were sympathetic to its views.

In short, Iran was, as predicted by structural theory, socialized by, and participated in, the international system.

The case of Iran also illustrates that ideology makes little difference in the conduct of relations between nations. Whether purchasing arms, marketing its oil or soliciting financial assistance, ideology has not been

a constraint on the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic.

All states, including revolutionary states such as Iran, the current regime in Haiti and Islamic regimes that are threatening to emerge in various Middle Eastern states, are clearly constrained by the international system. It is certainly possible, and in some cases likely, that these states will oppose U.S. strategic or regional interests, but they are still vulnerable to traditional power politics.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

While there are many different theories that attempt to explain the nature of international relations and the formulation of foreign policy, two very different orientations dominate the discourse. Many international relations (IR) theorists assert that domestic factors have little impact on the relations between states, and focus instead on the structure of the international system as the primary determinant of state behavior in the international realm. Many historians and students of comparative politics disagree, arguing that domestic politics and ideology are decisive components of foreign policy formulation.<sup>1</sup> In a volume on the role of ideology in Middle Eastern politics, Robert J. Pranger argues that:

Every one of the forms of ideology and power in the Middle East has serious implications for international as well as regional security. Increasingly it is recognized by specialists in international relations that the internal working of movements and regimes, constantly changing as events interact with actors and institutions have important effects on conflict within the wider international order.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hereafter I will refer to those of the first school, which are often called *neo-realists*, as *Structuralists* and the second school as *state level theorists*. Although these terms are vague and encompass a wide variety different theories in each category, they do highlight this fundamental distinction between these two theoretical orientations.

<sup>2</sup>Robert J. Pranger "Introduction", *Ideology and Power in the Middle East*, ed by Peter J. Chelkowski and Robert J. Pranger, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 27.

Additionally, R.K. Ramazani asserts, in his history of Iranian foreign policy, that "Generally the relationship between foreign policy and domestic conditions is easily underestimated."<sup>3</sup>

As Pranger noted, even scholars within the international relations discipline disagree on the importance of systemic versus domestic factors in explaining state behavior in world politics. Many theorists believe that internal attributes of states, including domestic politics, the composition of the political elite and the regime's ideology play the decisive role in the crafting of foreign policy.

These two schools of thought would predict very different types of state behavior in international relations. State level theorists would expect that since there are a variety of different ideologies, political elites and domestic political struggles, states would exhibit a variety of very different types of behavior in international politics. Structuralists on the other hand, would expect that since there is only one international system at a given time, states, despite their different internal characteristics, would engage in very similar types of behavior.

While a single case study can neither completely validate nor completely discredit either theoretical orientation, Iran is an ideal case study to compare the expectations of these two orientations. Everything that the state

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<sup>3</sup>Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973, A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), p. 389.



level theorists declare to be important in foreign policy formulation changed following the 1979 revolution: the leadership changed, the nature of domestic politics changed and the ideology changed. Everything that the Structuralists believe is important in determining state behavior in the international politics remained the same. The bipolar international system remained in place throughout the first decade of Islamic rule. These two orientations would thus predict radically different foreign policy outcomes from these two very different regimes. State level theorists would expect a radical change in the nature and conduct of foreign policy following the revolution. Structuralists however, would expect major continuities in the conduct of foreign policy with only stylistic changes from Pahlavi to Islamic Iran.

Iran is also a great case study due to its vital geostrategic location. Iran is strategically located in the Middle East, a setting which offers a unique juxtaposition of these contending theories. Iran was the focus of the "great game" between great power rivals Russia and Great Britain for over a century. The initial salvos of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union were waged over the issue of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran following the second World War. Additionally, the region was uniquely anarchic, experiencing numerous "coups d' etats, civil wars, revolutions, and interstate conflicts..."<sup>4</sup> These frequent disruptions spawned an amazing variety

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<sup>4</sup>Sohrab Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente: Israeli-Iranian Relations, 1948-1988* (New York: Praeger, 1989), p. 70.

of ideologies to justify the new social order that the revolutionaries promoted. Wahabbism, pan-Arabism (including Nasserism, and Syrian and Iraqi versions of Ba'athism), nationalism and pan-Islam all sought to establish a more open (or independent, egalitarian or just) society on earth. Further, the extent of state and substate actors attempting to influence state behavior within the region is unmatched in other areas. The geostrategic location of Iran guarantees that it will be the focus of continuing interest for both regional actors and superpowers in the future.

Finally, Iran is an exceptional case study due to the level of interest in the nation. Due to its strategic location, great oil wealth, rapid modernization, Islamic ideology and its internal turmoil, many scholars have conducted research on all facets of Iranian society, government and policy, both before and after the revolution. The Islamic Revolution occurred during the mass media age and its causes and results are well documented, although much debated. This documentation makes it possible to compare the foreign policy formulation and Iranian behavior in international politics under both Mohammed Reza Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini.

This thesis will examine foreign policy formulation in both Pahlavi and Islamic Iran and compare the behavior of both regimes in international politics. I will show that although Islamic Iran initially attempted to isolate itself from international politics, it was quickly socialized to the international system.

*Despite the often disjointed and inconsistent nature of foreign policy formulation in*

*the Islamic Republic, the behavior of Iran in international affairs was remarkably similar to that of Pahlavi Iran.* Despite acerbic rhetoric to both superpowers and to many of its regional neighbors, Iran often pursued pragmatic policies towards these ideological enemies. In short, the constraints of the international system played the decisive role in the determination of Iranian foreign policy.

## II. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

There is debate between political scientists over which level of analysis is appropriate for the study of international relations. This debate between the two schools was sharply defined by the publication of Kenneth Waltz' classic *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz contends that the international system is made up of states which are *like units*, and that systemic forces not internal attributes, play a decisive role in the determination of relations between states. "It is not possible to understand world politics simply by looking inside of states."<sup>5</sup> His critics argue that "the units do matter"<sup>6</sup> and that "the attributes of interest here are those relating to the internal cultural, political, and economic systems of states."<sup>7</sup> Many IR theorists accept the importance of structural factors in international relations. There is, however, little agreement on the definition of the structure of the international system and the amount of emphasis given to its various components. Robert

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<sup>5</sup>Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: Random House, 1979), p.65.

<sup>6</sup>Helen Milner, "A Critique of Anarchy" in *International Politics, 3rd ed*, ed by Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), p.34.

<sup>7</sup>Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War", paper prepared for the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History's* conference on "The Origins and Preventions of Major Wars," New England Center of the University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH Oct 22-24, 1986, p. 5.

Keohane presents a lively debate over these various aspects of structural realism.<sup>8</sup> .

The debate is even more heated however, between structuralists and state level theorists who argue that domestic factors play a larger role in determining state behavior in world politics. Graham Allison's classic work on the Cuban Missile Crisis<sup>9</sup> pioneered the research on what has come to be known as bureaucratic politics. In this volume, he analyzes three models which he believes are useful in explaining foreign policy outcomes. While emphasizing different levels of analysis, all three of his models depend on an understanding of the internal characteristics of the individual states. Daniel Wirls makes a strong argument for the primacy of domestic, especially electoral politics in his study of the Reagan era arms buildup.<sup>10</sup> James Lindsay and Kenneth Mayer have developed separate research supporting Wirls' argument in favor of domestic level influences in defense related

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<sup>8</sup>Robert Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>9</sup>Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

<sup>10</sup>Daniel Wirls, *Buildup: the Politics of Defense in the Reagan Era*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

issues.<sup>11</sup> John L. Gaddis' classic work on U.S.-Soviet relations also supports the case for domestic determinants of foreign policy.<sup>12</sup>

Some scholars have attempted to transcend the levels of analysis question to determine how systemic factors interact with domestic factors in the determination of foreign policy. Alexander George argues that scholarly research has failed to provide policy makers with the types of information that is needed to enact coherent policy. He contends that structural realism fails to account for important variables that influence policy makers' choices "such as domestic structure and politics, ideology, belief systems, images of the opponent, bureaucratic politics, strategy and bargaining."<sup>13</sup> George recognizes that much still needs to be done and calls for academics studying international relations to develop a rich theory of foreign policy which can account for the large number of variables that can affect foreign policy formulation.

Snyder and Diesing attempt to synthesize decision making and information processing theories with the structural model, however, their result depends on the:

*attributes of the state actors-their national styles and operational codes, the nature of their decision making process, and the values, images, and*

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<sup>11</sup>See James M. Lindsay, *Congress and Nuclear Weapons*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991) and Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Political Economy of Defense Contracting*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

<sup>12</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: a Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>13</sup>Alexander George, *Bridging the Gap, Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy*, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993), p. 113.

relative influence of the individuals and agents who participate in the process.<sup>14</sup>

To understand the nature of the very different predictions that the two orientations would make regarding Iranian behavior in world politics following the revolution, one must be familiar with the competing views. The following is a brief review of some of the theories that are representative of the competing orientations in international relations theory, focusing on their different views on the determinants of state behavior and the different predictions they would make in the Iranian case.

#### A. STRUCTURAL REALISM

In his *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz develops a rigorous systemic theory to explain certain outcomes in international relations. Waltz is specifically interested in what effect the structure of international politics has on the interaction of the states that make up the system. Waltz' theory does not attempt to explain the formulation of foreign policy of individual states, "To expect it to do so would be like expecting the theory of universal gravitation to explain the wayward path of a falling leaf."<sup>15</sup> What Waltz' systemic theory does explain is the nature of structural constraints that limit

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<sup>14</sup>Glen H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations, Bargaining, Decision Making and System Structure in International Crisis*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 479. original emphasis.

<sup>15</sup>Waltz, p. 121.

the freedom of action of all states. It provides insight into the general patterns of behavior that states in the international system engage in; why states in similar situations behave in a similar fashion, despite their many internal differences.

To Waltz, the international system is composed of a political structure that is defined by its three attributes: the principle by which it is organized; the differentiation of participating units and specification of their functions; and finally, the distribution of capabilities among the units. As opposed to the domestic arena, which is centralized and hierarchic, the international system is decentralized and anarchic. For Waltz, anarchy is defined not as chaos, but merely as unordered. One ramification of this decentralized anarchic structure is that each state in the system must operate on a self-help principle. There is no organization to which states in the international arena have surrendered their sovereignty; all states are forced to pursue their own interests without recourse to a central authority. The motivation of the individual states, assumed, rather than described, is survival. This goal of state survival is fundamental to Waltz' theory. While all states have a variety of goals, state survival is a prerequisite for the realization of any of these other secondary issues. While this system obviously cannot be maintained if all of the actors lose interest in self preservation, it will persist as long as most states pursue efforts to maintain their individual political identity.



This structure imposes significant constraints on state behavior. While some states may wish to disregard these constraints, they do so at their peril. The international system mirrors the competitive economic market which rewards some firms with high profits, while condemning others to bankruptcy. Competition compels less successful firms to emulate the more successful ones. States in the international system also engage in this type of emulation. New states in the system quickly become socialized to the constraints of the system and behave accordingly, or cease to exist as a sovereign entity. Waltz cites the behavior of Bolshevik USSR as a classic example of this socialization. In the early years, the new Soviet state preached international revolution and "flouted the conventions of diplomacy."<sup>16</sup> By 1922, however, Lenin instructed his foreign minister Chicherin to engage in traditional diplomatic activities during the Genoa Conference. The Soviet Union was socialized by the system, despite its ideologic reasons to oppose it.

Iran illustrated this principle shortly after the end of the monarchy. Following the revolution, the Islamic Republic chose to dismantle its defense forces by purging the officer corps. This action nearly "bankrupted" the new republic as it was perceived vulnerable to its persistent adversary, Iraq and threatened with extinction. This invasion quickly socialized the revolutionary leaders to the realities of the international system. Following the Iraqi invasion, many military leaders were "rehabilitated." Fighter pilots were

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<sup>16</sup>Waltz, p. 127.

literally taken from prison and placed in the cockpit in order to repel the Iraqi invaders. Iran began to pursue attempts to restore its former military capabilities, even buying western arms from Israel. While the ideological rhetoric continued to express the advantages of isolationism, Iran's behavior clearly indicated its willingness to participate in international politics. Although the Iranian leadership sought, for ideologic reasons, to pursue isolationism and reduce the power and influence of the military, the constraints of the international system forced them to reconsider, or face extinction.

Chiliastic rulers occasionally come to power. In power, most of them quickly change their ways. They can refuse to do so and yet hope to survive, only if they rule countries little affected by the competition of states. The socialization of nonconformist states proceeds at a pace set by the extent of their involvement in the system.<sup>17</sup>

Despite revolutionary Iran's desire to withdraw from the international system, its involvement in the international system due to its geostrategic location and importance to both sides of the cold war, coupled with its vast quantities of oil reserves, virtually guaranteed that it would have to eventually accommodate itself to this system.

The second aspect of Waltz' definition, the character of the units, is the one that elicits the most debate. In developing his theory of structural realism, Waltz specifically excludes the internal attributes of the units in order to examine *structural* effects on state behavior in international system. In this

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<sup>17</sup>Waltz, p. 128.

system, major states are the most important actors, thus states are the logical level of analysis. States establish the rules by which non-state actors interact in the international realm, "whether by passively permitting informal rules to develop or by actively intervening to change the rules that no longer suit them."<sup>18</sup> Although they are not the only international actors, states are clearly the most important and the most durable.

In domestic political structures, institutions are differentiated not only by their position in the hierarchy, but more importantly, by the functions that they perform. The legislature enacts laws, the executive administers and the judiciary interprets and adjudicates the law. While it is true that roles may overlap and certain institutions may attempt to usurp the powers of others, the individual roles of the institutions are differentiated by the central authority, with procedures defined to clarify conflicts. In contrast, in the anarchic international system, each state must perform the same function. Each state is a sovereign political entity, duplicating the functions of the other states. Each state must decide how it will raise revenues, defend itself, enact and execute legislation and provide for the needs of its citizens. No international organization dictates the particular methods that a particular state must use to fulfill these functions. Although the structure of the international system imposes constraints on the prospects for success of a particular strategy, each state is still free to decide how it will cope with its internal and external

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<sup>18</sup>Waltz, p. 94.

challenges. Although states vary widely in size, wealth, geography, ideology and power, they are alike in the tasks they face and the ends they aspire to.

[Domestic] politics consists of differentiated units performing specified functions. International politics consists of like units duplicating one another's activities.<sup>19</sup>

By eliminating internal attributes from his model, Waltz can determine *systemic* influence on state behavior in international politics.

The behavior of states in the international realm are strikingly similar, the differences arise chiefly from differences in Waltz' third defining attribute, the distribution of capabilities. Using the distribution of capabilities among the units as an attribute of the international system may seem to contradict Waltz' assertion that the attributes of the units do not affect the international structure. It does not. Waltz contends that:

although capabilities are attributes of units, the distribution of capabilities across units is not. The distribution of capabilities is not a unit attribute, but rather a system wide concept.<sup>20</sup>

An individual state's capabilities does not effect the system, it is the distribution of capabilities that matters; whether one, two or more states attain great power status. Students of international politics have long recognized the important role that capability plays and have defined historical eras by the great powers that have dominated them. Capability refers not only to military, but to political and economic power as well.

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<sup>19</sup>Waltz, p. 97.

<sup>20</sup>Waltz, p. 98.

By defining the system by the distribution of capabilities of the units, a positional picture emerges. This distribution of capabilities determines the type of international system that will develop. With three or more great powers, a multi-polar system will prevail. Relations, alliances, between these states do not matter, if four great powers form two opposing alliances, the world does not become bipolar, the system remains multi-polar. A bipolar system will only result if only two nations attain great power status.

These different systems emerge due to structural pressures to create a balance of power. Waltz' balance of power theory assumes that states are unitary actors who, as noted above, seek self preservation. Whenever a powerful state emerges, it threatens the security of the other states in the system who will then act to balance that threat. States will use all available means, both internal and external to achieve these ends. In a multipolar world, states can align and realign in order to maintain a balance of power. In a bipolar world, although alignment has less impact, states still engage in balancing behavior, emphasizing internal efforts to increase military strength or economic capability. A balance of power will occur even though no state is working to achieve or maintain this balance. "Balance-of-power politics prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Waltz, p. 121.

While the international balance of power between the two superpowers dominated international politics for nearly five decades, regional actors also had to contend with the regional distribution of capabilities. With the withdrawal of Great Britain from the Persian Gulf, the Shah perceived an opportunity to expand Iran's regional influence. This expansion naturally led to increased tension with some of the other regional actors, chiefly Iraq. Iraq perceived that revolutionary Iran had seriously reduced its ability to defend itself from external aggression by purging its army and isolating itself from the international system. This perception of an imbalance in the regional distribution of power led to the destructive Iraqi invasion and eight brutal years of war. Great power politics also influenced these events, however, as the U.S. supported the Shah's ambitions as a check on possible expanded Soviet regional influence, while the Soviets continued to support their ally, Iraq. In the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviets provided arms to the Islamic Republic as long as it was on the defensive, then it reverted to supporting Iraq. U.S. presence in the Gulf increased dramatically in order to balance the increased Soviet influence gained by its agreement to lease tankers to Kuwait.

Waltz, then, has defined the structure of the international system by two attributes, the ordering principle and the distribution of capabilities. Structural changes will occur only if there is a change in the ordering principle. If a hierarchic system develops, this will be a structural change. Systemic changes, on the other hand, will occur if there is a change in the distribution of

capabilities. The emergence of a bipolar world after World War II was a systemic change, as was the end of bipolarity with the fall of the Soviet Union. Each of these systems imposes particular set of constraints on the behavior of states in the international arena. This bipolar system, characterized as "the long peace"<sup>22</sup> endured from the end of World War II until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This single international system encompassed virtually the entire reign of Mohammed Reza Shah as well as first decade of the Islamic Republic.

Waltz has defined structural realism as sparsely as possible, eliminating all internal attributes of nations and relations between nations, in order to determine the role structural forces play in international politics.

In defining international-political structures we take states with whatever traditions, habits, objectives, desires and forms of government they may have. We do not ask whether states are revolutionary or legitimate, authoritarian or democratic, ideological or pragmatic...We ask what range of expectations arises merely from looking at the type of order that prevails among them and at the distribution of capabilities within that order.<sup>23</sup>

While not a theory of foreign policy, it is possible to draw some expectations from the post-revolutionary regime, based upon Waltz' theory of international politics. The establishment of the Islamic Republic did not change the nature of the international system, thus the new regime still faced similar constraints in its foreign policy. This type of structural analysis would

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<sup>22</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>23</sup>Waltz, p. 99.

expect that several important themes would continue to be present in post-revolutionary Iranian foreign policy. The Islamic Republic would continue to be concerned with Superpower interference in its internal affairs, it would respond to armed invasion by improving the readiness of its armed forces, obtaining arms from available sources in the international market, that it would continue to exploit divisive elements in its adversaries in an attempt to undermine the forces arrayed against it, that it would continue to ally with those states that shared common foreign policy goals, and finally, that despite its rhetoric, that Islamic Iran would become socialized to the international system.

Waltz' critics argue that international politics cannot be explained by the constraints of the international system, that understanding the nature of domestic politics is fundamental to understanding a state's foreign policy formulation: "to understand Iranian foreign policy one must pay close attention to the domestic sources of foreign policy behavior."<sup>24</sup> Graham Allison's landmark publication of *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, provides a theory to explain the different factors influencing the domestic sources of foreign policy behavior.

## B. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

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<sup>24</sup>Farhad Kazemi, "All Politics is Local", in *Iran's Strategic Intentions and Capabilities*, ed. by Patrick Clawson, (Washington D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1994), p. 49.



Graham Allison seeks to explain the basis for the policy decisions made by the Kennedy administration during the Cuban Missile Crisis through an understanding of the decision making process. He constructs three different models and compares their ability to accurately explain the policies that the administration ultimately enacted. These three models depend on their different levels of analysis. The three models are: the rational actor, the organizational process and the governmental politics paradigms.

The rational actor paradigm is derived from classical theories of economics. In this model, the state is conceived as an individual rational being, the value maximizer of economics theory. Strategic goals are developed to ensure the state's national security and national interest. Various course of action are explored and the consequences of these options are considered. The costs and benefits of each policy option are ranked and decision making is simplified as the choice which yields the highest value for the lowest possible cost. This model presupposes intent. If a state takes a particular action, it is assumed to be pursuing a rational goal. The problem for the scholar attempting to explain foreign policy under this model is to determine the "purposive pattern within which the occurrence can be located as a value-maximizing means."<sup>25</sup> Explanations of foreign policy decisions, then, are dependent on an understanding of the state's relevant values and objectives, perceived courses of actions, estimates of the consequences of these actions

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<sup>25</sup>Allison, p. 33.

and its valuation of these consequences.<sup>26</sup> This model makes intuitive sense and has served as the implicit basis for understanding foreign policy formulation, even prior to its explicit expression. Allison contends that it fails to adequately explain foreign policy formulation, in part due to its flexibility.

It must be noted, however, that an imaginative analyst can construct an account of value-maximizing choice for any action or set of actions performed by a government. Putting the point more formally, if somewhat facetiously, we can state a "Rationality Theorem": there exists no pattern of activity for which an imaginative analyst cannot write a large number of objective functions such that the pattern of activity maximizes each function.<sup>27</sup>

On the surface, Allison seems to have defined decision making in this model as a purely rational process. Understanding this process is dependent, however, on understanding the internal attributes of the individual nation.

Thus we can see how Model I emphasizes, on the one hand, the problem and context that create incentives and pressures for a government to choose a particular course of action, and, on the other, the national (or governmental) values and axioms that create propensities to respond in certain ways...Were one ignorant, for example, of the differences between American national *attitudes* in the mid-1960s and those in the mid-1930s, he would miss fundamental factors in the foreign policy of the United States.<sup>28</sup>

While the decision making process consists of maximizing the value for the minimum cost, one must understand the what influences the nation to place more value on one alternative over another.

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<sup>26</sup>Allison, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup>Allison, p. 35.

<sup>28</sup>Allison, p. 257-258 emphasis added.

The rational actor model provides a plausible explanation for the U.S. decision to establish a quarantine around Cuba and the Soviet Union's subsequent decision to back down, but this model fails to adequately explain the manner in which the Soviets attempted to install missiles in Cuba in the first place. While the decision to deploy missiles to Cuba may have resulted in a strategic foreign policy coup if executed undetected, the method in which it was implemented virtually guaranteed that the missiles would be discovered prior to reaching full operational capability. To explore this issue, Allison turns to his second model.

Under the organizational process model, policy makers are constrained in the outcomes they can choose by the organizations which will be called upon to implement their decisions. While the leaders can have a limited effect on the outcome and can combine different outcomes for a specific result, established organizational procedures determine the specific content of the outcome. The organizations provide information, analysis and alternative courses of action to the decision makers. By presenting only the options that it views as favorable, the organization seriously limits the choices available to policy makers. In a crisis situation, leaders are further constrained by the organizational capabilities that are immediately available.

In understanding foreign policy formulation under the organizational process paradigm, one must look not only at desired outcomes, but at the interaction of organizations which are assigned to develop and implement the

decision. The government is not a monolithic body with a single focus, but rather a "constellation of loosely allied organizations on top of which government leaders sit"<sup>29</sup> Each of these allies has parochial interests which it may pursue at the even at the expense of good policy. While the policy makers are limited by the capabilities and interests of the organizations, these organizations are limited by their standard operating procedures and alternatives which have been previously foreseen and prepared. The best way to predict for how an organization will react in a situation is to examine how what options it favored in previous, similar situations. This model's explanatory power is achieved by uncovering organizational routines that produce a given output.

Allison's third model focuses on the political elite, the leaders of the various organizations that influence foreign policy formulation. Each of these leaders has his own power base and different conceptions of personal, organizational and national goals. Each of these individuals is engaged in a central competitive game of politics. The bargaining that occurs during this game often produces outcomes distinct from what any member or group intended. "...players who make government decisions not by a single, rational choice, but by the pulling and hauling that is politics."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Allison, p. 80.

<sup>30</sup>Allison, p. 144.

Under this model, it is important to determine who the important players are, what determines how they stand on an issue and how much influence they wield. Most of the players in the national security policy game occupy positions as leaders of agencies that enact or implement policy, i.e., State or Defense departments, Director of the CIA or NSA. Others with important ties to the National Command Authority enjoy status and influence in excess of that expected from their organizational role. Determination of an individual's stand can often be understood by examination of the goals and interests of the organization that he is affiliated to. "Where you stand depends on where you sit".<sup>31</sup> Relative influence is determined by the individual's personal power. Power is a blend of personal political skills, formal and informal authority, and the other player's perception of these attributes. To understand why a policy was adopted under this model it is necessary to "identify the games and players, to display the coalitions, bargains, and compromises, and to convey some feel for the confusion."<sup>32</sup>

For Allison the key to understanding foreign policy development is by understanding the process. All three of his models are dependent on the internal attributes of states. The rational actor model depends on the states relevant values and objectives. The organizational process is dependent on an understanding of the interests, goals and routines of the organizations which

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<sup>31</sup>Allison, p. 176.

<sup>32</sup>Allison, p. 146.

enact or implement foreign policy. The governmental politics model is dependent on the individual strengths and weakness of the various players in the national security game.

All three of Allison's models would predict substantial change between Pahlavi and Islamic Iran. The ideology, which affects the relevant values and objectives of a state changed; the organizations which developed foreign policy alternatives changed and new organizations were developed which paralleled the official ones and often performed the same or competing tasks; all of the important players changed, many times, in the course of the consolidation of power in the Islamic Republic. This radical change in domestic political structure would lead Allison to expect radical change in the conduct of foreign policy.

### C. CONCLUSION

In order to determine systemic effects, Waltz assumes that the international system is made up of states that are like units. He does not deny that these states are different in many of their internal attributes, only that these differences are insignificant, that systemic factors are decisive in determining state behavior in international relations. Many of Waltz' critics argue that the attributes of the individual states are vital to understanding the pattern of relations between states and that systemic influences are of less significance than internal attributes, including ideology , domestic politics and

the influence of the political elite on the decision making process that occurs during foreign policy formulation. Iran provides a unique opportunity to compare the expectations of the structuralists and the state level theorists. Following the 1979 revolution, virtually all of the internal attributes which theorists argue are important in foreign policy formulation changed radically. State level theorists, then, would expect a very radical change in the nature and the substance of Iranian foreign policy. The international system remained the same for the first decade of the new regime. Structuralists would expect that following an initial series of perturbations, the new regime would become socialized to the international system and engage in behavior very similar to that of the Pahlavi regime. The following sections compare the internal attributes, the ideology, the political elite and the nature of the political struggle between the institutions of the Pahlavi regime with that of the Islamic Republic. This comparison of the internal attributes is followed by an analysis of the foreign policy outcomes that these two very different regimes produced.

### III. INTERNAL ATTRIBUTES OF PAHLAVI IRAN

The attributes that state level theorists argue are decisive in formulating foreign policy include: domestic politics, the composition of the political leadership and elite, and finally, the regime's ideology. This chapter will examine these internal attributes under the Pahlavi regime in order to provide a comparison with the internal attributes of the Islamic Republic which supplanted it. I will show that by the mid 1970s, the Shah personally dominated all aspects of these internal attributes, and that his fall led to a radical change in the nature of these factors.

#### A. DOMESTIC POLITICS

While the early years of Mohammed Reza Shah's reign were marked by a power struggle between the Majlis, the government<sup>33</sup> and the monarch, by the early 1960s the Shah had emerged as the undisputed leader in Iranian politics. He continued to solidify his grip on the reigns of power, allowing only two political parties, the Mellion and the Mardom. These parties, which were officially regarded as a pro-government party and a loyal opposition party, were unofficially known as the "yes party" and the "yes sir party."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>by government, I refer to the Prime minister and his cabinet, including, of course, the Foreign Minister.

<sup>34</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton (continued...))



Both of these parties were led by courtiers known for their loyalty to the Shah. Additionally provincial governors used the local police forces and the gendarmerie to closely supervise the parliamentary elections.

Despite this control, the Majlis elected in the fall of 1960 opposed the domestic reforms envisioned by the Shah. Exercising his constitutional rights, the Shah dissolved both the Senate and the Majlis and called for new elections. The elections took place in early 1961. This new parliament differed only slightly from the previous one and it too was dissolved. The Shah then ruled by *firman* (royal decree) for the next two years. He appointed Asadollah Alam, the leader of the yes sir party, as prime minister who was responsible for implementing the reforms of the Shah's White Revolution. Alam was responsible for the repression of the clergy which eventually sent Ayatollah Khomeini into exile. With opposition cowed, elections were allowed to proceed in 1963. In order to legitimize his actions, the Shah submitted the reforms of his White Revolution to a referendum. Support for this referendum is said to have exceeded 99%. Additionally, the Shah submitted all of the *firmans* issued in the absence of the parliament to the new Majlis for ratification. Through these measures, the Shah was able to claim at least the illusion of popular support for his measures. Following the White Revolution,

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University Press, 1982), p. 420.

the Shah felt it necessary to eliminate the pro-government Mellion party and replace it with the New Iran party, which was then able to reflect the new reformist attitude of the same old regime. While these parties did elect members to parliament, they did not really reflect political power in Iran. "By the early 1970s a serious student of Iranian politics could not attach much importance to the Mellion and Mardom parties; the central point in his studies should have been the administrative and decision-making process in the Iranian government under the Shah's supreme authority."<sup>35</sup>

The Shah's control of the political parties and Majlis elections in the 1960s marked the end of significant Majlis influence in domestic politics. This same era also saw the end of the role of the prime minister as the head of the government. In 1965, the Shah appointed Amir Abbas Hoveyda as prime minister, who continued to serve until 1977, by far the longest tenure of any prime minister in modern history. Hoveyda was successful at controlling the pro-government New Iran party, but was less successful in influencing policy formulation. The role of the prime minister had changed from that of crafting policy to one of interpreting and enacting the wishes of the Shah. Hoveyda's longevity was due to his ability to carry out the Shah's wishes without threatening his power. "His principal asset was his acceptance of this subservient role, an astute interpretation of what the Shah wanted and a canny

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<sup>35</sup>Lenczowski, p. 452.

feel for the political mood of the country."<sup>36</sup> Hoveyda was considered by his rival, Assadollah Alam, Minister of Court, as a drunken fool who lacked the Shah's confidence or the courage to perform his role as Prime Minister. Indeed, Hoveyda played such a small role in the Iranian foreign policy that he was free to accompany the Empress on a sight seeing trip to Europe during the height of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973.<sup>37</sup>

Despite his nearly complete control of both the Majlis and the government, the Shah continued his efforts to dominate domestic politics. In 1975, he eliminated both the Mardom and the New Iranian parties, replacing both with the Resurgence party. The goal of this change was to create a Soviet style, totalitarian, one party state. The Resurgence party created a Central Committee and elected Hoveyda as the Secretary General of its Politburo. Nearly all members of the Majlis became members of the new party which significantly expanded state control of society. "The growth of the Resurgence party had two major repercussions: the intensification of state control over the salaried middle class, the urban working class, and the rural masses; and, for the first time in Iranian history, the systematic penetration of the state into the propertied middle class, especially the bazaars and the religious

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<sup>36</sup>Robert Graham, *Iran, the Illusion of Power*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p.131.

<sup>37</sup>Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I, the Confidential Diary of Iran's Royal Court, 1969-1977*, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1991), p. 100, 283, 329,

establishment."<sup>38</sup> By the mid 1970s, the Shah had cowed the competing institutions and was clearly in control all facets of domestic politics.

As the dominant force in policy making in Iran, the Shah personally directed the activities of his government. Marvin Zonis' empirical study on the political elite in Iran documents the divide and rule strategy that Mohammed Reza Shah employed to control the process.<sup>39</sup> By controlling appointment to key positions and utilizing parallel organizations to provide information and enact policy, the Shah was able to control the process as well as the substance of Iranian foreign policy. According to William Griffith, "The Shah is Iranian foreign policy, has been so since 1953, and will in all likelihood remain so as long as he reigns."<sup>40</sup> The translator and editor of Alam's diaries concurs:

Always keen to control foreign policy, from the late 1950s the Shah's interventions became increasingly frequent until he, not the government, became sole arbiter in diplomatic affairs. In the spring of 1969, for example, Iran came close to war with Iraq, yet the Shah notified his Prime Minister and the national defense council of these development only after the army had been fully mobilized.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Abrahamian, p. 442.

<sup>39</sup>Marvin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.80-113.

<sup>40</sup>William E. Griffith, "Iran's Foreign Policy in the Pahlavi Era", in *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, ed by George Lenczowski, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 385.

<sup>41</sup>Alinaghi Alikhani, "Introduction" in Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I, the Confidential Diary of Iran's Royal Court, 1969-1977*, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1991), p. 14.

Alam himself notes many occasions where the Shah personally conducts diplomacy, or prevents the traditional ministers and bureaucracy from doing so.<sup>42</sup> Alam also noted the bureaucratic inefficiency that resulted from the Shah's personal interference in the conduct of affairs: "Every minister and high official direct from His Imperial Majesty and the result is that individual details often fail to mesh with any overall framework...Occasionally one set of instructions contradicts another..."<sup>43</sup>

As his reign drew to an end, the Shah dominated domestic politics. Having risen from one who "cut little ice in Iranian politics"<sup>44</sup> to the supreme ruler of his country, the Shah overcame the persistent efforts of the competing interests of the government and the Majlis in foreign policy formulation. The overthrow of the Shah ended his personalized vision of foreign affairs.

## **B. THE POLITICAL ELITE**

Mohammed Reza Shah sat at the pinnacle of power in Pahlavi Iran and controlled entry into the political elite by his control of access to patronage and education. Beneath the Shah in this elite hierarchy, were the 63 members of the royal family and the wealthy aristocrats and entrepreneurs.

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<sup>42</sup>See for example Alam, p. 102, the Shah directs arms procurement, p. 155 diplomatic overtures to Kuwait, p. 357-8, forbidding Foreign Minister from contacting the Prime Minister.

<sup>43</sup>Alam, p. 190.

<sup>44</sup>Alikhani, p. 3.

Traditionally, the political elite of Iran consisted of the wealthy landowners. While wealth continued to play an important role in determining elite status under Mohammed Reza Shah, the importance of land ownership was reduced by his land reform measures of early 1960s. While some contend that "land reform has weakened and alienated a considerable part of the Shah's traditional allies: the landlords."<sup>45</sup> Zonis argued that the loss of this base of support was unimportant to the Shah. While land reform removed one traditional source of elite wealth, access to opportunities to invest in the rapidly expanding manufacturing sector, as well as access to sources of patronage, more than made up for the loss of agricultural income. Access to these sources of wealth were controlled by the regime. Membership in the political elite was thus more subject to regime control than previously, when it relied on land ownership. By the mid 1970s the upper class of Iran consisted of approximately 1000 families which not only still owned a substantial amount of large commercial farms, but 85 percent of the major private manufacturing, foreign trade and financial firms.<sup>46</sup>

A secondary base for access to elite membership in Pahlavi Iran, was education. This source of political elite was also subject to regime control. While traditionally, Iranian education was conducted by the religious sector, a

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<sup>45</sup>Hossein Mahdavy, "The Coming Crisis in Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, Oct 1965, p. 142, quoted in Zonis, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup>Abrahamian, p. 432.

large modern educational sector under the control of the ministry of education was established under Reza Shah and expanded during the reign of his son. By 1946, the last time a census of traditional schools was reported, less than ten percent of the students attended the traditional religious schools.<sup>47</sup> The regime deliberately limited access to university education to "students 'who had the most at stake' in maintaining the present system."<sup>48</sup> The political elite of the 1950s were thus able to ensure the continued elite status of their children through access to educational opportunities at home and abroad. Through regime control of these elite power bases, Mohammed Reza Shah sought to maintain support for his reign.

### C. IDEOLOGY

Two themes dominate the ideology of Mohammed Reza Shah, nationalism and modernization. The nationalist trend permeated the Shah's foreign policy efforts to assert Iranian independence. Even his alignment with the west was a result of his perception that Iran was not strong enough to maintain its own sovereignty in the face of Soviet expansionism. While some scholars extol the virtues of Mossadegh's nationalist efforts, Lenczowski argues that "It was the Shah's regime that was par excellence a nationalist one because the Shah tried to safeguard Iran's independence and integrity against what he

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<sup>47</sup>Zonis, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup>Zonis, p. 37.

saw as a greater danger, namely the very real threat of Soviet imperialism rather than the imaginary threat of American or British imperialism."<sup>49</sup> Even in his western orientation, the Shah continued to exercise limited independence from the U.S., making initiatives to the Soviets when it served Iranian interests, as in his purchase of \$100 million of Soviet arms in 1967.

Modernization was also a key element in the Shah's strategy, indeed, he was almost obsessed with it. "Today we have far to go to catch up, and it is not merely enough to 'catch up'...we also need to adapt." "My father was never satisfied with the pace of modernization and neither am I."<sup>50</sup> This obsession increased following the dramatic rise in oil prices in the early 1970s. Some theorists, especially the Shah's supporters, have argued that it was the pace of modernization that ultimately led to the revolution which ended his reign.<sup>51</sup> Through modernization, the Shah hoped to achieve a "Great Civilization" which would "have meant that Iran had become a prosperous industrialized and welfare state, and a formidable world economic and military power in its own right..."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Lenczowski, p. 469.

<sup>50</sup>Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, *Mission For My Country*, (London: Hutchinson of London, p. 1960), p. 132 & 139.

<sup>51</sup>Abrahamian, p. 426.

<sup>52</sup>Amin Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 137.



## D. CONCLUSION

The competition between the institutions of the government, the Majlis and the Shah ended in a victory for the Shah, who completely dominated domestic politics by the mid 1970s. This dominance also extended to the political elite which the Shah influenced through his control of access to patronage and education. The regime's ideology was based on the Shah's unique personal blend of nationalization and modernization. The Shah's pervasive influence over every facet of the internal attributes of Iran would lead state level theorists to expect very different behavior from the revolutionary regime which violently overthrew the ailing monarch.

#### IV. INTERNAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

The government of the Islamic Republic was a radical departure from the government of Mohammed Reza Shah. All of the internal attributes that state level theorists argue are decisive in formulating foreign policy changed; the domestic politics changed, the political leadership changed and the regime's ideology changed. This chapter examines these internal characteristics of Khomeini's regime in order to contrast these attributes with those of the Shah.

##### A. DOMESTIC POLITICS

Mohammed Reza Shah was deposed when his opponents, reflecting the full spectrum of political beliefs and social classes, united in a coalition to end reign of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran. Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini emerged as the only political figure with a national following. His quest to establish his version of an Islamic Republic dominated domestic politics in Iran until his death in 1989. Competition between the various governmental and extra-governmental institutions, spawned by the revolution, inhibited the effective formulation of policy in the new regime. According to the state level theorists, the strife that characterized domestic politics following the establishment of the Islamic Republic should have played an important role in the foreign policy of the new regime.

## 1. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of Iran.

Following his return to Iran, Khomeini quickly demonstrated his supreme authority by appointing Mehdi Bazargan as the Prime Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Iran (PRG). With the dissolution of the Majlis, Bazargan and his cabinet represented the only legitimate branch of government. Bazargan's government was made up of politicians who had actively opposed the Shah. Clerics and members of the Tudeh party were conspicuous by their absence from this first attempt to govern the new republic.<sup>53</sup>

Bazargan was a nationalist, formerly a member of the National Front. In foreign policy he preferred a moderate non-alignment policy very similar to that of his former colleague, Mossadegh. This policy would avoid dependence on great powers while maintaining good relations with all states, especially in the developing world. Although concerned about the pervasive negative influence of the U.S., Bazargan was more fearful of the Soviet threat:

Like most Iranian nationalists of both secular and Islamic variety, however, Bazargan and his colleagues were apprehensive about the Soviet Union, given its proximity. They wanted to maintain good relations with the West to balance Soviet power.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>David Menashri, *Iran, a Decade of Revolution*, (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1990), p. 78, see also Shaul Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs, Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1986), p. 54.

<sup>54</sup>Hunter, p. 109.

While Bazargan's PRG represented the only "legitimate" source of political power in Iran, real power, however, was dispersed between many extra-governmental institutions. The Revolutionary Council was established prior to the Shah's abdication, and was intended as a transition team to effect a smooth transfer between the former and the revolutionary regime. This council remained in place following the establishment of Bazargan's Provisional Government and acted as a secret "supergovernment" running parallel agencies of its own. The Revolutionary Council engaged in its own foreign policy, instructing the Iranian ambassador to the U.S. to conduct certain negotiations without notifying the Foreign Ministry.<sup>55</sup> The two institutions had contradicting foreign policy goals. While Bazargan wished to conduct traditional diplomacy, the Revolutionary Council was committed to withdrawing from the international system:

Bazargan wanted envoys skilled in diplomacy or, at a minimum, seasoned in politics and international affairs. The Revolutionary Council, however, preferred ideologues who were prepared, if necessary, to defy international convention.<sup>56</sup>

The Revolutionary Council was not the only institution interfering in the attempts of the PRG to govern Iran. *Komitehs*, the revolutionary committees that sprang up in virtually every city, town, industry and district, were instrumental in organizing collective action against the Shah

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<sup>55</sup>Menashri, p. 82.

<sup>56</sup>Robin Wright, *In the Name of God, The Khomeini Decade*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 67.

during the revolution. With the fall of the Shah, thousands of small arms fell into the hands of the *komitehs* which served as local security forces and agents of the revolution, prison guards and executioners.<sup>57</sup> Many of the *komitehs* were subordinate and loyal to local clerics and political leaders. In Tehran alone, there were an estimated 1,500 *komitehs* in 1979. Gaining control of these autonomous agencies preoccupied the Bazargan government for the duration of its reign. The Provisional Government never presented a serious threat to the power of these institutions.

In an attempt to gain control over the *komitehs* and as a counter to the regular armed forces, whose loyalty was unproven, Khomeini established the Revolutionary Guards (*Pasdarán*) in May, 1979. The *Pasdarán* was under control of the Revolutionary Council and often worked counter to the efforts of the PRG. The *Pasdarán* was often employed to suppress domestic opposition in regions where the regular army was reluctant to engage the "enemy". The *Pasdarán* was instrumental in subduing the Kurdish and Arab revolts.<sup>58</sup>

The fear of a counter-revolution and the desire to punish member's of the Shah's repressive regime led to the establishment of a system of Revolutionary Courts. These courts had the cooperation of the *komitehs* and the Revolutionary Guards. Like the other revolutionary extra-governmental

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<sup>57</sup>Bakhash, p. 56-57.

<sup>58</sup>Menashri, p. 90-92.

institutions, the Revolutionary Courts were independent of government and even the Revolutionary Council. The first courts were established in Tehran, but were quickly copied in the other major cities. While these courts were certainly effective at eliminating members of the former regime, they obstructed the progress of the governments reconstruction efforts. Bazargan attempted to assume the authority of these courts by establishing a counter-revolutionary court system under the control of the Ministry of Justice. The government passed these measures but the Revolutionary Courts refused to abdicate their role as long as they maintained Khomeini's confidence. While Bazargan was successful in obtaining the Imam's support in reducing the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts, he lacked the means to enforce these limits.<sup>59</sup> The courts continued dispensing their version of Islamic justice long after the fall of the PRG.

As noted above, Khomeini was the supreme authority appointing Bazargan to head the PRG and creating and supporting the various non-governmental agencies. While he did act as an arbiter between the government and the extra-governmental institutions, Khomeini was reluctant to give his unqualified support to either faction. Despite Bazargan's limited effectiveness and dwindling popular support, Khomeini refused to accept his resignation on several occasions during his tenure as Prime Minister.

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<sup>59</sup>Bakhash, p. 60.

It was a foreign policy initiative that hastened the downfall of the PRG. On November 1, 1979, Bazargan attended a meeting with Brzezinski in Algiers to address the future of U.S.-Iranian relations. Despite receiving a mandate from the Revolutionary Council to conduct the meeting, Bazargan became the personal target of the public wrath for meeting with the "Great Satan" while the Shah was admitted to a U.S. hospital for cancer treatment. Immediately following the ensuing hostage crisis, Khomeini accepted Bazargan's resignation and appointed the Revolutionary Council to manage affairs until the establishment of formal government institutions. The winner of the first round in this competition in domestic politics was clearly the parallel government as opposed to the "legitimate" government institutions.

## **2. The Bani-Sadr Presidency.**

The hostage crisis that hastened the fall of the Bazargan government also mobilized support for the rule of clerics in the newly established republic. One month after the occupation of the U.S. embassy, in a massive show of support, the country approved the new Constitution, confirming Khomeini's role as *vilyate-e-faqih*. The election for the first president was set for January 25, 1980. Although confirmed by the plebiscite for the constitution, Khomeini was apparently still reluctant to sanction the dominant role of the clerics in the new order; Khomeini precluded mullahs from

competing in this election.<sup>60</sup> Abol-Hassan Bani-Sadr, a persistent opponent of the Shah with close personal ties to Khomeini- one of the few to accompany Khomeini on his triumphant return from exile- won the presidency with over 75% of the popular vote. Bani-Sadr mistakenly believed that this vote gave him a popular mandate to pursue his program. Like Bazargan, Bani-Sadr was a westernized nationalist. Born the son of an Ayatollah, his close ties to Khomeini led him to express a more activist non-aligned party than that of the PRG, "especially in the service of Islamic causes."<sup>61</sup> Bani-Sadr was also more concerned with the threat of the Soviet Union, whose forces invaded Afghanistan in the fall of 1979, and thus favored "reasonable" ties with the west. The competition between Bani-Sadr and first the Revolutionary Council, and later, prime minister Rajai, constrained the implementation of his views. Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh reported in May, 1980, that Iran did not have a foreign policy, complaining that " a certain amount of demagoguery, simple-mindedness and naivete (in the Revolutionary Council) has *totally paralyzed* our foreign policy".<sup>62</sup>

Khomeini initially supported Bani-Sadr, confirming his election as president and appointing him the head of the armed forces. Foreshadowing the coming rivalry, however, the Revolutionary Council prevented Bani-Sadr

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<sup>60</sup>Wright, p. 88.

<sup>61</sup>Hunter, p. 110.

<sup>62</sup>Menashri, p. 152, original emphasis.



from establishing his cabinet until the completion of the Majlis elections later that spring. The clerics were allowed to participate in the parliamentary elections and the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), the bastion of the mullahs, won the largest number of seats, capturing control of 47% of the Majlis. While the IRP was clearly the dominant force in the first Majlis, even it was racked with factionalism and competition.<sup>63</sup> The Majlis did, however, present a more or less united front in the struggle for power it engaged in with the President. As noted above, the formation of the government provided the initial issue of debate. Bani-Sadr selected Mostafa Mir-Salim from a list of candidates approved by the Majlis as his choice for prime minister. Mir-Salim was opposed by the Revolutionary Guards and the *komitehs* due to his criticism of the level of violence utilized in the suppression of a *Mojahedine* rally. These institutions compelled the Majlis to block Mir-Salim's confirmation, despite its earlier support. Bani-Sadr opposed the Majlis choice, Mohammed-Ali Raja'i, but as the summer drew on, he bowed to the continuing Majlis pressure and accepted his nomination. The president and the prime minister continued to struggle for control of the government through the appointment of the remaining cabinet members. This competition waged from Raja'i's appointment in August 1980 and was not resolved by the time Bani-Sadr was

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<sup>63</sup> Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the revolution*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.), p. 68-70.

removed from the presidency in June 1981.<sup>64</sup> This power struggle paralyzed foreign policy formulation as long as Bani-Sadr remained in power.

In addition to competition from the Majlis, the government and Revolutionary Council, Bani-Sadr had to contend with the Students Following the Imam's Line (SFIL) who were occupying the American embassy and using captured documents to discredit government officials who opposed their goals. Shortly after the occupation of the U.S. embassy, while serving as Foreign Minister, Bani-Sadr's mission to the U.N. to publicize Iran's grievances against the U. S. was blocked by opposition factions in the Revolutionary Council.<sup>65</sup> His attempts, as president, to pursue a negotiated settlement were blocked when Khomeini ruled that only the Majlis-yet to be elected- could address the issue. The SFIL turned the embassy compound into their personal territory, denying access to government and foreign negotiators. "On a critical issue of foreign policy, the government had lost its freedom of action."<sup>66</sup>

The importance of the hostage crisis was rapidly overshadowed by Saddam Hussein's invasion on 22 September, 1980. The rivalry between the president and the prime minister was exacerbated by the war. Bani-Sadr was appointed as the Commander in Chief of the regular armed forces, whose leadership and readiness were decimated by the post-revolutionary purges.

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<sup>64</sup>Bakhash, p. 105-110.

<sup>65</sup>Zabih, p. 55.

<sup>66</sup>Bakhash, p. 114.

Nearly 8,000 officers had been dismissed and many units were only 25% operational.<sup>67</sup> The Prime minister and the IRP maintained control of the revolutionary Guards, which were considered more reliable and had gained experience in the campaign against the Kurds. The Revolutionary Guards were often deployed at the rear of the regular forces in order to prevent army retreat rather than to attack Iraqi forces. Although the president had been granted broad powers to prosecute the war, the prime minister actively opposed his efforts and gained control of foreign and domestic policy formulation. He personally represented Iran at a meeting of the UN Security Council and prevented Bani-Sadr from sending his representative. He steadily gained control of the decision making process, implementing government decrees without the president's approval, blocking presidential appointees from departing on foreign missions, and seizing the initiative in the hostage negotiations.<sup>68</sup>

Bani-Sadr appealed to Khomeini for support in his efforts to seek the resignation of the government. The *faqih* refused to take sides in the dispute instead recommending the creation of a three man commission to arbitrate affairs between the president and the government. Despite Khomeini's pleas for the two sides to cease airing their differences publicly, both parties continued their attacks. As the government moved to restrict his

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<sup>67</sup>Bakhash, p. 114 and 127.

<sup>68</sup>Bakhash, p. 130.

powers, Bani-Sadr continued to demand the dismissal of government. In June, 1981, the three man commission ruled that Bani-Sadr had acted against the constitution and against the wishes of Khomeini. The clerics successfully urged Khomeini to withdraw his support for the president; Bani-Sadr was dismissed and joined the ranks of the expatriate opposition groups. With the fall of Bani-Sadr, "both the appearance and the reality of power passed into the hands of the clerics, who were now free to concentrate on the program of Islamization and suppression of their enemies to impose their ideology and perpetuate their rule."<sup>69</sup>

Presidential elections were scheduled one month after the dismissal of Bani-Sadr. Of the 71 potential presidential candidates, only the four candidates which were IRP members were approved by the Council of Guardians.<sup>70</sup> Raja'i was elected and Mohammed Bahonar, co-founder of the IRP, was confirmed as Prime Minister. This government was short-lived as both Raja'i and Bahonar perished when a powerful bomb exploded during a meeting in the prime minister's office. Khomeini abandoned attempts to exclude clerics from the role of president and supported Ali Khameni'hi's bid for the presidency.

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<sup>69</sup>Menashri, p. 183.

<sup>70</sup>The Council of Guardians consisted of six clerics appointed by Khomeini and six Muslim jurists selected by the Majlis, which was dominated by the IRP, see Menashri, p. 117, also see note in Wright, p. 101.

### 3. The Consolidation of Clerical Power.

With the election of Khameni'hi, the sole surviving co-founder and leader of the IRP, as president, and the appointment of Mir Husayn Musavi as Prime minister, the clerics were clearly in charge of domestic politics. Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected as the speaker of the Majlis and became a powerful political figure in both the Majlis and the IRP. Ideological differences still occurred, but these differences were confined to varying interpretations of clerical rule; those opposed to clerical rule were suppressed.<sup>71</sup>

The competition for influence continued between the clerics ruling the Islamic Republic. Echoing the situation prevalent under the Shah, the competition now focused around the official government institutions. Following his re-election in 1985, Khameni'hi desired to nominate one of his own followers to the position of prime minister. Khomeini apparently had misgivings about Musavi's previous performance and gave him only lukewarm support; just enough to ensure his nomination and confirmation as prime minister. The Majlis served as an important forum for debate on the composition of the cabinet and approved the composition of the government only after appeals from the Imam that further delay would "harm Islam."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>See Menashri, p. 223 for a description of the basic difference between the two main factions in the Majlis: the Maktabi and the Hujjatiyyah.

<sup>72</sup>Menashri, p. 347.

Competition also waged between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians. In an attempt to fulfill their obligations to the *mostazafin*, the oppressed, the Majlis passed legislation redistributing land, creating a government monopoly on real estate transactions, nationalizing foreign trade, labor laws and providing for government control of health clinics. The more conservative Council blocked all of these measures as being contrary to the principles of Islam.<sup>73</sup>

Competition for influence also waged within the IRP. President Khameni'hi and Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani became the leaders of the two factions within the party. While both men continued to express their friendship and admiration for the other, basic differences in social and economic policy existed. Generally, Rafsanjani was more pragmatic in his views of economic and foreign affairs. By 1984, these differences had begun to impair the functioning of the IRP and had, by 1985, led to deep divisions within the party. These party rivalries carried over into parliamentary politics. Three of the most important cabinet posts (oil, interior and foreign affairs) were held by men loyal to President Khameni'hi who did not cooperate with the prime minister and impaired the functioning of his government.<sup>74</sup>

Khomeini took action to resolve the issues surrounding these power struggles. In response to a June, 1987 letter from both Rafsanjani and

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<sup>73</sup>Wright, p. 172 and Menashri, p. 224.

<sup>74</sup>Menashri, p. 307-309 and 350-352.

Khameni'hi, Ayatollah Khomeini dissolved the IRP stating that the party had fulfilled its mission to consolidate the institutions of the Islamic Republic, and thus was no longer necessary.<sup>75</sup> While this measure quieted the public debate by removing the forum for discussion, it did not address the nature of the differences between the opposing factions.

In late 1987 and early 1988, Khomeini moved to resolve the power struggle between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians. In 1987, Khomeini urged the Council to approve the Majlis legislation. In February, 1988, he empowered the politicians by ruling that if an impasse between the two institutions should develop, it could be resolved through a commission consisting of the six theologians in the council and six leading politicians. A majority vote of this commission would be binding on both institutions.

Shortly before his death in 1989, Khomeini moved to eliminate the rivalry between the president and the prime minister. In an effort to clarify certain constitutional questions, centering mainly around the issue of his succession, Khomeini sanctioned a commission to study the constitution and recommend changes. The issues under consideration were: the qualifications of leadership, the division of executive power and finally, the composition of the judiciary. This commission would make recommendations which would be submitted for public approval through a referendum.

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<sup>75</sup>Wright, p. 162.

The qualifications of the *faqih*, according to the 1979 constitution required candidates for the supreme office to be a source of emulation, a *marja-e-taqlid*. In 1989, of the clergy that met this requirement, "none had the physical strength, personal inclination or *political acceptability* to become the supreme religious leader."<sup>76</sup> The commission resolved this issue by changing the requirement so that religious leaders that had the potential to become a *marja-e-taqlid* were also eligible to serve as the supreme leader. Through this action, the constitution enhanced the political aspect of the leader's role and diminished the religious aspect.

The second issue directly addressed the intra-government competition between the president and prime minister. The role of the prime minister was abolished, but the Majlis' ability to check the president's power was enhanced by making the president subject to questioning by the Majlis. If the president's response to this questioning was unsatisfactory, the Majlis would have the right to appeal to the leader to dismiss him. The constitutional reforms also made the Majlis subject to dissolution by the leader under certain conditions.

Other constitutional reforms provided for the election of a *mujtahid*, "well versed in judiciary affairs"<sup>77</sup> as the head of the judicial branch, the appointment of a vice president and the creation of a Supreme National

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<sup>76</sup>Hunter, p. 25, emphasis added.

<sup>77</sup>quoted in Hunter, p. 32.



Security Council to assist the president in the administration of his government.

While these reforms served to strengthen the political institutions of the government of the Islamic republic, they did not end the competition between the different factions of the leadership. This competition continued long after the death of the founder of the Islamic Republic. Despite his efforts to centralize the government under his personal direction, Khomeini never succeeded in ending the competition within his regime that dominated domestic politics during the first decade of the Islamic Republic.

## B. POLITICAL ELITE IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

Much of the leadership that initially supported the revolution were members of the political elite under the Shah's regime. With the fall of PRG under Bazargan, many of these former elites fled. "Within one year, almost all of the revolutionary leaders who could be considered part of the old elite had been pushed outside the revolution."<sup>78</sup> This elite was replaced by a new elite consisting of clerics and highly religious laymen.

At the pinnacle of political power, of course, was the *vilyate-e-faqih*, Ayatollah Khomeini. As the political leader, he appointed the commander in chief of the army, important elements of the Council of Guardians and the

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<sup>78</sup>Richard Cottam, "Inside Revolutionary Iran", in *Iran's Revolution, the Search For Consensus*, ed. by R.K. Ramazani, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 4.

judiciary, and representatives to virtually any government department. As the religious leader, Khomeini appointed the Friday prayer leaders in all of the important cities and towns. "As Khomeini's personal representatives, the Friday prayer leaders in the major cities often overshadowed the authority of the provincial governors"<sup>79</sup>

Elected officials also reflected the emergence of a clerical elite. Although Khomeini initially opposed the participation of clerics in presidential elections, he reversed himself following the fall of President Bani-Sadr, which eventually led to the election of Ayatollah Khameni'hi. Majlis elections were dominated by the new elite from the start. The election for the first Majlis was supervised by the Minister of the Interior, headed by an Ayatollah, which announced that "all candidates 'should believe in Islamic teaching."<sup>80</sup> These elections were a clear victory for the clerics as the IRP and members of its "Grand Coalition" gained control of 130 of the 270 Majlis seats, the largest of any block in the parliament. The IRP next sought to control the government, succeeding in imposing its choice for prime minister on the president. Bani-Sadr was initially successful in blocking IRP control of the cabinet, but with his fall the new elite was in total control of all branches of government in the Islamic Republic.

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<sup>79</sup>Bakhash, p. 244.

<sup>80</sup>Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani, supervisor of the Ministry of Interior, explaining his overturning of the guidelines previously established by the election law which would have allowed Marxists candidates. Quoted in Menashri, p. 124.

Control of the extra-governmental organizations was almost exclusively in the hands of the clerics, which, as noted above acted autonomous of government control. In addition to these extra-governmental revolutionary organizations which were controlled by the clerics and religious laymen, the leaders of the traditional bureaucracy were stripped away and these positions were filled with supporters of the Islamic Republic, often members of the IRP. The revolutionary regime thus created a new administrative elite who owed their advancement to the revolution."<sup>81</sup> The wealthy, educated elite of the Pahlavi regime was quickly replaced by a group of clerical elites that were fundamentally different in the Islamic Republic.

### C. IDEOLOGY

The ideological view of the Islamic republic Iran was almost exclusively formulated by its *faqih*, Ayatollah Khomeini. In his view, the world is divided into oppressors and the oppressed. The U.S. and the Soviet Union were clearly the leading oppressors and divided the world between their capitalist and socialist views. The world was also divided into "those who follow the 'right path,' the 'path of God and belief' and those who follow the 'corrupt path,' the 'path of Satan and disbelief'"<sup>82</sup> This led to Khomeini's support for a "neither east nor west" policy. This policy exceeded normal tenets of non-

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<sup>81</sup>Bakhash, p. 245.

<sup>82</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 37.

alignment and deliberately sought international isolation. This isolation was a goal to be sought, not a sanction to be feared: "We are not frightened by isolation; rather, isolation should be welcomed because it forces us to think about our own affairs... even an economic blockade could only be regarded as a gift."<sup>83</sup>

In Khomeini's view, only Iran was non-aligned; only the Islamic Republic was based on the true faith of Islam. Because of Iran's singular place in international affairs, Khomeini believed it must assume the responsibility for exporting its revolution to save oppressed peoples everywhere. Iran attempted to encourage all third world nations to seek their own independence by severing ties to the superpowers. Khomeini also sought to promote unity in the Muslim. This unity could not take place, however, as long as the current oppressive regimes continued to dominate the Islamic world. This belief led to support for efforts to export the Islamic Revolution to the neighboring Muslim countries. There was debate within the government throughout the years as to means by which this exportation was to occur. Some argued that Iran should strive to be an example for the oppressed peoples of its neighboring states to model themselves after, while others argued for a more activist, interventionist type of revolution export.

This vision of international relations dominated the foreign policy establishment. Those favoring normal relations with the west departed with

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<sup>83</sup>Ayatollah Khomeini, quoted in Menashri, p. 203.

the fall of Bani-Sadr. While earlier, Iranian foreign policy had been paralyzed by the internal power struggles within the Iranian leadership, after the fall of Bani-Sadr, Iranian foreign policy was paralyzed by Khomeini's views on isolationism.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Following the Islamic revolution in 1979, there was a radical change in the nature of the internal attributes in Iran. Domestic politics was dominated by the Shah from the early 1960s until the end of his regime. He controlled the political party which determined candidates for Majlis elections. He controlled appointment of the prime minister and the cabinet. Senior military and ministry officials reported directly to him. He had parallel security organizations and established a special agency under the control of his supposedly loyal, personal friend, Fardoust, to monitor the activities of other agencies.

The political elite in the Pahlavi regime consisted of wealthy, educated aristocrats and entrepreneurs. The Shah controlled access to this elite through his control of sources of patronage and entry to advanced education.

Following the downfall of the Shah, domestic politics was dominated by the struggle to achieve power in the post-revolutionary regime. This struggle was initially waged between the nationalist and clerical factions of the Government, between the provisional government and the extra-government

revolutionary organizations. With the approval of the Constitution the struggle shifted to control of the executive branch, with the revolutionary agencies still causing problems for the administration. Even after the consolidation of clerical power, factions of the ruling clique were divided over the role of the private and the public sector. This divisiveness eventually led to the disintegration of the Islamic Republican Party, a long time bastion of clerical power. Through all of these struggles, Ayatollah Khomeini served the role of arbiter, maintaining a balance between these factions and avoiding open conflict within his regime.

The political elite in the Islamic Republic consisted of clerics and religious lay people. Entry into the elite was controlled by the clerics' control of the Council of Guardians which determined the suitability of candidates for government office and through Khomeini's authority to appoint individuals to government positions. The ideology changed from the Shah's western oriented , modernizing nationalism to Khomeini's non-aligned efforts to export the Islamic revolution and free the oppressed peoples of the world. All of these attributes, that the state level theorists argue are decisive in the formulation of foreign policy, changed radically. As noted above, however, the international system did not change as result of the Islamic revolution. The next section will examine the conduct of foreign policy in both regimes to demonstrate that these internal factors had little impact, and that it was systemic forces which played the decisive role on the actual conduct of Iranian foreign policy.

## V. FOREIGN POLICY CONDUCT

Despite the very different nature of domestic politics, political elite and regime ideology, both Pahlavi and Islamic Iran faced a similar international and regional balances of power. This similar structure imposed similar constraints on the foreign policy of both regimes. Although the revolutionary regime which supplanted the Pahlavi regime attempted to withdraw from international politics, it quickly was socialized by, and became an active participant in, the international system. This chapter focuses on some of the issues that the two regimes faced in order illustrate the impact that systemic and domestic factors have on state behavior in international politics.

### A. RELATIONS WITH THE SUPERPOWERS

The foreign policy of Iran has long been preoccupied with its relations with the United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, R.K. Ramazani defines the eras of Iranian foreign policy in terms of its relations with the superpowers. According to Ramazani, the central objective of foreign policy under the Shah was the pursuit of national autonomy.<sup>84</sup> Ramazani defines autonomy as the optimization of freedom of action in the international system. While the Shah became committed to serving U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf,

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<sup>84</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, On the issue of autonomy, see introduction, p. 10-14, on the use of foreign policy strategies, see ch. I, VIII, XI and XIII.

even these efforts served to expand Iran's regional influence. The Shah was willing to exploit the U.S. preoccupation with the Soviet threat in order to obtain U.S. aid and arms in pursuit of Iran's regional ambitions. The strategies that Pahlavi Iran utilized in the pursuit of this national autonomy were clearly driven by systemic factors. They were: Third Power strategy, Negative Equilibrium, Positive Nationalism and Independent National Policy. This goal of national autonomy continued to drive Iranian foreign policy, even after the revolution.

### 1. The Monarchy and the Superpowers.

Following World War II, Iran was at the mercy of the occupying powers and sought to use the U.S. as a third power counter to Soviet and British influence, much as Reza Shah had attempted to exploit ties to Germany in the inter-war period. The U.S., committed to rebuilding war torn Europe, while supportive of the young monarch was not as enthusiastic as Tehran in developing close ties. Tehran solicited at least \$250 million in loans and grants, while Washington was willing to provide only a tenth of that amount.

The early fifties saw the rise of the contentious issue of oil nationalization promoted by the charismatic Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. Mossadegh supported a policy of negative equilibrium to replace the Shah's efforts to engage the American in his third party strategy. Although initially sympathetic to Iranian nationalization efforts, as the crisis developed, the United States sided more and more with Great Britain: "as the East-West



cold was developed ... the resultant bipolar international system did not allow much divergence of approach between the United States and Britain on matters of common concern...<sup>8586</sup> As relations with Great Britain and the west became more strained and the Iranian economy deteriorated, the threat of a communist takeover appeared to be real. Mossadegh was unable to play the off United States against Great Britain so he attempted to play the Soviet Union off against both western countries. This miscalculation led to the downfall of the Mossadegh regime and the end of Iran's policy of negative equilibrium.

Once the Shah returned to power in 1953, the Shah abandoned Mossadegh's attempts at negative equilibrium and adopted "positive nationalism" which basically meant a tactical, temporary, alignment with the west.<sup>87</sup> This time the Americans responded and provided an initial \$60 million of emergency aid to Iran's economy and an additional \$120 million once the oil crisis was resolved. The Shah adhered to the Baghdad pact and visibly supported the Eisenhower doctrine. Although disappointed that the U.S. failed to participate in the Baghdad pact, Tehran did sign a bilateral executive agreement with Washington which pledged American economic and military assistance.

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<sup>85</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 245-246.

<sup>86</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 245-246.

<sup>87</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 260.

Iranian policy towards the Soviet Union in this period was one of "resistance if necessary, reconciliation if possible."<sup>88</sup> In the mid 1950s, the Shah visited the Soviet Union and the two nations signed a settlement of their persistent boundary dispute. The Soviets opposed Iranian efforts to align with the west and offered to abrogate the nefarious provisions of the 1921 friendship treaty providing for Soviet occupation of Iran in certain conditions, if Iran would withdraw from the Baghdad Pact.

The changing nature of the international system in the 1960s led to a change from the policy of alliance with the west to one of "independent national policy." The Shah viewed the growing detente between The U.S. and the Soviet Union as "both a danger and an opportunity."<sup>89</sup> The Sino-Soviet split reduced the threat of "monolithic" international communism. The failure of the U. S. to support CENTO ally Pakistan in its conflict with India and the growing U.S. involvement in Vietnam reduced the value of America as an ally against regional and Soviet aggression. As oil revenues increased, Iran became less dependent on American aid and gained more autonomy in its foreign affairs. Domestically, the resurgence of the National Front led to calls for a more non-aligned foreign policy. In the early sixties, the Soviets reduced their support for the Shah's internal opponents, giving him more latitude in domestic affairs. The Kennedy administration had been criticizing Iran for the

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<sup>88</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 291.

<sup>89</sup>Griffith, p. 375.

pursuing a larger military force while neglecting socio-economic development. These pressures, facilitated by better relations with the Soviets enabled the Shah to consolidate his power and initiate the White Revolution.

The Shah's "independent national policy has been interpreted as a major shift in the thrust of his foreign policy. Ramazani argues that this is exaggerated. As the international system moved from active containment to detente, the Shah exploited this opportunity to expand Iranian freedom of action. During his earlier, "positive nationalism" phase, the Shah had clearly taken advantage of periods of reduced tensions with the Soviets to obtain concessions. Iran's independent national policy never led its withdrawal from its alliance with the west.<sup>90</sup> The orientation of the Shah's foreign policy did not change under independent national policy, only some of the details of its implementation.

The Kennedy administration had fundamentally different view than the Shah, of the nature of the threat to Iranian security. The Shah was convinced that the threat derived from the Soviet Union and its support for regional powers such as Iraq and Nasser's United Arab Republic. Washington on the other hand, viewed threats to the Pahlavi dynasty as deriving from internal sources, susceptible to communist subversion due to the lack of progress in socio-economic reforms. The U.S. suspended its \$30 million annual subsidy of the Iranian budget in 1962.

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<sup>90</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 31.

The 1960s saw the rapid increase in oil revenues and by 1967, the United States had suspended military and economic aid to Iran. Military aid became military sales. While the U.S., as a weapons supplier, retained some leverage in Tehran, it was much less than it had enjoyed as a provider of military aid.

Following the Shah's White Revolution, the Johnson administration demonstrated its approval of the Shah's reforms by approving a \$200 million Iranian military acquisition plan. Despite this high level support, the Pentagon continued to block the sale of advanced technology and front line fighter aircraft to Iran. This opposition to modern weapons sales evaporated, however, following Iran's 1967-68 agreement to purchase military equipment from the Soviet Union, illustrating again, the impact of systemic factors. The subsequent sale of two squadrons of F-4 Phantom fighters was financed through the U.S. Department of Defense through Import-Export Bank.

The Shah was even more successful in implementing the modernization of his armed forces following the 1968 announcement of British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf. Arguing that it would be "unfair" for troubled nations to cable Washington for assistance, the Shah proposed western support for a massive improvement in the capability of the Iranian armed forces. The Great Britain and the U.S. backed the Iranian buildup as an alternative to continued British or increased American presence in the region. Iran was an ideal candidate for implementation of Kissinger's plan to build up

"regional superpowers" so U.S. intervention would not be required. Iran spent \$2.5 billion in the first two years of the seventies, "paying cash for eight squadrons of F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers..."<sup>91</sup> The oil boom of 1973 led to even more military expenditures, with a 47% increase in the military budget from 1972-1973. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war and subsequent Arab oil boycott highlighted the importance of a stable pro-western regime in Tehran. In 1972, President Nixon removed all barriers to the Shah's purchase of advanced weapons and announced the U.S. dependence on the Twin Pillars of Iran and Saudi Arabia to maintain Persian Gulf security.<sup>92</sup> The Nixon Doctrine cemented the military alliance between Iran and the U.S.

The principle component of the Shah's independent national policy was the temporary end of his estrangement from the Soviet Union. Normalization of relations occurred after the Soviets accepted Iran's pledge of no American missile bases on Iranian soil in 1962. An earlier attempt at rapprochement between the two nations were stalled as a result of the Soviet Union's refusal, in 1958-1959 to accept Iran's definition of military bases. The Soviet Union accepted this definition in 1962 for two reasons. At the systemic level, relations between the superpowers had noticeably warmed since 1958

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<sup>91</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 369.

<sup>92</sup>Roger M. Savory, "Religious Dogma and the Economic and Political Imperatives of Iranian Foreign Policy", in *Iran at the Crossroads, Global Relations in Turbulent Decade*, ed. by Miron Rezun, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 48.

illustrated by signing of the limited nuclear test ban treaty in 1962. This easing of superpower tensions gave the Shah more leeway in his dealings with the Soviet Union. Additionally, American technological advances had made its intermediate range nuclear missiles obsolete. The Polaris ballistic missile submarine system became operational in 1961 and provided "a much better retaliatory force"<sup>93</sup> than the vulnerable land based missiles. Indeed, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, president Kennedy was distressed to discover that the U.S. Jupiter missiles had not already been dismantled as directed.<sup>94</sup> These factors enabled Iran to make a no missile pledge and led to Soviet acceptance of this overture which promoted better relations between the neighbors.

Iran sought better relations with the Soviets in order to obtain leverage with its increasingly reluctant ally, the U.S. Relations between the Iran and the U.S. had deteriorated to the point that in 1960 the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that the U.S. was "cultivate(ing) the opposition parties there (Iran) in hope of taking out diplomatic insurance in case of an overthrow of the present regime."<sup>95</sup> As noted above, the Kennedy administration discouraged military spending in Iran, promoting socioeconomic reforms instead. Even after initiating the reforms of the White revolution, the U.S. was reluctant to provide the advanced equipment requested by the Shah until the

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<sup>93</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 319.

<sup>94</sup>Allison, p. 142.

<sup>95</sup>*Christian Science Monitor*, January 15, 1960, quoted in Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 319.

1967 agreement to purchase \$100 million of Soviet light arms, trucks and anti-aircraft guns. This, coupled with the withdrawal of the British from the gulf led to the U.S. decision to grant the Shah access to any western weapon system that he desired.

The first fruits of the 1962 missile pledge was a new trade agreement signed in June, 1964, which led to a five year trade agreement signed in 1965 and renewed again in 1970. Transit trade increased from less than \$100 million to over \$1 billion between 1967 and 1975.<sup>96</sup> In 1966, Iran signed the single most important economic agreement with the Soviets which led to the Soviet construction of Iran's Aryamihr steel mill and a gas pipeline between the two neighbors. In 1972, Iran and the Soviet Union signed a fifteen year treaty of economic and technical cooperation. By this time trade had increased by over 400 percent during the past five years. As with the United States, cultural and scientific exchanges increased during this phase of relaxed tensions. While this economic and cultural cooperation flourished, Iran continued to resist Soviet political pressure to sever its links to the west. The Soviets targeted Iran's membership in CENTO and Soviet propaganda highlighted the policy differences between Washington and Tehran. Moscow hoped that its arms sales to Iran would weaken its links to the U.S., but the Soviets were constrained in what they could sell to Iran by the regional balance of power. Iran sought Soviet surface to air missiles to defend

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<sup>96</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 331.

themselves from the advanced aircraft that the Soviets had provided to Iraq and the United Arab Republic. The interests of these Soviet allies precluded the sale of these missiles. The Soviet arms sales to Iran failed to drive a wedge between Iran and its western arms suppliers. Indeed, following this sale Washington was more willing to provide the levels of advanced arms that the Shah requested.

A second point of Soviet pressure was its efforts to encourage Iran to end its economic relation with western oil companies. The Soviets were aware of the volatility of the oil issue and hoped, with a little bit of pressure, to exploit this weakness. In 1972, Iraq broke with western oil interests, nationalized the industry and established the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). The Soviets encouraged Iran to follow this revolutionary example, asserting that nationalization would hasten Iranian economic development. In 1973, Iran informed the oil consortium that it would not renew the 1954 agreement when it was due to expire in 1979, Moscow viewed this as a victory for its interests. Iran, however, to Moscow's intense disappointment, remained committed to a continued relationship with the consortium and signed an agreement in which the consortium would become a long term purchaser of Iranian oil.

The most intense conflict between the two powers resulted from the 1968 British decision to end its presence in the Persian Gulf, effective in 1971. Following the British announcement, Tehran declared that Persian Gulf



defense responsibilities should be borne by the littoral states. While the Soviets went on the record supporting this view, they developed close ties with Tehran's bitter rivals in Baghdad. The Soviets cast themselves as the champion of the Arab revolutionary cause in the Persian Gulf area,<sup>97</sup> which put them on a collision course with Iran's Gulf policy. The Soviet support for the Dhofar rebellion led to armed conflict between the superpower's surrogates in the Persian Gulf.

Iran had pursued relations with the Soviet Union in part to obtain greater leverage with its American allies. By the middle of the 1970s, Iran had achieved all of the goals of its independent national policy: it was actively participating as the region's policeman in accordance with the Nixon doctrine, it had a free hand in purchasing whatever western arms it desired and it was pursuing rapid industrialization and modernization due to the meteoric rise in oil revenues. The loosening of tensions in the international system gave Iran the freedom to conduct trade and development projects with the Soviets, while at the same time acting in the interests of American in the Persian Gulf.

## **2. Islamic Iran and the Superpowers.**

Ayatollah Khomeini's foreign policy doctrine has frequently been characterized by the slogan, "neither east nor west," to indicate his intention to end the domination of superpower influence on Iran and his intention to

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<sup>97</sup> Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 349.

withdraw from the international system. Varying interpretation of this slogan by the different factions competing for influence in the revolutionary regime have impacted the nature of Iran's superpower relations.

Relations between the newly established Islamic Republic and the United States can initially be described as cautious. While the Bazargan administration withdrew from CENTO and cancelled the joint Iran-U.S. executive defense agreement, it attempted to "pursue a nonhostile, nonalignment policy toward the United States."<sup>98</sup> During the February seizure of the U.S. embassy, the government quickly asserted its authority and returned the embassy to U.S. control. U.S. support for the Shah was the chief cause for tension between the former allies; Iranian dependence on the U.S. for economic and military assistance was the chief cause for restraint these relations. In February, 1979, the Carter administration, declaring that it would "honor the will of the Iranian people," extended recognition to the Islamic Republic and withdrew its recognition of the Shah's government.<sup>99</sup> While Iran announced its intention to return American F-14 fighters to the U.S., it also negotiated new contracts for support for these and other advanced American aircraft. Tensions increased following the U.S. Senate's May condemnation of the excesses of the revolutionary courts. Relations deteriorated further in May

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<sup>98</sup>Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy, Contending Orientations", in *Iran's Revolution, the Search for Consensus*, ed. by Rouhollah K. Ramazani, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 51.

<sup>99</sup>Menashri, p. 97.

when the proposed U.S. Ambassador was rejected by Iran; Washington refused to nominate another candidate. Bazargan, believing that he had the Revolutionary Council's mandate to pursue relations with the U.S., met with Brzezinski in Algiers, leading to the end of his Provisional Government.<sup>100</sup>

The hostage crisis, which dominated Iranian and American Foreign policy for the next fourteen months, isolated Iran in the international community. Both superpowers were hesitant to intervene directly in Iranian affairs, which initially gave the revolutionary regime some freedom of action in its dealings with the superpowers. The U.S. feared that American intervention would trigger a Soviet invasion in accordance with the provisions of the 1921 friendship treaty. The Soviets feared that increased instability in Iran would lead to direct U.S. involvement. The U.S. quickly froze all Iranian assets, but maintained diplomatic relations until April, 1980, in an attempt to pursue a negotiated settlement. The Bani-Sadr administration supported a negotiated end to the crisis and sought to have custody of the hostages transferred from the students to the government. Khomeini exercised his authority and blocked these attempts. The SFIL blocked negotiation efforts and prevented United Nations delegations' access to the hostages that had been arranged by the Bani-Sadr government. The first Majlis of the new regime was seated in May and supported an end to the crisis, yet Khomeini

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<sup>100</sup>Bakhash, p. 70.

would not side with the government against the students.<sup>101</sup> While a motion to create a committee to address the hostage issue was passed in early September, 1980, no action was taken until after the Iraqi invasion of 22 September. Isolated in the international community and under concerted attack which threatened the Islamic Republic with extinction, Iran ended the hostage crisis, demonstrating that it was beginning the process of socialization to the international system.

Despite the end of the crisis, relations with the U.S. did not improve. The revolutionary regime continued to characterize America as the enemy and attacked America's alleged support for Iraq, the growing U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf, America's support for the Israel-Egyptian peace process and U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, these issues which represented a clear difference in the two states' national interest were cast in ideologic terms for the public and Khomeini vowed to fight "the Great Satan until the absolute annihilation of its interests (in that part of the world)."<sup>102</sup> Hunter reports that following the resolution of the hostage crisis, "the essence of Iranian policy toward the United States became defiance and challenge, and its principle goal the demonstration of U.S. impotence to stem the rising tide of Islam."<sup>103</sup> The end of the Bani-Sadr presidency and the violence that

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<sup>101</sup>Menashri, p. 150.

<sup>102</sup>Menashri, p. 205.

<sup>103</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran and the World, Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, (continued...)

characterized this period increased the tension between the U.S. and Iran. Its vituperative rhetoric toward the U.S. gave the appearance of a pro-Soviet tilt despite Iran's continued characterization of the Soviet Union as the "lesser Satan. These factors certainly affected the U.S.-British decision to provide Tehran with information on Soviet intelligence efforts in Iran obtained from Soviet defector, senior KGB official Vladimir Kuzichkin.<sup>104</sup> Some relations between Iran and the U.S. continued, however, as Iran attempted to pursue a financial settlement of its outstanding dispute with the U.S. in accordance with the Algiers Agreement. It also maintained commercial ties and sought American arms for use in its struggle against Iraq.

For its part, the U.S. remained officially neutral in the war between the Persian Gulf adversaries, but gradually began to tilt toward Iraq. With Iran's success in expelling Iraqi forces from its territory in 1982, the U.S. removed Iraq from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and permitted financial transactions to resume.<sup>105</sup> In response to the 1983 Iraqi initiated "tanker wars", Iran threatened to close the Straights of Hormuz to all shipping. The U.S. responded that it would use military force if necessary to maintain freedom of navigation in the straights. Whether due to U.S. threats or because its own oil revenues were dependent on traffic through the straights, Iran

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(...continued)

(Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 59.

<sup>104</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 87.

<sup>105</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 60.

refrained from intervening with tanker traffic at this Persian Gulf chokepoint. Following the attempted truck bombing of the U.S. embassy in Kuwait, the Reagan administration designated Iran as a state supporting terrorism and under "Operation Staunch," banned military sales to Iran in January, 1984.

Despite these tensions, Iranian leaders began to hint that better relations between Washington and Tehran were possible. In October, 1984, Khomeini himself declared that "Iran wanted 'relations with all governments' (with the exception of the United States, Iran and South Africa)."<sup>106</sup> Other Iranian leaders suggested that Khomeini's "open door" might also be open to the U.S. if it "changed its attitude...".<sup>107</sup> As early as 1983, in a message aimed at the Americans, Rafsanjani had declared that Iran would "recognize any country that 'honored' the revolution."<sup>108</sup> Following Iranian assistance in resolving the hijacking of TWA flight 847, the Reagan administration pursued its ill fated arms for hostages initiative.<sup>109</sup> While Iran's initial aim in this venture was obviously to obtain arms for its upcoming Karbala offensive, its long term goals were renewed relations with Washington, possible cooperation

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<sup>106</sup>quoted in Menashri, p. 363.

<sup>107</sup>Hunter, *Iran after Khomeini*, p. 115.

<sup>108</sup>Wright, p. 134.

<sup>109</sup>For a discussion of the events of the "Irangate" affair, see Wright, p. 130-153. and James A. Bill, "The U.S. Overture to Iran, 1985-1986: An Analysis", in *Neither East Nor West, Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States*, ed. by Nikki R. Keddie and Mark J. Gasiorowski, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 166-179.

against Soviet threats and the coordination of both countries' assistance to the Afghan Mojahadine.<sup>110</sup> For both sides the main issue was a political-to establish a framework for future cooperation.<sup>111</sup> While Iran was successful in obtaining several thousand American anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, the political bridge between the two nations was never built. Mehdi Hashemi, a cleric with ties to the Revolutionary Guards who opposed a rapprochement between Iran and the U.S., leaked details of the arms for hostages initiative to the press on November 3, the day before the anniversary of the seizure of the American embassy. While this disclosure terminated the arms for hostages deal, it failed to bring down Rafsanjani as the previous meeting with Brzezinski had brought down Bazargan. Indeed, Hashemi was the one eventually executed for treason. Rafsanjani attempted to maintain the possibility for future relations, suggesting that closer ties were possible "If your governments prove to us in practice that they do not engage in treason against us..."<sup>112</sup> The Reagan administration also recognized its continued common interest with Iran. U.S. public and congressional response, however, precluded closer ties without a tangible demonstration of Iranian good will. Further contact between the two nations would have to occur between official

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<sup>110</sup>R.K. Ramazani, "Challenges for U.S. Policy", in *Iran's Revolution, the Search for Consensus*, ed. by R.K. Ramazani, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 130.

<sup>111</sup>Menashri, p. 378.

<sup>112</sup>Wright, p. 153.

government representatives, a condition that was not domestically feasible in Iran.

Following this aborted effort, U.S. tilted even more overtly toward Iraq in the Persian Gulf struggle. In September, 1986, Kuwait requested superpower assistance in protect its fleet of oil tankers from Iranian attacks. While the U.S. was not enthusiastic to expand its participation in the war, the Soviets agreed to lease three tankers to the small gulf nation. Fearful of expanded Soviet influence in the region, the U.S. decided to reflag and provide armed escort for Kuwaiti tankers. In retaliation for missile and mine attacks on these targets, the U.S. attacked Iranian oil platforms, Iranian naval units and a mine-laying ship. The United States increased its diplomatic initiatives in the U.N. to end the war, pressing for the passage of Resolution 598, with the provision for sanctions against the belligerent that rejected the plan. Iran surprised the U.S. by conditionally accepting the resolution and calling for an international determination of the aggressor in the conflict. Following the Air Bus tragedy, Iran officially accepted the terms of the cease fire. Surprisingly, Iran did not resort to anti-American rhetoric in the wake of apparent U.S. hostility. The Deputy Foreign Minister exercised restraint and:

called on the United States to end its hostile attitude; denied that Iran wanted to export its revolution 'with a gun;' reiterated its interest in regional cooperation for security in the Persian Gulf; complained about Iraqi sabotage against Iran; and said that Iran could help gain the release of



American hostages if the United States ended the difficulties that it had created for Iran.<sup>113</sup>

President Bush, in his 1989 inaugural address stated his desire for improved relations with Iran; Iran reacted favorably, but neither side undertook practical steps to end the decade long estrangement.

The Islamic revolution and subsequent hostage crisis which severed relations between Tehran and Washington did not lead to improved relations with the Soviet Union. Moscow viewed the revolution with mixed expectations and apprehension. The Soviets feared the turmoil would lead to direct U.S. intervention and could not believe that Washington would allow the Shah's loyal regime to be replaced by one that was not "equally responsive to its interests."<sup>114</sup> The Soviets were hopeful however that the Iranian revolution would eventually lead to a socialist regime in Tehran, noting that Lenin predicted the use of religion as a protest against the ruling class as a period of upheaval on the road to the ultimate socialist victory.<sup>115</sup> While the Soviets were initially in support of the hostage crisis.<sup>116</sup> As long as Tehran

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<sup>113</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 71-72.

<sup>114</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, "Soviet-Iranian Relations in the Post Revolution Period" in *Iran's Revolution, the Search for Consensus*, ed. by R.K. Ramazani, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 87.

<sup>115</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 82.

<sup>116</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 83, Hunter reports that the Soviets were not only pleased with the hostage crisis, but are implicated in the planing and execution of the takeover itself, arguing that Hojat-el-Islam Khomeini was "Moscow's man".

held the hostages, there could not be a rapprochement between Iran and America. As tensions between Tehran and Washington grew, however, it feared American intervention to topple the Revolutionaries and install a pro-American puppet. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Bani-Sadr administration felt Moscow's fears might be used as a pretext for a Soviet invasion of Iran in accordance with the 1921 friendship treaty. The Soviet initially welcomed the fall of Bazargan; Bani-Sadr turned out to be as anxious of the Soviets as the PRG had been. The fall of Bani-Sadr was an opportunity for Moscow. The Tudeh continued to support the clerics as they cracked down on their critics from both the left and the right. As long as Iraq remained on the offensive, Moscow was willing to provide weapons and advisors to aid the besieged Islamic Republic. In addition to military aid, the Soviet-Iran rapprochement of 1981-1982 led to increased trade, economic and diplomatic initiatives.

This rapprochement was short lived. With the end of the hostage crisis in January 1981, and thus the international economic embargo, Tehran was less dependent on Moscow to supply its needs. Once Iran became less dependent on Soviet aid and trade, it became more critical of the communist ideology and Soviet policies in neighboring Afghanistan. With expulsion of Iraqi troops, Moscow was less willing to supply Iran's offensive capabilities against its Arab ally. The revelation of Soviet espionage in 1983 and the subsequent purge of the Tudeh party strained relations even further. Despite

these tensions, diplomatic relations were never severed between the two nations.

With the increased U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, Iran-Soviet relations improved once again in the summer of 1984. U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the Saudi shoot down of an Iranian F-4 led to a joint Soviet Iranian declaration opposing foreign presence in the gulf. The diplomatic door which Khomeini opened to foreign nations for the first time in 1984 was opened to the communist nations as well as Europe and the third world. Diplomatic contacts between the two nations increased and attempts were initiated to establish joint Soviet-Iranian projects including gas and oil exploration and shipping and fishing in the Caspian Sea. The failure of the pro-west factions in Tehran to create a framework for cooperation in the arms for hostages fiasco increased Soviet influence in Iran. The U.S. tilt toward Iran led to fears in Tehran that active American intervention was imminent. Moscow played on these fears as both regimes opposed increased American influence in the Gulf. Economic and diplomatic relations improved; agreements were reached on the construction of a trans-Iranian railroad, joint oil exploration and Caspian shipping projects were finalized, Aeroflot service to Tehran resumed and joint industrial projects expanded. The Soviets took Iran's part in the U.N. security council debate on linking rejection of Resolution 598 to economic sanctions. The Soviet Union's decision to lease three tankers

to Kuwait and the subsequent Iranian attack on Soviet shipping slowed but did not interrupt these initiatives.

By late 1987, the international system showed signs of change. Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to promote closer ties to the west made the Soviet Union less accepting of the slow pace of cease fire talks with Iran. Continued Soviet occupation of Afghanistan remained a source of tension between the two neighbors. Iraqi use of extended range Soviet scuds to bomb Tehran and other Iranian cities led to even more criticism of Moscow. While Moscow desired to maintain closer relations with Tehran, it was not willing to risk its relations with Gulf Arabs or its growing rapprochement with the U.S., whose support it needed for an end to its Afghanistan debacle.

With the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, all obstacles (except ideological ones) to better relations between Iran and the Soviet Union were swept away. Moscow pursued closer ties to Iran as a counter to American influence with the "moderate" gulf Arabs and to revitalize the Soviet Asian republics.<sup>117</sup> Iran pursued ties to the Soviets in order to influence the nature of the future Afghan regime and to oppose Saudi-American influence in the Gulf.

Both the Soviet Union and the United States were condemned by Khomeini's declaration of a "neither east nor west" foreign policy strategy. The United States was the Great Satan whose imperialism was responsible for a

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<sup>117</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 94.

variety of ills in Iranian society. The Soviet Union was the lesser satan whose godless communist ideology was abhorrent and whose occupation of Iran's Muslim neighbor, Afghanistan was clearly unacceptable. Despite these obstacles, Iran continued to conduct relations with both superpowers, often counter the influence of the other cold war competitor. Relations with the lesser satan were the best when the United States was actively supporting the Iraqi war effort. Relations with the Great Satan were the best when Iran most needed American arms for its war effort. Despite widespread enmity for the United States and routine calls for death to America, Iran did not suspend oil sales to its ideological enemy. In 1987, the U.S. was Iran's largest trading partner, purchasing in excess of \$500 million worth of Iranian oil.<sup>118</sup> While domestic politics played a minor role in influencing the details of Iranian foreign policy with the superpowers, systemic factors clearly played the dominant role in the actual behavior of Iran towards these two nations.

## B. IRAN'S NEIGHBORS

Iran's relations with its neighbors are more complex than relations with either of the superpowers, because the international balance of power system intersects and interacts with regional balance of power politics. The major

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<sup>118</sup>R.K. Ramazani, "Iran's resistance to U.S. Intervention in the Persian Gulf" in *Neither East Nor West, Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States*, ed. by Nikki R. Keddie and Mark J. Gasiorowski, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 47. See also Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy, Contending Orientations", p. 61.

issues facing Iran and its neighbors were the superpower cold war, persistent border disputes and irredentist claims and finally, the marketing of the region's most important resource, oil.

#### 1. Israel.

Iran conducted relations with Israel, at times openly, while often covertly, since shortly after the Jewish homeland was established in 1948. While the specific character of certain issues was clearly influenced by domestic politics and regime ideology, the basis for these relations was due to systemic imperatives. Both states perceived themselves as "under attack from progressive Arab leaders."<sup>119</sup> Nasser overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952 and pledged to oppose the remaining monarchies who were "self-serving tools of foreign interests"<sup>120</sup> Iran was also threatened by the Soviet Union which had only recently ended its occupation of northern Iran and continued to interfere in domestic Iranian affairs through its active control of the Tudeh party. Tensions with Iraq, strained due to disputes over the Shatt-al-Arab river, increased following the fall of the monarchy in Iraq in 1958; border incidents continued at varying intensity until after the death of Khomeini in 1989. With the withdrawal of British forces in 1971, Iran occupied three gulf islands which

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<sup>119</sup>Robert B. Reppa, Sr., *Israel and Iran Bilateral Relations and Effect on the Indian Ocean Basin*, (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 97.

<sup>120</sup>Reppa, p. 92.

exacerbated relations with Arab countries, even those far removed from the Persian Gulf.

Israel was also surrounded by hostile states. Belligerent rhetoric and constant low level conflict escalated to full scale war during each decade following the establishment of Israel. The overriding goal of Israeli foreign policy in its first years of existence was to end the regional isolation surrounding it. " Whatever its guiding ideology, whatever its domestic political makeup, an no matter what historical legacy shadowed the minds of its policy makers, Israel's conduct was motivated by the patently anarchic nature of the regional and the wider international environment."<sup>121</sup>

As the Middle East became the focus of the super-power cold war, Iran and Israel became important components of the U. S. efforts to oppose perceived Soviet advances in the region. Since U.S. balancing behavior was targeted against the Soviets, both Israel and Iran became aware that the U.S. would be of dubious support in a regional conflict. This led both states to look favorably to the other as a regional ally as a balance to perceived Arab aggression. While Iranian ideology, political elite and domestic politics changed drastically following the revolution, the systemic basis for a bilateral relations continued, especially following the Iraqi invasion. Relations between the two nations chilled initially, due to Iran's effort to isolate itself from the international system, but resumed, albeit at a lower level than under the

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<sup>121</sup>Sobhani, p. 4.

monarchy, after the Iraqi attack began the socialization process within the Islamic Republic.

Ties between Israel and Iran were initially prompted by Iraq's persecution of its Jewish minority following the establishment of Israel in 1948. In order to facilitate the evacuation of Iraqi Jews, Israel attempted to cultivate ties to Iran. The unstable domestic political situation in Iran led Israeli policy makers to believe that "It was possible to achieve almost anything in Iran through bribery."<sup>122</sup> For its part, Iran was impressed by Israeli military prowess and economic development. The Shah tended toward recognition of Israel, but his views were not decisive in foreign policy decisions as the 1940s turned into the 1950s. The traditional landowners in the Majlis supported de facto<sup>123</sup> ties to Israel, while the clergy and Mossadegh's National Front opposed these efforts, although for different reasons. Israel provided \$240,000 to generate favorable publicity and in February 1950, Prime Minister Sa'id announced the establishment of de facto relations. In March, the cabinet supported this decision and Iran discreetly opened a consulate in Israel. When

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<sup>122</sup>Sobhani, p. 6.

<sup>123</sup>Sobhani mistakenly refers to the relations between Iran and Israel as "de jure". Iran conducted de facto relations with Israel, but never elevated them to de jure status. See Eric Hoogland, "The policy of the Reagan Administration Toward Iran", in *Neither East Nor West, Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States*, ed. by Nikki Keddie and Mark Gasiorowski, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 186 and Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf, Iran's Role*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), p. 37.



Mossadegh came to power in 1952, he closed the consulate but never formally ended relations with Israel, despite the favorable response from the Arab nations. The Shah's return in 1953 was a victory for the royalist forces, society however was still divided along religious/secular lines. The weak central government was constrained by these domestic factors from pursuing a more aggressive alliance with Israel.<sup>124</sup> The alliance continued, but relations remained discreet.

The 1950s experienced not only the consolidation of royal power, but also the intensification of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. and the Iran-Arab cold wars. These events combined to increase the value of a relation between Iran and Israel. In the Shah's view, Iran's problems were all due to security issues. "The attainment of social, economic and political development as well as true independence, all hinged, in the last analysis, on the achievement of security."<sup>125</sup> The chief threat to Iranian security was from the Soviet Union which bordered Iran to the north, interfered in Afghanistan to the east, and supported Arab nationalist movements in the west. Nasser's alignment with the Soviet Union and the 1955 Czechoslovakia arms deal coupled with his anti-Iranian rhetoric increased the perceived threat to stability in the region. These fears were exacerbated by the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958. Qassim quickly established ties with Egypt, Syria and the Soviet Union. He

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<sup>124</sup>Sobhani, p. 13.

<sup>125</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 258.

abrogated the 1937 treaty concerning the Shatt-al-Arab waterway and border disturbances increased. As a balance to this threat, Israel provided a good alliance partner. It had not only proven its military superiority again in the 1956 war, but the Shah perceived that Israel could provide economic assistance as well as an inside link to Washington.

In order to enhance security and to facilitate the consolidation of his power, the Shah created the security service, SAVAK, in 1956. In 1957, the Shah proposed increased cooperation between the Israeli *Mossad* and SAVAK. The *Mossad* began training SAVAK agents and the security service link became the mechanism for discreet diplomatic relations. A regional alliance between *Mossad*, SAVAK and the Turkish security service TNSS was established to share intelligence on the activities of the communists and Arab nationalists in the region. The *Mossad* and SAVAK cooperated in arming the separatist Kurdish movement in Iraq.

The failure of the United States to come to the aid of CENTO member Pakistan's aid in its war with India in 1965 led to the realization that ties with the United States were of limited value in regional conflicts. The Shah, whose armed forces were dependent on the U.S. for arms and advisors, sought to diversify his arms suppliers. Israel once again was in the ideal position to fill this role. The Israeli Defense Force was highly respected for its performance against the Arab forces. Israeli weapons were also highly regarded. In 1964 Iran purchased Uzi submachine guns and signed, in 1966,

an agreement for an additional \$6 million arms package. Israel's ties to Washington served to overcome Congressional resistance to the sale of advanced arms to Iran. In 1967, the head of the Israeli delegation to Iran asked the U.S. ambassador if the United States was trying to "Throw the Shah into the arms of the Russians?"<sup>126</sup> The combined influence off Israeli pressure on President Johnson and Soviet arms sales to Iran, (see above) removed opposition to the subsequent sale of two squadrons of F-4s to Iran. As the relationship matured, Iran and Israel participated in joint ventures to produce a long range surface to surface missile, electronic counter measures for Iranian fighter aircraft and also participated in a joint naval cooperation program.

The Shah was willing to sell oil to any interested nation, including Israel. These sales began in 1957 and continued for twenty years. At a time when its foreign exchange reserves were low, Iran bartered oil for Israeli arms. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Iran participated in a joint venture to construct a pipeline from the Red Sea port of Elat to Israel's Mediterranean coast. With the Suez Canal closed, it was cheaper to ship oil to Mediterranean through the pipeline than around Africa in supertanker which were too large to be serviced at many of the Mediterranean ports. The Iranian

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<sup>126</sup>Sobhani, p. 52.

guarantee of oil deliveries to replace Sinai crude were a key element of the agreement to return the Sinai to Egypt.<sup>127</sup>

Following a massive earthquake in 1962, the Shah sought Israeli aid in its reconstruction efforts. An Israeli team developed and implemented a four stage development plan which emphasized water development, agricultural planning, the development of *kibbutz* style farming communities and a reorganization of marketing techniques. This plan was approved the Iranian parliament; Israeli participation, however, was down played. Economic relations between the two nations increased. By the end of the 1960s, trade amounted to \$250 million annually.

Relations between Pahlavi Iran and Israel developed and thrived in response to the security dilemma both states faced. Both Israel and Iran were surrounded by hostile states. While both states had ties to the United States, it became obvious to Israel as a result of the U.S. position in the 1956 war and to Iran as a result of the U. S. failure to support Pakistan in 1965, that the United States would not necessarily support them in regional conflicts. Both Israel and Iran must be prepared to defend themselves. The imperatives of the international system ensured that the relationship between Iran and Israel would continue at the level required to promote the security of the allies.

Ayatollah Khomeini had long proclaimed a vitriolic hatred for Israel. He spoke publicly against relations with the "gang of Jews" who ran

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<sup>127</sup>Sobhani, p. 118.

Israel and the need to "uproot this germ of corruption."<sup>128</sup> In one of his first acts of foreign policy during the his pursuit of international isolation, Khomeini closed the discreet Israeli embassy and turned it over to the PLO. While Iran professed the desire to "have friendly relations, based on reciprocal respect..."<sup>129</sup>, the nature of the state of Israel "permit(s) no compromise, as far as an Islamic State is concerned."<sup>130</sup> Following the advent of the war with Iraq, Khomeini proclaimed that "the next stop after 'conquering Baghdad' is the 'liberation of Jerusalem.'"<sup>131</sup>

Despite this hostile rhetoric, the regional system remained as hostile to the Islamic Republic as it had to the Pahlavi regime. The Iraqi invasion brought this situation clearly into focus. As a result of the hostage crisis, the United States had instituted an arms embargo against Iran. The Iranian armed forces were dependent on U.S. arms; Iran was forced to turn to western sources to resupply its war machine. Israel began supplying Iran with

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<sup>128</sup>Bakhash, p. 37

<sup>129</sup>Foreign Minister Yazdi, Oct 1979, quoted in Menashri, p. 95.

<sup>130</sup>Maziar Behrooz, "Trends in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1988" in *Neither East Nor West, Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States*, ed. by Nikki Keddie and Mark Gasiorowski, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 15.

<sup>131</sup>Sobhani, p. 142.

spare parts and arms in 1979. By 1986, Israeli arms sales to Iran had grown to \$500 million annually.<sup>132</sup>

In addition to the obvious economic benefits, Sobhani cites two important reasons that Israel agreed to supply weapons to the Islamic Republic, safety for Iranian Jews and the regional balance of power. Despite public and constitutional assurances of religious freedom for Jews, Israel became convinced that "Khomeini's passionate hatred of Israel had clearly extended to Iran's Jewish community."<sup>133</sup> In order to facilitate the emigration of Iranian Jews, a tacit agreement was made with the Khomeini regime to exchange spare parts. Between 1979 and 1987, it is estimated that over 55,000 Jews, out of a population of approximately 80,000, emigrated from Iran.

The utility of Israeli arms did not prevent Iran from attacking Israeli interests when the opportunity arose. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, Iran deployed Revolutionary Guards to Baalbek in support of the Lebanese Shia. These forces supported unconventional attacks on Israeli interests. In retaliation for a truck bomb attack on their military headquarters in 1983, Israel conducted air raids which killed 23 Revolutionary Guardsmen. These conflicts, however, did not diminish the systemic conditions favoring a pragmatic entente and did not interrupt the flow of arms from Israel to Iran.

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<sup>132</sup>Sobhani, p. 141.

<sup>133</sup>Sobhani, p. 145.

The heart of the "pragmatic entente" between Iran and Israel was based upon systemic factors. By tying down Iraqi forces, Iran prevented Iraq from actively supporting the front line Arab states in their struggle with Israel. The war also drove a wedge between Arab states. "Thus since 1980, two of Israel's most vociferous enemies-Syria and Libya-worked to undermine another of Israel's traditional enemies, Iraq."<sup>134</sup> Despite Khomeini's anti Israel rhetoric during Iran's war with Iraq, Israel continued to be an important supplier of western arms and a key link in Iran's attempts to pursue less tense relations with Washington.

## 2. Turkey.

The fall of the Ottoman and Qajar dynasties in the wake of World War I saw the end of decades, even centuries, of competition and strained relations between Iran and Turkey and set the stage for the modern era of cooperation between these Muslim, non-Arab, neighbors. The regimes of both Reza Shah and Kemal Attaturk, aggressively pursued a western-oriented effort to rapidly modernize their nations. It was natural for these nations to align in the face of perceived great power expansionism.<sup>135</sup> This alliance was first formalized under the Sa'adabad pact in 1937. This pact did not have provisions for unilateral or joint military activities, thus was of little value in

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<sup>134</sup>Sobhani, p. 150.

<sup>135</sup>Graham Fuller, *The Center of the Universe, The Geopolitics of Iran*, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), p. 211.

detering foreign aggression. It did however, provide the precedent for the alliances which succeeded it.

While the Sa'adabad pact was not specifically targeted at any particular state, the Baghdad Pact, signed by Mohammed Reza Shah in 1955, was clearly the result of cold war politics. This pact targeted Soviet expansionism in the region. The chief threat, as perceived by alliance members, was not an invasion from the Soviets, but its subversive support for "*regional radicalism*."<sup>136</sup> With the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq in 1958, the Baghdad alliance was transformed into CENTO. As noted above, the failure of the United States to come to the assistance of Baghdad Pact/CENTO members Iraq during the revolt against the monarch, Pakistan during its conflict with India over Kashmir and Turkey with its conflict with Greece, led these alliance members to question its usefulness in regional vice superpower disputes. This dissatisfaction led to the establishment of a purely regional forum, the Regional Cooperation for Development. This alliance between Iran, Turkey and Pakistan proposed "mutual military and diplomatic support during any crisis. Nonetheless, the RCD's capabilities as a security pact, were clearly limited, as even the name implies."<sup>137</sup>

Iran and Turkey were also joined with Israel in a discreet alliance of their security services, Trident. Meetings were typically held every

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<sup>136</sup>Fuller, p. 213 original emphasis.

<sup>137</sup>Fuller, p 214.



six months to "exchange intelligence information...(and to) recommend appropriate policy responses."<sup>138</sup> The Turks ,however, played a peripheral role in Trident, which was primarily a vehicle for Iranian-Israeli cooperation.

Despite these regional alliances and a shared secular, western oriented ideology, relations between Turkey and Iran were correct, but not close. Ankara did not appreciate the joint CIA, Mossad, SAVAK support for the Kurdish separatist movement in Iraq due to the impact these efforts had on the large minority of "mountain Turks" (Kurds) in eastern Turkey. These diplomatic alliances also failed to lead to closer economic ties as both countries preferred to trade with the west.. Relations between the states were also strained by the 1973 oil price hike. While Iran was awash in oil profits, Turkey faced severe balance of payments problems, "in a large part due to its heavy oil import bill."<sup>139</sup> The Shah refused Turkish requests for rescheduling its debt.

Following the revolution, Iran withdrew from its formal alliances with Turkey. Turkey remained a NATO member, serving "U.S. regional interests," whose commitment to secular nationalism was "anathema to" Iran's

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<sup>138</sup>Sobhani, p. 29.

<sup>139</sup>Fuat Borovali, "Iran and Turkey: Permanent Revolution or Islamism in One Country?", in *Iran at the Crossroads, Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade*, ed. by Miron Rezun, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 83.

"ideology of Islamic revolutionary universalism."<sup>140</sup> Iran supported "Islamic radicalism in Turkey and propaganda efforts among Turkish workers" Over half-million Iranian refugees made Turkey their home which exacerbated tensions between the neighbors.

The chief source of tension between Ankara and the Shah also emerged to strain relations between Ankara and the revolutionary regime in Tehran. In an attempt to undermine Saddam Hussein, Khomeini engaged in the time honored Iranian practice of supporting Iraqi Kurdish separatists. This support once again resulted in increased Kurdish guerilla activity in Turkey as well as Iraq. Ankara negotiated an agreement with Baghdad to allow either country to cross the border to engage in hot pursuit of Kurdish guerillas. Turkish Air Force assaults on the positions of Iran's Kurdish allies in Iraq were viewed by Tehran as evidence of Turkish irredentist claims and territorial claims on the oil rich Kirkuk and Mosul provinces.<sup>141</sup>

Despite these divisive security issues and ideological differences, Turkey became an important source of trade with Iran when it chose to ignore the American sponsored embargo of Iran. Following the destruction of its southern ports in the war with Iraq, Turkey also became an important trading route to Europe for Iranian goods. Turkey attempted to maintain ties with both Iran and Iraq, undertaking diplomatic efforts to end the war.

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<sup>140</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 134.

<sup>141</sup>Borovali, p. 86.

The cease fire with Iraq removed some of the sources of conflict between Turkey and Iran, but also removed some of the imperatives for continued relations. The end of threats to Iranian gulf shipping reduced the importance of Turkey as a trading route and western willingness to participate in Iranian reconstruction reduced trade opportunities between the neighbors. Khomeini indicated his commitment to regional cooperation however by supporting the 1988 initiative establishing an Economic Cooperation Organization. This organization, mirroring the Shah-era RCD, supports increased economic ties between Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and possibly Afghanistan. Despite the radically different nature of Iran's internal attributes following the Islamic revolution, and Turkey's continued alliance with Iran's ideological enemy, there was a remarkable similarity in the nature of Turkey's relations with both Iranian regimes. The chief source of tension in both cases was Iranian support for Iraqi Kurdish dissidents which increased Kurdish guerilla activity in Turkey. The chief source of cooperation in both cases was support for regional economic alliances between Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. Systemic factors played a dominant role in the relations between Iran and Turkey.

### **3. Pakistan.**

Iran, under the Shah, had good relations with Pakistan, which it viewed as an important security buffer between it and the most significant south-Asian power, India. Following the military buildup which drastically

improved its capability after 1973, Iran offered its military support to Pakistan in the event of an Indian attack. Tehran refused Pakistani requests for weapons, however, in order to reassure India. It did provide substantial amounts of financial aid and engaged in joint economic development programs with Pakistan.

Despite Pakistan's continued alliance with the United States, it continued to share strategic security interests with Iran. The Khomeini regime continued to honor its pre-revolution treaties and agreements with Pakistan. It also continued to provide an important trade route to China and continued to provide a source of nuclear cooperation.<sup>142</sup> Fear of Soviet expansionism led Pakistan to seek good relations with Tehran. Immediately following the revolution, Pakistan feared a Soviet invasion in Iran. With the Soviet presence in Iran, Pakistan would have been surrounded by three pro-Soviet states. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan was also a source of tension; Iran and Pakistan backed different factions of the anti-Soviet opposition. Both Iran and Pakistan supported various guerrilla movements fighting the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Their support for different factions in this effort, however, inhibited the development of closer relations.

Khomeini's relations with Pakistan continued to mirror the Shah's policies. Both countries opposed Soviet regional expansion and supported

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<sup>142</sup>Ashok Kapur, "Relations With Pakistan and India", in *Iran at the Crossroads, Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade*, ed. by Miron Rezun, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 78.

increased joint economic initiatives. Pakistan is one of the only nations with which Khomeini honored the previous regime's formal relations. Systemic factors were clearly decisive in the formulation of Iranian policy toward Pakistan.

### C. RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD

The basic conflicts between Iran and its Arab neighbors predate the Islamic revolution by centuries. "The Irano-Arab power conflict over the Persian Gulf was in full bloom as early as the fourth century, and the subsequent centuries provided no real basis for political accommodation."<sup>143</sup> Ancient Iranian claims to Bahrain and other Persian Gulf islands continue to confound attempts at reconciliation between contemporary Iran and its neighbors.

As noted above, the Middle East is a very dynamic regional system. Alignments between these regional powers changed rapidly in the decades preceding the Islamic Revolution. Throughout this period, the Shah sought to expand his regional influence in order to "enhance Iran's regional stability and security..." through his opposition to communism and "Arab revolutionary nationalism."<sup>144</sup> During this period the nature of Iranian relations with Egypt, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf States changed, growing closer and farther as these

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<sup>143</sup>Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf, Iran's Role*, p. 34.

<sup>144</sup>Saikal, p. 162.

states engaged in frequent balancing behavior in the region. Despite the many changes wrought by the Islamic revolution, once in power, Khomeini's relations to the Arab world were very similar to that of the Shah. "On coming to power, the Islamic regime formally rejected Iranian nationalism, yet, in fact, its perceptions of Iran's interests in the Persian Gulf and its regional role are identical to those of the Iranian nationalists and the statements made by the Islamic Republic's officials about the Persian Gulf echo those of the Shah."<sup>145</sup>

### 1. Iraq.

Centuries of Iranian-Arab rivalry and decades of border disputes along the Shatt-al-Arab were submerged by systemic factors which led to the adherence of both Iran and Iraq to the Baghdad Pact in 1955. "Spurred on... by their common perceptions of the potential threat of Communism, the two states relegated their differences to the sidelines and began to focus their attention on forging a viable regional security organization to cope with external threats to area."<sup>146</sup> This cooperation between the two states was short-lived. Once the monarchy was overthrown in 1958, and Iraq changed from a pro-west to a pro-Soviet regime, tensions between these gulf neighbors naturally heightened. Tensions increased and border disturbance rose, Iranian

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<sup>145</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 99.

<sup>146</sup>Jasim M. Abdulghani, *Iraq and Iran: The Years of Crisis*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 13.

statements appeared to repudiate the 1937 treaty which had previously been accepted as the basis for a final border settlement along the Shatt-al-Arab.

In addition to the continuing dispute over the Shatt-al -Arab border, other issues precluded better relations between Tehran and Baghdad. In the early 1960s, the oil companies began to explore and develop the offshore oil concessions. Tensions grew as Iran and Iraq both exploited oil fields fed by a "common subterranean source."<sup>147</sup> Secondly, Iran sought to manipulate subversive Kurdish elements in Iraq, setting up a transmitter in Kermanshah to broadcast propaganda in Kurdish. In an attempt to deal with these issues, the president and prime minister of Iraq visited Iran in 1967 and 1968; any progress achieved was short-lived as the Iraqi regime was ousted in a coup d'etat by the Ba'ath party in July, 1968.

The new Ba'ath regime initially attempted to prevent relations between Baghdad and Tehran from deteriorating further, but these attempts failed when the Shah unilaterally abrogated the 1937 treaty in 1969. Cold war raged between the two nations. SAVAK, supported by the CIA and the MOSSAD continued to provide support for Kurdish separatist elements in northern Iraq. Tehran viewed the 1972 friendship treaty between Iraq and the U.S.S.R. as a Soviet attempt to surround Iran with Soviet satellites. Iranian aid to Iraqi Kurds increased dramatically, by 1975 regular Iranian forces were providing the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq with anti-aircraft support. This

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<sup>147</sup>Abdulghani, p. 20.

support led to direct engagement between regular Iraqi and Iranian forces in northern Iraq.<sup>148</sup>

With Iraq allied to the Soviets and Iran to the American's, systemic pressures added to the specific issues of contention between the two neighbors. Once the British announced their intention to withdraw from the region in 1969, both states acted to increase their regional influence. Iranian seizure of Abu Musa and the Tunbs was condemned by Baghdad and Iraqi perception of British duplicity in this takeover led to the break in relations between Baghdad and London. Iraqi claims to the "territory" of Kuwait increased tensions with both Iran and Kuwait as Iraq sought to deploy troops to oppose Iran on Kuwaiti territory.<sup>149</sup> Iraq provided aid to the Dhofari rebel troops in Oman while Iran sent troops to support the embattled monarch.

A brief respite in the cold war between Baghdad and Tehran was initiated by the Algiers agreement of 1975. This agreement provided for Iraqi submission to Iranian demands on the demarcation of borders along the Shatt al-Arab river in return for the end of Iranian support for the Kurdish insurgents. Iraq ended its support for the rebels in Oman and used its influence in South Yemen to seek the end its support for the Dhofaris. The rapprochement between Tehran and Baghdad continued until the Islamic revolution with normal, but not close relations between the two neighbors.

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<sup>148</sup>Abdulghani, p. 142.

<sup>149</sup>Abdulghani, p. 98.



Different views by Iran and Iraq on the character of Gulf Security led to the total collapse of the Gulf Security Conference attended the eight Gulf littoral states in 1976.

Following the fall of the Iranian monarch, tensions between Iran and Iraq increased significantly. Iraq reported over 500 Iranian violations of Iraqi territorial borders and Iran reported over 800 such violations in the first 19 months of the Islamic Republic. In September 1980, Iraq abrogated the Algiers agreement and asserted Iraqi control of the disputed waterway. Iraq was at the pinnacle of its political, economic and military power, Iran was militarily weak and disorganized, internationally isolated and under an economic embargo; Iraqi forces invaded Iran and full scale war erupted on 22 September, 1980. Iraq's requirements for ending the war included Iranian recognition of Iraqi rights on the Shatt al-Arab and the return of Abu Musa and the Tunbs to Arab control.

The Iraqi invasion provided the wake up call that the Islamic Republic required and the new regime began the rapid socialization process that participation in the international system required. Iranian nationalism, previously denied by the Islamic Republic, experienced a resurgence. The regular armed forces were rehabilitated and rearmed. Iran engaged in behavior toward Iraq that was very similar to that of the Shah, supporting Kurdish separatist movements in northern Iraq and even dealing with Israel for arms. Despite the repugnance with which Khomeini viewed any decision

to end the war short of victory, he ultimately made the decision that "was more deadly than drinking hemlock,"<sup>150</sup> due to pressures from the international system. Relations with Iraq, more than any other state illustrate the definitive role that systemic factors play in the formulation of Iranian foreign policy.

## 2. Syria.

The relations between Syria and Iran under the monarchy were largely influenced by the east-west cold war, relations between Syria and the Islamic Republic were largely influenced by the regional balance of power. Thus, while relations between the two nations changed following the revolution, it is still possible to clearly see the impact of systemic factors.

Ba'athist Syria's regional alignment with Egypt and international alignment with the Soviets precluded close relations between Tehran and Damascus. Syria supported Egyptian claims that Khuzistan was part of the Arab nation and joined Nasser in condemning Iranian relations with Israel. Soviet support for Syria and Iraq led to increased U.S. aid to Iran in the early 1970s. The easing of international polarization in 1970s also led to a thaw in Irano-Arab relations. As the 1960s ended, Egypt's president Nasser became less dependent on the Soviets. Iranian calls for the end of Israeli occupation of territories seized in 1967 coupled with Egyptian support for the Rogers peace

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<sup>150</sup>Wright, p. 190.

initiative in 1970 led to closer ties between the Shah and Nasser.<sup>151</sup> This also led to better ties and Iranian investment and economic aid to Syria.<sup>152</sup> Ba'athist Syrian estrangement from Ba'athist Iraq, with which Iran engaged in persistent disputes (see above), also served to increase Syrian-Iranian ties. Iran also served as an important link between Washington and Damascus which provided a Syria with an alternative to the Soviet Union.<sup>153</sup>

Following the Iraqi invasion, an alliance of convenience was established between Islamic Iran and Ba'athist Syria, despite their diametrically opposed ideologies.

Given their fundamental differences, the alliance between Syria and Iran has been intriguing. the former is secular and Arab nationalist, whereas the latter is Islamic and outspokenly anti-nationalist. Syria has a large Islamic movement which it has brutally suppressed, and regional ambitions of the two countries have also been incompatible. Nevertheless, while tense and tenuous...the Syria-Iranian alliance has held longer than would logically be expected.<sup>154</sup>

While Syria opposed a complete Iranian victory leading to an Islamic Republic in Iraq, it hoped for "a situation in which Saddam Hussein's collapse under Iranian pressure would allow it to determine his successor."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, p. 422.

<sup>152</sup>Shahram Chubin, "Iran's Foreign Policy 1960-1976: an Overview," in *Twentieth Century Iran*, ed. by Hossein Amirsadeghi, (New York: Holmes and Meir Publishers, 1977), p.204.

<sup>153</sup>Chubin, p. 212, 216.

<sup>154</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 122.

<sup>155</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 122.

In addition to weakening its Arab rival, an alliance with Iran provided financial incentives as well. Syria not only obtained oil from Iran worth several billion dollars, but obtained financial concession from Gulf Arab states to use its influence on their behalf in Tehran. Iran, in addition to the military equipment channeled to it through Syria, was able to damage Iraq economically, Syria shut down the oil pipeline that transported up to 500,000 barrels of Iraqi oil through Syria, to the Mediterranean. The alliance with Syria also allowed Iran to argue that its war with Iraq was not based on Persian-Arab conflict, and that only the "reactionary and corrupt Arabs sided with Iraq."<sup>156</sup>

This alliance against Iraq did not extend to all other areas of regional significance. Iran and Syria, while both opposing increased Israeli influence in Lebanon, pursued opposing objectives in this chaotic state. Iran supported the creation of an Islamic government in Lebanon, while Syria supported the creation of any style of government which it could dominate. Iran deployed Revolutionary Guards to the Bekaa valley in 1982. This contingent was responsible for organizing and training the Hezbollah, which became rival to the Syrian supported Islamic Amal in Lebanon. In May 1988, regular Syrian forces invaded Lebanon and asserted Syrian control over events in its chaotic neighbor. These clashes in Lebanon failed, however, to derail the alliance against Iraq.

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<sup>156</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 123.

While relations between Iran and Syria improved following the Islamic revolution, this alliance was clearly the result of systemic factors, not due to the drastic changes in the domestic politics, political elite of the regime ideology.

### 3. The Gulf States.

The Persian Gulf has long been the focus of Iranian attention. The British announcement in 1968 that it would withdraw its forces from the Gulf by 1971, facilitated the realization of the Shah's ambitions. Tehran scored points with the Gulf Arab countries when it acknowledged the independence of the island of Bahrain. At the same time Iran concluded agreements on the division of the continental shelf, and thus oil concession rights, with Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.<sup>157</sup> Tensions with the gulf states mounted however, when Iran occupied three disputed islands located near the straits of Hormuz. Iran also cooperated with the Gulf Arabs in creating the oil cartel, OPEC.

Iran also exerted its influence in the early 1970 when it joined Saudi Arabia, Kuwait Jordan and Great Britain in supporting the government of Oman against the Soviet backed rebels in the Dhofari rebellion. While Oman was strategically important to Iran, located at the Straights of Hormuz, support for the Monarch also served as an opportunity to confront Iran's persistent opponent, Iraq, which was supporting the rebels.

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<sup>157</sup>Saikal, p. 165.

Despite these apparent regional successes in foreign policy, the Shah was unable to rally much support for his vision of a regional collective security organization. Regional powers viewed Iran's rapid military buildup with suspicion. These regional powers, chiefly Saudi Arabia, sought to balance perceived Iranian pursuit of hegemony by expanding their own military and economic capabilities. The expansion in military capabilities of such "moderate" states as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia "provided justification for such 'radical' countries as Iraq and the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen to increase their defense expenditures in order to guard themselves against possible consequences of the Iranian military build-up."<sup>158</sup> The Shah's attempt to ensure Iranian security led to a regional arms race, a classic example of the effects of the "security dilemma."<sup>159</sup> The Shah's regional ambitions also led to Saudi attempts to undermine his efforts through the forum of the OPEC cartel. Iran required massive oil revenues to achieve its military and domestic spending requirements. Saudi Arabia, with much larger oil reserves and a much smaller population, could meet all of its requirements for revenues. In order to reduce the Shah's capabilities, Saudi Arabia opposed the 1975-1976 oil price hikes proposed by Iran. When OPEC agreed to implement a 15 percent

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<sup>158</sup>Saikal, p. 198.

<sup>159</sup>The term "security dilemma" refers to the systemic effect that results from one state's efforts to improve its security by improving its capabilities. This change in the distribution of capabilities undermines the security of other states in the system. See Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma", in *World Politics*, Vol. 30 No. 2 January, 1978, p. 167-214.

price hike in January 1977, the Saudis announced that they would hold the line at 5 percent and would expand production by 20 percent to lessen the impact of the price hike by the other producers. This measure caused a 1,500,000 barrel per day drop in Iranian oil sales, significantly impacting the Shah's ability to simultaneously modernize his armed forces and his domestic economy. It also clearly established Saudi hegemony in OPEC politics.

As his reign came to a close, the Shah was failed to realize his dreams of a regional security arrangement dominated by Iran. His pursuit of regional hegemony was countered by regional balancing by the very states he hoped to coopt into his sphere of influence.

The reaction of the gulf states to the Islamic revolution was initially mixed. Those states that feared the Shah's ambition viewed favorably Bazargan's assertion that Iran would no longer serve as the regions gendarme, as was the end of Tehran's relations with Israel.<sup>160</sup> This favor was short lived as these same regimes began to fear the exportation of the Islamic revolution. Iranian seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 and subversion in Bahrain and Kuwait further exacerbated these fears. Following the Iraqi invasion, the gulf states created the Gulf Cooperation Council in an effort to balance the threat of the two regional hegemon. Iran perceived this alliance as an anti Iranian military alliance which would be dominated by Iran's

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<sup>160</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, "Iran and the Arab World", in *Iran at the Crossroads, Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade*, ed. by Miron Rezun, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 104.

historic rival, Saudi Arabia. This failed to occur in the first decade following the Islamic revolution, which reduced Iranian fears to some degree.

Iran continued to promote a regional forum for security in the region, as long as Iran was allowed to participate. Indeed, Iranian participation was viewed in Tehran as vital to the success of any security regime. Any attempt to ignore the vital role that Iran could play as the most powerful and most populous state in the region was doomed to fail. The UAE and Oman, friendly to Pahlavi Iran, continued their lucrative trade with Islamic Iran, despite being labeled as traitors by Baghdad.<sup>161</sup> Saudi Arabia, Iran's persistent, powerful gulf rival, and Kuwait, subject to coercive influence by neighboring Iraq, continued to oppose Iranian objectives in the gulf. These states resorted to the tactic that had proven so useful to the Saudis half a decade earlier—conducting economic warfare against Iran through their ability to control oil prices. This policy was once again devastating to the Iranian economy. Saudi success in these efforts led to a gradual warming of relations between the monarchy and the Islamic Republic. This warming was illustrated by a joint agreement to stabilize oil prices and through an exchange of visits by government ministers. Close relation between the two regimes was precluded, however, by their continued competition for influence in the region.

Relations between Islamic Iran and the gulf states were largely similar to that of Pahlavi Iran, despite the destabilizing effects of years of

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<sup>161</sup>Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 117.



conflict between Iran and Iraq. Systemic factors continued to drive the behavior of gulf states, despite the drastic changes in the regime in Tehran.

## VI. CONCLUSION

There are two very different orientations that attempt to explain state behavior in international politics. State level theorists argue that internal attributes such as domestic politics, composition of the political elite and the regime's ideology are decisive in determining a state's foreign policy. Structuralists, on the other hand, contend that these internal attributes are unimportant, or at best secondary, in explaining a state's external behavior. This thesis has examined the case of Iran in order to determine which theory is better at explaining its behavior international politics following the Islamic Revolution.

The case of Iran has clearly demonstrated that the structuralists more accurately explain state behavior in vital issues of foreign policy. Structuralists, by definition, are only concerned with issues that effect the security of a nation: "The survival motive is taken as the ground of action where the security of the state is not assured, rather than as a realistic description of the impulse that lies behind every act of state"<sup>162</sup> In issues regarding regime survival, neither domestic politics, composition of the political elite, nor regime ideology made any difference. When confronted with annihilation by the Iraqi invasion, Iran abandoned its efforts to isolate itself from the international system and sought arms from its most repugnant

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<sup>162</sup>Waltz, p. 92.

ideological enemies, the U.S., Israel and the Soviet Union. It engaged in balancing behavior, allying with Syria, a secular state based on Arab nationalism. It sought to market its oil to any nation that would purchase it, often selling on the spot market to American companies, below the posted price. Relations between Islamic Iran and the superpowers waxed and waned depending on the level of threat that Iran perceived was posed by the opposing superpower. Iran sought to undermine the forces arrayed against it in the gulf through conciliatory policies toward regimes such as the U.A.E. and Qatar that were sympathetic to its views. In short, Iran was, as predicted by structural theory, socialized by, and participated in, the international system.

Structural theory only goes so far, however, in explaining state behavior, and is of little use explaining issues that do not impact the survival of the nation. In these issues, domestic politics does matter. Relations between Iran and the world clearly changed following the revolution. Iran severed its alliances with the U.S. and CENTO and attempted to isolate itself from the international system dominated by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It sought to expand its revolution to neighboring states and encouraged the "oppressed peoples" to rise up against their "corrupt illegitimate governments." The American hostage crisis of 1979 was a key element of the efforts of the clerics to consolidate their rule to the exclusion of the liberal elements. The revelation of the arms for hostages deal was the result of the continuing power struggle in the Islamic republic between the various factions of the clerical leadership.

It must be noted, however, that structuralists would not attempt to explain these types of issues based on a structural theory of international politics.

The case of Iran also illustrates that ideology makes little difference in the conduct of relations between nations. Whether purchasing arms, marketing its oil or soliciting financial assistance, ideology has not been a constraint on the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic. Rhetoric is designed for the press and for popular consumption, not as serious foreign policy initiatives.

Although this thesis specifically addressed theoretical issues, it does have some serious practical implications. Revolutionary states such as Iran, the current regime in Haiti and Islamic regimes that are threatening to emerge in various Middle Eastern states, are clearly constrained by the international system. It is certainly possible, and in some cases likely, that these states will oppose U.S. strategic or regional interests, but they are still vulnerable to traditional power politics. As ideology is apparently unimportant in the conduct of relations between states, the administration should pay as little attention as possible to the rhetoric these states profess, while pursuing traditional political and military diplomatic efforts to ensure U.S. interests.

While revolutionary states are constrained and socialized by the international system, this does not give a clear indication of the type of behavior to expect from these regimes. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world, the range of possible behaviors has drastically

changed. Although the Soviet Union is not around to offer assistance to states opposing U.S. interests, the U.S. cannot use the threat of Soviet domination to keep its allies in line. States are less constrained by the system and may engage in economic and diplomatic relations with virtually any other state in the international system. It is much more difficult for the U.S. to isolate a given state, especially if that state possesses geostrategic or important economic importance. Even IR theorists, committed to the structural orientation, are unable to agree on the current formation of the international system and the types of constraints on international behavior that it entails.

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