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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**ENDING AN ENEMY:  
UNITED STATES-IRAN RELATIONS**

by

William B. McMurrey

September 2019

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Siamak T. Naficy  
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**ENDING AN ENEMY: UNITED STATES–IRAN RELATIONS**

William B. McMurrey  
Major, United States Army  
BS, U.S. Military Academy, 2007

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS  
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Iran–United States relationship is often described by U.S. leaders as an intractable, zero-sum problem. In this view, the solution is to collapse the Islamic Republic by military threats and unyielding economic pressure. Since 1979, presidents of both parties have pursued this two-tool campaign with similar results.

This research explores the prospects for breaking the characterization of United States–Iran relations as an intractable conflict and seeks more likely avenues for ending adversarial hostility. What makes the hostility between Iran and the United States seem intractable? The investigation of other seemingly intractable relationships (United States–Libya, United States–China, The Troubles, Pre-JCPOA) enables a greater appreciation for the flaws of zero-sum assessments and the gathering of relevant relation-building characteristics.

As an alternative, this thesis offers 1) a broad outline of why Iran–United States relations should not be seen as a zero-sum problem and 2) an examination of other perceived intractably hostile relations and how they were solved, with relevant insights gleaned from prior successful endeavors. Diplomacy is undervalued in the current and previous approaches toward Iran over the past 40+ years; U.S. leaders must reinvigorate diplomacy among the elements of national power. History serves as a font of ideas, illuminating considerations for the development of a concerted effort aimed at advancing long-term relations with Iran.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
ANO	Abu Nidal Organization
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ARG	Amphibious Ready Group
AVG	American volunteer group
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CCP	Communist party of China
CSG	carrier strike group
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DIME	Instruments of National Power (Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic)
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
EADS	European aerospace and defense group
EFP	Explosively formed penetrators
FMS	Foreign military sales
FTO	foreign terrorist organization (U.S. State Department's FTO list)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
G8	Group of Eight
ICBM	intercontinental range ballistic missile
ICC	International Criminal Court
IMET	International military education and training
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRGC-QF	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JP	Joint Publication (U.S. Joint doctrine for the DoD)
KMT	Kuomintang—Chinese nationalist party
MbS	Mohammad bin Salman (Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia)
MbZ	Mohammad bin Zayed (Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces)
MEK	Mujahedin-e Khalq

MEU	U.S. Marine Expeditionary Unit
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate (Annual report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence)
NPT	Non-proliferation Treaty (of nuclear weapons)
NTC	National Transition Council of Libya (Founded 2011)
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OPEC	Organization of the petroleum exporting countries
PRC	People's Republic of China
QME	Israel's qualitative military edge (Term referenced in U.S. congressional and legislative documents)
SAVAK	<i>Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar</i> (Secret Police for Pahlavi dynasty in Iran)
SASC	U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee
SNSC	Supreme National Security Council of Iran
SLV	space launch vehicle
SOF	Special operations forces
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
VEO	Violent extremist organizations
WMD	Weapon of mass destruction

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?<sup>1</sup>

—Abraham Lincoln

China and President Xi pursue a “Hundred-Year” Strategy, while Putin maintains the Russian long game as well.<sup>2</sup> For decades, deterrence was key to U.S. foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> In the current era of impatience and instant gratification in all aspects of life, the application of coercive diplomacy in international affairs resonates with politicians and the American public as the most expeditious option for achieving results. Particularly in the Middle East where Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) and Iran captivate attention, there is an interest in engaging in forceful persuasion.

Numerous Iranian actions have attracted international condemnation and other “distinctly unfavorable reactions from many parts of the world.”<sup>4</sup> Washington officials, media, and Americans have referred to Iran as a threat for some 40 years. The first U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) released in 1987, was an initial report that reflected the then-current strategic thinking: under the subheading of Middle East and South Asia, the NSS identified “Our strategy in region aims to safeguard our interests from those threats” of Libya, Syria and Iran.<sup>5</sup> Through nearly 20 years of National Security Strategy releases,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Greene, *The 48 Laws of Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2016).; Molly K. Mckew, “Putin’s Real Long Game,” *Politico*, January 1, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/01/putins-real-long-game-214589>.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., “The Eroding Balance of Terror: The Decline of Deterrence,” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 63, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-12-11/eroding-balance-terror>.

<sup>4</sup> Sverre Lodgaard, “Challenge from Within: The Case of Iran,” in *Nuclear Proliferation and International Order: Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Treaty*, ed. Olav Njølstad (London: Routledge, 2010), 92, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203844823>.

<sup>5</sup> “National Security Strategy,” Office of the Secretary of Defense: Historical Office, Accessed February 9, 2019, <https://history.defense.gov/Historical-Sources/National-Security-Strategy/>.; Jim Norman, “Four Nations Top United States’ Greatest Enemy List,” Gallup News Service, February 22, 2016, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/189503/four-nations-top-greatest-enemy-list.aspx>.; “Iran,” Gallup News Service, Accessed February 9, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116236/iran.aspx>.



the United States maintains a threat list that includes the nations of China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia.<sup>6</sup> Trends from public opinion polls, using open questions, establish a similar consensus with the same four nations (China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia) rotating the top spot as the “U.S. Greatest enemy.”<sup>7</sup> Dating further back than initiation of the NSS in 1987, the early 1970s marked the labeling of Iran as a threat and the corresponding conflict.

Regional presence of United States military service members started in the late 1940s and in this most recent stint of the twenty-first century, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) service members have been actively deployed in the Middle East and Afghanistan for the past 17 years to face VEOs and Iran.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the use of sanctions, the U.S. military and interagency members spend a great deal of time collecting intelligence and attempting to counter Iranian actions in other theaters of operation (Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan)—without achieving much in the way of longstanding progress to date. Failed attempts to tame an Iranian threat beg the question of the actual strategy for the Middle East and relations between the United States and Iran.<sup>9</sup>

The issues in the Middle East compound with reinvigorated involvement by other competitors (i.e., Russia and China). In the last 24 months, leaders in Washington intermittently have sounded off, alerting the Armed Forces to re-double efforts in

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<sup>6</sup> “National Security Strategy,” Office of the Secretary of Defense: Historical Office, Accessed February 9, 2019, <https://history.defense.gov/Historical-Sources/National-Security-Strategy/>.

<sup>7</sup> Polling range began with February 2001 and most recent poll was February 2018. Jeff Jones and Lydia Saad, “Americans’ View of the United States’ Greatest Enemy (Trends),” Gallup News Service, February 19, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/227906/americans-views-united-states-greatest-enemy-trends.aspx>; Jim Norman, “Four Nations Top United States’ Greatest Enemy List,” Gallup News Service, February 22, 2016, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/189503/four-nations-top-greatest-enemy-list.aspx>; “Iran,” Gallup News Service, Accessed February 9, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116236/iran.aspx>.

<sup>8</sup> An earlier episode of United States involvement began 1908 when the Majles, interested in not giving Russians and British any more of a role in their country, appointed American William Morgan Schuster as their economic advisor. In the 1940s, United States troops deployed to Iran to man supply lines moving lend-lease equipment from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union for use on the Soviet’s Eastern front during WWII. Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 23.; Michael A. Palmer, *Guardians of the Gulf, A History of America’s Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 24. in Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 40.

<sup>9</sup> In approaches to leverage changes in Iranian behavior, leaders in Washington embrace an almost exclusive reliance on military and economic power.

preparation for great power competition. The 4+1 threat list received retooling as a 2+3 to distinguish Russia and China as great powers separate from Iran, North Korea and VEOs.<sup>10</sup> In the context of strategy, perhaps resolving existing conflict or reducing the number of declared U.S. adversaries would enable the United States to refocus attention to great power adversaries. Although facing off and destroying an enemy today contains slightly more complexity than the 1842 planning of Lincoln’s duel with cavalry broadswords, this achievement of ending an enemy is in the realm of the possible.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly, the “belief in American ingenuity, the American spirit [and] the can-do attitude” should enable the United States scratch off at least one adversary from the 2+3 threat list.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the United States possesses the intangible traits to lose an enemy.

In the present period, removing an adversary from a threat list is possible using lethal or non-lethal methods.<sup>13</sup> In a deductive manner, we review the list of adversaries for a potential candidate to remove. China and Russia are not suitable choices to directly assault based on the possibility of mutually assured destruction, as well as our interconnectedness in multiple spectrums. North Korea, as a nuclear state, has shown an extreme resistance to conventional policy and sanctions and military coercion. The complete destruction of VEOs (current and future) is unlikely based on ever-presence of grievances, the proliferation of ideologies, morphing networks, and acephalous traits that contribute to their resilience. However, if we should want to reduce the threat list as well

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<sup>10</sup> “4+1” threat list refers to Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and violent extremist organizations. Jim Garamone, “Changes Coming to Strategic Levels in Military, Dunford Promises,” U.S. Department of Defense, October 5, 2016, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/965661/change-coming-to-strategic-levels-in-military-dunford-promises/>; Jim Garamone, “U.S. Benchmarking Capabilities Against China, Russia, Dunford Says,” U.S. Department of Defense, November 6, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1683762/us-benchmarking-capabilities-against-china-russia-dunford-says/>.

<sup>11</sup> “A Story of Mr. Lincoln’s Duel,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1867, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/92333346/>; “Lincoln’s Broadsword Duel: How he Accepted a Challenge to Fight in a Quarrel About a Pin,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1876, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/93549534/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Mourning the Passing of President Ronald Reagan*. H.R. 664. 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., June 8, 2004, 11767.

<sup>13</sup> Emphasis on the type of engagement with an U.S. adversary remains in Washington—Shot caller’s (i.e., policymaker’s) choice. Lil’ Troy, “Wanna Be a Baller,” May 15, 1999, MP3 Audio, stream, 0:03:39, <http://spotify.com>.

as progress the U.S. national interest in Middle East stability, Iran is a prime candidate. Consider the value of Iran's geography and its population: access to the 4th largest oil resources, the 2nd largest natural gas holding, the generally "pro-American" population, and a history of civic participation.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Iran as a threat pales in comparison to Russia and China.

Before we step further with this nomination for dealing with Iran, a short reflection of nineteenth century history may prompt U.S. policymakers to refashion their approach to United States–Iran relations. The previously mentioned 1842 affair of honor, the duel between Abraham Lincoln and James Shields, called for "the–barbarous practice of fighting with broadswords in the nineteenth century" across the Mississippi river inside a 12-foot pit.<sup>15</sup> Spectators and colleagues of both men anticipated the inevitable–significant bloodshed. On September 22, 1842, both parties met on the island and made final preparations for their faceoff. During prelude of their duel, Lincoln nonchalantly reach up and lopped off a branch of a nearby tree, this "impressive display of arm-span" was "an effort to scare Shields into submission."<sup>16</sup> Again, the duel was a matter of honor and the display did not sway Shields. Before the duel commenced, several mutual friends intervened. Francis Browne, American biographer, credits General John Jay Hardin in

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<sup>14</sup> Global rank ordering for oil resources and natural gas holdings. BP, BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2018, 67th ed. (London: BP, June 2018), 12, <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/en/corporate/pdf/energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2018-full-report.pdf>; Ibid., 26.; References emphasizing Iran's "Pro-American" population. Thomas L. Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes: The World in the Age of Terrorism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 345.; Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle : The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 309.; Afshin Molavi, "A New Day in Iran?," *Smithsonian*, March 2005, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/a-new-day-in-iran-84154591/>.; Azadeh Moaveni, "Stars (and Stripes) in Their Eyes," *Washington Post*, June 1, 2008. in Sara B. Elson and Alireza Nader, *What Do Iranians Think? A Survey of Attitudes on the United States, the Nuclear Program, and the Economy* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2011), 17.; Karim Sadjadpour, "How America Could Stumble into War with Iran," *Atlantic*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/02/iran-trump-nuclear-deal/515979/>.; Herb London, "The Iranian People are pro-American, unlike their Government," Fox News, January 5, 2018, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/the-iranian-people-are-pro-american-unlike-their-government>.

<sup>15</sup> The location selected was an island across the Mississippi river as dueling was illegal in Illinois. "Lincoln's Broadsword Duel: How he Accepted a Challenge to Fight in a Quarrel About a Pin," *New York Times*, December 3, 1876. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/93549534/>.; Julia Davis, "The Time Abe Lincoln and a Rival Almost Dueled," *Mental Floss*, September 18, 2014, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/12382/time-abraham-lincoln-and-political-rival-almost-dueled-island>.

<sup>16</sup> Julia Davis, "The Time Abe Lincoln and a Rival Almost Dueled," *Mental Floss*, September 18, 2014, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/12382/time-abraham-lincoln-and-political-rival-almost-dueled-island>.

“putting a stop to the whole proceeding.”<sup>17</sup> Twenty-five years later, the *New York Times* recounted the impetus deescalating the situation was Mr. Lincoln’s earnest statement and a dash of humor.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, the men reached “[A] face-saving compromise, working it out with words instead of [hacking each other with] swords.”<sup>19</sup> The duel ended as a bloodless affair and years later during the height of the American Civil War, President Lincoln recommended a second bloodless approach to another question of life and death. President Lincoln was chastised for describing “Southerners as fellow human beings in error,” not as “irreconcilable enemies who must be destroyed,” Lincoln offered another bloodless approach of “destroy [ing] [our] enemies when [we] make them [our] friends.”<sup>20</sup>

In light of President Lincoln’s actions and words, we must examine United States’ positions revving for regime change in Iran and forcefully destroying an enemy. While acknowledging U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) planners have already generated options using the Joint Operations Planning Process, there is still space for initiating a potentially bloodless and more concerted effort to resolve the conflict. Perhaps before we execute strategic and operational-level decisions centered on a kinetic faceoff with Iran, it is imperative to revisit the prospects of a concerted effort to advance United States–Iran relations.

#### **A. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM (AREA OF INQUIRY)**

The United States upholds an extended presence in the Middle East with overlapping short- and medium-term efforts to maintain and secure national interests. The United States has met with little progress to date, despite leveraging sanctions, military and interagency resources used to collect intelligence and counter Iran’s actions, as well as its presence in other theaters of operation (Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan). More concisely,

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<sup>17</sup> Francis F. Browne, *The Every-day Life of Abraham Lincoln*, (New York: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co. 1887), 185.

<sup>18</sup> “A Story of Mr. Lincoln’s Duel,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1867, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/92333346/>.

<sup>19</sup> Julia Davis, “The Time Abe Lincoln and a Rival Almost Dueled,” *Mental Floss*, September 18, 2014, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/12382/time-abraham-lincoln-and-political-rival-almost-dueled-island>.

<sup>20</sup> This version of Lincoln’s first-person question revised into a third-person statement for readers. Robert Greene, *The 48 Laws of Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 12.

the actual strategy for the Middle East and relations between the United States and Iran remains unclear. The United States perceives and professes the conflict with Iran to be an intractable, zero-sum problem.<sup>21</sup> Leaders in Washington maintaining a zero-sum viewpoint, regardless of administration or political affiliation, appear to have an affinity for military and economic tools. This zero-sum viewpoint and the lack of long-term strategy spur concern for the status of intractable conflict between the United States and Iran.

Within the larger realm of security studies, the research area for this thesis regarding Iran is informed by theories of balance of power, patron-client state relationships, coercive diplomacy, theocracies, selectorate theory related to small-coalition regimes, as well as to aspects of trust. Empirical cases for consideration are: (U.S.–China)—Nixon’s approach to China (1969–1972) in connection with Vietnam; (U.S.–Libya)—Libyan pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (1981–2003); (United Nations–Iraq)—Oil for Food (1995–2003) Program; and (U.S.–Egypt)—security aid (1974–2003) in the form of Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and International Military Education and Training (IMET). Outside the nation-state conflicts previously described, we consider one additional conflict with a religious flavor—with peace only after 30 years of continued retributive violence: (State/Non-State)—The Northern Ireland Conflict (1968–1998).

This research effort centers on the tools of statecraft to pursue national interests. The wielding of the diplomatic, informational, military and economic instruments of national power (DIME) and the “whole of government” approach represent for the United States two additional areas within the empirical discussion.<sup>22</sup> In the years leading up to

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<sup>21</sup> Zero-sum problem(s): Regional influencer: Iran **or** United States; Complete capitulation (Pompeo’s 12 demands) of Iran **or** the United States must walk away from the Middle East; United States must pick Iran **or** Israel/Saudi Arabia; Patron **or** Client; Negotiation (JCPOA) **or** Military action; “Axis of Evil” **or** positioned in “rightful place [among] in the community of nations”; Diplomatic dialogue **or** Military threats/action; etc.

<sup>22</sup> “Within the national security community, the DIME model is a categorization of actions based on aspects of national power. Each categorization—Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic—is an instrument of national power.” Catherine A. Theohary, *Information Warfare: Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R45142 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018), 7, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R45142.pdf>; Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Strategy*, Joint Doctrine Note 1–18 (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 25, 2018), II-5, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn\\_jg/jdn1\\_18.pdf?ver=2018-04-25-150439-540](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn_jg/jdn1_18.pdf?ver=2018-04-25-150439-540).

positive interactions, we may potentially find the nations grappled in a tit-for-tat manner based on a zero-sum assessment of problems spurring a perception that the conflicts were immovable. From a cursory glance of these examples, conflict appears to churn before the application of diplomacy in conjunction with other forms of national power. A concerted effort incorporating multiple elements of national power resulted in changes within the targeted nation that promoting positive interactions between the nations. These cases may offer insight to the United States–Iran relations through which it is feasible to regain traction for enhancing nation-state relationships.

Another unique challenge lies in the United States’ ability to advance relations with Iran while balancing other bilateral and multilateral relationships. The United States–China relationship development (1970s) was mostly a bilateral action which had multilateral effects. Acknowledging the complexity of multinational interests and existing bilateral relationships, the thesis will also consider interactions of regional personalities and nations: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Zayed (mbZ) of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Both regional partners of the United States will attempt to inform policy through Saudi and Israeli lobbyists inside the United States and regionally affect the re-kindling relations with Iran. Beyond regional actors, the frame also includes Russia and the group of national stakeholders for the nuclear deal (JCPOA) as they have a vested stake in the status of the United States–Iran relations.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The United States’ customary view frames the conflict with Iran as a rigid, zero-sum problem. Through the 40-year period since the revolution, the policy makers’ solution had called for pressuring the Islamic Republic of Iran with military threats, other countering efforts, and economic pressure. United States presidents of both parties have seen similarly insignificant results by emphasizing military and economic national power. This thesis aims to investigate what makes the hostility between Iran and the United States seem intractable.

If by unpacking the importance of this question—if it follows that the foundation of U.S. policy on Iran is this unsurmountable, intractable conflict—we determine this view is not appropriate by locating flaws with the zero-sum assessment, then the very architectural pillar of the United States’ current policy strategy crumbles.

A recent 2018 example of a message formulated with a zero-sum viewpoint was the U.S. Secretary of State’s remarks outlining 12 sweeping conditions required for any Iran deal.<sup>23</sup> The 12 demands ranged from Iran ending support of militia groups outside Iran to altering the status ballistic missile development. While the 12 points are often described as expectations “consistent with global norms” and actions of “a normal nation,” the problem of insisting adherence to an extensive pre-conditions list is that the stance eliminates the possibility of finding a workable solution.<sup>24</sup> Demands of complete capitulation does not pique the interest of other nations to positively respond or engage in dialogue. The removal of bargaining chips for Iran means any engagements would initiate with an unequal status; as such, there is no interest to participate in dialogue. Foreign policy resting a zero-sum view and containing far-reaching demands lacks structural integrity and disintegrates when relied upon.

This thesis explores prospects for breaking the intractable, zero-sum characterization of United States–Iran relations to open potential avenues for rapprochement. The inspection includes four comparative examples of previously perceived intractable conflicts, offers how they were solved, and provides a vantage point to glean insights into relation-building from the progress of those prior successful

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<sup>23</sup> Secretary Pompeo shared remarks, containing the 12 points, with Heritage Foundation 14 days after President Trump announced the United States’ withdrawal from the JCPOA. Michael R. Pompeo, “After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy,” Remarks to Heritage Foundation, U.S. Department of State, May 21, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/after-the-deal-a-new-iran-strategy/>.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase actions of “a normal nation” lacks a reference point. It is questionable if Iran needs to act a normal nation similar to that of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or an earlier Iran (an era under the Shah). Within this added context, there are flaws with the statement. Michael R. Pompeo, “After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy,” Remarks to Heritage Foundation, U.S. Department of State, May 21, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/after-the-deal-a-new-iran-strategy/>; John Paul Ging, “Mike Pompeo: Iran Should Behave Like ‘A Normal Nation,’” Euronews, June 3, 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/06/02/mike-pompeo-iran-should-behave-like-a-normal-nation>; Nahal Toosi and Anita Kumar, “Pompeo Offers, to Talk to Iran with ‘No Pre-conditions,’” *Politico*, June 2, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/02/pompeo-iran-trump-negotiations-1349845>.

endeavors. One caveat to this method is that the comparative examples are simply analogies; they do not provide a numbered checklist for actions or steps guaranteeing success. Instead, these analogies use history to illuminate insights available for enhancing the United States–Iran relationship.

First, we examine (U.S.–LIBYA and U.S.–CHINA) conflict examples. Expanding beyond the first two examples, this thesis surveys The Troubles in Northern Ireland (State/Non-State) and the United States–Iran relations (Pre-JCPOA) at a time when both parties managed to navigate the complex conflict and reached a solution/compromise. Both examples extend additional perspective for the perceived intractable conflict related to religious motivations and the fourth example includes the nation-states of Iran and the United States.

In addition to checking the status of the zero-sum viewpoint, the topic supports the gathering of relevant relation-building characteristics from previously successful endeavors. The historical analogies highlight similarities and differences to provide perspective for consideration of the United States’ policy approach with Iran.

### **C. BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE**

Multiple bodies of knowledge provide understanding of conflict, statecraft tools and their specialized utility across varying environments and conditions. In addition, this section refines topics for empirical considerations and shares the projected actor-specific focus of discussion regarding Iran and United States relations.

This is a voluminous area of study for scholars as the topic contains numerous variations and levels. In its basic form, conflict is an “incompatibility—of ideas, beliefs, behaviors, roles needs, desires, values and so on—then resolving such incompatibility leads, in some way, to change: in attitude, perception belief, norms, behavior, roles, relationship, and so forth.”<sup>25</sup> In discussions of strategy, the military refers to “a wide

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<sup>25</sup> Eric C. Marcus, “Change and Conflict: Motivation, Resistance and Commitment,” in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice 2nd edition*, ed. Peter T. Coleman, Morton Deutsch, and Eric C. Marcus (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 436.



variety of challenges along a conflict continuum that spans from peace to war.”<sup>26</sup> The complex nature of the strategic environment links the conflict continuum with the range of military operations in three categories: military engagement, security cooperation and deterrence; crisis response and limited contingency operations; and large-scale combat operations.<sup>27</sup>

This research narrows the interest to U.S. relationships labeled as intractable hostility. In descriptions of United States approaches the Middle East and South Asia, Stephen P. Cohen and Maayan Malter characterize intractable conflict as “having lasted for 25 years or longer, with no sign of resolution” and includes a structural fact—“a lack of trust in the other side causes embedded hardliners to derail détente.”<sup>28</sup> In 2010, four psychologists, Vallacher et al. denoted an intractable conflict as “one that has become entrenched in cognitive, affective, and social-structural mechanisms, a transformation that effectively distances the conflict from the perceived incompatibilities that launched it.”<sup>29</sup> The American and Polish psychologists explained an exacerbation of problems “[a]s a conflict becomes a primary focus of each party’s thoughts, feelings, and actions even factors that are irrelevant to the conflict become framed in a way that intensifies or maintains the conflict.”<sup>30</sup> Later, the scheme proposed for digesting the comparative examples in Chapter IV refers to this exacerbation of problems as “churning conflict.”

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<sup>26</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, October 22, 2018), V-4, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_0ch1.pdf?ver=2018-11-27-160457-910](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0ch1.pdf?ver=2018-11-27-160457-910)

<sup>27</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, October 22, 2018), V-4, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_0ch1.pdf?ver=2018-11-27-160457-910](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0ch1.pdf?ver=2018-11-27-160457-910)

<sup>28</sup> Stephen P. Kohen and Maayan Malter, “Managing Intractable Conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia,” Brookings, July 23, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2015/07/23/managing-intractable-conflicts-in-the-middle-east-and-south-asia/>.

<sup>29</sup> Robin R. Vallacher, Peter T. Coleman, Andrzej Nowak, and Lan Bui-Wrzosinska, “Rethinking Intractable Conflict: The Perspective of Dynamical Systems.” *American Psychologist* 65, no. 4 (2010): 262.

<sup>30</sup> Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak, and Bui-Wrzosinska, 262.

Tools of statecraft are often implemented in order to influence the external balance of power.<sup>31</sup> Tools come in various shapes and sizes, but there are two general categories distinguish the external approach.

The first category is through the application of “hard” power, which often refers to the use or threat of military force or applying “coercive” methods to induce a response by the identified nation.<sup>32</sup> Brandishing hard power requires the expenditure of resources. Three coercive diplomacy variations are: stopping an opponent’s action before they reach a goal, persuading an opponent to undue an action, and pursuing an alteration in the government such as a change of the regime.<sup>33</sup>

The second category is the use of “soft” power, a persuasive method, in which actions center upon the adjustment of an opponent’s preference ordering.<sup>34</sup> This foundational knowledge of hard and soft power will assist with the exploration of the empirical cases as well as the comprehensive approach to Iran–United States relations.

Patron-client relationships, in any given society, are interactions of individuals that are personal, voluntary, tied to interests, and structured by trust (solidarity) with members of the community.<sup>35</sup> Carney assists with describing dyadic, harmonious relationships in comparison to structurally conflicted relationships that rely on the use of coercive power for the interactions of nation-states.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, “World Politics in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” *Review of Politics* 10, no. 2 (April 1948): 156.

<sup>32</sup> Kurt Campbell and Michael O’Hanlon, *Hard Power: The New Politics of National Security* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Alexander L. George, David K. Hall, and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1971).

<sup>34</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, “Patron—Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 1 (January 1980): 44.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher P. Carney, “International Patron-Client Relationships: A Conceptual Framework,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 24, no. 2 (1989): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687171>.

In another line of thought, there is utility in exploring selectorate theory related to small-coalition regimes.<sup>37</sup> The exploration of reliance on political coalitions, for the purpose of preserving stability and avoiding potential revolutions, enhances the understanding of the variables associated with coalition size as well as the health status of individual leaders.<sup>38</sup> For consideration of empirical cases, one area of observation is the level of emphasis the nations and /or leaders place on political coalitions. There is relevance in identifying relations with theocracies, as this may contain benefits for understanding a system of government intertwined with religion.

The statecraft tools have specialized utility across varying regional environments. There are numerous theories available, but we often do not find a theory with a perfect fit for multiple interactions. Theories serve as lenses to categorize interactions and gain perspective regarding relationships between nations. This basis of theoretical knowledge assists with the dissection and weighing of empirical examples for later consideration and potential application.

### **1. Empirical Consideration**

Case studies for consideration include relations revolving around conflict, cooperation, efforts to induce desirable outcomes, coercion, and other combinations of effort. The Nixon administration's political approach to China between 1969 and 1972, topped with Nixon's 1972 visit with China at the tail end of Vietnam, enabled the thawing of relations.<sup>39</sup> Soft power, incorporated by Nixon, enabled the revision of China's preferences specific to Vietnam as well as the larger Cold War. The Libyan pursuit (1981–2003) of weapons of mass destruction ended through persuasion, as well as other variations

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<sup>37</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior Is Almost Always Good Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Dena Motevalian, "How Coalitions in the Islamic Republic of Iran Maintain the Regime's Stability." *Journal of Political Inquiry: New York University* (Fall 2016): 9.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret MacMillan, "'Nixon and Mao,'" *New York Times*, February 25, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/25/books/chapters/0225-1st-macm.html>

forms of coercion, which ultimately induced cooperation.<sup>40</sup> The Libyan regime, like other autocratic governments, also contained a small winning coalition. There are several distinct periods of United States–Egypt relations (1974–2003) in which the United States provided security aid such as FMS and IMET programs.<sup>41</sup> Spanier and Wendzel’s concept of influence assists with describing the efforts to build personal relationships at all governmental levels through the FMS program as well as the use of the IMET program to expose potential leaders of Egypt to United States culture and values.<sup>42</sup> In addition to inducing some actions of Egypt through compellence, the application of soft power techniques were also prevalent in portions of United States–Egypt relations.

## 2. Actor-Specific (Iran)

The actor specific portion of the thesis considers a concerted approach to Iran–United States relations. Not only does Iran appear to possess a tolerance for nearly 40 years of sanctions, the U.S. military and interagency organizations have not achieved concerted success in efforts to counter Iran’s twenty-year expansion of influence in Syria, Iraq, and more recently Yemen.<sup>43</sup> While this thesis explores the American and Iranian positions and approaches, it also acknowledges the complexity of multinational interest and existing bilateral relationships such as that with Saudi Arabia and Israel. Current posture of these two nations regarding Iran and their current reach into American politics strains the possibility of the United States rekindling relations with Iran. Beyond regional actors, the Russians and the group of international stakeholders for the nuclear deal (JCPOA) interacting with Iran are also worth noting.

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<sup>40</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson and Christopher A. Whytock, “Who ‘Won’ Libya?: The Force-Diplomacy Debate and Its Implications for Theory and Policy,” *International Security* 30, no. 3 (December 1, 2005): 51.

<sup>41</sup> Scott C. Gover, “U.S. Security Assistance to Egypt: A Source of Influence or Illusion?” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 1996), ix–xiii, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/32155>.

<sup>42</sup> John W. Spanier and Robert L. Wendzel, *Games Nations Play* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1996).; Scott C. Gover, “U.S. Security Assistance to Egypt: A Source of Influence or Illusion?” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 1996), 81, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/32155>.

<sup>43</sup> Ben Hubbard, Isabel Kershner, and Anne Barnard, “Iran, Deeply Embedded in Syria, Expands ‘Axis of Resistance,’” *New York Times*, February 19, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/19/world/middleeast/iran-syria-israel.html>.

## **D. CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

Chapter II discusses methodology for using cases to investigate what makes the hostility between Iran and the United States seem so intractable. First, we review selection criteria, the identification of four comparative examples, and the formulation of two assumptions. The assumptions assist with catching the recognition of the other side having a vote as well as discussing actions addressing the element of security. While the selection of nations with similarities to Iran eases the process of drawing parallels, we will also garner insights from the differences.

Chapter III notes ideologies and an ecological model of politics. This contribution frames a problem in an expanded manner to consider the nation-state exchanges with the ecological surroundings and stresses the significance of weighting actions over words in conflict.

Chapter IV, Comparative Examples, incorporates a three-pronged method of examining symptoms vs. root, churning conflict, and where intractability was dissolved. Through the examination of each conflict, we check for perceived intractability and instances of the United States displaying its zero-sum assessment of problems. Sequence of examples: (U.S.–LIBYA), (U.S.–CHINA), (The Troubles), and (Pre-JCPOA). The first two comparative examples of the United States relationships with Libya and China, respectively. The United States–Libya conflict offers the model of oversimplified policy. The third and fourth case of The Troubles and Pre-JCPOA serve as examples regarding emphasis of religious motivation and a sliver of time where United States–Iran interactions established an agreement and were interfacing on a generally positive wavelength. This chapter serves as the consolidation point for relation-building characteristics, concepts and traits of utility that aided in the crumbling of other conflicts.

Chapter V narrows in on the actor specific portion of the thesis. First, we factor Iranian action by reviewing the state's behavior in pursuit of Iranian security goals. In particular, the strategic utility of Iran's Quds Force (IRCG-QF) protects the revolution and serves as the primary method for advancing Iranian interests. The United States–Iran interactions in the region accentuates U.S. military efforts without the application of other

forms of national power are not enough to change Iranian action. The second portion of Chapter V dissects the symptoms vs. root issue, the conflict churning, and the status of the United States–Iran conflict. The chapter assists with teasing out objections and implications for existing relationships (e.g., Israel, Saudi Arabia, Russia, JCPOA stakeholders).

Chapter VI provides implications and conclusions for advancing United States–Iran relations. Specifically, the chapter reemphasizes the flaws of maintaining rigid zero-sum assessment of problems and draws upon other perceived intractably hostile conflicts in U.S. history as analogies regarding the condition of conflict between the United States and Iran. Appreciation of both similarities and differences from history enables greater understanding of the United States–Iran relationship. The previously successful endeavors offer insights to integrate with a future concerted effort for United States–Iran relations.

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## II. METHODOLOGY

This chapter draws upon the background to the problem and the bodies of knowledge to establish the scheme for selecting comparative cases, framing the examples, assumptions and linking the cases with United States and Iran interactions.

In an effort to identify considerations for a future concerted approach to relations with Iran, this thesis looks for the relation-building utility of previously recognized theories: balance of power (Morgenthau) emphasizing the application of “hard” or “soft” power, patron-client relations (Eisenstadt and Roniger), and selectorate theory to small-coalition regimes (Buena de Mesquita and Smith). This basis of theoretical knowledge may assist with the dissection and weighing of empirical examples for analysis and potential application. Comparative examples for consideration include relations revolving around conflict; cooperation; inducement of desirable outcomes, including by means of coercive diplomacy; and other combinations of effort.

In addition to recognized theories, the thesis uses an analogy related to the ecological model of polities. The analogy emphasizes the framework for capturing nation-state interaction with the surrounding ecology, nations are a product of what is available at the time, and the weighting of behavior/actions over words. Chapter IV/V use a three-pronged scheme for exploring the zero-sum, intractable conflicts and incorporates discussions of: 1) symptoms of conflict versus the root cause/s, 2) the lag or misreading of intentions and/or purpose when the ecology of available choices was not considered (leading to unintended sabotage and conflict churning), and 3) an examination of how other seemingly intractable conflicts were indeed solved.

The inspection of the comparative cases notes the flaws of the rigid, zero-sum assessment of problems. In the instance of the United States–China (Chapter 4B) and United States–Iran (Chapter 5B) interactions, the explorations of both describe the misreading of intentions/purpose using balance of power and selectorate theory lenses to note the churning conflict. Refining the problem to consider ecology emphasizes weight of actions over words and accentuates the significance of the interplay between local politics



and foreign policy for both nations. We examine comparative examples in history of previously perceived intractable conflicts, how they were solved and glean insights from the progress of the United States' prior successful endeavors. The analogies highlight similarities, but the differences also offer perspective for consideration of the United States' approach with other nations. History serves as foil, illuminating aspects to consider for the development of a concerted effort for improving long-term relations with Iran.

#### **A. SELECTION CRITERIA**

This study examines four comparative examples in order to consolidate characteristics associated with relation-building utility. There is also something to be learned from the objections to U.S. policy from intended target state perspective as well as the parties and groups mentioned previously, e.g., Saudi Arabia, Israel, Russia, JCPOA stakeholders. Selection criteria for cases includes periods of time (years) with frozen or hostile communications; presence of a small winning coalition within the target nation-state (regardless of official political structure); and awareness that bi-lateral action initiated will have multilateral consequences.

This area of exploration focuses not on coalitions, but specifically on U.S. relations with another nation-state. The example of the Iraqi Oil for Food (1995–2003) Program would be insightful for relationships from the perspectives of hard power compellence and selectorate theory; however, this case falls outside of the selection criteria as the exchange occurred between the United Nations and Iraq. In the instance of multi-national relationships, the variance of respective national interests adds complexity to the case. Therefore, coalition interaction is increasingly difficult to decipher for the purpose of isolating of variables.

Moreover, this study draws upon cases where nation-states reluctantly receive or accept soft-power enticements instead of nations over-enthusiastically reaching to grasp benefits. Another aspect narrowing the example selection is the initiation of action, adjusting the relationship, beginning with the United States. The United States security aid to Egypt (1974–2003) presented a valuable for understanding soft power and the extent of United States influence gained through the implementation of FMS and IMET programs.

However, this case falls outside the selection criteria due to the change stimulant originating from Egyptian action; the Egyptians initiated these actions in connection with a motivation to gain access to the United States' menu of soft power incentives.

The example of United States and Egypt began in the 1950s, when the United States' had concerns about the close ties between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Varied viewpoints existed due to pan-Arabism concept and the initial alignment with the Soviet Union through rounds of the Arab-Israeli battles in the 1970s, a void in dialog remained between the United States and Egypt. President Anwar Sadat's effort to "build Egypt's internal [regional] importance is less an end in itself than a mean of furthering his primary goal: that of attracting the cooperation and assistance of other states in the tasks of advancing Egypt's economic development."<sup>44</sup> A CIA memorandum regarding Sadat described, "The first years of his presidency were marked to a certain degree by an uncompromising attitude toward many foreign policy problems, by fruitless attempts to fulfill Nasir's vision of pan-Arab unity, and by a failure to look ahead at the long-range consequences of his decision."<sup>45</sup> The report attributed Sadat's reevaluation to the US-Soviet détente. Egypt perceived the United States was interested in stagnation of the Arab-Israeli confrontation.

President Sadat recognized national development, especially economics, could not occur for Egypt without settling this regional conflict. Acknowledging the possibility of greater external support, the Egyptians reducing the connection with the Soviet Union and reached for the United States as an intermediary. Sadat contended, "[N]o country can afford to be isolated from either the U.S. or the USSR and hostility toward one at the price of friendship with the other is unrealistic and harmful."<sup>46</sup> Egyptian recognition of United States' willingness to assist with security aid enticed the nation to separate itself from the Soviet Union. The concept of influence designated by Spanier and Wendzel in 1995 assists

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<sup>44</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "A Coming of Age: The Foreign Policy of Anwar Sadat," Memorandum, April 9, 1975, 2, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00865A002500320001-0.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, 4.

with describing the efforts to build personal relationships, at all governmental levels, through the FMS and IMET programs.<sup>47</sup>

There was evidence of frozen communications, instances of military coups changing the small winning coalitions, and the bilateral relations stimulating multilateral consequences. The activation of the United States–Egypt bilateral relationship improved Arab-Israeli relations and led to the Camp David Accords of 1979. While the example meets the selection criteria, we set aside the example because Egypt initiated the first move to improve relations. Instead of an example where a nation enthusiastically reached for and accepted “carrots” as inducements or payments, the study intends to draw upon cases where the targeted nation reluctantly accepted enticements and the United States initiated the adjustment of the relationship.<sup>48</sup> In the instance of United States–Egypt relations, President Anwar Sadat commenced actions adding warmth to a cold relationship. Another aspect that precipitated the cold shoulder of the United States with Egypt was not strictly due independent Egyptian national actions, but a mix of United States’ frustration with pan-Arabism and more even significantly their soviet ties. In short, the United States–Egypt relationship is not included in the scope of this survey.

The date range for case identification stretches from present day, 2019, back to the 1950s. The left limit for case selection refers to a change in the United States’ stance on imperialism. After the dust settled from WWII, the 1950s concept of national self-determination blossomed with the U.S. encouragement of “European imperial powers to negotiate an early withdrawal from their overseas colonies.”<sup>49</sup> An unintended consequence of advocating self-determination was the activation of competition and prolonged the justification of waves of liberation, though United States believed colonies and newly

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<sup>47</sup> John W. Spanier and Robert L. Wendzel, *Games Nations Play* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996>.

<sup>49</sup> Department of State: The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945–1960,” last modified January 7, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/98782.htm>.

independent nations were susceptible to Soviet influence of communism. During the period of Cold War competition, various tools of statecraft were tested and refined.

## **B. CASES 1–2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FOCUS**

The first comparative example, U.S.–Libya, precipitates from the incremental expansion of U.S. national interests based on the development and proliferation of technology. The Libyan pursuit (1981–2003) of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) ended through persuasion, as well as other variations of coercion which ultimately induced cooperation.<sup>50</sup> In the 1970s, the United States and Libya traded limited verbal dialogue in a strained relationship. President Qaddafi threatened to sideline American companies through the nationalization of oil.<sup>51</sup>

The U.S. Department of State designated Libya a “State Sponsor of Terrorism” in conjunction with the 1979 enactment of an Arms Export Control Act. Libya attempted to demonstrate an air power capability and lost a direct fire engagement with the United States during the 1981 Gulf of Sidra incident. This shaped Muammar Qaddafi’s desire to wield a greater capability, which led to his pursuit of a WMD program. A preliminary view of this case points to Libyan actions as attempts to rebalance power. Libya, at this time, was easily identifiable as a small-coalition regime.

Although successful persuasion eliminated the Libyan WMD program, there is an asterisk mark on this case, based on the later overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi. United States policymakers and leaders of other nations commonly reference the U.S.–Libya case when referring to regime change. In consideration for an approach to develop a lasting

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<sup>50</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson and Christopher A. Whytock, “Who ‘Won’ Libya?: The Force-Diplomacy Debate and Its Implications for Theory and Policy,” *International Security* 30, no. 3 (December 1, 2005): 51.

<sup>51</sup> For spelling consistency, this thesis refers to Libyan leader as “Qaddafi” in the text while footnotes and list of references may have an alternate spelling of the last name. Max Fisher, “Rebel Discovers Qaddafi Passport, Real Spelling of Leader’s Name,” *Atlantic*, August 24, 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/08/rebel-discovers-qaddafi-passport-real-spelling-of-leaders-name/244077/>.; Steven Mufson, “Conflict in Libya: U.S. Oil Companies Sit on Sidelines as Gaddafi Maintains Hold,” *Washington Post*, June 10, 2011, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/conflict-in-libya-us-oil-companies-sit-on-sidelines-as-gaddafi-maintains-hold/2011/06/03/AGJq2QPH\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/conflict-in-libya-us-oil-companies-sit-on-sidelines-as-gaddafi-maintains-hold/2011/06/03/AGJq2QPH_story.html).

relationship, policy makers should recognize the statecraft audible of regime change as a risky venture that cannot guarantee short-term results. An advantage of choosing this case is the commonality between Libya and Iran based on the prevalence of oil as a natural resource. Examination of the U.S.–Libya case, prior to the regime change, may provide insights to a U.S.-policy approach that defused the desire for a Libyan offensive weapon capability in the form of WMD.

The second comparative example for survey, U.S.–China, began with Nixon’s empowerment of Kissinger to initiate a dialogue in 1969 with Premier Zhou Enlai at the tail end of the Vietnam War, which facilitated the thawing of relations.<sup>52</sup> Before the thawing of relations, the balance of power and selectorate theory provide perspective on United States–China relations. The soft power incorporated by Nixon encouraged the revision of China’s preferences specific to Vietnam, as well as in the larger Cold War. As a communist nation-state, a small winning coalition existed in the form of Chinese elites who influenced policy choices. The threatened annexation of Taiwan, in terms of bilateral relations, illustrates multilateral consequences. Selection of the U.S.–China case provides an example of “soft” power in a period replete with coercive diplomatic actions.

### **C. CASES 3–4: OTHER NODS TO DISSOLVED INTRACTABILITY (THE TROUBLES) AND (PRE-JCPOA)**

The conflict in Northern Ireland (The Troubles) and U.S.–IRAN (Pre-JCPOA) are two additional examples that will most likely expand the prospects for gathering of relevant insights. While The Troubles in Northern Ireland were more an intrastate rather than interstate matter, the similarities and differences are valuable when analyzing conflict and hostility shaping United States–Iran relations. Although, the pre-JCPOA period of conflict provides context for the present United States–Iran conflict, the real significance of the analogy relates to the flaws of the zero-sum view that helped to constrain and derail notions of compromise even when they were being reached. Pre-JCPOA example emphasized in spite of everything, compromise occurred. Counter to the self-imposed zero-sum

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret MacMillan, “Nixon and Mao,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/25/books/chapters/0225-1st-macm.html>.

constraint, compromise is not extinct and remains a possibility. The dissection of both of these examples investigates intractability between two parties in order to gain insights for future United States–Iran interactions.

In relation to the assumption regarding the fundamental issue of security, there is an interest in expanding the exploration with The Northern Ireland Conflict (1968-1998). This example resonates due to the 30 years of violence in which religious beliefs fanned and propelled action on both sides. It is unclear if this is culturally induced ignorance or limited memory bank, but there is a belief that no accommodation exists within religious clashes. Parties cannot back down from conflict when they take action for religious beliefs. Oddly, many people associating the Troubles as an absolute religious clash were surprised by the outcome when the conflict ended with the Good Friday Agreement on April 10, 1998.<sup>53</sup> Reaching an end of conflict with religious undertones should not be surprise, for even the Crusades ended. The peace process leading to a breakthrough in Northern Ireland may translate to an approach for shaping relations between the United States and target nation-states where religion appears to be an issue. John Coakley offers “three features of the process leading the agreement are of particular interest: the inclusive character of participation, the significance of informal discourse and the degree of reliance on external mediation.”<sup>54</sup> Although, the case involved a state and a non-state actor, there is potential for unearthing additional insights relevant to bi-lateral nation-state relations. As such, the underlying question worth examining is “what changed?” in the Northern Ireland conflict.

The Pre-JCPOA period contained considerable conflict between the United States and Iran. Many, if not most, United States policymakers believed diplomatic interaction with the Islamic Republic of Iran was a fool’s errand; however, between 2012 and 2015 negotiations occurred and resulted in the implementation of a formalized agreement. Despite a long list of grievances held by both sides, positive interaction occurred. The selection of this example showcases the possibility for compromise. The United States and

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<sup>53</sup> Russell Riley, “What Bill Clinton Could Teach President Trump about Dealmaking,” *Atlantic*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/trump-clinton-ireland/557621/>.

<sup>54</sup> John Coakley, “Ethnic Conflict and Its Resolution: The Northern Ireland Model,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 40.

Iran communicated on positive wavelengths, negotiated over Iran’s nuclear interests, and implemented an agreement. While multiple analytical think tanks attribute different stimuli (i.e., sanctions, multilateral sanctions, sweet spot for nuclear weapon development, dialogue) as the key factor for spurring compromise, one aspect that is clearly absent from the present approach—a diplomatic effort in concert with other elements of national power.<sup>55</sup> There is definitely a necessity to acknowledge the JCPOA did not address everything; however, the future possibility of compromise remains. This analogy underscores the actual compromise with Iran despite the often-touted zero-sum assessment of an intractable conflict with an ideologically motivated, irrational opponent.

#### **D. ASSUMPTIONS**

In the comparative example chapter, we review the validity of the two assumptions. The reemphasis acknowledging of the other side (nation-state) having a vote when the initiation of action, adjusting the relationship, begins with the United States. With this notion in mind, leaders in Washington should use a reflection period to check if they were in a target nation state’s position, would they be willing to respond to interaction and/or reciprocate in kind.

*Assumption 1: Targeted nation-state always has a vote (i.e., initiating, reciprocating)*

In the instance of the United States–Egypt relationship, we understand that Sadat activated the “defrost” mechanism surrounding relations with the United States. This is potentially a valuable point to consider within the selected group of cases. When exploring the relations the United States pursues a consideration for two-party action surfaces. The United States may apply a great amount of energy and resources, but the intense actions may prove fruitless if the policy does not acknowledge that the targeted nation-state possesses “a vote.”

*Assumption 2: Necessary condition for the approach of the United States to address the security of the targeted nation-state*

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<sup>55</sup> Various camps nominate a dominant, independent factor that stimulated compromise by pointing to the significance of multilateral sanctions, the weight of military threats, speculations of Iran reaching a sweet spot with nuclear weapons development, and the bilateral dialogue of the United States and Iran.

The status or level of security for a nation-state readily surfaced as a theme when considering balance of power and selectorate theory. Several cases appear to contain a variable associated with a grievance or a fundamental issue of the targeted nation-state. Within a cursory inspection of the comparative examples, the leading participant appears to address the common aspect of security.

#### **E. PROCESS TO LINK CASES WITH U.S.–IRAN INTERACTIONS**

Note the lag in relationship progress for the other comparative examples and this assists with the instances the United States categorized other conflicts as zero-sum problems. The actor-specific portion of thesis reconnoiters the United States–Iran relationship and considers the application of relation-building characteristics in the form of a concerted effort to mitigate current objections to U.S. policy. The current status includes: portions of Iran suffering under decades of sanctions; the application of Iranian proxies for the purpose of countering American influence; minimal recognition of Iran as a stability player by the United States; a somewhat isolated nation-state resorting to interactions with Syria, Russia and China; and air filled with Iranian and U.S. rhetorical soliloquies about the other as an adversary instead of dialogue.

In addition to consolidating the relation-building characteristics consolidated from the comparative examples, we will also reassess the two assumptions. The inspection of previously perceived intractable conflicts offers how they were solved and a vantage point to glean insights of relation-building utility from the progress of those prior successful endeavors. The analogies highlight parallels with the targeted nations and Iran; the differences also offer perspectives for reconsidering of The United States’ approach.

Acknowledging the complexity of multinational interests and existing bilateral relationships, the thesis will also address interactions of the United States with other leaders and some interested third parties, like Russia, the E.U., Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Although there are multiple nations in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Israel have unique connections by which they apply resources for lobbying to influence policymakers within the United States. Despite the fact, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates spend large sums on lobbying in the United States; their participation in this informal process is relatively



new.<sup>56</sup> Qatar maintains an improved relationship with Iran since the Saudi-led economic embargo against Qatar in 2017.<sup>57</sup> United Arab Emirates is an ally of Saudi Arabia, often backing its statements and actions. There is a notion, potentially an overly constricted view, that the UAE is only sidekick while a spotlight shines on MbS and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.<sup>58</sup> A comparison of Saudi and Emirati significance/influence requires additional exploration, separate from this thesis. Returning to the currently aligned positions of Israel and Saudi Arabia, both view Iran as an adversary based on its economic potential, its political ability, and the use of proxies to counter and project influence throughout the region. Saudi Arabia and Iran have a commonality in terms of Muslim populations; but Iranians self-associate as Shia while the majority of the Saudi population prescribe and export Sunni ideals Wahhabism.<sup>59</sup> Potentially, Israel and Saudi Arabia perceive a great loss if the United States improves relations with Iran. There are concerns Israel and Saudi Arabia may assume antagonistic roles in the Middle East and within the D.C. political sphere. In addition to identifying a comprehensive approach for United States–Iran relations, it is thus also necessary to address/consult both allies before embarking on any particular strategy toward Iran.

The bodies of knowledge and research questions presented in Chapter I provided the initial reference points for the development of the methodology. Chapter II explained

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<sup>56</sup> Qatar increased from \$4.2 million for lobbying in 2016 and \$16.3 million in 2017, the year of the blockade. Julie Bykowicz, “The New Lobbying: Qatar Targeted 250 Trump ‘Influencers’ to Change U.S. Policy,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-lobbying-qatar-targeted-250-trump-influencers-to-change-u-s-policy-1535554647>.; United Arab Emirates total government spending on lobbying was \$21.4 million in 2017 and \$14.3 million in 2018. Foreign principles listed in 2018 are Govt. of Abu Dhabi, Govt. of the United Arab Emirates, and Govt. of United Arab Emirates. “FARA: United Arab Emirates,” Center for Responsive Politics, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/fara/countries/1?cycle=2017>.; Tyler Bellstrom, “War with Iran Would Benefit the Emirates, Not the U.S.,” *New Republic*, May 22, 2019, <https://newrepublic.com/article/153974/war-iran-benefit-emirates-not-us>.

<sup>57</sup> “Qatar Rejects Outcome of Regional Summit on Iran,” RFERL, June 3, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-qatar-saudi/29978053.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Tyler Bellstrom, “War with Iran Would Benefit the Emirates, Not the U.S.,” *New Republic*, May 22, 2019, <https://newrepublic.com/article/153974/war-iran-benefit-emirates-not-us>.; Taylor Luck, “Can Religious Tolerance Help and an Aspiring Muslim Power?,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 11, 2019, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2019/0611/Can-religious-tolerance-help-an-aspiring-Muslim-power>.

<sup>59</sup> Beyond the Sunni-Shia distinction, the ethnic identities distinguish Iran as predominantly Persian and Saudi Arabia as mostly Arab.

the methodology used for the thesis, which expanded on the selection criteria and the cases selected for the thesis. In the next segment, Chapter III assists with discussing uses of ideology and describes an ecological model of politics. Recognition of ecological interplay orients analysis to look for distinctions between what a nation says or broadcasts in relation to actual behavior. This distinction of models sets a proper frame of mind for sorting through the cases of significant conflict.

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### III. IDEOLOGIES AND AN ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF POLITIES

Chapter III notes ideologies and introduces an ecological model of politics. This approach frames a problem in an expanded manner to consider the nation-state interactions with the ecological surroundings and recognizes the significance of weighing actions more than words in conflict.

The chapter expands the framing of the United States–Iran relationship to include nation-state interactions with ecological surroundings; it also contextualizes the conflict by illuminating the advantage states gain when they weight actions over words. In preparation for exploring historical examples of intractable conflict, Chapter III offers an additional mode for consideration by tugging on ideology and ecological models of politics. This additional viewpoint aids in later chapters as we use selected political theories to produce generalizable insights about nations interacting.

#### A. BACKGROUND

Empirical research offers an opportunity to observe and measure phenomena and derives “knowledge from actual experience rather than from the theory or belief.”<sup>60</sup> Based on an enormous bank of observations for foreign policy and nation-state interactions, there is over-reliance on reductive approach to predict behavior by looking at textual and stated ideology. Surface level observations of political leadership does not offer much as the leaders themselves are rarely isolated from the reverberations of their decision(s). Leadership changes with elections or coups happen around the globe. Possible exceptions may exist for those leaders who have created a dynasty or kingdom. In order to gain a larger grasp on nation-state interactions, it is possible to repurpose a lens from behavioral and ecological studies to survey interaction and collaboration between species.<sup>61</sup> An ecological species approach considers the kinds of niches available in the ecosystem in both the

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<sup>60</sup> “Empirical Research in the Social Sciences and Education,” Penn State University Libraries, Last modified May 9, 2019, <http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/emp>.

<sup>61</sup> Amal Y. Aldhebiani, “Species Concept and Speciation,” *Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences* 25, no. 3 (March 2018): 437.

development of new categories (speciation) as well the identification of different, though interfertile species (e.g., wolves and coyotes).<sup>62</sup> Using an approach from biology assists with framing a better analogy, the niches that are available to populations of animals are often better for describing species.<sup>63</sup> Although the complexity of the framed problem increases, the method accounting for the nation-state interactions and niches within the environment contributes to the recognition of the human dimension.

## **B. IDEOLOGY AS A DRIVER**

Ideologies are another voluminous area of study in which many often use a heuristic to recall groups driven by “extreme” beliefs and labels using the “-ism” suffix. (e.g., anarchism, barbarism, communism, fascism, Marxism, nationalism, totalitarianism.) Within printed references, one definition of ideology is “a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group or culture; a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture.”<sup>64</sup> Dominant groups and institutions of societies persuade others to override or realign their viewpoint for a common purpose. Another study proposes, “[I]deologies are narratives that extol certain beliefs and call for social, economic or political change.”<sup>65</sup> If we employ the heuristic mentioned previously for quickly categorizing ideologies of polities, it is likely to miss something regarding the understanding of drivers for other nation-states.

Within the examples selected (Libya and China), each nation maintained some form of an autocratic, authoritarian government. Ideology cannot be the sole driver of actions. There is an important distinction that ideology may influence, but there are surely other factors involved. Although statements containing extreme stances may gain momentum

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<sup>62</sup> Roberta L. Hall, “Variability and speciation in canids and hominids,” in *Wolf and Man*, ed. Roberta L. Hall and Henry S. Sharp (Cambridge: Academic Press, 1978).

<sup>63</sup> Siamak T. Naficy, “Describing Human Behavior” (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, April 9, 2019).; Simon Brown and Susan Salter, “Analogies in Science and Science Teaching,” *Advances in Physiology Education* 34, no. 4 (2010): 168.

<sup>64</sup> Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage, s.v. “Ideology.” (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> Raven R. Holm, “Natural Language Processing of Online Propaganda as a Means of Passively Monitoring an Adversarial Ideology” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2017), 16, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/52993>.

with media sources, it is necessary for United States political leaders to not discount or label the view as incompatible from our own beliefs. It is shortsighted to quickly label ideology as irrational. Realizing an actor or state is employing ideology as a tool, we can re-orient our perspective to inspect the ecology of the conflict.

### C. BROADENING VIEWS WITH ECOLOGY

In general terms, ecology is “the study of the distribution and abundance of organisms, the interaction between organisms, the interaction between organism and their environment, and structure and function of ecosystems.”<sup>66</sup> Without delving into the nuanced interdisciplinary field of study of political ecology in anthropology, we pull on the thread of a present-day topic to gain insights from the approach. The rather straightforward example, available for extrapolation, is Dawson’s “Sketch of a social ecological model for explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalization.”

#### 1. Social Ecological Model for Extrapolation

The 2017 research sketch offers merits of an ecological approach for “organizing and extending a grasp of social and social psychological factors influencing the career of potential jihadists.”<sup>67</sup> The approach centers on individuals or groups interacting with their environment and contains an assumption that no single factor holds complete explanatory value.<sup>68</sup> Dawson’s objective “has been to humanize terrorists so that people can better understand how and why ‘remarkably ordinary’ individuals can end up doing such extraordinary things.”<sup>69</sup> Recognizing how interactions with environment stimulates

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<sup>66</sup> “What Is Ecology,” British Ecological Society, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/about/what-is-ecology/>.

<sup>67</sup> Lorne L. Dawson, “Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation,” *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)—The Hague* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.19165/2017.1.01>.

<sup>68</sup> Dawson, 3.

<sup>69</sup> The phrase “remarkably ordinary” is from (Silber and Bhatt) and it was included in a quote used by Dawson. M.D. Silber and A. Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: New York City Police Department, 2007).; Lorne L. Dawson, “Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation,” *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)—The Hague* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 4, <http://dx.doi.org/10.19165/2017.1.01>.

extreme decisions and actions is quite valuable. Dawson notes constructing the model with lessons of Herbert Blumer and C. Wright Mills in order to “gain a sense of the actor’s ‘definition of the situation.’”<sup>70</sup> Accounting for the actor’s viewpoint may mitigate the potential of drawing conclusions from a fictitious world or model.

Sketching the social ecology model of radicalization, Dawson identified five ecological niches (starting with highest generality): late modernity, immigrant experience, youthful rebellion, ideology, and group dynamics.<sup>71</sup>

1. Late modernity—“[N]ew social conditions in which we all live”; “the capacity to spread messages fueling terrorism with relative ease by the internet”; local and global merged, where global conflicts and grievances receive attention every day in the media and penetrate into every home.”<sup>72</sup>
2. Immigrant experience—“[U]nprecedented movements of peoples around the world, the ability of immigrants to stay in regular contact with people and issues in their homelands.”<sup>73</sup>
3. Youthful rebellion—“[S]ocial pressure to construct a unique personal identity”; “quest for significance”; “real concern with moral issues...by some higher or transcendent authority”; “orientation to action, to adventure and risk”<sup>74</sup>
4. Ideology—Terrorist ideology “offers definitive explanation for their angst, offers a grand solution, targets a culprit, and prescribes a course of action. Sets the individual’s struggles in a transcendent frame of meaning that gives an ultimate and virtuous purpose to their existence.”<sup>75</sup>
5. Group dynamics—“[S]hared nature of experience between close friends or family members ratchets up the enthusiasm”; “watching online videos and discussing jihadist tracts, solidified commitment to the cause”; outside mentors; “radicalization needs to be legitimated to be complete.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dawson, “Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation,” 5.

<sup>71</sup> Dawson, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Describing “Late Modernity,” Dawson, 6–7.

<sup>73</sup> Describing “Immigrant experience,” Dawson, 6.

<sup>74</sup> Describing “Youthful rebellion,” Dawson, 7–8.

<sup>75</sup> Describing “Terrorist ideology,” Dawson, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Describing “Group dynamics,” Dawson, 8–9.

This model draws from varying analytical levels individual, communal, and societal and includes combinations of factors across the ecological niches. Again, a single niche does not have greater importance than another niche. Relative significance is captured through combinations of variables and diverse linkages.<sup>77</sup> Although numerous variations exist, Dawson recounts Robert Prus’ view of social phenomenon in which there is still potential for the patterns to be discernable.<sup>78</sup> With respect to the development of radicalized individuals, Dawson recommends, “an ecological approach maximizes and synchronizes the process of knowledge acquisition and mobilization.”<sup>79</sup> This model offers an intuitive framing of a problem and disentangles some of the complexity surrounding radicalization and terrorism.

With respect to the larger focus on Iran—the example of Iranian political wings—it is *not* advantageous to reduce Iranian politics to simple categories of moderate and radical ideologies. Instead, it may be more prudent to pay attention to trajectories of individuals and parties within the “ecology” of the larger available political landscape. That is, in the context of, who is saying what to whom, and when. Who are the audiences? Who are the players? What are the relevant conditions?

## **2. Ecological Interplay and Emphasis of Actions over Words**

As we adjust the focus from individual level radicalization to nation-states, we must “think in terms of dynamic interplay of individuals [i.e., leaders/nations] with their environment...that work in complex yet identifiable ways” to propel decisions, “though rarely in the same way.”<sup>80</sup> This example assists us with recognizing the value of gaining a vantage point to observe the interplay multiple factors (social, political, economic, environment) of the ecology, which are incorporated into the decisions of nation-states. In addition to the environment affecting the states individually, there are also the exchanges between nation-states. While the ecology or adversaries may entice political leaders to

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<sup>77</sup> Dawson, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Dawson, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Dawson, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Dawson, 3.



transmit messages from their soapbox, displaying their primal cuspids, fixating on the terse words distracts from actions separate from the transmission. Periodically occasions for relearning precipitate; in particular, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century adage, “actions speak louder than words” resonates.<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, we should look to weight behavior, in which actions are more significant than statements verbalized and projected at another nation. Foreign policy has a human dimension integrated. If we care about the security and political interests of the United States, what is the best predictor of long-term cooperation among polities? Ideology or behavior? Behavior is much more telling!

As we transition to Chapter IV, we carry the knowledge discerned from the human dimension to expand perspective while we gather generalizable insights from examples of hostile interactions between the United States and other nations.

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<sup>81</sup> Eric D. Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett, and James S. Trefil, “Actions speak louder than words,” in *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002).

## IV. COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Chapter IV contains a three-pronged scheme for exploring zero-sum, intractable conflicts and incorporates discussions of: 1) symptoms of conflict versus the root cause/s, 2) the lag or misreading of intentions and/or purpose when the ecology of available choices was not considered (leading to unintended sabotage and conflict churning), and 3) an examination of how other seemingly intractable problems were indeed solved. Using these and history as foil, we can compare the similarities without necessarily underappreciating the differences, the sequence for the examples begins with U.S.–Libya and U.S.–China. In an abbreviated manner, Chapter IV checks “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland, and the U.S.–Iran (Pre-JCPOA) between 2012 and 2015 as other instances of intractable conflict changing. The dissection of each comparative example looks at intractability of other United States relations in order to gain perspective for the United States–Iran interactions. This chapter assists with the recognition of regional perspective, security as a necessary condition, and characteristics of relation-building utility for integration with the United States–Iran relationship.

### A. UNITED STATES–LIBYA

The United States and other nations sometimes try to depict Libya as an exemplary case, attributing conduciveness to economic and domestic political conditions, for coercive diplomacy in action.<sup>82</sup> Although, Muammar Qaddafi’s autocratic nation survived 16 years of sanctions before renouncing nuclear weapon ambitions, the nation did not possess an infrastructure to circumnavigate sanctions or the social structure to harness the will of the nation to maintain resilience. It appears the advancement of United States–Libya relations pertains more to an instance of one man lacking resolve and buckling. A secondary note for this example refers to the impact on nonproliferation. Unfortunately, the United States’ interaction with Libya in 2003 in conjunction with the role in the bombing of Qaddafi’s

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<sup>82</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson and Christopher A. Whytock, “Who ‘Won’ Libya?: The Force-Diplomacy Debate and Its Implications for Theory and Policy” (*International Security* 30, no. 3: 2005), 80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137487>.

forces during the 2011 UN intervention of Libyan Civil War partially depleted the utility of negotiations for nonproliferation efforts.<sup>83</sup> While historians and political scientists refer to the great success of the United States averting the poor decision-making of Muammar Qaddafi with coercive diplomacy, this example warrants a cautionary flag for oversimplified foreign policy.

The Libya–United States relationship began blossoming in the 1950s. In 1953, relationships shifted as the King of Libya, Idris I, concluded a 20-year alliance with the British and Libya joined league of Arab States.<sup>84</sup> Around this period, United States held a transactional relationship with Libya. The United States installation of Wheelus Air Base, near Tripoli, was a strategic base during portions of the Cold War. Libya provided base rights in exchange for economic aid.<sup>85</sup> Libya was a relatively poor country until the discovery of oil in 1959. Companies of the United States and the United Kingdom had large roles in the development of the oil industry and Libya’s expanded economic growth.<sup>86</sup> Libya joined Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1962 and shortly thereafter held the position as the fourth largest oil producer.<sup>87</sup> King Idris consolidated wealth at the national level by amending the constitution to “abolish the federal system.”<sup>88</sup> Arab nationalist sentiment grew as the monarchy left “most of the state’s underdeveloped economic and political structures unattended.”<sup>89</sup> While the Monarch

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<sup>83</sup> Malfred Braut-Hegghammer, “Giving Up on the Bomb: Revisiting Libya’s Decision to Dismantle its Nuclear Program,” Woodrow Wilson Center, October 23, 2017, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/giving-the-bomb-revisiting-libyas-decision-to-dismantle-its-nuclear-program>.

<sup>84</sup> “Libya’s Foreign Policy History, 1951–2011,” Embassy of Libya, Last accessed April 29, 2019, <http://www.embassyoflibyadc.org/about-libya/foreign-policy/>.

<sup>85</sup> Helen C. Metz, ed., *Libya: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 38.

<sup>86</sup> Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 45.

<sup>87</sup> Vandewalle, 54–60.

<sup>88</sup> Guma el-Gamaty, “Libya’s Road to Peace: Constitution First, Then Elections,” Middle East Eye, April 16, 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/libyas-road-peace-constitution-first-then-elections>.

<sup>89</sup> Vandewalle, 5.

visited Turkey, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi led a bloodless coup to depose King Idris, seized power, and declared Libya a republic.<sup>90</sup>

## 1. Symptoms

The repression of the Libyan people, support for terrorism, development of chemical weapons and nuclear weapons ambitions were all topics of concern when reflecting on Libya. Qaddafi's socialism, the state met basic needs of the people while also distinguishing a separation between the select group of those favored by Qaddafi and everyone else.<sup>91</sup> Jonathan Winer, previous U.S. Special Envoy for Libya, referred to James Gelvin's 2012 writing to capture the issue: "It was 'an Orwellian nightmare.' As 'rule by the masses' in principle meant control by 'Qaddafi & Co.' backed by repression to keep the system going."<sup>92</sup> Advancing the concept for the socialist state and prompting Arab unity, Qaddafi nationalized banks in 1969 and oil industry the following year.<sup>93</sup> The changes prompted the departure of U.S. companies. Under an agreement with the previous monarchy, the United States collapsed the Air Force footprint in Libya and hand over Wheelus air base to the new Libyan authority.<sup>94</sup> Libya maintained a stance as a nonaligned country as they reached out for new sources of Arms. The Libyan Army "sharply grew the 6,000-man pre-revolutionary force" and their armaments expanded with the purchase of "Soviet-built armor and missiles" and French Mirage jets.<sup>95</sup> Libya provided armored tanks and two squadrons of Mirage fighters to Egypt during the Yom Kippur War, or 1973

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<sup>90</sup> "1969: Bloodless Coup in Libya," BBC, last updated December 31, 2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/1/newsid\\_3911000/3911587.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/1/newsid_3911000/3911587.stm).

<sup>91</sup> Jonathan M. Winer, *Origins of the Libyan Conflict and Options for its Resolution*, Report Number 2019-4 (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 2019), 3, [https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Origins\\_of\\_the\\_Libyan\\_Conflict\\_and\\_Options\\_for\\_its\\_Resolution.PDF](https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Origins_of_the_Libyan_Conflict_and_Options_for_its_Resolution.PDF).

<sup>92</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2012), Chapter 3. In Jonathan M. Winer, *Origins of the Libyan Conflict and Options for its Resolution*, Report Number 2019-4 (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 2019), 3, [https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Origins\\_of\\_the\\_Libyan\\_Conflict\\_and\\_Options\\_for\\_its\\_Resolution.PDF](https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Origins_of_the_Libyan_Conflict_and_Options_for_its_Resolution.PDF).

<sup>93</sup> "Everything you Need to Know About the Libyan Oil Industry," Business Insider, February 22, 2011, <https://www.businessinsider.com/libya-oil-exports-2011-2>.

<sup>94</sup> Helen C. Metz, ed., *Libya: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 45.

<sup>95</sup> Metz, ed., 45, 273.

October war with Israel. The Egyptians piloted one squadron of Mirage fighters during sorties for the war.<sup>96</sup> At the end of the war, Sadat inched further away from pan-Arabism to focus on Egyptian national interests. In 1977, Libya intensified conflict with Chad by delivering weapons and supplies to The People's Armed Forces.<sup>97</sup> Within the same year of 1977, the tensions with Egypt escalated to several battles along the Egyptian-Libyan border that yielded nothing more than a ceasefire. Although the Libyans possessed equipment with some technological advantages, Qaddafi was unable to display his military prowess. Several more clashes between Libyan and Chadian forces occurred between 1978 and 1987 with mixed results. In the absence of overwhelming military success in Chad or Egypt, Qaddafi pursued other tactics and weapons developments to gain greater standing.

Qaddafi, looking for international "street credibility," dabbled in support for IRA, ETA and Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front.<sup>98</sup> In July 1972, Qaddafi announced support for the IRA and advocated for IRA action against British colonialism.<sup>99</sup> Several years later, in March 1978, Qaddafi extended statements of support to include regional topics: "If they [Irish rebels] want to achieve freedom for Ireland, then we are with them. If they want to fight Britain, then we are with them, because Britain handed Palestine over to the Jews and handed the Gulf Islands to Iran."<sup>100</sup> In order to increase popularity, Qaddafi selected emotionally charged issues and used media to link Arab issues with Irish liberation

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<sup>96</sup> James D. Perry, "Aircraft Fighters: Other Nations," in *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social, and Military History*, ed. Spencer C. Tucker and Priscilla Roberts (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 53.

<sup>97</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948–1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 375.

<sup>98</sup> "State Sponsors: Libya," *Council on Foreign Relations*, Last modified December 1, 2005. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/state-sponsors-libya>.

<sup>99</sup> The National Archives, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Archives, *Libyan Agency Report on Northern Ireland, 13 June 1972*, 39/1087 (London: The National Archives, 1972); Ali Abdussalam Abdulla Ali, "Libya and Britain: A Study of the History of British-Libyan Relations 1969–1979" (PhD diss., Nottingham Trent University, 2014), 227, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30624181.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> The National Archives, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Archives, *Gaddafi's Evacuation Day Address*, 39/1087 (London: The National Archives, 1978); Ali Abdussalam Abdulla Ali, "Libya and Britain: A Study of the History of British-Libyan Relations 1969–1979" (PhD diss., Nottingham Trent University, 2014), 231, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30624181.pdf>.

efforts.<sup>101</sup> Libya's aggressive stance against Israel, support of several left-wing groups, and a Libyan mob burning the U.S. embassy in Tripoli on December 2, 1979, influenced the designation of Libya as one of four state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>102</sup> Separate from Qaddafi's support for select groups, he also searched for the acquisition of other tools. Libya reached for peaceful nuclear cooperation with the Soviet Union, and in line IAEA safeguards. In 1979 the Soviet-Libyan cooperation generated a 10MW research reactor at Tajoura, Libya.<sup>103</sup> Evidence offered by the IAEA in 2004 suggested Libya during the 1970s and 1980s "[P]ursued both the uranium- and plutonium-based pathways to nuclear weapons."<sup>104</sup> The chemical weapons topic blossomed in 1984 with the construction of a production plant in Rabta and in December 1987 the State Department raised official concerns that morphed into President Reagan considering a strike on the facility.<sup>105</sup> Libya's interests in supporting opposition groups and the development of nuclear in addition to chemical weapons went against the grain of existing international norms. The **root cause** within the United States–Libya conflict stemmed from the Western belief that Libya, and for that matter Qaddafi, did not have national prestige or regional significance. It is almost as though Qaddafi's belligerence appeared to be aimed at garnering the attention of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the international community.

## 2. Conflict Churning

Qaddafi's "ambition to become an international leader had strongly affected his foreign policy" and as such, he reinforced the image of a rebel bestowed upon him.<sup>106</sup> In 1981, Libya attempted to demonstrate an air power capability and lost two combat jets in

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<sup>101</sup> Ali Abdussalam Abdulla Ali, "Libya and Britain: A Study of the History of British-Libyan Relations 1969–1979" (PhD diss., Nottingham Trent University, 2014), 233, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30624181.pdf>.

<sup>102</sup> "Upgrading of Diplomatic Relations with Libya," U.S. Department of State, May 15, 2006, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/66243.htm>.

<sup>103</sup> "Libya: Nuclear," National Threat Initiative, Last Updated January 2015, <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/libya/nuclear/>.

<sup>104</sup> "Libya: Nuclear."

<sup>105</sup> Andrew W. Terrill, "Libya and the Quest for Chemical Weapons," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 14, no. 1 (1994), 49.

<sup>106</sup> Ali, 232.

a direct fire engagement with the United States during the Gulf of Sidra incident. The loss of Libyan conventional air assets reinvigorated a draw to unconventional tactics and terrorism. Diederick Vanderwalle, political science professor at Dartmouth College, believed “The feeling that Libya was very small and inconsequential in the Arab context made terrorism an attractive strategy to raise Libya’s platform.” Vanderwalle added further, “Terrorism was also a cheap alternative that would enable [Qaddafi] to emerge as a...leader in the Arab world.”<sup>107</sup> The December 27, 1985, attacks on civilians in the Rome and Vienna airports escalated conflict between United States and Libya. The Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) claimed responsibility, but the United States accused Libya of providing the terrorists with weapons and funding.<sup>108</sup> Less than six months later, La belle disco (1986) bombing in West Berlin “killed two American servicemen, a Turkish woman, and injured more than 200 others.”<sup>109</sup> The United States blamed Qaddafi after intercepting messages of Libyan agents communicating between Tripoli and Europe.<sup>110</sup> Retaliatory air strikes, Operation El Dorado Canyon, targeted Libyan military infrastructure 10 days after the discotheque bombing.<sup>111</sup> Qaddafi claimed a bomb from U.S. air strikes killed his adopted daughter Hana.<sup>112</sup> Libya traded blows with the United States; Qaddafi continued to fund terrorism and expanded a relationship with Abu Nidal of ANO. The 1986 hijacking of PAN AM Flight 73 at the Karachi Airport, killed 20 and wounded 120, was later in 2004 attributed to Qaddafi.<sup>113</sup> Two years after United States struck targets in Libya, the bombing of PAN AM flight 103 occurred.

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<sup>107</sup> Sara Obeidat, “Muammar Qaddafi and Libya’s Legacy of Terrorism,” PBS: Frontline, October 13, 2015, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/muammar-qaddafi-and-libyas-legacy-of-terrorism/>.

<sup>108</sup> Partick Seale, *Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), 243–245.

<sup>109</sup> Obeidat.

<sup>110</sup> Obeidat.

<sup>111</sup> Todd R. Phinney, “Airpower Versus Terrorism: Three Case Studies,” (Master’s thesis, Air University Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 2003), 20, <https://web.archive.org/web/20061110175203/https://research.maxwell.af.mil/papers/ay2003/saas/phinney.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> Andrew Glass, “U.S. Planes Bomb Libya, April 15, 1986,” *Politico*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/04/15/reagan-bomb-libya-april-15-1986-1272788>.

<sup>113</sup> Jon Swain, “Revealed: Gaddafi’s Air Massacre Plot,” *The Sunday Times* (UK), March 28, 2004, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article1052614>.

The 1988 airliner bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland crystalized the United States' assessment of Libya as a grave threat. The bombing of PAN AM 103 resulted in 259 passengers and 11 people in Lockerbie were killed.<sup>114</sup> Reflecting on the significance of the event, U.S. journalist Garrett Graff explained "The attack horrified America, which until then had seen terror touch its shores only occasionally as a hijacking went awry; while the U.S. had weathered the 1983 [Hezbollah] bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, attacks almost never targeted civilians."<sup>115</sup> The killing of 200 U.S. passengers was a devastating blow that spiked the significance and anonymity of terrorist actions, as it did not draw an immediate response from the United States. The bombing of the aircraft was not claimed and required a lengthy multinational investigation. The evidence of the circuit board, a Swiss prototype timer, clothing fibers from baggage packed with explosives, and Maltese immigration records led to the identification and indictments in November 1991 of two Libyan Intelligence officers.<sup>116</sup> Qaddafi denied the Libya's role in the bombing, but relished U.S. implications of Libyan plots against Western interests. Seeing "himself as a bulwark against the U.S. and Western Interests in the third world," Qaddafi's use of terrorism strengthened his stock and signaled prominence as a regional leader.<sup>117</sup>

### **3. Intractability Dissolved (How the Relationship Advanced)**

The common U.S. tools of employed against Libya were from the bins of economic and diplomatic power. After the Lockerbie bombing, the United States and the United Kingdom were not interested in diplomatic exchanges with Libya. Western nations doubled down on sanctions. The United States imposed three rounds of economic sanctions on Libya in 1986, 1992 and 1996.<sup>118</sup> The UN resolution, generated by the bombing, included the imposition of UN economic sanctions as well as obligations "ending support of

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<sup>114</sup> Garrett M. Graff, "PAN AM Flight 103: Robert Mueller's 30-Year Search for Justice," *Wired*, December 27, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/robert-muellers-search-for-justice-for-pan-am-103/>.

<sup>115</sup> Graff.

<sup>116</sup> Graff.

<sup>117</sup> Obeidat.

<sup>118</sup> Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal, and Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenal: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), p. 306.



terrorism, admitting culpability and compensating victims' families."<sup>119</sup> Other than denying involvement, Qaddafi did not broach the subject for an extended period of time.

In the midst of sanctions imposed on Libya, Qaddafi in 1990 renewed calls for having nuclear arms after reflecting Libya's inability to directly respond to the 1987 U.S. air attack.<sup>120</sup> Libya displayed consistent interest in an abundant military arsenal and these acquisitions were "attempts to deter potential attack and bolster the domestic legitimacy of the regime."<sup>121</sup> According to a 1996 U.S. Department of Defense report, Libya's nuclear program was rudimentary as it "lacks well-developed plans, technical expertise, consistent financial support, and sufficient support from foreign supplier."<sup>122</sup> While it is understood pathways to a nuclear weapon are not a sequential processes, the DoD report noted Qaddafi's aspiring statements were at odds with the actual status of the program. At best an ineffective program and at worst it produced nothing more than a topic for dialogue with the United States and United Kingdom. Conveying a desire for nuclear weapons went against the international norms of the nuclear weapon Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and this soapbox talking point reinforced the rebellious, revolutionary image.

Fatigued by isolation and economic sanctions, Qaddafi looked for opportunities to reach out. Flynt Leverrett, former intelligence officer and Penn State professor, noted that Qaddafi since the late 1990s sought "normalized relations with the United States" and attempted discreet meetings to convey the message with Clinton administration.<sup>123</sup> Clinton's representatives held a position of no dialogue unless Qaddafi was willing to address the Lockerbie bombing. Martin S. Indyk, distinguished fellow for the Council on

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<sup>119</sup> Martin S. Indyk, "The Iraq War did not Force Gadaffi's Hand," Brookings Institution, March 9, 2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinion/the-iraq-war-did-not-force-gadaffis-hand/>.

<sup>120</sup> Leonard S. Spector, *Nuclear Ambitions: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons, 1989–1990* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 183. in Joshua Sinai, "Libya's Pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Nonproliferation Review* 4 (1997), 97.

<sup>121</sup> Andrew W. Terrill, "Libya and the Quest for Chemical Weapons," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 14, no. 1 (1994), 53, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/viewFile/15163/16232>.

<sup>122</sup> *Proliferation: Threat and Response* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 1996), 25.

<sup>123</sup> Flynt L. Leverrett, "Why Libya gave up on the Bomb," Brookings Institution, January 23, 2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/why-libya-gave-up-on-the-bomb/>.

Foreign Relations, reflected on “a deepening economic crisis [in Libya] produced by disastrous economic policies and mismanagement of its oil revenues. United Nations and United States sanctions that prevented Libya from importing oilfield technology made it impossible for Mr. Qaddafi to expand oil production.”<sup>124</sup> In hindsight, it is possible that Qaddafi did not adequately assess the weight of the Western response and repercussions of the Lockerbie bombing. Anticipating a spotlight within the international stage, in actuality, he basked in limelight that did not greatly enhance his position in the region. Disparaged by the pan-Arab concept, Qaddafi recognized a course correction to relieve sanctions benefited the nation and his individual standing.

In May 1999, after 10 years of international economic sanctions “taking a toll on his country,” the prolonged negotiations led to Qaddafi’s turnover of two suspects; it was noticeable “the leader wanted to put the incident behind him.”<sup>125</sup> As discussed previously with the assumptions, the other side has a vote. In the instance of Libya, Qaddafi chose to concede his position in order to clear barriers for a diplomatic channel and receive a reprieve of some sanctions. The two suspects were arraigned and court occurred in Hague, Netherlands. One Libyan, Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, was convicted in 2001 and jailed for the attack.<sup>126</sup> While it was most likely cathartic for many family members to see the imprisonment of an attacker, yet it probably brought about other mix emotions since there was no retribution dealt against the nation responsible. Even with an emotionally charged issue as the Lockerbie bombing, from a diplomatic perspective, the topic in the eyes of both nations served as an agreeable as an agreeable area in which to cooperate. In relation to the threat of nuclear weapons, the threat of chemical weapons employment and support of terrorism have the propensity to inflict harm to a greater population than the number of victims that were on PAN AM flight 103. Libya admitted culpability in 1999 which, now cleared of barriers, allowed re-opening the diplomatic channel. The UN and the United States continued to push against Libya’s ownership of chemical weapons and

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<sup>124</sup> Martin S. Indyk, “The Iraq War did not Force Gadaffi’s Hand,” Brookings Institution, March 9, 2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinion/the-iraq-ware-did-not-force-gadaffis-hand/>.

<sup>125</sup> Graff.

<sup>126</sup> Graff.

nuclear ambitions. According to German scholar Thomas Müller-Färber, the previous bargaining process regarding chemical weapons between the United States and Libya of the 1980s also directly influenced direct nuclear disarmament talks.<sup>127</sup> Müller-Färber study also analyzed shifting behavior patterns and divided United States–Libya into four episodes: pre-negotiation, pre-agreement, agreement, and post-agreement.<sup>128</sup> The pre-negotiation phase centered on both nations validating the interest in the issue. Validating the interest on both sides is a function of trust, and this in turn, points back to the utility of pursuing low hanging fruit or lesser issues.

*a. An End (2003) ... Qaddafi's Nuclear Weapon Ambitions*

Qaddafi's position regarding ambitions for nuclear weapons shifted rather quickly in late 2003. William H. Toby, senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International affairs, recalled the announcement: "Late on the night of December 19, 2003, however, Qaddafi treated the world to a rare reversal of form, confirming that Libya had decided to abandon its illicit effort to acquire a nuclear bomb, its chemical weapons stocks, and all of its longer-range missiles."<sup>129</sup> While the change of Qaddafi's antagonistic identity sounds impressive especially with the follow up noting nuclear bomb, chemical weapons stock and long-range missiles, this was a concession largely of ambitions and a nascent nuclear weapons program. Reflecting on the program, two diplomats in Vienna noted AQ Khan's sale of "blueprints to Libya in late 2001 or early 2002 for as much as \$20 million."<sup>130</sup> John Feffer, the director at Foreign Policy in Focus a DC based think tank, elaborated on the status of the program by noting that "Tripoli had acquired centrifuges from Islamabad courtesy of AQ Khan, but most of these were still in boxes when inspectors

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<sup>127</sup> Thomas Müller-Färber, "How the Qaddafi regime was driven into nuclear disarmament," (PhD diss., Hertie School of Governance, 2016), 154, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/85206046.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Müller-Färber, 154.

<sup>129</sup> William Tobey, "A Message from Tripoli: How Libya Gave up its WMD," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December 3, 2014, <https://thebulletin.org/2014/12/a-message-from-tripoli-how-libya-gave-up-its-wmd/>.

<sup>130</sup> Douglas Frantz and Josh Meyer, "For Sale: Nuclear Expertise," *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 2004, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-feb-22-fg-nuke22-story.html>.

gained access to the program.”<sup>131</sup> After many years of Qaddafi’s stated interest, the early 2000s registered the proliferation signature with Libyan acquisition of blueprints and centrifuges. The United States intelligence agencies continued collection against A.Q. Khan proliferation network in 2003.<sup>132</sup>

Multiple events influenced Qaddafi’s December 2003 announcement, two significant events were anticipation of the 2003 invasion in Iraq and the October 2003 interdiction of the *BBC China* transporting centrifuge parts to Libya. Apparently fearing for his safety, Qaddafi sought out dialogue in the spring of 2003 with U.K. and U.S. officials, days before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>133</sup> Later in October 2003, President Bush directed the interdiction of *BBC China*. The ship held five 40-foot shipping containers, Libya-bound and manifested as “used machine parts,” contained thousands of centrifuge parts manufactured by The A.Q. Khan proliferation network in Malaysia.<sup>134</sup> Confronted with the information, Libyan officials simply “responded that the equipment had been ordered long before the talks had begun.”<sup>135</sup> During smaller meetings in October and November 2003, the Libyans withheld further information until confronted with knowledge of their purchase from A.Q. Khan of a “turnkey facility,” “a workable centrifuge enrichment plant.”<sup>136</sup>

William Toby recounted, “Denial was no longer an option,” the Libyans agreed to the visits of an U.K.–U.S. technical team and they verified various aspects of Libya’s

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<sup>131</sup> John Feffer, “The Strange Case of Libya,” Institute for Policy Studies: Foreign Policy in Focus, February 10, 2010, [https://fpif.org/the\\_strange\\_case\\_of\\_libya/](https://fpif.org/the_strange_case_of_libya/).

<sup>132</sup> William Tobey, “A Message from Tripoli: How Libya Gave up its WMD,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, December 3, 2014, <https://thebulletin.org/2014/12/a-message-from-tripoli-how-libya-gave-up-its-wmd/>.

<sup>133</sup> Tobey.

<sup>134</sup> Robert G. Joseph, *Countering WMD: The Libyan Experience* (Fairfax VA: National Institute Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>135</sup> Tobey; William Tobey, “A Message from Tripoli, Part 2: How Libya Gave up its WMD,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, December 3, 2014, <https://thebulletin.org/2014/12/a-message-from-tripoli-part-2-how-libya-gave-up-its-wmd/>.

<sup>136</sup> U.S. Congress. House. Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005: Sec. 304. Sense of Congress on the Dismantling and Removal of Libya’s Weapons of Mass Destruction. H.R. 4548. 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., June 23, 2004, H4843.; George Bunn and Christopher F. Chyba, U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy: Confronting Today’s Threats (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 139.

WMD program.<sup>137</sup> The American and British counterparts persuaded Libyan representatives an official renouncement of WMD program by Qaddafi “was the only way to end [Libya’s] pariah status.”<sup>138</sup> Qaddafi had jitters and proposed a postponement of the announcement because he “[w]orried that the humiliating capture of Saddam would be viewed as the driving force behind his voluntary disarmament.”<sup>139</sup> After nine months of discrete negotiations, on December 19, 2003, President Qaddafi disclosed and renounced WMD program.

United States and British officials welcomed the Qaddafi’s announcement, President Bush noted the prospects of “‘far better’ relations between Washington and Tripoli” if Libya “fully implements its commitments and ‘demonstrates its seriousness.’”<sup>140</sup> Qaddafi’s announcement also included Libya’s commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention, “to limit missiles to ranges of less than 180 miles in accordance with the Missile Technology Control Regime, and to allow international inspectors unconditional access to monitor and verify compliance.”<sup>141</sup> In January 2004, the most sensitive item collected was a plastic shopping bag from an Islamabad tailor shop which contained “60 to 70 sheets of nuclear weapons design” documents provided by Libya’s supplier.<sup>142</sup> International inspectors interviewed Libyan scientists about the designs, the scientist explained the designs were not seriously studied and this suggested the newness of the material and the limited depth of the Libyan program.<sup>143</sup> Within a ten-

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<sup>137</sup> Tobey, “A Message from Tripoli: How Libya Gave up its WMD.

<sup>138</sup> Tobey.

<sup>139</sup> Scott MacLeod, “Behind Gaddafi’s Diplomatic Turnaround,” *Time*, May 18, 2006, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1195852,00.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Kelsey Davenport, “Chronology of Libya’s Disarmament and Relations with the United States,” Arms Control Association, Last Update: January 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/LibyaChronology>.

<sup>141</sup> “Libya Nuclear Chronology,” James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at Monterey Institute of International Studies: Nuclear Threat Initiative, Last update: February 2011, 30, [https://media.nti.org/pdfs/libya\\_nuclear.pdf](https://media.nti.org/pdfs/libya_nuclear.pdf).

<sup>142</sup> Thomas Müller-Färber, “How the Qaddafi regime was driven into nuclear disarmament,” (PhD diss., Hertie School of Governance, 2016), 159, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/85206046.pdf>.

<sup>143</sup> Joby Warrick and Peter Slevin, “Libyan Arms Designs Traced Back to China: Pakistanis Resold Chinese-Provided Plans,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 2004, A01, <http://www1.udel.edu/globalagenda/2004/student/readings/libya-chinaconnection.html>.

month period, United States and British services “remove [d] all the components of Libya’s WMD program and dismantle [d] its long-range ballistic missiles.”<sup>144</sup> Libya moved forward with obligations charting progress, the Assistant Secretary of State William Burns visited Tripoli in March 2004 meeting with Libyan officials and President Qaddafi. The State Department described “[T]he meetings as ‘constructive’ and reflective of the ‘step-by-step normalization’ of relations between Libya and the United States.”<sup>145</sup>

**b. A Second Ending (2011)... Qaddafi Deposed**

Fast-forwarding seven years to February 15, 2011, anti-regime protests erupted in Benghazi.<sup>146</sup> Up to this point, the Libyans continued to comply with biological weapons convention and nuclear nonproliferation obligations, as they slowly progressed with the destruction of chemical weapons.<sup>147</sup> Protestors and human rights groups made claims of pro-government security killing and wounding Libyans.<sup>148</sup> On February 22, 2011, Qaddafi addressed his nation on state TV vowing to “crush the revolt and die as a martyr.”<sup>149</sup> Anti-government protests in rapidly transitioned to rebel militias facing off with pro-government security forces and other Qaddafi hired hands. A Libyan businessman recounted regime support incentives—the government offered “a car and money to any supporters bringing three people with them to join the [pro-Qaddafi] effort,” armed the groups, paired them with “someone from the old revolutionary committees,” and provided instruction to “drive

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<sup>144</sup> Scott MacLeod, “Behind Gaddafi’s Diplomatic Turnaround,” *Time*, May 18, 2006, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1195852,00.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Davenport.

<sup>146</sup> “APPENDIX A.: Timeline of Events in Libya.” In *Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War*, edited by Karl P. Mueller, Gregory Alegi, Christian F. Anrig, Christopher S. Chivvis, Robert Egnell, Christina Goulter, Camille Grand, Deborah C. Kidwell, Richard O. Mayne, Bruce R. Nardulli, Rober C. Owen, Frederic Wehrey, Leila Mahnad, and Stephen M. Worman (RAND Corporation, 2015), 393. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt16f8d7x.20>.

<sup>147</sup> Davenport.

<sup>148</sup> “A Timeline of Conflict in Libya,” CNN, August 24, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/08/18/libya.timeline/index.html>.

<sup>149</sup> “Libya Protests: Pressure Mounts on Isolated Gaddafi,” *BBC*, February 23, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12550719>.

around the city and terrorize people.”<sup>150</sup> Qaddafi controlled Tripoli and Sirte while the Anti-Qaddafi forces held positions in the cities of Ajdblya, Benghazi, Misrata and Tobruk.<sup>151</sup> Clashes continued into the spring of 2011.

Objecting to Qaddafi’s use of force against civilians, the Obama administration nudged the United Nations which adopted UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1973 on March 17, 2011. This resolution “expressed determination to protect civilians,” demanded an immediate ceasefire, established a no-fly zone in Libyan airspace, and authorized member states “to take all necessary measures” “to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.”<sup>152</sup> The response to the Libyan civil war authorized military intervention in Libya. Two days after providing a window for Libyan ceasefire, the United States and allied forces established the initial no-fly zone, the French initiated first strike “on armor units near Benghazi” and the United States initiated strikes on Qaddafi’s air-defense assets.<sup>153</sup> The mission enforcing the no-fly zone transitioned to NATO responsibility on March 24.<sup>154</sup>

Discussion within the international community led to a decision in favor of military intervention. In May 2011, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Mr. Luis Moreno-Ocampo, recommended a criminal investigation for Colonel “Qaddafi’s use of force against civilians.”<sup>155</sup> Moreno-Ocampo added, “[E]vidence supporting charges... included the shooting of peaceful protestors, followed by weeks of systematic persecution, including murder, imprisonment and torture.” The ICC issued

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<sup>150</sup> “Armed Pro-Gadhafi Gangs Roll in Libyan Capital,” Fox News, Last Update: November 17, 2014, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/armed-pro-gadhafi-gangs-roll-in-libyan-capital>.

<sup>151</sup> “Libya Protests: Pressure Mounts on Isolated Gaddafi,” *BBC*, February 23, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12550719>.

<sup>152</sup> UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1973 (2011): On the Situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*, S/RES/1973 (March 17, 2011), 3, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_03/20110927\\_110311-UNSCR-1973.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_03/20110927_110311-UNSCR-1973.pdf).

<sup>153</sup> Jeremiah Gertler, *Operation Odyssey Dawn (Libya): Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R41725 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 7, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R41725.pdf>

<sup>154</sup> Gertler, 17.

<sup>155</sup> Marlise Simons and Neil MacFarquhar, “Hague Court Seeks Warrants for Libyan Officials,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/world/africa/05nations.html>.

“crimes against humanity” warrants for Qaddafi and two senior regime leaders in June 2011.<sup>156</sup> Between spring and fall, the fighting continued between Qaddafi’s forces and the rebels all across Libya. In particular, the month of August contained a number of clashes around and inside Tripoli. Seven months after UNSC resolution 1973, in October 2011, following “an extended military campaign with sustained Western support, rebel forces conquered the country and killed Qaddafi.”<sup>157</sup> Rebels killed Muammar Qaddafi outside Sirte on October 20; three days later, October 23, 2011, the National Transition Council (NTC) “declared the liberation of Libya.”<sup>158</sup>

Multiple allied and U.S. leaders applauded the success of the military intervention of the Libyan civil war, suggesting it was an optimum level of involvement that achieved operational results without placing a U.S. Soldier on the ground or becoming overly wrapped in stabilizing the nation. Alan J. Kuperman, Associate Professor at Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, four years later reflected on the October 2011 perceived success “Indeed, the United States seemed to have scored a hat trick: nurturing the Arab Spring, averting a Rwanda-like genocide, and eliminating Libya as a potential source of terrorism.”<sup>159</sup> Kuperman argued the labeling of the 2011 intervention as a success was premature since Libya “failed to evolve into a democracy” and even worse, it “devolved into a failed state.”<sup>160</sup> Libya’s second or new civil war, beginning in 2014, continues today.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> “A Timeline of Conflict in Libya,” CNN, August 24, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/08/18/libya.timeline/index.html>.

<sup>157</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, “Obama’s Libya Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 66–67, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2019-02-18/obamas-libya-debacle?gp=140292%3Af47c722455083cef>

<sup>158</sup> “NTC Declares ‘Liberation of Libya,’” Al-Jazeera, October 24, 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/10/201110235316778897.html>.

<sup>159</sup> Kuperman, 66–77.

<sup>160</sup> Kuperman, 66–77.

<sup>161</sup> “Libya’s Civil War: The Essential Briefing,” *Strategic Comments* 20, no. 10 (November 26, 2014): ix.



Another disadvantage from the U.S. intervention, assisting the rebels to overthrow Qaddafi, was the backlash from undercutting counter proliferation efforts. After Qaddafi voluntarily halted programs, “his reward, eight years later, was a U.S.-led regime change that culminated in his violent death.”<sup>162</sup> The “task of persuading other states to halt or reverse their program” became more cumbersome with the enlargement of trust concerns.<sup>163</sup> Kuperman drew upon both North Korean and Iranian comments about their leadership’s understanding about the hazards of complete disarmament. North Korea’s Foreign minister in 2011 discussed Libya’s earlier denuclearization as “an invasion tactic to disarm the country.”<sup>164</sup> Abbas Abdi, onetime Iranian revolutionary student leader/hostage taker and now prominent reform-minded Iranian, shared: “When Qaddafi was faced with an uprising, all Western leaders dropped him like a brick. Judging from that, our leaders assess that compromise is not helpful.”<sup>165</sup> The intervention decision affected aspects of nonproliferation diplomatic dialogue and expanded the reservation for other nations to discuss proliferation topics with the United States. Potentially the United States must employ other techniques to enhance trust building for nonproliferation negotiations and dialogue. The second ending for Qaddafi surely ended an enemy; although, there are elements indicating oversimplified foreign policy related to the example of United States–Libya relations, it is still possible to gain insight from this comparative example.

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<sup>162</sup> Kuperman, 70.

<sup>163</sup> Kuperman, 70.

<sup>164</sup> Mark McDonald, “North Korea Suggests Libya Should Have Kept Nuclear Program,” *New York Times*, March 24, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/25/world/asia/25korea.html>.

<sup>165</sup> Thomas Erdbrink, “Iran Hostage Taker Returns to the Spotlight, with Insight,” *New York Times*, November 1, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/02/world/middleeast/spotlight-returns-to-1979-iranian-hostage-taker.html>.

#### 4. Reflection of Assumptions

Qaddafi's willingness to interact, Assumption I, became more apparent in the 1990s. Qaddafi, interested in receiving relief from sanctions, approached the United States and the United Kingdom. Martin Indyk, previous U.S. assistant Secretary of State, recalled in May and October 1999 the Libyan officials repeatedly offered to eliminate their chemical weapons programs.<sup>166</sup> In both instances, United States officials declined the Libyan offer and insisted no dialogue on other topics until Libya resolved issues regarding the bombing of PAN AM flight 103. The Libyan government accepted responsibility for the attack and discussed "willingness to set up a \$2.7 billion fund" "to compensate families of the explosion's 270 victims."<sup>167</sup> Libya moved forward with fulfilling the obligations in order to receive some form of reprieve from sanctions.

Security as a necessary condition, Assumption II, appears relevant to Libyan position in northern Africa. It does not appear that it was specifically discussed with the United States. During the early years of Qaddafi's reign, he focused Libyan funds on military equipment. The expansion of the military aided his tenure as the country's leader and it served as a symbol in relation to neighboring nations. After facing more than 16 years of sanctions, Libya became eligible to enhance the Libyan military. The renewal of arms sales occurred after the European Union lifted arms embargo in 2004 and in "2007 the European aerospace and defense group (EADS) signed a contract to provide Milan anti-tank missiles to Libya."<sup>168</sup> Compliance with UN resolution obligations and the removal from the U.S. state sponsor of terror threat list made it possible for the enhancement of the Libyan military.

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<sup>166</sup> Martin S. Indyk, "The Iraq War did not Force Gaddafi's Hand," Brookings Institution, March 9, 2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinion/the-iraq-war-did-not-force-gadaffis-hand/>.

<sup>167</sup> Alan Sipress and John Mintz "Libya Accepts Responsibility for Bombing Over Lockerbie," *Washington Post*, May 1, 2003, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/05/01/libya-accepts-responsibility-for-bombing-over-lockerbie/7865ce94-c723-4458-beff-f1841bc5cdaa/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.3c0e3824a7a9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/05/01/libya-accepts-responsibility-for-bombing-over-lockerbie/7865ce94-c723-4458-beff-f1841bc5cdaa/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3c0e3824a7a9).

<sup>168</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard, *Libya: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS Report No. RL33142 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008), 33, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=236078>.

## 5. Characteristics of Relation-Building Utility

Three characteristics (secrecy, actions of good faith, low hanging fruit) surface from the exploration of United States–Libya relations. Secrecy was relevant from both sides. In the instance of Qaddafi, he maintained his rebel image by communicating boisterously on Pan-Arab and conveying support of extreme groups. Openly reaching out to the United States may have affected his reputation. Renouncing terrorism in conjunction with ceasing nuclear ambitions appeared to be a significant shift; it was an opportunity for Qaddafi to re-brand his image. In a similar light, the United States understood the scrutiny of the American public would be severe if communication with Qaddafi was open to anything other than the topic of the Lockerbie bombing. Actions of good faith—Saif Qaddafi, Muammar’s son, recalled the seizure of *BBC China* and the centrifuge parts bound for Libya was not broadcasted.<sup>169</sup> The United States and the United Kingdom did not ramp up the incident and push for military action. From this sequence of events, Saif Qaddafi reassured his father of the respectful, formal interaction. Focus on achievable goals allows for the maturing of trust and confidence building measures. Each of the nations may have less stringent red lines for topics of low hanging fruit.

Again, there is caution surrounding the case of Libya, the positive interactions with the United States beginning in 2003 did not guarantee extended safety for Qaddafi. As Qaddafi became “tractable” compliant with the United States, then the United States advocated for the 2011 military intervention in Libya and was involved in the overthrow of Qaddafi. In some viewpoints, positive interaction with the United States may be unattractive to Iran.

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<sup>169</sup> William Tobey, “A Message from Tripoli: How Libya Gave up its WMD,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December 3, 2014, <https://thebulletin.org/2014/12/a-message-from-tripoli-how-libya-gave-up-its-wmd/>; Scott MacLeod, “Behind Gaddafi’s Diplomatic Turnaround,” *Time*, May 18, 2006, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1195852,00.html>.

## B. UNITED STATES–CHINA

This government [People’s Republic of China] is willing to establish diplomatic relations with any foreign government that is willing to observe the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>170</sup>

—Mao Zedong

Shortly after the conclusion of the World War II, the United States focused on competition with the Soviet Union to combat what they believed was the rising threat of communism. In 1946, in the midst of this competition with the USSR, the Chinese civil war resumed, and the United States provided aid to Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist regime in its fight against the communists. Despite United States support, the Chinese Communist party (CCP) under Mao Zedong achieved victory in 1949 and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland. Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists took refuge by retreating to the island of Taiwan. The United States continued to recognize Kuomintang as the legitimate government of China, going so far as not mentioning PRC by name, but rather “Red” [China].<sup>171</sup> The United States’ hard line against communism created significant diplomatic conflict between the two large nations, which morphed into proxy wars fueled with political ideology. During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States centered many of its anti-communist efforts to battle uprisings of infectious communism in Korea and Vietnam, which the United States government identified as fomented and aided mainly by the PRC. Yet, while still involved in Vietnam, the Nixon administration interacted with China. The period of interest for observing noticeable change, a thawing of relations for United States and China, occurred between 1969 and 1972.

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<sup>170</sup> “Proclamation of the Central People’s Government of the PRC,” October 01, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Renmin ribao (People’s Daily), October 2, 1949. English translation from Michael Y. M. Kau, ed., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976*, Volume I, September 1949–December 1955 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 10–11. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121557>

<sup>171</sup> Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974 from “Red Menace” to “Tacit Ally”* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 18.

## 1. Symptoms

As the United States maintained support of Chiang Kai-shek, it expanded a mix of events ranging from political antagonism to outright confrontation with what would become the PRC. One particularly egregious example of this from before the Chinese revolution was even decided was the 1948 confinement and isolation of American consul Angus Ward and 21 staff members by Mao's organization for over a year in Shenyang.<sup>172</sup> Although the United States only provided financial aid during the revolution, the Chinese penalized the American officials for their government's decision to support the nationalist party. November 1949, the Chinese forces allowed the party to leave the consulate; five Americans were deported for a charge of inciting a riot. "Given the steadfast refusal to sever relations with the KMT, the American stress on 'norms of international behavior; in the Ward case served only to provoke further hostility among CCP leaders."<sup>173</sup> This event serves as one marker in the tit-for-tat action that became a hallmark of the United States–China relationship.

During this era, the United States relied on a doctrine designed to diminish communist influence in multiple regions. The possibility of communism spreading from the Soviet Union or China concerned U.S. leaders. In the instance of the Korean War, many historians would characterize conflict between Soviet Union siding with North Korea and South Korea aligned with the United States and the United Nations. The next significant confrontation came one year after the formal establishment of the PRC. In October 1950, China deployed forces beyond its borders to fight in Korea and contest American dominance in Asia. China employed its forces based on the concern that foreign nations in Korea would translate to a threat of their own territorial sovereignty.<sup>174</sup> This entry into the Korean War reinforced the notion of the PRC as a communist threat in the eyes of leaders in Washington. Several years later, China and the Soviet Union provided material support

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<sup>172</sup> Chen Jian, "The Ward Case and the Emergence of Sino-American Confrontation, 1948–1950," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 30 (1993): 149. doi:10.2307/2949995.

<sup>173</sup> Jian.

<sup>174</sup> Bangning Zhou, 2015. Explaining China's Intervention in the Korean War in 1950. *Interstate - Journal of International Affairs* 2014/2015 (1), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1069>.

to the communist regime of North Vietnam.<sup>175</sup> South Vietnam and the United States contested the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong forces for 19 years. Another issue was the nuclear initiative, in which the PRC pursued and gained nuclear weapons capability in 1964.<sup>176</sup> Kennedy's administration deliberated "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle,'" a question over the necessity "to initiate a preventative action to forestall Chinese nuclear capability."<sup>177</sup> The United States, under the Johnson administration, relied "[O]n export controls, military containment, and continued intelligence monitoring."<sup>178</sup> Grappling between the United States and China occurred over numerous symptoms of conflict. While the anti-communist stance of the United States precipitated many events, the **root cause** for the conflict between the United States and China was the absence of recognition regarding sovereignty or their positions of authority within the Pacific.<sup>179</sup>

## 2. Conflict Churning

There was a reluctance, on the behalf of the United States, to acknowledge the PRC. One aspect behind the hindered growth of the relationship between the PRC and the United States, was the previous investment and the hardship experience with China led by KMT during World War II (WWII). Japanese atrocities against China, such as the "Rape of Nanking," stirred greater Western financial support (US, UK, AU) and precipitated the

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<sup>175</sup> S.K. Ghosh, "Relations between North Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union," *India Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (April 1975): 136. doi:10.1177/097492847503100203.

<sup>176</sup> Gordon H. Chang, "JFK, China, and the Bomb," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 4 (1988): 1308, doi:10.2307/1894411.

<sup>177</sup> William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle': The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960–64," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2000): 54–99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2626706>.; William Burr, "China's First Nuclear Test 1964—50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," National Security Archive Briefing Book No. 488, The George Washington University: The National Security Archive, October 16, 2014, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb488/>.

<sup>178</sup> Burr and Richelson, 96.

<sup>179</sup> "Proclamation of the Central People's Government of the PRC," October 01, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Renmin ribao (People's Daily), October 2, 1949. English translation from Michael Y. M. Kau, ed., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976, Volume I, September 1949–December 1955* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 10–11. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121557>

support of China in 1941 by the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers.<sup>180</sup> Roosevelt extended \$25 million credit to Nationalist regime of KMT for purchasing war supplies and this credit later expanded to \$100 million in 1940.<sup>181</sup> The United States assisted with ensuring Japan ceded control of Taiwan back to China as a result of the defeat in WWII. The United States picked KMT to overshadow the CCP and remain as the dominant leadership. The larger cold war competition between the United States and the Soviet Union tinted the viewpoints for interacting with China, particularly the PRC.

Yet, some figures in U.S. foreign policy understood there were different shades of red within the bin of international communism. George F. Kennan, Chargé d' Affaires in Moscow, offered the now famous “Long Telegram” (1946) from his post & “Mr. X” article in *Foreign Affairs* (1947) contending that the United States could gain strategic advantage from tensions between Soviet Union and national communist movements.<sup>182</sup> Paul Heer, scholar and veteran of U.S. intelligence community, expanded upon Kennan’s stance that “containment was exclusively about containing Soviet Communism” and Japan was the only nation in the Pacific vulnerable to Soviet influence.<sup>183</sup> A wedge between China and the Soviet Union had potential to deflate the larger shared concept of communism. Unable to realize the potential for the Sino-Soviet split, the Truman administration “mutated ‘containment’ into a crusade against all international communism leaving little space for nuanced, fact-based assessments related to politics or internal struggles.”<sup>184</sup> The United

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<sup>180</sup> Russell Whelan, *The Flying Tigers : The Story of the American Volunteer Group* (New York: Viking Press, 1942).

<sup>181</sup> “U.S.-China Relations: A Brief Historical Perspective,” U.S. China Policy Foundation, last modified August 2018, <http://uscpc.org/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/backgrounder-on-US-China-relations.pdf>.

<sup>182</sup> Moscow 511: The Charge in the Soviet Union [Kennan] to the Secretary of State, February 22, 1946, Cold War Documents, National Security Archive, George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.; X, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1, 1947): 566–582.

<sup>183</sup> Paul J. Heer and Richard C. Bush, “Mr. X and the Pacific: George F. Kennan and America Policy in East Asia,” September 18, 2018, Washington, D.C., Center for East Asia Policy Studies, Brookings Institution, Audio Recording, Transcript, 15, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FP-09182018-Kennan\\_Asia-Transcript-corrected.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FP-09182018-Kennan_Asia-Transcript-corrected.pdf).

<sup>184</sup> Siamak T. Naficy, “What the Revolutions Brought: United States and China” (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, April 27, 2019).

States applied concept of containment to the Soviet Union and China; viewing the Pacific as vital to national interests.

*a. Perspective—Balance of Power*

The balance of power perspective contributed to the lack of growth in a relationship between the United States and the Chinese PRC. The United States wanted to maintain the status quo of regional dominance; choosing not to interact with the PRC mitigated the potential for China's relative gains on the international stage. Mao's success of the Chinese revolution bolstered his commitment to restore national independence after the long periods of Western domination, embodied by the presence of the United States and its support of the Chiang Kai-shek regime.<sup>185</sup> The PRC perceived the meddling of the United States in Chinese self-determination efforts as a threat, United States involvement stimulated the need to defend Chinese sovereignty and contest American dominance in Asia. From the United States perspective, Kennan described China's hatred toward the United States based on the "strength and the temerity to stand in their [China's] path and to obstruct the expansion of their power."<sup>186</sup> Kennan candidly shared the opinion to "run out on commitments with which we emerged from the Pacific war and to forfeit at once all the most important fruits of our victory in the war" was not an option.<sup>187</sup> The United States was unwilling to cede power to the CCP with the acknowledgement of the PRC.

*b. Perspective—Selectorate Theory*

The conflict churned between the United States and China remained for an extended duration because Mao concentrated on propelling the revolution, later advancing Chinese Communist views, and remaining in power. Selectorate theory simplifies aspects of emphasis and direction of focus for governances. From this concept, we note the external

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<sup>185</sup> Naficy.

<sup>186</sup> George Kennan, "A Fresh Look at Our China Policy," *The New York Times*, November 22, 1964, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/11/22/archives/a-fresh-look-at-our-china-policy.html>.

<sup>187</sup> Kennan.



conflict remains as an autocratic leader deliberately focuses on the central goal to remain in power. Mao Zedong's communist concept noted the struggle for the interests of the deprived and suppressed masses.<sup>188</sup> In the 1950s, Mao stripped land from families, peasants received titles, and cadre organized mutual labor teams for community cooperatives.<sup>189</sup> This technique served as an attempt to unify the struggling mass for a cooperative agricultural effort. In reality, the method bound the peasants to a form of economic conscription. Some version of collective leadership of the CCP existed previously where expression of dissent existed within closed doors, but the criticism of Mao's Great Leap Forward became a significant offense that prompted arrests of leadership after the Lushan meeting in the summer of 1959. Mao's efforts led to the arrest of Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao assumed the role as China's defense minister.<sup>190</sup> Periodic freshening, or more appropriately, purging of the winning coalition occurred. Mao advanced the Cultural Revolution to further oust CCP leaders and refine his position over China and the party organization.<sup>191</sup> The 9th Congress of the CCP contained a 23-member politburo that Mao squeezed down to 14 members in 1969.<sup>192</sup> The coalition size closest to Mao was rather small, sometimes referenced as the "Gang of Four."<sup>193</sup> Mao's individual authority climbed during the Cultural Revolution; he remained in power until his death in 1976. While the United States' refusal to acknowledge the PRC may have goaded China into further competition and conflict, it appears that many actions of the PRC targeted the preservation of stability needed for Mao to maintain his power. The PRC maintained a

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<sup>188</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook Why Bad Behavior Is Almost Always Good Politics* 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 263.

<sup>189</sup> Albert Ravenholt, "The Chinese Communes: Big Risks for Big Gains," *Foreign Affairs* 37, no. 4 (1959): 576. doi:10.2307/20029379.

<sup>190</sup> Mira Lansky, "'People's War' and the Soviet Threat: The Rise and Fall of a Military Doctrine," *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 4 (October 1, 1983): 623. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1297330989/>.

<sup>191</sup> Bueno De Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, James D. Morrow, and Randolph M. Siverson. *The logic of political survival* (Boston: MIT press, 2005), 542.

<sup>192</sup> Harry Harding, "The Chinese State in Crisis, 1966–9," in MacFarquhar, ed., *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 242–245.

<sup>193</sup> "Yao Wenyan," *Economist*, January 12, 2006, <https://www.economist.com/obituary/2006/01/12/yao-wenyan>

stance which the United States bore responsibility for the first move to improve relations, external recognition, while Mao kept focus on locally preserving internal status of the PRC.

*c. Ecology Considered*

Re-framing the problem to include the ecology of the United States and China relationship, or lack thereof, increases the complexity of the topic. From this macro lens, it is easier to appreciate the aspect of local politics having an impact on foreign policy. Two instances that quickly come to mind include the dynamics of the PRC intervening in the Korean War as well as the American view demanding the containment of communism. China's involvement in the Korean War is an instance that showcased the overlap of local political dynamics influencing foreign policy. The PRC's decision to intervene presented an opportunity to improve the domestic situation. Zhao, an international politics graduate of Aberystwyth University in Wales, elaborates by countering anti-Communist forces and demonstrating the "dedication to defend national sovereignty and communism and fight against imperialism" the CCP regime bolstered their legitimacy and authority with the public.<sup>194</sup> Taking a stance against the United States, reinforced by actions during the Korean War, increased the clout of the PRC in mainland China, the region, and the larger international community.

George Kennan noted the strong body of opinion in the United States, which insisted, "[O]ur true objective was the destruction of communism, as a political force, in China and elsewhere."<sup>195</sup> This dominant opinion in local politics within the United States calcified the conflict and the stance in foreign politics opposing interaction with the Soviet Union and the PRC. Senator Joseph McCarthy, in 1950, instigated a polarizing period in local politics by claiming he possessed a list 205 men in the State Department that were

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<sup>194</sup> Bangning Zhou, 2015. Explaining China's Intervention in the Korean War in 1950. *Interstate - Journal of International Affairs* 2014/2015 (1), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1069>.

<sup>195</sup> Kennan.

also members of the Communist Party.<sup>196</sup> Investigations and accusations expanded fears of communism near and abroad. Heightened fears of communism polarized American views to see a zero-sum problem; the United States lumped China in with the Soviet Union.

Both instances, for the PRC and the United States, stimulated actions while preventing the nations to interact in constructive manner. The Warsaw Sino-Ambassadorial talks, during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations of the 1960s, centered on airing grievances and United States demands (esp. regarding Taiwan) rather than arguably—on real rapprochement.<sup>197</sup> Actions maintain a significance over words. The local political dynamics affected the shaping and execution of foreign policy with respect to the opposing nation. The overlapping aspects of an ecology highlight the potential for local politics and foreign policy to affect each other in a non-sequential manner.

### 3. Intractability Dissolved

[F]rom the very onset [Nixon's vision], the United States made it clear that it sought its opening to China not as a matter of expediency but as a long-term and strategic move.<sup>198</sup>

—Chas Freeman, diplomat and Nixon's principal interpreter

In the early 1970s, the United States reoriented its foreign relations policy regarding Communist China. It is an outstanding example in U.S. history of how real rapprochement with a rising revolutionary state “may shed light on what it might take to get it right.”<sup>199</sup> While it is difficult to pinpoint a single specific action as a definitive catalyst for thawed relations, several seemed to herald the change between the two nations:

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<sup>196</sup> “Senator Joseph McCarthy, McCarthyism, and the Witch Hunt,” The Cold War Museum, accessed April 24, 2019, <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/50s/SenatorJosephMcCarthy.asp>.

<sup>197</sup> Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 762–763.

<sup>198</sup> Charles Freeman, “The Process of Rapprochement: Achievements and Problems,” in *Sino-American Normalization and Its Policy Implications*, ed. Gene Hsiao and Michael Witunski (New York: Praeger, 1983, 8.)

<sup>199</sup> Naficy.

- The United States moderated its tone, changing the use of Beiping (KMT version) to Beijing (CCP version).<sup>200</sup>
- “In 1966, U.S. representative to the Warsaw talks referred publicly to ‘the People’s Republic of China,’ marking first time an American diplomat formally used the nation’s official name.”<sup>201</sup>
- President Nixon empowered Kissinger to initiate a dialogue in 1969 with Premier Zhou Enlai.<sup>202</sup>
- The invitation by the People’s Republic of China table tennis team, in 1971, to the United States team for friendly matches in Peking, China.<sup>203</sup>
- The Republic of China (KMT), maintained their physical location in Taiwan, but did not receive assistance from the United States to block the loss of their seat in the United Nations in 1971.<sup>204</sup>

The shift in this period, built upon discrete interaction to revamp the view of the problem, created an opportunity to peel off the label of a zero-sum issue.

Nixon went into cultivating a relationship while U.S. Soldiers were in direct and indirect engagements with Chinese-supported forces in Vietnam.<sup>205</sup> Stating demands upfront may have fallen on deaf ears or been ignored. Orienting discussions centered on

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<sup>200</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao : The Week That Changed The World*, 1st edition (New York: Random House, 2007), 162.

<sup>201</sup>As Henry Kissinger later noted, such gestures “were put forward as abstract hopes geared to some undefined change in Chinese attitudes,” yet “no practical conclusion followed.” Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 199. in Flynt L. Leverrett and Hillary M. Leverrett, *Going to Tehran* (New York: Picador, 2013), 378.

<sup>202</sup> Margaret MacMillan, “Nixon and Mao,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2007, sec. Books. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/25/books/chapters/0225-1st-macm.html>.

<sup>203</sup> “Ping-Pong Diplomacy,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1971, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/04/10/archives/pingpong-diplomacy.html>

<sup>204</sup> Eleanor Albert, “China—Taiwan Relations,” Council on Foreign Relations, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-relations>.

<sup>205</sup> Over 300,000 Chinese technical experts and troops rotated North Vietnam during the war. Information regarding Chinese involvement discussed in Hanyok’s “Chapter 6- Xerxes’ Arrows: SIGINT Support to the Air War, 1964–1972” in *Spartans in Darkness*. Robert J. Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness: American SIGINT and the Indochina War, 1945–1975*. Series 6, Volume 7 (REDACTED) (Ft. Meade: National Security Agency, 2002), 247, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a483675.pdf>

Richard M. Nixon, *Richard Nixon: 1972: Containing the Public Messages, speeches, and Statements of the President*, University of Michigan Digital Library, The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 378, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4731812.1972.001/436>.

mutual interests provided a point of departure for expanding dialog between the United States and China. Nixon encouraged a revision of China's preferences specific to Vietnam. Discussion over annexation of Taiwan in a bilateral forum illuminated multilateral consequences. The Shanghai Communiqué of February 27, 1972 was a joint document in which both sides agreed:

- “[P]rogress toward normalization of relations between China and United States is in the interests of all countries;
- both wish to reduce danger of international military conflict;
- neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony; and
- neither is prepared to negotiate on behalf of any third party or to enter into agreements or understands with the other directed at other states.”<sup>206</sup>

In short, the joint 1972 Shanghai Communiqué was a pledge toward a constructive effort, to agree one day. The interactions, described as back channel diplomacy, over multiple years yielded the United States' formalized recognition of the PRC in 1979.

#### **4. Reflection of Assumptions**

China's willingness to interact, Assumption I, was high while the United States maintained a position of no contact with the PRC for an extended period, over 20 years. CCP assessed the United States' objective was an expansion of influence in the “intermediate zone” between United States and the Soviet Union; Mao “believed that China would play a central role in determining the result of the Cold War.”<sup>207</sup> The PRC perceived it was a necessity to confront and counter efforts of the United States on various planes, believing outright recalcitrance would hamper recognition or the legitimacy of the

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<sup>206</sup> Nixon.

<sup>207</sup> Jian Chen. *China's Road to the Korean War : The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 18–20.

PRC. They maintained a stance prepared to reciprocate mutual respect for the recognition of their territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>208</sup>

The Soviet Union, most likely, held objections to United States approach to improving relations with China. Eventually, United States' actions expanded a wedge between the Soviet Union and China as Kennan suggested in 1947. Assessing the Soviet-Sino relationship in 1963, the CIA reported that in all aspects “[S]hort of survival,” “China and the USSR will increasingly view each other as hostile rivals and competing powers.”<sup>209</sup> The wedge became increasingly visible in 1969 as the USSR and PRC clashed along the Ussuri River valley near Manchuria.<sup>210</sup> In addition to the Soviet Union, leaders of the Republic of China and KMT party also objected to relationship changes; losing the backing of the United States and the United Nations seat in 1971 were heavy blows. Dr. Thomas Bellows, political science scholar, referred to United States advancing “a process of accommodations” for the PRC and the crowning action was the Shanghai Joint Communiqué of February 27, 1972 that reaffirmed Taiwan is a part of China.<sup>211</sup> These events and the tension with Mao’s PRC oriented the KMT on a course with political isolation.

Security as a necessary condition, Assumption II, appears relevant to the United States–China relationship. Mao refined priorities to work toward self-reliance of the nation achieved through mass participation.<sup>212</sup> The concept in the 1950s incorporated the use of

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<sup>208</sup> “Proclamation of the Central People’s Government of the PRC,” October 01, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Renmin ribao (People’s Daily), October 2, 1949. English translation from Michael Y. M. Kau, ed., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976*, Volume I, September 1949–December 1955 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 10–11. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121557>

<sup>209</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Sino-Soviet Relations at a New Crisis,” memorandum, January 14, 1963, 6, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp79t00429a000300020013-1>.

<sup>210</sup> Michael S. Gerson, “The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict: Deterrence, Escalation, and the Threat of Nuclear War in 1969,” CNA, November 2010, 3–10, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/D0022974.A2.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/D0022974.A2.pdf).

<sup>211</sup> Thomas J. Bellows, “Taiwan’s Foreign Policy in the 1970s: A Case Study of Adaptation and Viability,” *Asian Survey* 16, no. 7 (1976): 594, doi:10.2307/2643160.

<sup>212</sup> Deba R. Mohanty, “The Chinese Security Dilemma in the 1950s and 1960s: Story of the Third Front,” Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses- India, Accessed April 15, 2019. <https://www.idsa-india.org/an-jan-4.html>.

the countryside, or interior, as “The enemy has occupied China’s cities and lines of communication.”<sup>213</sup> Mao consistently referenced security which suggests this was a driver for many PRC actions. Recognition of China by the United States greatly expanded the position of China in the greater Pacific theater.

## 5. Characteristics of Relation-Building Utility

Three characteristics (secrecy, actions of good faith, long-term focus) surface from the exploration of the United States and China relations.

Kissinger insisted that his negotiations ensue in secrecy, as he recognized public (local level) political perceptions or open speculation would undermine the visit before it occurred.<sup>214</sup> In addition to local population, this secrecy offered a buffer to mitigate the possibility of spooking China and U.S. allies. Kissinger chose a path to mask the early engagements with China, attempting to re-label the relationship fragile aspect of the approach. In the instances of zero-sum problems, animosity often festers from us versus them attitudes. There is also an attitude that any concession is a loss, regardless of the overall gains. An approach to alter the labels of a conflict may require an incubation period before sharing the decision with local populace and media sources.

Demonstrations of U.S. good faith occurred, over a multi-year period, in advance of Nixon’s visit with Mao. On Nixon’s orders, the Seventh Fleet in November 1969 quietly ended 19 years of patrolling of the Taiwan Strait, the United States relaxed of trade and travel restrictions in 1970, and one year later the CIA ceased support of Mustang rebels in Tibet.<sup>215</sup> Each of the actions contained its own level of significance, but in combination

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<sup>213</sup> Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger: 1963), 288.

<sup>214</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao : The Week That Changed The World* 1st ed (New York: Random House, 2007), 182.

<sup>215</sup> Department of State, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China and Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command” from September 23, 1969. in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, vol. XVII, China 1969–1972, ed. Steven E. Phillips (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006), Document 34. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d34>.; John Masko, “CIA Operations in Tibet and the Intelligence-Policy Relationship,” *American Intelligence Journal* 31, no. 2 (2013) 127–128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26202084>.

with one another, the displays of good faith signaled the interest of the United States to improve relations with China.

The Nixon administration placed emphasis on future relations with China; they “[R]ecognized diplomacy with Beijing was not a reward for the PRC, but a strategic imperative for the United States.”<sup>216</sup> Nixon possessed a goal to undo the undermined U.S. position in Asia. During a winter 1970 press conference, Nixon shared, “[W]e are going to continue the initiative that I have begun, an initiative of relaxing trade restrictions and travel restrictions and attempting to open channels of communication with Communist China, having in mind the fact that *looking long toward the future* we must have some communication and eventually relations with Communist China.”<sup>217</sup> Concerned with not only the issues of the period, Nixon set into motion a long-term focus for relations with China. While Kissinger executed the legwork in a discrete manner, Nixon used the December 1979 press conference to highlight the future focus to the public.

### C. OTHER INSTANCES OF DISSOLVING INTRACTABILITY

In addition to gaining insight from United States–China relations, there are several other comparative examples that also enhance prospective for dissolving intractability of a relationship. Sequence of examples: Troubles in Northern Ireland (State/Non-State) and the United States–Iran relations (Pre-JCPOA). We begin with a general overview of the relationship by referring to the events and actions often tied to symptoms of the conflict. In multiple relationships, recrimination is in itself not a solution. The focus on symptoms exacerbates the lag in progress and delays the prospects for fashioning an approach to address the root issue. While things were bad, both sides engaged in conflict. The discussion of how the relationship advanced accounts for an alteration of the zero-sum view of the conflict and actions recognizing the root issue. Finally, the thesis provides a window to review the similarities and differences of the selected comparative examples

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<sup>216</sup> Naficy.

<sup>217</sup> Richard Nixon, “The President’s News Conference - December 10, 1970,” UC Santa Barbara: The American Presidency Project, Accessed on April 25, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240680>.



with the United States–Iran interactions and further assisting the process for sorting and gleaning key points. Insights gleaned from history will surely aid the re-tooling of a concerted effort for advancing United States–Iran relations.

### **1. The Troubles–Political Peace Process**

The Troubles of Northern Ireland surfaced as an intra-state matter in the late 1960s: the beginning marked by the development of the Ulster volunteer force in 1966, civil rights march in Derry on October 5, 1968, the bogside clashes or deployment of British troops in August 1969.<sup>218</sup> The themes of resistance and violence resonated on the Island as the variations of Irish and Anglo conflict date back to Tyrone’s rebellion against Tudor reign in the 16th century.<sup>219</sup> In the midst of Anglo-Irish war (1919-1921), the partitioning of Southern and Northern Ireland occurred with the United Kingdom’s 1920 Government of Ireland Act.<sup>220</sup> A summer truce led to the end of the Anglo-Irish War in December 1921, this war treaty yielded a free Irish State. The parliament of Northern Ireland opted out of the Free State and remained aligned with the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland’s population included unionists who wanted to remain linked with the United Kingdom and nationalists who desired a united Ireland that was independent of Britain. A second demographic described Northern Ireland’s Protestant majority and a Catholic minority. Catholic nationalists, a minority in Northern Ireland, believed “[T]his new set-up [government] was marked by discrimination in employment, partial distribution of resources such as housing, and a number of inequalities in relation to electoral practice and the organization of the security forces.”<sup>221</sup> The alienation in Northern Ireland stimulated 1960s civil protests to campaign against the limited jobs, social housing allocation, and the

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<sup>218</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland’s Ordeal 1966–1996 and the Search for Peace* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 333.

<sup>219</sup> Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1993).

<sup>220</sup> Ged Martin, “The Origins of Partition,” in *The Irish Border: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. Malcom Anderson and Eberhard Bort (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999) 68.

<sup>221</sup> James W. McAuley, Catherine McGlynn and Jon Tonge, “Conflict Resolution in Asymmetric and Symmetric Situations: Northern Ireland as a Case Study,” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 1, no. 1 (2008): 92, DOI: 10.1080/17467580802284712.

right to vote. The Ulster Constabulary in Derry attempted to disperse protestors during October 5, 1968 civil demonstration.<sup>222</sup> The local force aggressive action, or overreaction, against the protest coupled with the employment of British army to reestablish order “fueled resentment and aided recruitment from the nationalist community to previously moribund republican paramilitary forces.”<sup>223</sup> The police, British military and Unionist groups traded blows in an asymmetric conflict with the provisional IRA, which aggressively propagated 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland.

*a. Background Events/Actions (Abbreviated)*

The Troubles contained a mix of political and military efforts focused on gaining an advantage over the opposing group. Simple references to town names—Unionists referred to Londonderry as the location of the 1968 March while Nationalists called it Derry—harbored the schism between the two groups.<sup>224</sup> Civil demonstrations still occurred after 1968, shifting from campaigns against discrimination to an accumulation of grievances as responses to civil protests became more filled with violence. Rounds of violence fed off the other side’s reaction. Early 1970s in Derry, the British military killed two civilians in 1971 and killed 13 civilians on January 30, 1972, which became known as Bloody Sunday.<sup>225</sup> In an open 2010 letter to the *Sunday Times*, the anonymous author reflected on 1972 by describing the Unionist and British governments preparations “to intimidate nationalist protesters” with “CS gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, even internment without trial, had failed.”<sup>226</sup> Instead of quelling the protestors, Unionist and British efforts in 1972 ignited the struggle and stoked nationalist reasons for justice. The

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<sup>222</sup> Bob Purdie, *Politics in the Streets: The origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1990), 140–143.

<sup>223</sup> McAuley, McGlynn, and Tonge, 92.

<sup>224</sup> Alan Cowell, “50 Years Later, Troubles Still Cast ‘Huge Shadow’ Over Northern Ireland,” *New York Times*, October 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/04/world/europe/northern-ireland-troubles.html>.

<sup>225</sup> A. Johnston, “Britain, Ireland and Ulster,” *Review of International Studies* 7, no. 3 (1981): 189, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20096919>.

<sup>226</sup> “Remember the Other Atrocities; LETTERS,” *Sunday Times* (London, England), NI Syndication Limited, June 20, 2010.

Provisional IRA wove “Bloody Sunday” into “the republican narrative, offsetting accusations that the IRA was more brutal in its tactics than the British Army.”<sup>227</sup>

In addition to the clashes between the Provisional IRA against the Ulster and British governance, other groups participated in the conflict. Loyalist and Unionist paramilitary groups also sought to challenge the Provisional IRA and the minority position supporters.<sup>228</sup> Shooting and Bombings also remain the preferred attack method. Council for Foreign Relations background report noted, “Between 1968 and 1998, loyalist paramilitaries killed an estimated 864 civilians (most of them Catholic), compared with an estimated 728 civilians (most of them Protestant) killed by the IRA.”<sup>229</sup>

Tit-for-tat actions energized with religion and notions of justice exacerbated the conflict. Religious fervor helped unite and hardened identities of us versus them into the sectarian camps of Protestants versus Catholics. The religious identities heighten the interest to take a stance in the struggle and propelled the action on both sides. Violence occurred throughout Northern Ireland and London, with a concentration of events ensued in Derry and Belfast. The 30 years of violence, accounting for more than 3,500 deaths and approximately 42,304 injuries, affected Northern Ireland’s six-county population of 1.5 million.<sup>230</sup> The violence on the streets had ripple effect within many homes more 52% of deaths were civilians.<sup>231</sup>

The distress and fatigue felt by Northern Ireland’s population was a byproduct of the conflict. Justice and vengeance perpetuated The Troubles, while the prospects of

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<sup>227</sup> Cowell.

<sup>228</sup> “Northern Ireland Loyalist Paramilitaries (U.K., extremists),” *Council on Foreign Relations*, Last modified November 1, 2005, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/northern-ireland-loyalist-paramilitaries-uk-extremists>.

<sup>229</sup> “Northern Ireland Loyalist Paramilitaries (U.K., extremists).”

<sup>230</sup> Malcom Sutton, “An Index of Deaths from the Conflict in [Northern] Ireland: Summary Status of the Person Killed,” University of Ulster: CAIN Project, Last modified October 2002, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/sutton/book/index.html>.; “Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)/ Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Statistics: Table NI-SEC-05: Persons injured (number) due to the security situation in Northern Ireland (only), 1968 to 2003” in “Security and Defence,” University of Ulster: CAIN Project, Last modified February 6, 2019, <http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/ni/security.htm#05>.

<sup>231</sup> Sutton.

security and stability remained elusive until the late 1990s. Journalist Chris Thorton deduced “The IRA seemed perpetually convinced that attrition would drive the British out, while the British believed an aggressive, covert campaign of ambushes would paralyze the IRA.”<sup>232</sup> Additionally, Thorton offered, “Neither view was right; it was only when both sides gradually realized that they had reached a military stalemate that space opened in the ’90s for a political settlement.”<sup>233</sup> To some degree, the condition of an attrition stalemate eschewed violence and prompted the parties to pursue other efforts. The **root cause** of conflict for the civil population nationalists stemmed from the lack of official recognition and representation.

*b. Approach to Engagement—How the Relationship was Advanced*

Adjustments to the state of the relationship did not occur in rapid manner, 30 years elapsed before both sides secured a formal agreement ending The Troubles. The 1985 Anglo–Irish agreement initiated by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher served as a stepping-stone for the future agreement. The agreement established a consulting or advisory role for the Irish government in the affairs of Northern Ireland.<sup>234</sup> Other legislative items spurred were the abolition of Flag and Emblem act, a merger of the Ulster Defense Regiment with the Royal Irish Regiment, and promotion of Gaelic language, initiation of fair employment legislation.<sup>235</sup> In 1988, both communities believed the agreement did not significantly benefit the nationalist or unionist position.<sup>236</sup> The model of inter-governmental cooperation within the agreement shifted the arbitration role from the parties in Northern Ireland to earmark the “governments as the key players”; the Irish

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<sup>232</sup> Chris Thorton, “Brits in Northern Ireland: Mission Over,” *Time*, August 1, 2007, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1648606,00.html>.

<sup>233</sup> Thorton.

<sup>234</sup> Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change* (London: Routledge, 2013), 129.

<sup>235</sup> Tonge, 138.

<sup>236</sup> K. Boyle and T. Hadden, *Northern Ireland: The Anglo-Irish Agreement: Commentary, Text and Official Review* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1989), 19.

government became the “new custodian of the rights of nationalists in Northern Ireland.”<sup>237</sup> This also fashioned a more neutral position in the conflict for Britain.

The 1994 ceasefire agreed upon by paramilitary groups of the Provisional IRA and the Loyalist paramilitary groups served as another adjustment to the relationship status. Loyalist justification to cease paramilitary activity drew upon the recognition that despite “Britain’s disinterest in Northern Ireland, it remained part of the United Kingdom” and they linked loyalist violence as traditionally reactive in “response to Republican paramilitary activity.”<sup>238</sup> The refrain, or change in tactics, influenced the viability of political engagement. McAuley et al. contended the “development of a working political coalition among political representatives marked the transformation from asymmetric conflict to symmetric peace.”<sup>239</sup> The “Increased perceptions of symmetry” expanded authority as guarantors, which enabled paramilitary organizations on both sides to promote the merits of a “‘political’ solution to their supporters.”<sup>240</sup> Two conditions surfaced in the mid-1990s, advancing a joint framework peace process required (1) “a commitment to a long peace by republican paramilitaries in the manner which they prepared for long war” and (2) the inclusion of *Sinn Fein* in all-party talks.<sup>241</sup> Sustainment of a peace process required the participation of all parties, excluding groups made the process vulnerable to parties interested in wrecking the engagement. The 1985 Anglo–Irish agreement, the 1994 paramilitary ceasefire, and the 1995 Joint Framework documents issued by Irish and British governments served as constructive measures which increased emphasis on the political process and engagement.

*c. Points from Peace Process Pursued*

The long road of violence shifted through political engagement and lengthy negotiations; “The Troubles” formally ended with the Good Friday Agreement on April

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<sup>237</sup> Tonge, 138–139.

<sup>238</sup> Tonge, 153.

<sup>239</sup> McAuley, McGlynn, and Tonge, 88.

<sup>240</sup> McAuley, McGlynn, and Tonge, 88.

<sup>241</sup> Tonge, 167.

10, 1998.<sup>242</sup> Points of interest are the long-term focus, informal discourse, inclusive character of participation. As mentioned previously, the Anglo-Irish agreement, paramilitary ceasefires, and joint framework served as stepping-stones in a long-term process which culminated in the Good Friday agreement. Seventeen years elapsed in The Troubles, before Prime Minister Thatcher emplaced the first stone. The actual negotiation in the mid-1990s within the peace process also reflected the theme of long-term focus. George Mitchell, United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, recounted negotiations included “700 days of failure and then one day of success.”<sup>243</sup> This is akin to the 1972 Shanghai Communique, which again, was in essence an agreement to agree one day; the trajectory from 1972 led to a secondary U.S.–China agreement seven years later. Long-term focus heightens the commitment levels of parties involved.

Informal discourse and inclusive character of participation are also helpful features. John Coakley, professor of politics and British–Irish studies at University College Dublin, offered the “three features of the process leading the agreement are of particular interest: the inclusive character of participation, the significance of informal discourse and the degree of reliance on external mediation.”<sup>244</sup> Opportunities for informal discourse surfaced with the 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement incorporating the Republic of Ireland in an advisory role and later the joint framework documents as well as the negotiation window. Emphasis on inclusiveness occurred with the 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement and other instances where the commitment to incorporate *Sinn Fein* in the all-party talks. Isolating groups has a great propensity to provide a reason to wreck deals. Inclusive efforts expand the possibility of success. While the snapshot refers to successful accommodation,

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<sup>242</sup> Russell Riley, “What Bill Clinton Could Teach President Trump about Dealmaking,” *Atlantic*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/trump-clinton-ireland/557621/>.

<sup>243</sup> Mark Landler, “Mideast Envoy Says Misconceptions Cloud View of Peace Efforts,” *New York Times*, August 3, 2009, A8.

<sup>244</sup> John Coakley, “Ethnic Conflict and Its Resolution: The Northern Ireland Model,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 40.

“Northern Ireland’s peace has been imperfect.”<sup>245</sup> This imperfectness requires recognition and prompts a question of “what is manageable?” for other bilateral relationships.

## 2. United States–Iran (2012-2015/Pre-JCPOA)

The period of time before the establishment of the JCPOA is another example which hints to the possibility of dissolving, or at least diluting deep-rooted conflict. Between 2009 and 2015, most leaders in Washington believed engagement with Iran was a fool’s errand. Iran stirred violence and caused problems in Iraq for U.S. Soldiers by proliferating explosively formed penetrators (EFP) technology, busily processed and enriched uranium, violently quashed local dissent connected to election results, supported Assad’s control of Syria, etc.<sup>246</sup> In addition to the enrichment of uranium, the status of Iran’s nuclear weapons capability and development was a significant concern. Congressional Research Service report emphasized the severity of the threat through the assessments and statements Iran kept the “‘option’ to develop nuclear weapons” open even though a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), from November 2007, assessed Iran “halted its nuclear weapons program” in 2003.<sup>247</sup> Within a period of conflict surrounding the Middle East, the United States and Iran interactions advanced to focus on the concern of nuclear weapons. Dr. Mohamad ElBaradei, a former Director General of IAEA (1997-2009) and 2005 Nobel Peace prize recipient, opined over larger multilateral discussions noting “It took the West a decade to realize that bare-knuckle competition for regional influence was not a viable strategy for dealing with Iran.”<sup>248</sup> In response to congressional

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<sup>245</sup> Coakley, 40; Tonge, Jon. “A Campaign without End?: ‘Dissident’ Republican Violence in Northern Ireland.” *Political Insight* 5, no. 1 (April 2014): 17, DOI:10.1111/2041-9066.12042.

<sup>246</sup> Alexandra Gutowski, “Iranian-linked Bomb Kills American Soldier in Iraq,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies: Long War Journal*, October 12, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/10/efp.php>.

<sup>247</sup> “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities,” National Intelligence Estimate, November 2007. [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/20071203\\_release.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/20071203_release.pdf); Director of National Intelligence James Clapper’s February 26, 2015, testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee (Statement for the Record, Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, February 26, 2015).; Paul K. Kerr and Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Nuclear Agreement and U.S. Exit*, CRS Report No. R43333 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018), 2, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43333.pdf>.

<sup>248</sup> ElBaradei “Hassan Rouhani,” *Time*, April 23, 2014, <http://time.com/70838/hassan-rouhani-2014-time-100/>

correspondence, the Department of State emphasized “The JCPOA reflects political commitments between Iran, the P5+1 (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, Germany), and the European Union.”<sup>249</sup> Political commitment and the application of all four elements of national power enabled the group to adopt the JCPOA. While an in-depth analysis of the JCPOA and the events leading to the agreement is another topic thoroughly discussed in its own right and beyond the scope of this thesis, there are several aspects worth reviewing in relation to the prospects of dissolving intractable conflict.

*a. Background Events/Actions (Abbreviated)*

This was not beginner’s luck or simply a matter of reversing stances of the Bush administration to spur a positive relationship with Iran. The point of this section is not to highlight a difference between liberal/conservative or reformist/hardliner administrations; in general, the United States’ approach has not varied much between partisan proponents. In fact, President Obama began with hopeful optimism and after three years, a policy of engagement “morphed from... an extended hand of friendship to harsh sanctions and preparations for war.”<sup>250</sup> The lack of reciprocation by Iran, after the United States “extended a hand,” provided an enhanced position “to lead an international coalition toward comprehensive sanctions.”<sup>251</sup> Issues with Iran continued to stew which expanded greater concurrence with the UN permanent party members and other nations of the international community. Both Iran and the United States never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, and in this snapshot of events between 2009 and 2011 Iran failed to reciprocate in engagement.<sup>252</sup> President Ahmadinejad’s second term, 2009–2013, signaled the relevance of ecology as the overlap of Iranian foreign and domestic politics constricted

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<sup>249</sup> Julia Frifield, Written Response November 19, 2015 to Congressman Pompeo’s letter September 18, 2015 regarding JCPOA legal status and signatures, Case No. F-2015-17118, Doc. No. C0610326 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2015), 1, [https://foia.state.gov/searchapp/DOCUMENTS/Dec16Jan17/F-2015-17118/DOC\\_0C06101326/C06101326.pdf](https://foia.state.gov/searchapp/DOCUMENTS/Dec16Jan17/F-2015-17118/DOC_0C06101326/C06101326.pdf).

<sup>250</sup> David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America’s Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012) 561.

<sup>251</sup> Nick Burns, “Obama’s Opportunity in Iran,” *Boston Globe*, October 1, 2009.

<sup>252</sup> Trita Parsi, “Iran and Israel: Peace is Possible,” June 2013, in TEDGlobal 2013, streaming video, transcript, 0:07:35, [https://www.ted.com/talks/trita\\_parsi\\_iran\\_and\\_israel\\_peace\\_is\\_possible](https://www.ted.com/talks/trita_parsi_iran_and_israel_peace_is_possible)



engagement with the United States. In 2012, there was a lull in any U.S. engagement as President Obama focused attention on reelection support, Western nations maintained a stance requiring Iran to completely cease enrichment, and the weight of multilateral sanctions continued pressing on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Some news sources referred to the reelection of President Obama, the election of President Hassan Rouhani, and the positioning of Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif—a combination of leadership changes that influenced the favorable progress toward an interim agreement in the fall of 2013.<sup>253</sup> Some news agencies in 2013 pointed to the February six-party visits in Kazakhstan where demands softened regarding enrichment, whereas others referenced secret talks with Iran in advance of their recent elections.<sup>254</sup> Deputy Secretary of State William Burns and Jake Sullivan, VP Biden’s top foreign policy advisor, traveled in March 2013 and met with an Iranian counterpart in Oman.<sup>255</sup> The meeting in Oman was one of five unpublicized, secret meetings that occurred over a nine-month period between United States and Iranian officials.<sup>256</sup> In the fall, September 2013, Presidents Obama and Rouhani held 15-minute direct conversation in which “Both leaders expressed confidence their countries could reach a peaceful settlement to standoff over Iranian nuclear program” and Obama further noted the discussion was a “basis for

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<sup>253</sup> “Breaking Silence Between the U.S. and Iran,” National Public Radio, October 6, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/2013/10/06/229879863/breaking-the-silence-between-the-u-s-and-iran>.; Ariane Tabatabai, “Reading the Nuclear Politics in Tehran,” *Arms Control Today* 45 (September 2015) [https://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015\\_09/Feature/Reading-the-Nuclear-Politics-in-Tehran](https://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015_09/Feature/Reading-the-Nuclear-Politics-in-Tehran).

<sup>254</sup> Steven Erlanger, “As Negotiators Ease Demands on Iran, More Nuclear Talks Are Set,” *New York Times*, February 27, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/28/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks.html>.; Julian Borger and Saeed Kamili Dehghan, “Secret Talks Helped Forge Iran Nuclear Deal,” *Guardian*, November 25, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/secret-usa-iran-talks-nuclear-deal>.

<sup>255</sup> Matthew Lee, Bradley Klapper, and Julie Pace, “How a Series of Secret Meetings Between U.S. and Iran Led to Historic Agreement,” PBS, November 23, 2013, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/how-a-series-of-secret-meetings-between-us-and-iran-led-to-historic-agreement>.

<sup>256</sup> Lee, Klapper, and Pace.

resolution.”<sup>257</sup> In addition participating in larger seven-nation meeting at the UN headquarters, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javid Zarif continued with bilateral discussions for more than 20 minutes after the larger discussion subsided.<sup>258</sup> Official direct engagements occurred on several different levels and the United States leaders to advantage of larger meetings as windows to expand bilateral interaction.

The interim agreement, from November 2013, resulted in Iran ceasing production of the Arak heavy water reactor, stopping enrichment of uranium above five percent, accepting more intrusive IAEA inspections and shrinking the stockpile of enriched uranium in exchange for partial lifting of sanctions and the unfreezing of assets.<sup>259</sup> Chas W. Freeman, retired U.S. ambassador and senior fellow at Brown University remarked, “sanctions typically retard rather than speed agreement at the negotiating table” and “that [the] only utility of sanctions is their removal.”<sup>260</sup> Through a 20-month negotiation period, which included several extensions to deadlines, the P5+1 and European Union agreed on a framework establishing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14,

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<sup>257</sup> Dan Roberts and Julian Borger, “Obama Holds Historic Phone Call with Rouhani and Hints at end to Sanctions,” *Guardian*, September 28, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/27/obama-phone-call-iranian-president-rouhani>.; Matthew Lee, Bradley Klapper, and Julie Pace, “How a Series of Secret Meetings Between U.S. and Iran Led to Historic Agreement,” PBS, November 23, 2013, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/how-a-series-of-secret-meetings-between-us-and-iran-led-to-historic-agreement>.

<sup>258</sup> Julian Borger, “Breakthrough Hailed as U.S. and Iran sit Down for Nuclear Deal discussion,” *Guardian*, September 26, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/27/us-iran-nuclear-deal-discussion>.

<sup>259</sup> Julian Borger and Saeed Kamili Dehghan, “Secret Talks Helped Forge Iran Nuclear Deal,” *Guardian*, November 25, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/secret-usa-iran-talks-nuclear-deal>.; Kate Lyons, “Iran Nuclear Talks Timeline,” *Guardian*, July 14 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/02/iran-nuclear-talks-timeline>.

<sup>260</sup> Chas W. Freeman, “Diplomacy as Tactics,” (Lecture, Brown University: Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Joukowsky Forum, Providence, RI, April 5, 2018), <https://watson.brown.edu/events/2018/chas-freeman-diplomacy-tactics>.; Transcript for lecture also available at <https://chasfreeman.net/diplomacy-as-tactics/>.

2015.<sup>261</sup> Six days later, the U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231 endorsed the JCPOA and acted upon measures relating to Security Council sanctions.<sup>262</sup>

In Chapter V, we will expand upon current status of United States–Iran relations and President Trump’s decision (May 8, 2018) for the United States to step away from honoring the agreement. Of note, Iran maintains adherence with JCPOA measures and their compliance most recently reported May 31, 2019, by the IAEA.<sup>263</sup> In July and August, the IAEA 2019 reporting noted that, during the period of escalated hostility between the United States and Iran, Iran had incrementally “exceeded both its the 202.8-kg limit on enriched uranium stock and the 3.76% cap on fissile purity” by enriching up to 4.5%.<sup>264</sup> Incremental actions of Iran appear provocative; other than the United States, all other stakeholders remain committed to the agreement. The United States’ decision to withdrawal from JCPOA re-calcified Iranian mistrust of the United States.

***b. Approach to Engagement***

Discussing the arrangements in advance of the nuclear deal, Ambassador Burns emphasized that the lack of sustained diplomatic contact in 35 years, as well as baggage and mistrust on both sides, oriented him to pursue direct, discreet engagements.<sup>265</sup> Elaborating further, Burns believed in quiet interactions to prevent the glare of publicity affecting the traction.<sup>266</sup> Obama’s administration recognized the polarizing positions

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<sup>261</sup> Daniel H. Joyner, “The United States’ Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal,” E-IR, August 21, 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/21/the-united-states-withdrawal-from-the-iran-nuclear-deal/>.

<sup>262</sup> Joyner.

<sup>263</sup> Paul K. Kerr, *Iran’s Nuclear Program: Tehran’s Compliance with International Obligations*, CRS Report No. R40094 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 4, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R40094.pdf>.

<sup>264</sup> As of August 31, 2019, the following JCPOA stakeholders remain committed to the agreement: (Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, European Union, United Kingdom). “IAEA Says Iran Continues to Enrich Uranium in Breach of Nuclear Deal,” August 31, 2019, Radio Farda, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iaea-says-iran-continues-to-enrich-uranium-in-breach-of-nuclear-deal/30138596.html>.

<sup>265</sup> Renee Montagne, “The Secret Talks That led to the Negotiations with Iran,” July 21, 2015, in *National Public Radio: Morning Edition*, Streaming audio, 00:07:17, <https://www.npr.org/2015/07/21/424887350/the-secret-talks-that-led-to-the-negotiations-with-iran>.

<sup>266</sup> Montagne.

arrayed over the topic of Iran, as such, the United States kept the engagements away from media attention and considered going around Congress for the engagements. In an interview with David Remnick of *The New Yorker*, President Obama elaborated, “Historically, there is hostility and suspicion toward Iran, not just among members of Congress but the American people... members of Congress are very attentive to what Israel says on its security issues.”<sup>267</sup> The Saudis and Israelis both incorporate themselves in the U.S. political process by expending funds for U.S. lobbying and consulting.<sup>268</sup> The aspect of secrecy aided in the advancement of interactions, it guarded against the verbal backlash of conservative and hardliner stances as well as the onslaught of alarms warnings and criticism from U.S. regional partners.

The flexibility in negotiations for foreign policy positions was another noteworthy aspect of the Pre-JCPOA engagement approach. The 2012 stance regarding Iran’s uranium reprocessing shifted from demands ceasing all enrichment (e.g., close Fordow plant) to a 2013 position establishing a maximum percentage level for enrichment.<sup>269</sup> Referring ecology analogy, the rigidity of the foreign policy position appears linked to U.S. local politics in advance of 2012 election. In 2012 a *New York Times* national security correspondent, David E. Sanger reported, “President Obama is trying to keep the pressure on Iran without letting the confrontation tip into crisis before the presidential election. The White House emphasizes the steps it is taking to pressure the Iranian leadership—which range from diplomatic isolation to sanctions to sabotage—and avoids discussion of why

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<sup>267</sup> David Remnick, “Going the Distance,” *New Yorker*, January 19, 2014, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-david-remnick>.

<sup>268</sup> The kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s spending on U.S. lobbying and consulting, which had dropped from \$14.3 million in 2015 to \$7.7 million in 2016, surged to \$27.3 million last year [2017], according to public records (Hamburger et.al.). Annual pro-Israel lobbying in the last several years ranges between \$4.1 - \$4.9 million. Tom Hamburger, Beth Reinhard, and Justin W. Moyer, “Inside the Saudis’ Washington influence machine: How the kingdom gained power through fierce lobbying and charm offensives,” *Washington Post*, October 21, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/inside-the-saudis-washington-influence-machine-how-the-kingdom-gained-power-through-fierce-lobbying-and-charm-offensives/2018/10/21/8a0a3320-d3c3-11e8-a275-81c671a50422\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3e876a74674b.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/inside-the-saudis-washington-influence-machine-how-the-kingdom-gained-power-through-fierce-lobbying-and-charm-offensives/2018/10/21/8a0a3320-d3c3-11e8-a275-81c671a50422_story.html?utm_term=.3e876a74674b.); “Lobbying: Industry: Pro-Israel,” Center for Responsive Politics, last updated April 24, 2018, <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?cycle=2018&ind=Q05>.

<sup>269</sup> Steven Erlanger, “As Negotiators Ease Demands on Iran, More Nuclear Talks Are Set,” *New York Times*, February 27, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/28/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks.html>.

despite those steps, Iran's nuclear power continues on course."<sup>270</sup> Local pre-election politics constricted President Obama's flexibility to advance engagement or negotiations with Iran. The February 2013 two-day multilateral talks in Almaty, Kazakhstan marked the adjustment of the zero-sum stance requiring a stop of all uranium enrichment and moved to a discussion of enrichment levels. Additional negotiations of the enrichment level occurred, after ten months one of the stipulations in the November 2013 interim agreement set the halting of uranium enrichment above 5%.<sup>271</sup> Dialogue before 2013 with Iran discussed reciprocity while concessions, an "often necessary [aspect] in negotiations," remained on the shelf.<sup>272</sup> The engagement approach included dialogue and negotiations in which the United States and other Western nations considered flexibility to the foreign policy position of uranium enrichment.

Expanding upon the 2013 interim agreement, the continued dialogue led to the multilateral agreement of a framework. The 2015 JCPOA activated the freezing of the Iranian development "clock"; the speculation of breakout time for the production of one nuclear weapon varies between six to twelve months.<sup>273</sup> Although the multilateral JCPOA did not neutralize all issues with Iran, the framework was a point of departure for further multilateral negotiations on the nuclear topic and established a dialogue rhythm to advance other solutions to issues in a bilateral format between the United States and Iran. To restate, the mere success an adoption and implementation of the JCPOA Iran's nuclear program suggests the conflict with Iran and the United States is soluble.

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<sup>270</sup> David E. Sanger, "Diplomacy with Iran Still Is Viable, U.S. Says," *New York Times*, August 24, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/25/world/middleeast/us-says-peaceful-solution-to-iran-nuclear-bid-still-viable.html>.

<sup>271</sup> "White House Fact Sheet on Iran Deal," *Jerusalem Post*, November 24, 2013, <https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/White-House-fact-sheet-on-the-Iran-deal-332822>.

<sup>272</sup> Deepak Malhotra, "Four Strategies for Making Concessions," Harvard Business School: Working Knowledge, March 6, 2006, <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/four-strategies-for-making-concessions#commentsAnchor>.

<sup>273</sup> Robert Einhorn and Richard Nephew, "Constraining Iran's Future Nuclear Capabilities," (New York, Brookings, 2019), 61, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FP\\_20190321\\_nuclear\\_capabilities\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FP_20190321_nuclear_capabilities_WEB.pdf).

### **3. Relation-Building Characteristics from The Troubles / Pre-JCPOA**

The comparative examples of The Troubles and Pre-JCPOA, both offered characteristics tied to approaches that dissolved conflict and hostility.<sup>274</sup> Under the topic of The Troubles and the follow-on peace process, the long-term focus, informal discourse, inclusive character of participation aided in the achievement of the 1998 Good Friday agreement. In the instance of pre-JCPOA state of United States–Iran conflict, three characteristics also resonated. The United States initiated bilateral secret engagements with Iran, established long-term commitment, and applied flexibility to dialogue and negotiations. These characteristics stimulated the prospects of reaching the multilateral agreement, the 2015 JCPOA. In both comparative examples, the engagements and dialogue yielded an agreement. The nature of the solution, an agreement, requires additional tending and involvement of vested parties. In addition to tending stipulations, the parties must come together to extend and expand the agreement. An agreement with staggered time constraints requiring additional interaction to extend “promotes the stability of cooperation by making the gains from cheating” or a lapse of an agreement in the present period “much less important relative to gains from potential mutual cooperation” in the future.<sup>275</sup> In the instance of dialogue with Iran, the JCPOA established a channel for continued engagement over the nuclear issue and set a platform for advancing solutions to other issues.

#### **D. DIFFERENCES / SIMILARITIES / KEY POINTS**

The section is an all-encompassing area for the collection of similarities, differences and key points from the comparative examples. This includes discussions of the differences of the U.S.–Libya and the similarities of the U.S.–China in connection with the U.S.–Iran relationship.

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<sup>274</sup> Phrased as “dissolved conflict” when thinking in terms of relationships and chemistry. Dissolution is a reversible change, which suggests the change may not be permanent and requires continued attention to remain in a dissolved form.

<sup>275</sup> Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation Revised Edition* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 132.

## 1. Differences (Mixed)

As with many military engagements, there is always an array of results. The Libya–United States relationship, a counter example for future efforts, is the oversimplification of foreign policy upheld as swift, effective policymaking and implementation. While this description of responsive policymaking and implementation placed the relationship in the win column, there was something odd about Qaddafi’s decision and commitment to pursue nuclear weapons; largely it appeared as a ploy to gain recognition. Again, many note Qaddafi’s cooperation with the United States did not prevent his death. Setting aside the topic of nuclear weapons development, policy shifts and geography are two aspects of the Libya example which assist with an enhanced understanding of Iran.

### (1) Policy Shift (Differences)

Policy Shift. The United States views Iran and Libya similarly as troublemakers for the West; however, one distinction differing between Libya and Iran was the wiggle room for policy shifts.<sup>276</sup> Qaddafi initiated the focus on the acquisition of nuclear weapons and was the same leader who later called off the work for the program. An assumption is that policy shifts in Iran are very straightforward since the Islamic Republic of Iran has had only two named Supreme leaders. Supreme Leader Khamenei’s title insinuates one individual making the decisions for Iran. However, Iran contends with its own bureaucracy. The Majles, an assembly of experts, oversee the Supreme Leader Khamenei while President Hassan Rouhani presides over the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). In addition to the assemblies and councils, the political stances as reformists and right-wing hardliners impart their influence on the policy decision(s). Much in the same light as United States bureaucracy, the policy in Iran for responses to U.S. engagement or nuclear stances, have many hoops to jump before a shift occurs. The current U.S. approach heightening tensions squishes reformists and hardliners into the same room

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<sup>276</sup> Expanding beyond January 2002 designation of Axis of Evil (Iraq, Iran, North Korea), the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security in May 2002 gave a speech to the Heritage Foundation which added Libya, Syria, and Cuba to the list of rogue nations. John Bolton, “Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction,” Heritage Foundation, May 6, 2002, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/beyond-the-axis-evil-additional-threats-weapons-mass-destruction-0>.

where it is illogical to view the United States as anything but an enemy. Iranian reformists are in a constrained state; they lack energy to reframe and influence Iranian policy partially due to the U.S. emphasis on military and economic national power that reinforces the perceptions and narrative of Iranian hardliners. Described another way, there is not an equivalent Augusto Pinochet or Kim Jung Un dictating the shots for Iranian foreign policy decisions. Iran, through its own bureaucratic complexities, currently possesses less latitude for wiggle room in instantaneous policy shifts than that of Qaddafi's Libya.

(2) Geography (Differences)

Geography. The physical location of Libya detracted from Qaddafi's message of Arab significance and Libya's claim as a regional leader. Libya has a northern boundary set by the Mediterranean Sea and maintains a border with six other nations; many scholars refer to Libya as a nation in the Maghreb region of North Africa, not in the Middle East. Residing to the west of Egypt hindered Qaddafi's interest in displaying and embodying central significance in the Arab world. Military cooperation occurred between Egypt and Libya, in which Libya provided armored tanks and air assets, during the 1973 October War with Israel. After the October War, President Sadat refined a policy of accommodation, a stance morphed to align with Western preferences, but alienated Arab nations and extremists in his own country.<sup>277</sup> Deteriorated relations continued between Egypt and Libya and in 1977, tensions erupted with several battles along the border. After heavy losses on both sides, the nations established a cease-fire. Libya maintained they were unwilling to restore diplomatic interaction with Egypt due to relations with Israel.<sup>278</sup> Qaddafi's Libya, possessing less influence than desired, sat on the periphery of the Middle East where it failed to harness the regional significance on the world stage.

The geographic and cultural connections are different for Iran. As Iran holds a significant geographic position within the Middle East along the Persian Gulf. In addition

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<sup>277</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "A Coming of Age: The Foreign Policy of Anwar Sadat," Memorandum, April 8-9, 1975, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00865A002500320001-0.pdf>.

<sup>278</sup> "Libya Spurns Ties to Egypt," *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-11-26-mn-109-story.html>.



to physical geography of Iran, another unique aspect is the religious connection with other Shia minorities in neighboring nations. Comparatively speaking, the location of Iran in relation to Libya suggests Iran should have greater involvement and representation in the Middle East. Now shifting slightly to the topic of regional stability, nations which are generally in the center of the region, and have at least a medium sized population, are included in regional stability and security discussions. In the examples of Asia and Europe, discussion of security and stability would not be fruitful without China and Germany, respectively. Considering the Middle East, discussions of stability and security require larger inclusion, such as the addition of Iran. As discussed previously with the Oslo process, isolation from discussion and projected isolation in the region amplified Iran's interest to wreck the deal. Future discussions of Middle East stability and security must bring together Arabs, Persians, Israelis, etc. Larger inclusion requires additional patience, but that aspect reduces the potential for other neighboring nations to wreck the deal. Additionally, when bringing together regional representatives for dialogue of security and stability more must be gained from staying with the group than earned from walking out on the group.

### (3) Economic Prowess

Economic Prowess. Iran does not and clearly will not have the same economic capacity as China. Nixon and later administrations note advancement of industry production occurred due to the size of the PRC's population base. Many companies invested in manufacturing and industry which enhanced China's economic position. Iran's population base for industrial production would potentially be comparable to a nation like Japan. The point of the initial statement reemphasizes the comparative example of U.S. China relations is only an analogy. Engaging Iran in a friendlier manner will not instantly make Iran into the economic player that China became after 1972. Investment in the Iranian economy presents opportunities for growth on a similar, but different scale.

While moderates in Iran share an interest in the improvement of economic relations and the reintroduction of foreign business investment, if trade or sanctions relief occurs too rapidly, it could crush local traders with the influx of goods at cheaper prices. Sanctions

for a number of years have entrenched a reliance on the Iran's black market. Weaning reliance of black market must occur. Another note is the possibility for spikes in unemployment. Expansion and economic development will take time to implement while preventing significant shocks to the economic system.

## **2. Similarities (China | Iran)**

Inspection of similarities between China and Iran assists with forming a better understanding of Iranian actions, as resemblances between the two nations highlight that Iran's complex behavior is not necessarily unique. Both nations harness ancient greatness to reinforce their self/group identity.<sup>279</sup> The sense of a cultured civilization enhanced confidence in their revolutionary paths. This section emphasizes historical timelines, commonality between root causes of conflict, and similar response(s) of China/Iran to United States' stances/actions. Noticeable similarities exist between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### **(1) Historical Timelines**

The development of both current nations stemmed from revolutions. Previously, the United States supported KMT in mainland China and the Shah in Iran. The revolutions of 1949 (People's Republic of China) and 1979 (Islamic Republic of Iran) were deemed as unacceptable challenges to United States ambitions and interests in strategically vital regions. Other common events were the slights against diplomatic and consulate postings of the United States in each respective region. The 1948 confinement and isolation of 22 American consulate members by Mao's organization in Shenyang lasted more than a year.<sup>280</sup> The 1979 U.S. embassy hostage crisis in Tehran, occurred in the early stages of the Iranian revolution and lasted 444 days.<sup>281</sup> The United States consulate and its embassy

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<sup>279</sup> John W. Garver, *China and Iran Ancient Partners in a Post-Imperial World* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>280</sup> Chen Jian, "The Ward Case and the Emergence of Sino-American Confrontation, 1948–1950," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 30 (1993): 149. doi:10.2307/2949995.

<sup>281</sup> Madeleine Albright, Remarks before the American–Iranian Council, U.S. Department of State, March 17, 2000, <http://fas.org/news/iran/2000/000317.htm>.

were representative postings, which signaled U.S. influence in the respective regions. In both instances, the CCP and Iranian hardliners captured and held the U.S. representatives for more than a year.

## (2) Root Cause Overlap

Next, there are also common threads woven among the root causes for both nations. In the instance of the conflict between the United States and China, the root cause was the absence of recognition regarding sovereignty or their positions of authority within the Pacific.<sup>282</sup> The root cause for the conflict between the United States and Iran is the denial of a greater official role in the Middle East.<sup>283</sup> In both instances, the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran perceived they were not treated as sovereign nations. As the United States–China relationship advanced, China’s inclusion in regional discussions increased. In this line of thought, the point of regional security and stability is easier to comprehend. Just as discussions of Indo-Pacific security include China, discussions of Middle East regional security warrant the inclusion of Iran. Again, the likeness of the root cause emphasizes Iranian actions are not wholly independent from the spectrum of nation-states interacting with the United States.

## (3) Response(s) of China / Iran to the United States

Third, United States often maintains stances/actions that prompt similar adversarial responses from both Iran and China. In relation to the group identity previously discussed, Iran and China emphasize anti-imperial positions. Iranian Majlis speaker Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visited China for the first time in 1985 and, during the engagement the Chairman of China’s Parliament, Peng Zhen, noted that both China and Iran “had had similar experiences as victims of imperialism and colonialism and were subjected to

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<sup>282</sup> “Proclamation of the Central People’s Government of the PRC,” October 01, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Renmin ribao (People’s Daily), October 2, 1949. English translation from Michael Y.M. Kau, ed., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976*, Volume I, September 1949–December 1955 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 10–11. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121557>

<sup>283</sup> Sverre Lodgaard, “Challenge from Within: The Case of Iran,” in *Nuclear Proliferation and International Order: Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Treaty*, ed. Olav Njølstad (London: Routledge, 2010), 90, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203844823>.

hegemonic threat today.”<sup>284</sup> From their regional positions, both have a significant role in countering Western influence. Reinforcing the anti-imperial stances, Iranians and other groups in the Middle East found their own methods for advancing security.

Some incidents stirred aggressive reciprocal responses which were sometimes escalatory in nature. For an extended period, the United States skipped the actual names of nations colloquially referred to the People’s Republic of China as “Red China” and the Islamic Republic of Iran as “Axis of Evil.” In line with the prestigious titles, but more so as an effort to constrain U.S. involvement in the respective regions, both nations looked to supporting national liberation movements...and dissident groups. For at least the first decade after China’s 1949 revolution, the Chinese strategy aimed to ward off United States strokes of containment by placing a greater reliance on ties to proxy allies. According to a 1966 Long Range Study on China, the Johnson administration assessed the mainland’s objective to become “the center and guiding light of a Communist World” by relying on a low-risk strategy to foment “militant dissidence.”<sup>285</sup> The dissidence was in addition to the China’s large-force involvement in Korea and Vietnam. One distinction based on the differences in population mass, China worked a combination of conventional forces and military dissidence, but in comparison, Iran invested much more heavily in unconventional forces. Iran, with a smaller population, discovered greater strategic utility with the IRGC-QF. Iran’s leadership places considerable emphasis on IRGC-QF development of proxy forces. In addition to Iran’s involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, proxy elements are also active in other areas. Akin to the assessment of China desiring to be the “guiding light of a Communist World” there are oversimplified assessments prescribing Iran is on a “quest for regional hegemony.”<sup>286</sup> As discussed later in Chapter V, factoring Iranian action requires an acknowledgement of complex behavior.

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<sup>284</sup> “Iran’s Rafsanjani Meet PRC Leaders, Ends Tour,” Xinhua, June 28, 1985, Foreign Broadcast Information service– China, July 1, 1985, I-1.

<sup>285</sup> “Communist China-Long Range Study,” June 1966, National Security Files, Country File, Box 245, Lyndon Bains Johnson Library, pp. 35–38, 203. In Michael Lumbers, “Piercing the bamboo curtain: Tentative bridge-building to China during the Johnson years” (PhD diss., University of London, 2005), 85–86. <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/1860/1/U210370.pdf>.

<sup>286</sup> Galip Dalay, “The Iran Question, Again,” Robert Bosch Academy, February 20, 2019, [http://www.robertboschacademy.de/content/language2/html/57754\\_58216.asp](http://www.robertboschacademy.de/content/language2/html/57754_58216.asp).

Again, reviewing the exchanges between the United States–China provides another window to reflect on analogous Iranian behavior. Most analogies offer a number of similarities and differences for reflection. Within the current grouping of four cases, the United States–China comparative example offers a cluster of similarities for others to appraise. This analogy may not predict the trajectory of Iran, completely correctly; however, it should assist with delineating reasoning for actions and suggest the threat of Iran is perhaps lower than speculated or publicized within the media and Washington, DC. Previously, the United States perceived an intractable conflict with an ideologically motivated, irrational opponent (China). Although there is currently trade tension between the United States and China, this is a marked improvement to the conflict before the late 1960s. Recognizing that Iran’s behavior post-1979 is not unique, in fact, it is in many ways similar to China, should enhance optimism for advancing the United States–Iran relationship.

### **3. Considerations for Engagement with Iran**

The comparative cases offer perspectives for future engagement strategies toward Iran. The perspectives originate from the characteristics of relation-building utility that surfaced during the exploration of the examples. In the cases of U.S.–Libya and U.S.–China relations, the aspects of secrecy, actions of good faith, long-term focus emerged as prominent characteristics. The sections of Chapter IV.A.5. and Chapter IV.B.5. covered U.S.–Libya relations and U.S.–China relations, respectively. Also framed in an earlier section of Chapter IV. C. 3. (Relation-Building Characteristics from The Troubles and Pre-JCPOA) discussed characteristics, which led to the dissolving of conflict. The section elaborated on the long-term focus, informal discourse, inclusive character of participation, bilateral secret engagements, long-term commitment, and applied flexibility to dialogue and negotiations. This section offers advantages for establishing long-term focus, the use of red lines as tokens, dialogue regarding low-hanging fruit, and reemphasizes natural tendency of negotiations.

A productive effort to enhance United States–Iran relations must emphasize long-term focus, the use of red lines as tokens, and dialog on lesser issues. Long-term focus sets

opportunities for generating trust. Red line stances established as a token to shift aid the process of dialogue and interaction. Initially orienting to low-hanging fruit enables both nations to achieve consensus. Possible items for discussion: the continued targeting of ISIS and other similar groups in the Middle East, involvement in Yemen, gulf (Arab and Persian) oil movements and sales occur in a free-flowing manner, nonproliferation, Israel/Palestine, Syria, etc. Success with lower items may enhance the future of tackling larger problems. Potentially, larger problems would encompass nation-state roles in advancing the stability of the Middle East.

Expanding on the topic of negotiations, there is a need to reaffirm natural tendencies—parties holding out due to a belief they will accumulate more if they wait. One particular instance of this refers to the United States response to the 2003 fax proposal, containing “an outline of a proposed solution to Iran’s nuclear situation, from Khatami’s cabinet to the U.S. Department of State via the Swiss ambassador to Iran.”<sup>287</sup> In Ostovar’s *Vanguard of the Imam*, the author describes journalist Nicholas Kristof’s article, in which both Khatami and Khamenei purportedly approved the “Grand Bargain” proposal.<sup>288</sup> The proposal reached Washington; no responsive action occurred other than reviewing the document. Cheney and Bolton believed “The offer was proof their strategy to reshape the Middle East through the use of force was working.”<sup>289</sup> The State Department viewed the proposal a promise of something more than “politically weak” reformists “could deliver,” as such, “The ‘Grand Bargain’ fax never received a reply.”<sup>290</sup>

In some respects, it is prudent to wait for an opposing party to extend an even better offer with more concessions on their side; however, the decision to not engage or probe conditions of the offer is a poor choice altogether. Disadvantages from waiting too long

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<sup>287</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 164.

<sup>288</sup> “Citing unnamed sources investigative journalist Nicholas Kristof claims that both Khatami and Khamenei approved the proposal.” Nicholas Kristof, “Iran’s Proposal for a ‘Grand Bargain,’” *New York Times*, April 28, 2007, <https://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/04/28/irans-proposal-for-a-grand-bargain/>. in Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 267.

<sup>289</sup> Ostovar, 164.

<sup>290</sup> “Showdown with Iran,” PBS: Frontline, video/transcript, 0:55:00, October 23, 2007, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/showdown/etc/script.html>

may decrease the other side's waning interest or altogether eliminate the offer on the table; both parties lose time for finding a solution when parties refrain from communication. Holding out for complete capitulation is a possibility, but the probability of a nation conceding everything remains low in much of foreign policy.

The four comparative cases offer potential considerations for approaching engagement with Iran. Carrying these insights forward to Chapter V enables readers to discern the relevance of these considerations in relation to sections describing complex behavior linked with Iranian security goals as well as other approaches to dissolve U.S.–Iran conflict.

## **V. ACTOR SPECIFIC (IRAN: 1951 TO PRESENT)**

Chapter V narrows in on the actor-specific portion of the thesis, factoring Iranian action and examining United States–Iran relations. First, we factor action by reviewing their behavior in pursuit of Iranian security goals. In particular, the strategic utility of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) illuminates the capacity of the organization to advance security goals, despite U.S. military efforts to counter Iranian action, in the region. Distilling intractable conflict yields complex behavior between the nations, and from this reprocessing of interactions, Washington must recognize the flaw of viewing the conflict as a zero-sum problem.

The second portion of this chapter uses the three-pronged method (symptoms vs. root issue, conflict churning, current approach), same as with the previous historical examples, to examine United States–Iran relations. Fixation on symptoms appears to lead policymakers astray, perpetuates the lag in progress, and rather quickly encapsulates the current status of conflict between the nations. Assumptions provide a window to consider independent choice and aspects of security as a necessary condition. Acknowledging the complexity of multinational interests, the chapter also addresses existing bilateral interactions of the United States with Saudi Arabia and Israel in the region and interested third parties such as Russia and JCPOA international stakeholders. The examination of the United States and Iran interactions in this chapter characterizes the true status of the conflict as complex, yet soluble.

### **A. FACTORING IRANIAN ACTION**

The pursuit of Iranian national interests provides other nations a glimpse of the goals and drivers generating Iran’s behavior. Inspection of behavior, in particular, offers perspective regarding an adversary, ally, or competitor. Iran’s four main security goals all aid in protecting the Islamic revolution. The desire for economic success, competition with Saudi Arabia, and internal anxiety are all drivers shaping Iranian behavior. The variety of drivers elevates the complexity of Iranian behavior concerning the distinction of security



goals. Acknowledging the drivers stimulating Iranian behavior assists with creating an unobstructed view of Iran's intentions and main security goals.

With the list of Iranian security goals in hand, we look to the actions of the IRGC-QF and reflect on their relative success in the region. The U.S. DoD has efforts focused on countering Iranian threat network, but the IRGC-QF maintains strategic utility and continues to advance Iran's security goals in the region. Sanctions and U.S. military countering efforts, thus far, are not enough to reverse actions or undo Iran's stance. Complex behavior of Iran is more apparent after reviewing security goals with the actions of the IRGC-QF. Washington's zero-sum view of the conflict attempts to remove the maneuver space for the possibility of enhancing future relations and this, in turn, props the U.S. perception of intractable conflict. Recognition of Iran's complex behavior, in the form of security goals and drivers, serves as a notable step towards untangling conflict between the United States and Iran.

### **1. Complex Behavior and the Pursuit of Iranian Security Goals**

Iran's four main security goals currently exist under the primary aim of protecting the Islamic revolution. Protection of the Islamic revolution entails Assad retaining power in Syria, undermining United States security coordination in the region, holding a position as a heavyweight on the world stage, and maintaining an Iranian identity as a source of strength. Iran's security goals may be differentiated based on the direction of focus: externally oriented (regional/global) and internally centered (state-specific). In considering the four security goals above, the first three goals are externally oriented while the fourth goal of discussing identity is a state specific security goal to galvanize the support of Iranian actions. The discussion of Iran's security goals assists Washington's leaders with the identification of focal areas for the nation.

*a. Main Security Goals (Iran)*

The list of possible state allies in the region for Iran is almost non-existent. The list is so short the Saudi's gifted Qatar into trading with Iran.<sup>291</sup> Iran has a working cooperative with Armenia as well as friendly interaction in the present period with Iraq and Syria. In addition to the pragmatic reason of maintaining Syria as a state ally, Iranian actions enable Assad in Syria to preserve an aid pathway into Lebanon.<sup>292</sup> This southern corridor facilitates Iranian support of Hezbollah and fosters the capacity for pursuing a pro-Islamic initiative. Disruption of Israeli actions requires freedom of movement through Syria for resupply of Hezbollah. Rockets employed by Hezbollah against Israel in 2006 were transported from Iran to Lebanon.<sup>293</sup> Corridor access influences the level of credibility for threats against Israel and impacts the overall deterrence of U.S. and Israeli action.<sup>294</sup> Safe passage and freedom of action within Syria enable Iran to maintain support to the Palestinian issue. The Palestinian issue contains the additive property which Iranians believe empowers solidarity for Muslim nations.<sup>295</sup> Protection of Assad's regime in Syria enhances the capacity for Iran to exert influence within the region and reinforces the legitimacy of the Islamic revolution.

Undermining U.S. security coordination in the region enables Iran to convey the narrative that Western nations will not solve the problems of the Middle East. The United States presence in the region also provides an opportunity for Iran to present their alternative, an Islamic approach, to Imperialist involvement. Less than ten months ago, during Mediterranean Dialogues (MED 2018), Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif described the internal problem to the region as, "[B]elieving you can rely on the outside

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<sup>291</sup> Dominic Dudley, "How Qatar Is Being Pushed into the Arms of Iran by Saudi Arabia and its Allies," *Forbes*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2017/11/27/qatar-pushed-into-arms-of-iran-by-saudi/#223bda7f7c4f>.

<sup>292</sup> Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 193.

<sup>293</sup> Ostovar, 205.

<sup>294</sup> Ostovar, 206.

<sup>295</sup> Ostovar, 105.

for prosperity, security, and everything else.”<sup>296</sup> Zarif later conveyed the Islamic Republic of Iran, their Islamic approach, as an example of stability in comparison to many other neighbors in the region.<sup>297</sup> Although appropriately omitted from the MED 2018 forum, it is necessary to consider the Iranian practice of emphasizing instability in the region through the support of conflicts abroad with combinations of material and manpower for kinetic action/advisory roles. Beyond support to Hezbollah, the IRGC-QF also fostered client militants through training and advising missions in Iraq and Syria.<sup>298</sup> Iran’s use of proxies shapes doubts regarding the capacity of the United States to ensure stability in the region. Supporting proxies is a relatively small investment and yields a dampening effect on U.S. influence.

This notion of being a “heavyweight” on the world stage relates to the lack of recognition in politics and economics. Iran employs some uncustomary methods for achieving influence. To demonstrate influence and resolve, Iran exhibits an offensive approach through foreign involvement to protect the revolution.<sup>299</sup> In addition to the sometimes covert or indirect action, Iran’s method uses the underlying insight of the conflicts to advocate for client (Iranian) interests within the political solution. Their shared, overarching purpose is to exhibit Iran’s ability to improve stability in the region. Arab neighbors formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981 to unify states against the export of the Islamic revolution and advocate for isolation to prevent Iranian participation in formal political dialogue regarding conflicts within the Middle East.<sup>300</sup> Then in the fall of 2015, after four years of conflict in Syria, Iran received backing from Russia to attend multilateral discussions in Vienna. The invitation presented an opportunity for Iran to receive acknowledgement at a podium and champion its interests.<sup>301</sup> However, there are

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<sup>296</sup> ISPI, “Med2018 - Special Dialogue with Mohammad Javad Zarif,” Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), Video, 29:44, November 22, 2018, <https://med.ispionline.it/highlight/special-dialogue/>, Statement beginning at 3min, 30 seconds.

<sup>297</sup> ISPI.

<sup>298</sup> Ostovar, 211–212.

<sup>299</sup> Ostovar, 103–104.

<sup>300</sup> Ostovar, 81.

<sup>301</sup> Ostovar, 233.

split views regarding Iranian intentions. One view of Iranian interest in politics is to help with stability and the other to undermining the actions of GCC and other nations external to the region. In December 2018, the United Nations denied Iranian participation of peace talks scheduled in Sweden regarding Yemen.<sup>302</sup> Iran continues to possess bargaining chips, such as the materiel support for Houthis in the form of ballistic rockets, which they may trade in for the purpose of enabling Iranian officials to convey their interests in an above-board manner (political solutions).

In terms of economics, Iran found its own variation of footing over the last 40 years; they possess the third largest GDP behind Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the region.<sup>303</sup> The economic arena contains some diversity within the agriculture, industry and service sectors. Natural resources of Iran are the primary dimension of economic capacity the U.S. sanctions target. Iran exports to one percent of the global natural gas market even though they possess 50 independent oil fields, the largest in the South Pars estimated as 14 trillion cubic meters of reserves.<sup>304</sup> Based on the constriction the sanctions pose, the current priority for natural gas goes to fulfilling internal state requirements. There is the potential for Iran to advance natural gas exports, but this requires foreign investment. As a vote of confidence and commitment to Iran concerning the JCPOA, France and Germany jointly step forward to create a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for facilitating transactions between Iran and the European Union.<sup>305</sup> Iran continues looking for other methods to lessen the significance of U.S. sanctions. Non-petroleum trade is an effort, in which 56% of export transactions (\$12.8 billion worth) occur with Iraq, United Arab Emirates, and

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<sup>302</sup> Julian Pecquet, "US Ices Iran out of Yemen Talks," *Al-Monitor*, 06 December 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/12/us-iran-yemen-talks-sweden-houthi-zarif-trump.html>.

<sup>303</sup> "GDP Current USD—2017 for GCC States, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Turkey," *The World Bank*, Accessed on 05 December 2018, [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2017&locations=QA-SA-OM-AE-KW-BH-IR-TR&start=1965&view=chart&year\\_high\\_desc=true](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2017&locations=QA-SA-OM-AE-KW-BH-IR-TR&start=1965&view=chart&year_high_desc=true).

<sup>304</sup> Omid Shokri Kalehsar, "The Effects of U.S. Sanctions on Iran's Natural Gas Projects, Tehran Times, December 10, 2018. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/430474/The-effects-of-U-S-sanctions-on-Iran-s-natural-gas-projects>.

<sup>305</sup> Lawrence Norman, "France and Germany Step In to Circumvent Iran Sanctions," *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 November 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/france-and-germany-step-in-to-circumvent-iran-sanctions-1543251650>.

Afghanistan.<sup>306</sup> Non-petroleum trade with neighbors is an avenue in which interaction may positively shape Iran’s economic position in the region. Iran appears to possess capacity and desire for greater advancement in the world’s economic arena.

The fourth goal centers on reinforcing Iranian identity, a mixture of Islamic and pre-Islamic/non-Islamic nationalistic ideals, which serve as a source of strength for bolstering domestic unity and advancing externally focused security goals. Intertwined within the everyday life of Iranians, the Basij champion the Islamic system.<sup>307</sup> Pro-Islamic ideals and “customs of the Prophet and immaculate Imams” distinguish Iran from other neighbors in the region.<sup>308</sup> The independent approach, rebel status, and level of perseverance are often used to describe Iran. Iranians have endured a number of sanctions and presently continue to do so. In describing Iran’s independent approach and resistance to pressure, Zarif emphasized, “We have shown in spite of the United States, not only without its support, but in spite of the United States we have survived, prospered, and thrived for 40 years... [It is] important to look at today when we see a lot of attempt [s] to pressure the entire world.”<sup>309</sup> This successful perseverance and progression expand the regional and global clout of Iran. Confidence continues to accumulate in the Islamic alternative. The Iranian identity maintains inertia for securing the regime at home and energizes efforts to tackle security goals abroad.

***b. Drivers of Iranian Behavior***

Several drivers include the desire for economic success, the competition with Saudi Arabia, and internal anxiety. Drivers may pulse behavior of Iran, but they do not always correlate to immediate action by the state. Some instances the stimulated behavior advances in the direction of Iranian security goals while other instances it detracts from security

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<sup>306</sup> Moshen Shariatinia, “Iran Hedges Bets on EU, China with Focus on Trade with Neighbors,” *Al-Monitor*, 15 October 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/10/iran-us-sanctions-economy-iraq-afghanistan-turkey-trade.html>.

<sup>307</sup> Ostovar, 191.

<sup>308</sup> Ostovar, 103, 120.

<sup>309</sup> ISPI, “Med2018—Special Dialogue with Mohammad Javad Zarif,” Statement beginning at 5 min, 03 seconds.

objectives. Although perceived as rigid governance, the Iranian regime appears to maintain autonomy, which readily supports shifts between political interests and Islamic values.

The desire to advance economic success drives Iran to try to normalize relations with Europe. Iran hopes some European support will offset the weight of United States sanctions. Iran continues to fulfill the JPCOA with an understanding that the adherence will build trust and open some economic opportunities to defray the current weight of United States sanctions. Within Europe there is a reliance on Russian natural gas resources, re-establishing trade with Iran may assist with the diversification of European imports. Iran has not directly asked for European assistance with alleviating sanctions. The action regarding the development of the SPV is an initiative of European states. Within the MED 2018 forum, Zarif described the JPCOA as a good deal negotiated as a compromise and “[I]t is our [Iran’s] intention to keep the deal alive.”<sup>310</sup>

- Zarif’s messaging in the open forum suggests Iran’s interest in the activation of the SPV.
- In the instance of the JPCOA, Iran also uses the opportunity to convey their position from a moral high ground.
- The United States withdrew from the U.N. agreement—trustworthiness of the United States is open for debate.

Iran highlights its adherence to the written agreement and fulfilling obligations that reinforce the moral attributes of their Islamic identity.

Competition with Saudi Arabia also drives Iranian behavior. Since the early years of the Islamic revolution, the two nations were in a state of competition. Unsure of Iranian intentions related to exporting of the revolution, Saudi Arabia loaned money to support Saddam Hussein in the Iraq-Iran war. In July 1987, there were 402 Iranian pilgrims killed when Saudi security elements violently stopped an Iranian delegation protesting in Mecca.<sup>311</sup> The 1996 Khobar Towers attack injured nearly 498 people and claimed the lives of 19 U.S. airmen. Saudi law enforcement worked with U.S. officials identifying Shia

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<sup>310</sup> ISPI.

<sup>311</sup> Ostovar, 97.

militants as suspects and implicated Iran's involvement in the attack. During the three-year period after the bombing, the attack was attributed to al-Qaeda.<sup>312</sup> The attack remains an event which Saudis have tried to pin on Iran. In later years, Saudi Arabia and Iran traded rhetoric and blows in a variety of ways. They held opposing views of the Arab Spring. Iran accused Saudi Arabia of endorsing imperialism with the military intervention of Bahrain.<sup>313</sup> Iran plotted to kill a Saudi ambassador in Washington, DC, Saudi Arabia and Qatar funded rebels in Syria as opposition to Assad.<sup>314</sup> As the Saudis attempted to influence Syria, the Iranians keyed in on the Saudi-led war against the Houthis, earmarking Yemen as a location for increased client investment. Saudis blamed Iran for providing arms to the Houthis.<sup>315</sup> The competition drove the Iranians to pursue methods to keep Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the United States preoccupied with Yemen. Iranian support of Houthis, a relatively small investment, burned Saudi capital for pursuing aggressive actions framed toward Iran, or attempts to influence the conflict in Syria.

Anxiety internal to the regime drives how the government interacts with its society. Speculation of a foreign-based plots and the possibility of losing control causes teetering to the level of paranoia.<sup>316</sup> This stimulates a perception in which almost everything is an assault on their way of life. There is also fatigue associated with the state decision to hold an isolated, independent position for the last 40 years. An underlying level of insecurity stimulates brash actions. The regime has a default reliance on Basij, within security infrastructure, to quell unrest such as the protests of 2009.<sup>317</sup> The heavy-handed action impacts the societal view of the regime. The government is aware of the rift between state

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<sup>312</sup> Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 168–169.; Jerrold M. Post, “Killing in the Name of God: Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda,” USAF Counterproliferation Center (Maxwell AFB, AL, 2002), 6–7, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Apr/11/2002115483/-1/-1/0/18killinginthenameofgod.pdf>; “Osama Bin Laden, A Chronology of his Political Life,” PBS Frontline, last updated November 2002, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/etc/cron.html>.

<sup>313</sup> Ostovar, 195.

<sup>314</sup> Ostovar, 207.

<sup>315</sup> Ostovar, 233.

<sup>316</sup> Ostovar, 186.

<sup>317</sup> Ostovar, 6.

and society, but it has a difficult time addressing it. Ahmadinejad attempted to provide small stipends to lower class citizens and later Rouhani pursued reformist views to improve economic outlook. It is worth noting this anxiety affects Iranian identity; however, the overall strength of this nationalism has a propensity to negate the perceived rifts.

*c. Segment Conclusion*

Drivers of Iranian behavior may command attention in the media, but they often cloud intentions regarding main security goals. Iran strives to ensure Assad retains power in Syria, undermine U.S. security coordination efforts in the region, hold heavyweight status on the world stage, and maintain the Iranian identity. The strength and energy they garner from the Iranian identity stimulates the conditions of progress for Iran. The amalgamation of Islamic and nationalistic values enables Iran to shift their rally points as they pursue security objectives to protect the Islamic revolution.

**2. Strategic Utility of IRGC-QF and Implications U.S.–Iran Interaction**

In the present state of foreign affairs, it appears that there is no constructive U.S. policy or military effort that will alter Iran’s long-term decision-making. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) retains a position to protect the Islamic revolution and serves as an action arm for advancing strategic interests. National leaders in Washington, devising strategies regarding Iran, heavily lean upon United States military power while they do not clearly factor the significance of Iranian asymmetric forces. IRGC-QF remains integral to the continued expansion of the Islamic Revolution. However, the United States fails to adequately recognize the Quds Force as an Iranian Special Operations Force (SOF). This skews the United States’ understanding of Iranian methods regarding strategic objectives. IRGC-QF demonstrates strategic utility in a variety of arenas within the region. Consequently, U.S. policymakers should reflect on the current military approach toward Iranian forces and consider placing greater emphasis on multiple elements of national power for the purpose of establishing a concerted approach to stabilizing the Middle East.

We begin with a review of the definitions for special operations and special warfare and consider the connection with strategic utility. Second, we step through the origins of



the IRGC to gain a glimpse of how the IRGC-QF were primed to serve as the military arm for achieving strategic interests. Next, we reflect on Iranian security interests to glean direction of the focus for Iran. We will discuss points regarding operations in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen to highlight Iranian capacity to conduct special operations. Lastly, acknowledging the strategic utility of IRGC-QF actions and reflecting on U.S. interests, the significance of a concerted approach incorporating multiple elements of national power will surface. Ultimately, United States' military tactical actions and operational activities focused on countering Iranian influence are not enough to negate IRGC-QF strategic utility or stabilize the Middle East.

**a. Reference Points: Special Operations and Strategic Utility**

We initiate the discussion with the reflection on the terms of special operations and special warfare. We will move forward with the concept of strategic utility commonly aligned with SOF. According to Joint Publication (JP 1-02), *Special Operations* are “Operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk.”<sup>318</sup> The overarching Joint publication, service branch immaterial, definition of special operations highlights distinctive characteristics associated with this type of operations. The environment for operations and risk acceptance are often intertwined with selection of forces as well as training. High-level training is not unique to special operations forces; there are other elite military formations who pride themselves in the preparation for their respective missions. Strategic thinker and professor, Colin Grey suggests, “[S]pecial operations lie beyond the bounds of routine tasks in war.”<sup>319</sup> Special operations are much more about applying the level of training in order to pursue and achieve an objective otherwise not obtainable by conventional forces.

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<sup>318</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2018), 218, <http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf?ver=2018-02-21-153603-643>.

<sup>319</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1998), 149.

In an effort to gain a more well-rounded understanding of special operations, we consider a service specific definition of special warfare. The Mission statement of U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) focuses on the mission sets of surgical strike and special warfare for the purpose of achieving theater and national objectives. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP 3–05) note *Special Warfare* as “[T]he execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.”<sup>320</sup> Similar to the special operations definition, the concept of special warfare also nods to culturally attuned, uniquely educated and trained men honed in a manner to enable the force to fight alongside indigenous elements and operate in all (hostile, denied, sensitive) environments.

Unfortunately, neither definition illuminates the purpose of special operations or special warfare. The joint publication definition alludes to the purpose of special operations by mentioning action in “politically sensitive environments.” As such, we must consider an additional source for additional perspective. Colin Gray applauds the superior definition of special operations prepared by Maurice Tugwell and David Charters. Special operations are “[s]mall-scale, clandestine, covert or overt operations with an unorthodox and frequently high-risk nature, undertaken to achieve significant political or military objectives in support of foreign policy.”<sup>321</sup> The “unorthodox” state of mind aids flexibility in capabilities of SOF.<sup>322</sup> This definition helps to convey an overarching purpose of special operations as they relate to the achievement of “significant political or military objectives” intertwined with foreign policy. Gray points to the use of “significant” as generic in its word choice, but also voices agreement with the basis for using the term as it assists with

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<sup>320</sup> Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, *Special Operations*, Army Doctrine Publication 3–05 (Washington, D.C., 2018), 7, [https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/adp3\\_05.pdf](https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/adp3_05.pdf).

<sup>321</sup> Maurice Tugwell and Charters, “Special Operations and the Threats to United States Interests in the 1980s,” in *Special Operations in U.S. Strategy*, ed. Frank R Barnett et al. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1984), 34.

<sup>322</sup> Gray, 158.

reducing the energy expenditure to debate a “distinction between strategic and tactical missions.”<sup>323</sup>

Gray employed the Tugwell and Charters definition of special operations as a corner stone for the concept of strategic utility. The term *strategic utility* is “[T]he contribution of a particular kind of military activity to the course and outcome of an entire conflict” and the consequences have direct and indirect impacts “upon a war as a whole.”<sup>324</sup> Associated with the notion of strategic utility, economy of force and the expansion of choice enhance the interest of special operations. The quality of SOF assists with balancing the quantity of conventional forces. The economy of force suggests achievement of “[S]ignificant results with limited forces.”<sup>325</sup> In terms of expansion of choice—“special operations can expand the options available to political and military leaders.”<sup>326</sup> The timing for the execution of special operations is specific to each conflict and the established strategic goals. Expansion of choice is enabled through scaling the special operations forces and tailoring the mission set. Although the terms were prepared in the United States, we will consider their applicability to describing special operations forces of other nations.

***b. IRGC-QF / Action Arm for Advancing Strategic Interests***

With respect to strategic utility, Iran’s IRGC rests in a prime position to not only voice strategic decision-making through direct connection with the Islamic Republic’s leaders, but also to take action in foreign involvements central to Iranian security.<sup>327</sup> Shortly after the Iranian revolution of 1979, the nation isolated itself from Western states, and appearing vulnerable the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran became entrenched in an eight-year war with Iraq. The Iraqi onslaught initiated the invasion of Iran and later

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<sup>323</sup> Gray, 148.

<sup>324</sup> Gray, 163–64.

<sup>325</sup> Gray, 168.

<sup>326</sup> Gray, 174.

<sup>327</sup> Afshon Ostovar, “The Grand Strategy of Militant Clients: Iran’s Way of War,” *Security Studies*, October 13, 2018, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2018.1508862>.

incorporated the use of chemical weapons, blister and nerve agents, against Iranians on the front lines.<sup>328</sup> Although Iraq initiated a war during the infancy of the Iranian revolution and the Iranians sustained significant blows, the nearly eight-year war had a larger reinforcing effect for the advancement of the Islamic Republic. Refining the focus of the Islamic Republic under Khomeini and the progression of the IRGC improved the platform for protecting against imperialism and spreading pro-Islamic ideals.<sup>329</sup>

At the onset of the Iraq–Iran war, IRGC existed in the form of city gangs that possessed minimal military knowledge and were not prepared to fight external foes.<sup>330</sup> As discontent increased with the performance of the regular military, Khomeini and Islamic Republican Party leaders advocated for greater roles for the IRGC in war planning. Khomeini highlighted the unequal status of the IRGC, blaming Bani-Sadr for holding back the IRGC. Success of Guerilla style and human wave tactics led to an increased planning role for the IRGC.<sup>331</sup> IRGC solidified their status as political tool separate from the regular military.

A byproduct of the Iraq-Iran war was a level of international street credibility for the Islamic Republic. Iran endured eight years of armed conflict, largely on its own, while Iraqis drew support (monetary funds, replacement parts, and intelligence) from multiple nations. The religious and political fervor focused on an external threat were factors that amplified the ideals of the Islamic Republic. Without the war, this identity for the Islamic Republic would potentially be unfamiliar to many states in the region. Furthermore, the IRGC now serves as a formalized tool, in reinforced position close to the Imam, which continues to strive to advance Iranian influence within the Gulf.

### *c. Iranian Security Interests*

Iran’s main security goals exist under the semblance of protecting the Islamic revolution. A more in-depth discussion of Iran’s security goals available in previous section

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<sup>328</sup> Henry Kamm, “New Gulf War Issue: Chemical Arms,” *New York Times*, March 05, 1984, A3.

<sup>329</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 103.

<sup>330</sup> Ostovar, 64.

<sup>331</sup> Ostovar, 71.

of Chapter V.A.1.a. The successful perseverance and progression expand the regional and global influence of Iran. Confidence continues to accumulate in the Islamic alternative. The Iranian identity maintains inertia for securing the regime at home and energizes efforts to tackle security goals abroad.

*d. Utility and Conditions for Success of Special Operations*

The IRGC is the lead organization for injecting strategic decision-making into the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) and the Quds Force of the organization are the action arm for foreign interaction on varying levels. In relation IRGC-QF strategic utility, the qualities of economy of force and expansion of strategic choice are easily identifiable. Achieving significant results with the application of limited numbers of forces is particularly relevant for Iran as trade opportunities for military equipment were greatly restricted after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the conclusion of the seven-year Iraq-Iran war. IRGC-QF also possesses attributes to perform actions in overt, clandestine, or covert manners. This capability increases options for military and political leaders to pursue in relation to foreign policy. Gray also prescribed “conditions for success of special operations” as an additional concept to pair with strategic utility. He also notes the conditions are not described as ingredients with specific amounts detailed in a recipe, but they should be considered as “[H]istorical factors that increase the prospects for achievement of significant strategic effect.<sup>332</sup> Politics, feasible objectives, and absence of alternatives, and reputation are several categories of Gray’s conditions for success which appear to be relevant to Iranian action:

Politics—“*SOF need permissive domestic conditions, a tolerant political and strategic structure.*”<sup>333</sup> The structure of direct connection between the IRGC and Khamenei enable pure information transmissions. Within U.S. State Department correspondence from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Brigadier General Soleimani was described as “the point man directing the formulation and implementation of [the Islamic

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<sup>332</sup> Colin S. Gray, “Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?,” *PARAMETERS, U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, no. Spring (1999): 2–24.

<sup>333</sup> Gray.

Republic of Iran Government's] Iraq policy, with the authority second only to Supreme Leader [Ali] Khamenei.”<sup>334</sup> Also, the religious aspect affords the IRGC a layer of protection in which actions are tolerated under the guise of protecting the revolution.

Feasible Objectives—“*SOF need objectives that they can secure without the aid of regular units.*”<sup>335</sup> Ostovar emphasizes the support for foreign militant groups or proxies developed relationships for the purpose of “securing its independence from foreign powers and counter the United States, Israel and other adversaries.”<sup>336</sup> A network of clients, developed by Iran, provided a degree of deniability as they fought to undermine U.S. influence during post-2003 occupation of Iraq.<sup>337</sup> The development of militant clients is not a skill set of regular units. Regionally and culturally knowledgeable IRGC-QF, in small numbers, operated in a decentralized manner to foster these militant groups.

Absence of Alternatives—“*SOF prosper when conventional operations are prohibited by political factors, ruled out as too expensive, or otherwise are deemed inappropriate.*” and “*Special Operations prosper in conflicts suited to the skills of SOF.*”<sup>338</sup> Remaining below the threshold of a conventional engagement, Iran has more options at their disposal to advance their security interests. The use IRGC-QF for special operations enables deniability. Similar to United States SOF, official statements limit their acknowledgement of Iranian presence in other nations to fulfill advisory roles.<sup>339</sup> Within the concept of special warfare, there is the mission set for building indigenous combat forces. In the instance of Syria, IRGC-QF was responsible for “establishing and training the NDF, the network of Syrian people’s militias that serve as the backbone of Assad’s

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<sup>334</sup> Ali Alfoneh, “Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani: A Biography,” *AEI: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*, Middle Eastern Outlook, January 2011, 1, <http://www.aei.org/publication/brigadier-general-qassem-suleimani-a-biography/>.

<sup>335</sup> Gray, “Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?”

<sup>336</sup> Ostovar, “The Grand Strategy of Militant Clients: Iran’s Way of War,” 4.

<sup>337</sup> Ostovar, 23.

<sup>338</sup> Gray, “Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?”

<sup>339</sup> Ostovar, 18.

defense against the rebels.”<sup>340</sup> Developing public committee militias of local Syrians was not a role appropriate for Iranian conventional forces. Many of the GCC would view conventional action beyond Iranian borders as provocative action; conventional action would overtly affirm belligerent behavior and provide pre-tense for Israel or United States to pursue regime change.

Reputation—“*It is most desirable that SOF should be feared.*”<sup>341</sup> Media external to Iran propagates snippets of factoids and speculations, regarding IRGC-QF and their commander Major General Qasem Soleimani. Ali Soufan notes Soleimani is “revered in his home country feared on battlefields across the Middle East” on the basis of creating an “arc of influence extending from the Gulf of Oman through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.”<sup>342</sup> This involvement and influence in multiple conflicts within the Middle East should cede Iran credit regarding their stature to foster stability or wreak havoc on security in the region. The reputation of effectiveness regarding the IRGC-QF is also visible in their approach to fund clients as a “cheaper and more effective strategic investment than competing with its neighbors through conventional defense spending.”<sup>343</sup> Like other states, Iran does not appear to have any qualms about arming or sponsoring groups to advance Iran’s strategic goals.

*e. Conclusion (Discussing Strategic Utility)*

The additional value of IRGC-QF operations to influence instability in the region must be acknowledged by the U.S. in order to move forward with identifying an appropriate strategy regarding Iran and the U.S. security coordination efforts in the region. As described, the use of militant clients by IRGC-QF in relation to regional strategy is a

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<sup>340</sup> Linda Robinson et al., *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*, RR 1772-A (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 150, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1772.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1772.html).

<sup>341</sup> Gray.

<sup>342</sup> Ali Soufan, “Qassem Soleimani and Iran’s Unique Regional Strategy,” *Combating Terrorism Center at Westpoint: CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 10 (November 2018): 1.

<sup>343</sup> Paul Kapur, *Jihad as Grand Strategy: Islamist Militancy, National Security, and the Pakistani State*, 1 edition (Oxford University Press, 2016), 21–22.

valuable Iranian tool that is currently overlooked.<sup>344</sup> A concerted approach, integrating multiple elements of national power, to Middle East stability and policy regarding Iran boosts the prospects of dialogue and future rapprochement. Therefore, the next steps for U.S. policy makers should consider developing an indirect approach by meshing Arreguin-Toft's concept of same-approach interactions and Beaufre's three factors to inform strategy.<sup>345</sup> The current approach of relying exclusively on U.S. military power disenfranchises American internal support for pursuing strategic objectives and strains SOF resources. Moreover, defining policy regarding Iran may enhance the likelihood of freeing U.S. SOF for employment to other regions linked with greater U.S. interests.

### **3. Recap: Factoring Iranian Action and Implications for the Current United States Zero-Sum Viewpoint**

Drivers of Iranian behavior may command attention in the media, but they often cloud intentions regarding main security goals. Iran strives to ensure Assad retains power in Syria, undermine U.S. security coordination efforts in the region, hold heavyweight status on the world stage, and maintain the Iranian identity. Conditions of progress for Iran are stimulated by the strength and energy they garner from the Iranian identity. The amalgamation of Islamic and nationalistic values enables Iran to shift their rally points as they pursue security objectives to protect the state established by the 1979 revolution.

Implications for United States–Iran interaction; United States policymakers should reconsider the current military-dominant approach, and contemplate placing greater emphasis on multiple elements of national power within a concerted, long-term effort to advance relations with Iran and enhance stability of the Middle East. The recognition of security interests helps to see zero-sum viewpoint masks over aspects for future relations. While wishfully idealizing the United States has zero presence in the Middle East, Iran advances incremental efforts to obtain a relative increase from their previous position in

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<sup>344</sup> Ostovar, "The Grand Strategy of Militant Clients: Iran's Way of War," 2.

<sup>345</sup> Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 121.; Andre Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy, : With Particular Reference to Problems of Defense, Politics, Economics, and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age* (Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 108.



relation to the United States. Iranian actions do not reflect a zero-sum mindset. On the other hand, not all that much changed in viewpoints since the 2005 reflection of Secretary Condoleezza Rice addressing the American University in Cairo. Secretary Rice stated, “For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East—and we achieved neither.”<sup>346</sup> The zero-sum viewpoint in Washington did not fade; the United States remains uninterested in diplomatically interacting with Iran.

Reducing Iranian influence in the region to zero is highly unlikely, just in the same light that it is not probable to completely eliminate U.S. influence in the Middle East. Zero-sum viewpoint does not assist with getting to a long-term solution. The United States does not simply have two options: execute regime change or back off from the Middle East. Placing greater emphasis on multiple elements of national power within a concerted, long-term effort is a more appropriate method to advance relations with Iran and enhance stability of the Middle East.

## **B. COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE (IRAN)**

In 1953, the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran’s popular Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. The Eisenhower Administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons; but the coup was clearly a setback for Iran’s political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs.<sup>347</sup>

—U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright

Iran has not shied away from attempting to pursue its national interests. The IRGC-QF applies a relatively small investment to make Iran’s position in the Middle East known. Reflection over Iranian security goals and drivers of behavior aids with dissecting the perceived intractable conflict between the United States and Iran. While many politicians

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<sup>346</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks at the American University in Cairo,” *U.S. Department of State Archive*, June 20, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/48328.htm>.

<sup>347</sup> Madeleine Albright, Remarks before the American–Iranian Council, U.S. Department of State, March 17, 2000, <http://fas.org/news/iran/2000/000317.htm>.

and media sources reference 40 years of conflict, the rich history of interaction between the United States and Iran goes further back, even before 1953 when the CIA and MI6 orchestrated the overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh, to the Iranian parliament's vote to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) in March 1951.<sup>348</sup> The United States and Britain opposed the nationalization of Persian oil; several attempts occurred in July and October 1951 to reach an agreement, but one or more parties rejected the deals proposed.<sup>349</sup> The coup of 1953 dismissed Mossadegh as Prime Minister and returned power to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Signs of future conflict were visible from the Shah's oil policies in the 1970s and direct interventions into the affairs of regional Arab state (i.e., Iraq and Oman). Angst from Western influence and discontent with the Shah's repressive treatment of dissenting Persian voices spurred the Revolution of 1979. Tension between the United States and Iran rapidly increased with the fall of the Shah. The last 40 years are pocked and scarred from tit-for-tat action; each side maintains a list of grievances connected to the conflict.

## 1. Symptoms

A flurry of topics echo through media channels regarding egregious actions of Iran: hostage-taking, Iranian use of proxies (Syria, Yemen, Lebanon), human rights violations, anti-Semite rhetoric, threatening the flow of oil (Strait of Hormuz), efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability. The 1979 U.S. embassy hostage crisis in Tehran, lasting 444 days, was one of the early publicized slights felt by the United States. Several years later, there were implications of Iranian involvement with the Hezbollah bombing of Beirut marine barracks in 1983 and the 1984 torture and killing of CIA station chief William F. Buckley.<sup>350</sup> Secretary Albright in 2000 expanded on several grievances, "The embassy takeover was a disgraceful breach of Iran's international responsibility and the trauma for

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<sup>348</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 55.

<sup>349</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.–Iranian Relations* (New York: New Press, 2012), 113–117, 125–127.

<sup>350</sup> Marc Perelman, "Search for a Mastermind," *Forward*, November 2, 2001. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/367547184/>; Elizabeth Smick, "Profile: Imad Mugniyah," *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 17, 2006, <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/profile-imad-mugniyah>.

the hostages and the families and for all of us. And innocent Americans and friends of America have been murdered by terrorist groups that are supported by the Iranian Government.”<sup>351</sup> Serious grievances surely trigger raw emotions. This snapshot of issues, hostages in 1979 and connection with an insurgent group in Lebanon who tortured and killed William Buckley, assists with explaining why there was no interest to interact with Iran along positive wavelengths. Animosity, sadness, anger, fear, skepticism of true intentions are just several of the many feelings emanating from the events.

Are the Iranians ineligible of possessing similar feelings? The United States in 1953 aided the removal of Mohammad Mossadegh, a popularly elected Prime Minister, and returned the Shah to power. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi championed modernization, economic advancement of the nation, while simultaneously employing the SAVAK and other tools to repress the people of Iran.<sup>352</sup> During the Iraq–Iran War, the United States was aware of Iraq’s chemical weapons use in 1982 and 1983. Presidential Envoy Donald Rumsfeld informed the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister that the “use of chemical weapons, escalation in the gulf, and human rights” as things that inhibited efforts of the United States to assist Iraq.<sup>353</sup> Incidents of Iraq’s chemical weapon use were not publicly admonished. While the United States did not create the Iraqi chemical weapons program, there was a conclusion of “Facilitation in an indirect way, by simply establishing relations, and therefore, in retrospect, by morally abetting chemical warfare.”<sup>354</sup> There were estimates of over 50,000 casualties from Iraq’s chemical weapons and an even larger number

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<sup>351</sup> Madeleine Albright, Remarks before the American–Iranian Council, U.S. Department of State, March 17, 2000, <http://fas.org/news/iran/2000/000317.htm>.

<sup>352</sup> Names Withheld, “Life Under The Shah,” *The Harvard Crimson*, December 6, 1979, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1979/12/6/life-under-the-shah-pit-was/>; “World: SAVAK: Like the CIA,” *Time*, February 19, 1979.; Robert C. De Camera, “The Shah as Tyrant: A Look at the Record,” *Washington Post*, March 23, 1980, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1980/03/23/the-shah-as-tyrant-a-look-at-the-record/218c6a8e-dcb7-4168-ac9c-8f23609f888f/?utm\\_term=.2d32d08c2aa5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1980/03/23/the-shah-as-tyrant-a-look-at-the-record/218c6a8e-dcb7-4168-ac9c-8f23609f888f/?utm_term=.2d32d08c2aa5).

<sup>353</sup> Cable, Memorandum of Conversation of the Dec. 19 Meeting, from Embassy London to Sec. State, “Rumsfeld One-on-One Meeting with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz,” Dec. 21, 1983, doc. # 31, National Security Archive, GWU, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/>.

<sup>354</sup> David M. Walker, “‘An Agonizing Death’: 1980s U.S. Policy on Iraqi Chemical Weapons During the Iran-Iraq War,” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 8, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 189, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2017.1315554>.

suffered from long-term effects.<sup>355</sup> In 1988, during the “Tanker War” phase of the Iraq-Iran War, multiple Iranian families suffered as 290 civilian passengers traveling on Iran Air flight 655 were shot down with a surface-to-air missile launched by the *USS Vincennes*. The United States identified the engagement as an accident while the Iranian government perceived it was a deliberate attack displaying a message of willingness “[T]o do anything—including killing Iranian civilians—to bring down the Islamic Republic.”<sup>356</sup> Another point of contention for Iranians is the United States’ current interactions with the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), an Iranian group who sided with Saddam Hussein and considered traitors after attacks against the Iranian Armed Forces. In 1994, the United States Senate released an official statement identifying MEK “as a ‘terrorist organization,’ criticizing its role in the 1979 hostage crisis and relationship with Ira, and stating that the Mojahedin [MEK] was an organization of questionable reputation responsible for ‘the deaths of more than 10,000 Iranians’ since its exile.”<sup>357</sup> The United States designated members of MEK as protected persons under Geneva Convention IV in 2004, later removed designation as terrorist organization in 2012, and U.S. officials (Rudy Giuliani, John Bolton) publicly participated in MEK conference events.<sup>358</sup> These actions as well as the MEK being touted as opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran propels impressions of United States collusion with Iranian traitors and adds to the paranoia regarding regime change. Many Iranians attribute casualties and anguish [of loss] to American actions: enabling the Coup of 1953, overlooking the Shah’s use of secret police (SAVAK) to

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<sup>355</sup> Robin B. Wright, *Dreams and Shadows : The Future of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 438.

<sup>356</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle : The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 232.

<sup>357</sup> James A. Piazza, “The Democratic Islamic Republic of Iran in Exile,” *Digest of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 4 (October 1994): 19.

<sup>358</sup> Tom De Boer and Marjoleine Zieck, “From Internment to Resettlement of Refugees: On U.S. Obligations Towards MeK Defectors in Iraq,” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 2014): 23, <https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.433102>.; Ashish Kumar Sen, “U.S. Takes Iranian Dissident Group MeK Off Terrorist List,” *Washington Times*, September 28, 2012, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/sep/28/us-takes-iran-dissident-group-mek-terrorist-list/>.; Arron Merat, “Terrorists, Cultists—or Champions of Iranian Democracy? The Wild Wild Story of the MEK,” *Guardian*, November 9, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/nov/09/mek-iran-revolution-regime-trump-rajavi>. Darren E. Tromblay, *Political Influence Operations How Foreign Actors Seek to Shape U.S. Policy Making* (Lanham:Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 63.

repress Iranians, morally abetting Iraq's use of chemical weapons, and shooting down a civilian airliner over the gulf by the USS *Vincennes*.

Unfortunately, each side (United States and Iran) initiated events with horrible outcomes. An inspection of each event for the purpose of identifying the true instigator or the verifying a five-year adolescent's statement, "s/he started it" is an exhausting endeavor. While likening the topic of pinpointing the instigator to an oversimplified discussion of chicken or the egg may seem inappropriate and insensitive as lives were threatened and lost on both sides; however, this type of study contains limited value. The re-listing of grievances is itself, not a solution. An inspection of this nature may locate the truth within history and aid individuals going through a grieving process; however, it does not get anyone or any nation closer into dissolving conflict. While loss of life is not an insignificant event, it is the past, and as such U.S. foreign policy must establish long-term focus and orient in a manner to reduce loss of life in the future.

The **root cause** of the conflict between the United States and Iran may well be the denial of a greater official role for Iran in the Middle East. Or put another way, Iran is not being treated as an adult (a sovereign nation); there is a lack of inclusion to discuss topics as straightforward as Middle East regional security. Additional examples of the root cause surface with the discussion of the lag in progress.

## 2. Conflict Churning

Conflict "baggage" appears to block most interest in progressing toward a more positive relationship between nations. The United States categorizes Iran as a malign actor. Offering a 20-year snapshot of the conflict, Secretary Albright reflected:

It is no secret that, for two decades, most Americans have viewed Iran primarily through the prism of the U.S. Embassy takeover in 1979, accompanied as it was by the taking of hostages, hateful rhetoric and the burning of the U.S. flag. Through the years, this grim view is reinforced by the Iranian Government's repression at home and its support for terrorism abroad; by its assistance to groups violently opposed to the Middle East peace process; and by its effort to develop a nuclear weapons capability.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Albright.

Based on this view of Iran, the United States implemented a policy of isolation and containment. Iran appeared adamant about their position of going it alone, while other nations in the Middle East continued to comply and interact with the United States. Receiving minimal foreign support during the Iraq-Iran War, Iran fended off an Iraqi invasion, refined the Basij “human wave” attacks and countered with a campaign of punishment against Saddam’s forces.<sup>360</sup> The eight-year war ended in stalemate in which both Iran and Iraq claimed victory; Iraq came out far, far better. Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died in June 1989 and was succeeded by Sayyid Ali Hosseini Khamenei. The Islamic Republic of Iran, viewed on the international stage as a belligerent actor, was on a path to fashioning its independent identity.

*a. Perspective—Balance of Power*

Another consideration for the lag in progress relates to the status of national interests. Even with an internal production capacity, the United States maintains dependence for net import of foreign oil.<sup>361</sup> The 1991 collapse of Soviet Union marked a transition point for the number of nations vying for influence in the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States remained “the dominant power in the Middle East.”<sup>362</sup> Interested in maintaining their influence in the region and the free flow of hydrocarbons, the United States in the 1990s established a goal “[T]o forge new peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.”<sup>363</sup> Kenneth Pollack describes the United States’ determination to establish peace was curse to Iranian “Ideology and strategic position” that

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<sup>360</sup> Jon Lee Anderson, “Understanding the Basij,” *New Yorker*, June 19, 2009, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/jon-lee-anderson-understanding-the-basij>.

<sup>361</sup> Mike Patton, “U.S. Dependence on Foreign Oil Hits a 30-year low,” *Forbes*, April 20, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikepatton/2016/04/20/u-s-dependence-on-foreign-oil-hits-30-year-low/#620fec73ff33>.

<sup>362</sup> Richard Haass and Martin Indyk, “A Time for Diplomatic Renewal Toward a New U.S. Strategy in the Middle East,” in *Restoring the Balance: a Middle East Strategy for the Next President*. ed. Richard N. Haass (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>363</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 245.

required wrecking.”<sup>364</sup> The United States viewed the Middle East as vital to national interests; Iran balked at U.S. involvement and began exacerbating the conflict and intensifying confrontation. It was not the peace per se, that Iranians feared, but the permanent isolation of its regime in this process.

**b. Perspective—Selectorate Theory**

In the instance of Iran, selectorate theory simplifies aspects of emphasis and direction of focus for governances. Similar to the discussion of United States–China, we note the external conflict between United States and Iran remains as Khamenei and SNSC deliberately focus on the maintenance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Basic points distinguish between the factions within the Islamic Republic of Iran. A portion of the actions was to carve their identity as a fighter against Imperialism. Supreme Leader’s focus was maintaining his winning coalition, the cleric elites within the Majlis. Based on a desire to keep the status, the Islamic Republic of Iran focused predominantly in an internal manner. Choices to keep the regime strong ran counter to the support of the people. In an effort to quell protesters in Tehran after 2009 elections, the regime employed local police, non-local Basij, and volunteers of Ansar-e Hezbollah.<sup>365</sup> The level of violence intensified after the addition of the non-local and volunteer units; Basij “commanders routinely stressed differences between Iran’s rich and poor to motivate the activism of their members.”<sup>366</sup> The government response resulted in “[T]he killing of 17 protestors” and between 240 to 627 arrests occurred.<sup>367</sup> A gradual shift of power began in 2005 placing the IRGC in a more central role than the clerics of the revolution. Ayatollah Khamenei endorsed the use of the IRGC to enable the re-election of President Ahmadinejad.<sup>368</sup> IRGC continues to serve internally as a force to maintain the regime. With this pairing of

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<sup>364</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 245.

<sup>365</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 183.

<sup>366</sup> Ostovar, 190.

<sup>367</sup> Nazila Fathi and Michael Slackman, “Iran Stepping Up Effort to Quell Election Protest,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/25/world/middleeast/25iran.html>.

<sup>368</sup> Fathi and Slackman.

Ayatollah Khamenei and the IRGC, there is little room for outside interaction with the United States or other nations, as they do not guarantee the permanence of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

*c. Ecology Considered*

Reframing the focus to incorporate the larger “ecological” setting provides an additional viewing platform of the conflict. Conflict between the nations appears in an almost semi-permanent state. Reflection of the events around the Oslo peace process (Oslo Accords), U.S. preparations for Afghanistan and the regime’s response to the Green movement illustrate the relationship was not primed for progress between the United States and Iran. These local decisions/events impact foreign policy and foreign policy projected into the surrounding environment affected local events.

(1) Oslo Peace Process

As previously mentioned, the United States super charged its focus in the 1990s on Arab–Israeli peace. Emphasis on the region as a one-issue area indirectly pushed Iran out of the frame.<sup>369</sup> The 1993 Oslo peace process yielded letters of recognition between the state of Israel and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as well as framework for negotiations. Iran’s relevance in the region was in question; the Oslo peace process enticed Iran to wreck the arrangement. Referring to David Menashri’s complementary studies of Iran, Parsi notes Iran’s swift and harsh reaction that “elevated opposition to Israel into high policy by increasing its rhetorical opposition to Israel and announcing in the hardline newspaper *Ettelaat* that Iran would offer limitless support to the opponents of the Oslo agreement.”<sup>370</sup>

Fear of a successful Oslo process translated into increased probability of isolation for Iran. In addition to verbalizing opposition to Israel, they finger-pointed at the PLO for

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<sup>369</sup> Alfred L. Atherton, “The Shifting Sands of Middle East Peace,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 86 (1992): 122, doi:10.2307/1149193.

<sup>370</sup> David Menashri, “Revolution at a Crossroads,” Policy Paper 43, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1997, 81. In Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 175.



not adequately representing the Palestinians, and found recipients interested in support. Approximations of Iran's financial support vary; Patrick Clawson of Washington Institute for Near East Policy estimated, as of 1993, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad \$20-30 million annually.<sup>371</sup> In 1995, outgoing CIA director Woolsey shared that Iran "[P]rovides Hezbollah over \$100 million per year in money and arms, as well as funds and other materials to the Palestine Islamic Jihad organization and Hamas."<sup>372</sup> One bombing, suggesting complicity of Iran and Hezbollah, was the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires of July 18, 1994.<sup>373</sup> In Israel's eyes, Tehran had reset their resolve to incorporate terror; Israel's General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak noted "[W]e saw more and more indirect Iranian involvement in what was going on inside Israel."<sup>374</sup> Other actions of Palestinian groups continued to shear the possibility of Arab-Israeli peace. The lack of inclusion in security discussions of the Oslo process was a different isolation than previously felt, Iran found a way to re-insert itself into Middle East decision-making. The foreign policy projected by the United States influenced Iran to alter their position in the local and regional environment.

## (2) Preparations for Afghanistan

It is possible to attribute other lags in progress with one nation or the other not being in a position to reciprocate. In the instance of preparations for Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks, a split exchange between the United States and Iran occurred with positive actions

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<sup>371</sup> Patrick Clawson, *Iran's Challenge to the West: How, When, and why* (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1993), 16.

<sup>372</sup> Worldwide Intelligence Review: Hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence, Senate, 104th Cong. 1 (1995), <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/hearings/worldwideintelli00unit.pdf>. (statement of R. James Woolsey, Director of Central Intelligence); Yaya J. Fanusie and Alex Entz. "Hezbollah: Financial Assessment." *Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance, Terror Finance Briefing Book* (2017): 3, [https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/CSIF\\_TFBB\\_Hezbollah.pdf](https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/CSIF_TFBB_Hezbollah.pdf).

<sup>373</sup> Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 177.; "Buenos Aires Bomber 'Identified,'" *BBC News*, November 10, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4423612.stm>

<sup>374</sup> Interview with Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Tel Aviv, October 25, 2004, quoted in Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 178.

and insulting words. Budding interactions at the lower diplomatic staff level held notes of reciprocating action while the posture and U.S. public statements of the higher administration cauterized the interaction. In this exchange, the United States kept pace for the relationship and ensured that “All sides have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.”<sup>375</sup>

Prior to the invasion of Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker, a U.S. State Department official, engaged with Iranian diplomats in Europe to discuss U.S. operations to uproot the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The secret meetings bore fruit; Iranians “shared intelligence on Taliban positions” while Crocker shared intelligence for “al Qaeda operative living in the eastern Iranian city of Mashhad.”<sup>376</sup> Interfacing on the topic of Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan presented the opportunity for ground work of mutual cooperation. This relationship skidded off the road with little chance of recovery after President Bush’s axis of evil speech in January 2002.<sup>377</sup> U.S. Intelligence committee suggested benefits to engagement with Iran “on the Afghan and potential Iraq wars—the Bush administration rebuffed Tehran’s offers and took an uncompromising line against the Khatami government.”<sup>378</sup> Hardliners of Iran pointed to Khatami’s pro-Western stances and the disinterest of the United States and bolstered the conservative position. The Bush administration continued to fixate on Iran’s demonizing words and used similar discourse. The United States did not pursue or encourage a line of reciprocating action regarding the topic of Afghanistan. Khatami lost room for maneuver, within the local political level, to attempt further engagements with the United States.

### (3) The Green Movement

Disputed elections of 2009 and Green movement demonstrations propelled the action of Khamenei’s IRGC in suppressing dissent in local forums. Iran placed foreign

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<sup>375</sup> Trita Parsi, “Iran and Israel: Peace is Possible,” June 2013, in TEDGlobal 2013, streaming video, transcript, 0:07:35, [https://www.ted.com/talks/trita\\_parsi\\_iran\\_and\\_israel\\_peace\\_is\\_possible](https://www.ted.com/talks/trita_parsi_iran_and_israel_peace_is_possible).

<sup>376</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 161.

<sup>377</sup> Ostovar, 161.

<sup>378</sup> Ostovar, 162.

policy on a back burner as they addressed the local issue of strife within the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Guardian Council vetted Mir-Hossein Mousavi as a candidate, although some believed he stood too far removed from politics due to the low profile after holding position as prime minister between 1980–1988 (Iraq-Iran War).<sup>379</sup> Through television debates challenging Ahmadinejad and statements championing reform “Mousavi managed—in just four weeks—to electrify a legion of supporters and spawn a burgeoning movement.”<sup>380</sup> Aware of the increased popularity of Ahmadinejad’s rivals, there was growing uncertainty of the incumbent’s success.

Iranian media released two letters sparking alarm for election turmoil. The first letter confidential communication within the IRGC stating supreme leader’s stance that “Ahmadinejad ‘should be re-elected’” and a second letter recounting a senior ayatollah warning election officials of Interior Ministry that “challengers should not win” based on their religious duty as supervisors.<sup>381</sup> Two days before the election, IRGC commander Jafari declared no toleration for ‘velvet coup’ attempts and this translated into an Election Day employment of 200,000 security forces (i.e., IRGC, Basij) in the capital city of Tehran.<sup>382</sup> The results stunned Mousavi supporters as they anticipated success based on high turnout of reformist voters. Mousavi received only 23 percent of the vote in comparison to Ahmadinejad’s 63 percent. Tens of thousands of Iranian protestors filled streets in Tehran and other cities sporting green bandanas and scarfs to display their support of Mousavi campaign.<sup>383</sup> Security forces were not prepared for the size of the demonstrations and the police turned to brute force. Clashes with protestors intensified as Basij units and volunteers from outside Tehran joined the Regime’s counter effort disperse

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<sup>379</sup> Abbas Milani, “The Green Movement,” United States Institute for Peace, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/green-movement>.

<sup>380</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 181.

<sup>381</sup> Ostovar, 181.

<sup>382</sup> Ali M. Anasri, *Crisis of Authority: Iran’s 2009 Presidential Election* (London: Chatham House, 2010), 46 and 48. Also referenced in Ostovar, 182.

<sup>383</sup> Michael Axworthy, *Iran: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2016), 148.

demonstrators.<sup>384</sup> The IRGC justified “its involvement in the crackdown” by emphasizing the “post-election unrest threatened the very fabric of the revolution and had been planned by foreign powers.”<sup>385</sup> The IRGC teetered between a natural level of anxiety and extreme level of paranoia where everything is an assault or attack on the Iranian way of life. At a basic level, insecurity stimulated the “regime’s reaction to the protests.”<sup>386</sup>

This reaction to the protests illuminated fault lines in the Iranian political process and the divisions in society and the fortified position of the IRGC. Iran’s inward focus on local politics and events heightened attention of human rights concerns and places the possibility of nuclear discussions with United States stutters. Amid multi-lateral sanctions, President Obama continued to hold out an open hand for initiating discussions without pre-conditions. Violent oppression of Iranians added to the complexity of larger dialog. The election violence in Iran “casts doubt on how quickly serious talks could begin.”<sup>387</sup> Bilateral meetings with a regime sweaty from putting down political dissention, may not set an appropriate precedent for future engagements with other nations. The regime’s violence against their people also stirred anxiety within the Group of Eight (G8). Questions of a G8 unified front and the appropriate actions regarding Iran’s nuclear program. Iran’s internal actions add complexity to the larger foreign policy setting. For Iran, the reality of 2009, after 30 years of relative success is that the IRGC maintains a paramount responsibility, as the regime is still very much susceptible to losing control.

The lag of progress becomes more easily identifiable when observing the conflict, the interactions between the United States and Iran, and their interactions with the environment. There is interplay with the between the nations and the environment. In the example of the Oslo process the larger environment stimulated Iran’s local and regional

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<sup>384</sup> Ostovar, 183.

<sup>385</sup> Ostovar, 186.

<sup>386</sup> Ostovar, 186.

<sup>387</sup> Michael Adler, “Iran’s Nuclear Crisis: Ever a Key Moment,” in “The Iran Presidential Elections,” (occasional paper, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars: Middle East Program, 2010), 20, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Iranian%20Elections.pdf>.

Ottaway, David. *Saudi Arabia’s Race Against Time*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Middle East Program, 2012.

efforts to wreck peace. The lack of footing to reciprocate based on internal politics is also another aspect that extends the lag in progress and the continuation of conflict. Khatami's standing in local politics withered with respect to hardline positions as the United States did not reciprocate. The green movement protests and the response of the regime exemplified how local events impact foreign policy. With the internal political problems, Iran was not in a position to interact externally and in a similar vein, the regime's actions intensified the spotlight of the international community. Again, the value of considering ecology enables an appreciation for the complexity of the conflict and highlights the significance of actions in relation to words.

### **3. Intractability –Other Approaches to Dissolving Conflict**

Previous eras of U.S. foreign policy primarily noted strategies of containment and isolation with a few references of engagement, while the United States' current approach does not have a phrase describing strategy. Perhaps catch phrases are no longer in vogue; the more troubling aspect is that the current U.S. strategy regarding Iran is difficult to discern from current actions and language. There is an emphasis on tools and techniques, but the ghost of a clearly identified strategy remains at large.

May 8, 2018 marked President Trump's termination of U.S. participation in JCPOA and initiated a sequence of exacerbating the relationship. This was followed up by Pompeo's list of demands regarding the scope of Iran's malign behavior, statements of describing actions establishing maximum pressure, unilateral sanctions for nations importing Iranian oil, adding Iran's IRGC a national military force to the U.S. State Department's foreign terrorist organization (FTO) list, and the end of exemption waivers for eight nations importing Iranian crude oil.<sup>388</sup> Leading up to the United States withdrawal, Iranian Foreign Minister noted the action as a breach of the multi-lateral

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<sup>388</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy," Remarks to Heritage Foundation, U.S. Department of State, May 21, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/after-the-deal-a-new-iran-strategy/>.; Matthew Lee, "U.S. Says No More Sanctions Waivers for Importing Iranian Oil," Real Clear Politics, April 23, 2019, [https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2019/04/23/us\\_says\\_no\\_more\\_sanctions\\_waivers\\_for\\_importing\\_iranian\\_oil\\_140133.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2019/04/23/us_says_no_more_sanctions_waivers_for_importing_iranian_oil_140133.html).

agreement and showcased the unreliability of the United States.<sup>389</sup> Other scholars reflected on the actual withdrawal as a “material breach” and “violation of the international norm.”<sup>390</sup> Iran drew additional attention in early January 2019 as speculation circulated about the link between the preparations for a space launch vehicle (SLV) and developments of intercontinental range ballistic missile (ICBM).<sup>391</sup> Nearly eight months after withdrawal from JCPOA, Dan Coats, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, testified January 29, 2019, before the Senate select committee that “We continue to assess that Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device. However, Iranian officials have publicly threatened to reverse some of Iran’s Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) commitments—and resume nuclear activities that the JCPOA limits—if Iran does not gain the tangible trade and investment benefits it expected from the deal.”<sup>392</sup> Iran continues engagements with the current JCPOA signatories to retrieve some variation of economic gains that would partially offset United States’ unilateral sanctions.

Alarm and confusion ensued globally with the U.S. National Security Advisor’s statement on May 5, 2019, regarding naval carrier strike group deployment:

In response to a number of troubling and escalatory indications and warnings, the United States is deploying the *USS Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force to the U.S. Central Command region to send a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime that any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force. The United States is not seeking war with the Iranian

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<sup>389</sup> Fareed Zakaria and Javad Zarif, “Fareed sits down with Iran’s Foreign Minister,” September 24, 2017, in CNN: *Fareed Zakaria, Global Public Square*, video recording, 14:03, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2017/09/25/exp-gps-0924-zarif-interview-iran.cnn>; CNN (@CNN), “The United States “is proving that it is unreliable,” Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tells @FareedZakaria,” Twitter, September 24, 2017, 7:16 a.m., <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/911957580687257600>

<sup>390</sup> Tom O’Connor, “Did Trump Break the Law? U.S. Leaves Iran Deal, Violates World Order and Risks War, Experts Say,” *Newsweek*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/did-trump-break-law-us-leaves-iran-deal-violates-world-order-risks-war-916173>.

<sup>391</sup> David Schmerler, “Iran’s Space Launch: ICBM or Space Program Development?” Foreign Policy Research Institute, January 22, 2019, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/01/irans-space-launch-icbm-or-space-program-development/>.

<sup>392</sup> Daniel R. Coats, “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” Statement for the Record (Washington, DC: Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 29, 2019), 10, <https://www.odni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>.

regime, but we are fully prepared to respond to any attack, whether by proxy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or regular Iranian forces.<sup>393</sup>

Confusion existed from the method of releasing information and the idea that the U.S. National Security Advisor re-labeled a carrier strike group (CSG) already underway in the Mediterranean for episodic training and exercises as a deployment signaling the force prepared to counter possible Iranian attacks.<sup>394</sup> Later, the Navy public affairs noted an “expedited transit” ahead of schedule; the Abraham Lincoln CSG departed Norfolk on April 1, 2019 and “was expected to operate in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Pacific” before returning to their home port in San Diego, CA.<sup>395</sup> Amid the consternation, U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo completed an unscheduled stop in Baghdad and spoke with Iraq leadership. Pompeo altered plans skipping a visit with Chancellor Merkel in Germany on May 7, 2019 in order “[T]o assure them [Iraqi leadership] that we stood ready to ensure that Iraq is a sovereign, independent nation.”<sup>396</sup>

On May 8, 2019, one year after U.S. departure from JCPOA, Bolton posted “The United States will continue its maximum pressure on the Iranian regime until its leaders decide to change their destructive behavior, respect the rights of the Iranian people, and return to the negotiating table.”<sup>397</sup> Later the same day, U.S. Treasury issued Executive

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<sup>393</sup> “Statement from the National Security Advisor Ambassador John Bolton,” White House, May 5, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-bolton-2/>.

<sup>394</sup> Kevin Baron, “How Not to Announce a Ship Deployment,” *Defense one*, May 7, 2019, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2019/05/how-not-announce-ship-deployment/156821/>; Jonathan Marcus, “US Sends Aircraft Carrier and Bomber Task Force to ‘Warn Iran,’” *BBC News*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48173357>.

<sup>395</sup> Sam LaGrone, “UPDATED: USS Abraham Lincoln Operating in Middle East after ‘Expedited’ Transit,” *U.S. Naval Institute News*, last updated May 9, 2019, <https://news.usni.org/2019/05/09/uss-abraham-lincoln-now-in-middle-east-heading-to-the-persian-gulf>.

<sup>396</sup> Richard Gonzales, “Pompeo Makes Unscheduled Visit To Baghdad Amid Rising Tensions with Iran,” *NPR*, May 7, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/07/721179030/hold-pompeo-makes-unscheduled-visit-to-baghdad-amid-rising-tensions-with-iran>.

<sup>397</sup> John Bolton (@AmbJohnBolton), “The United States will continue its maximum pressure on the Iranian regime until its leaders decide to change their destructive behavior. The United States will continue its maximum pressure on the Iranian regime until its leaders decide to change their destructive behavior...” Twitter, May 8, 2019, 5:55p.m., <https://twitter.com/AmbJohnBolton/status/1126289431810453505>.

Order 13871 imposing additional sanctions on Iranian industrial metal sectors.<sup>398</sup> Other than speculating U.S. psychological warfare in place of politics, Iran did not appear taunted by the propagation of threat concerns. President Rouhani discussed Supreme National Security Council decision on May 8, 2019, informing JCPOA parties of a 60-day suspense regarding their implementation of their commitments for banking and oil sectors.<sup>399</sup> After 60 days, Iran projects an alteration to their commitments to the JCPOA, particularly adjustments to levels of Uranium enrichment. The statements of the CSG deployment and the Baghdad visit potentially heightened the European allies' concern for unilateral action more so than conveying the United States' heightened resolve to respond against Iranian threats.

Both sides took verbal and textual cues from each other, in exchange that lasted 13 days (May 8–21, 2019). Trump and Zarif released messages into the media landscape while Pompeo, Bolton and Rouhani provided additional variety to their nation's positions shared via twitter, news and other media outlets. Abbreviated Chronological highlights below:

May 9—(U.S.) Secretary Pompeo reinforced Bolton's statement from the previous 24 hours, with another message noting "The Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in an escalating series of threatening actions and statements in recent weeks. Any attacks by them or their proxies against U.S. citizens or our interests will be answered with a swift and decisive response."<sup>400</sup>

May—(U.S.) While pushing changes to hospital care billing, the press questioned the risk of military confrontation and President Trump shared "I don't want to say no. But hopefully that [confrontation] won't happen" and "I'd like to see them

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<sup>398</sup> Donald J. Trump, Executive Order 13871, "Imposing Sanctions with Respect to the Iron, Steel, Aluminum, and Copper Sectors of Iran," *Code of Federal Regulations*, title 3 (2019 comp.): 20761-20764. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-05-10/pdf/2019-09877.pdf>.

<sup>399</sup> "Iran Gives JCPOA Parties 60 Days before Reducing Further Commitments," Mehr News Agency, May 8, 2019, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/145010/Iran-gives-JCPOA-parties-60-days-before-reducing-further-commitments>

<sup>400</sup> Michael Pompeo (@SecPompeo), "The Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in an escalating series of threatening actions and statements in recent weeks. Any attacks by them or their proxies against U.S. citizens or our interests will be answered with a swift and decisive response." Twitter, May 9, 2019, 5:31p.m., "<https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1126645997537497088>.



[Iran’s leaders] call me.”<sup>401</sup> The next day Washington passed a phone number to the U.S. Interest Section, a desk without American, in the Swiss Embassy of Tehran that has been present since 2008.<sup>402</sup>

May 15—(UK) Maj. Gen. Christopher Ghika shares “There’s been no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria.”<sup>403</sup> Maj. Gen. Ghika, deputy commander of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), the coalition responsible for counter-terrorist operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, shared comment during video interview with UK *Guardian*.

May 16—(U.S. and UK) Pompeo visits with Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt (UK) “We share the same assessment of the heightened threat posed by Iran. As always we work closely with the US.”<sup>404</sup>

May 17–18—(Event) Joint exercises occurred 17 and 18 May with the Abraham Lincoln CSG and Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) with 22<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) co-located in the Arabian Sea.<sup>405</sup>

May 19—(U.S.) Sunday afternoon Trump exclaimed “If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran. Never threaten the United States again!”<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> “Remarks by President Trump on Ending Surprise Medical Billing,” White House, May 9, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-ending-surprise-medical-billing/>.

<sup>402</sup> “Interest Section of the United States in Tehran, Iran,” Embassy Pages, Accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.embassypages.com/missions/embassy25784/>.

<sup>403</sup> “British General Contradicts U.S. Claim of Increased Threat from Iran-Backed Militias,” Time, May 15, 2019, <http://time.com/5589433/iran-isis-christopher-ghika-contradicts-us/?iid=obnetwork>.

<sup>404</sup> Jeremy Hunt (@Jeremy\_Hunt), “ @SecPompeo and I discussed #Iran last week in London and again in Brussels on Monday. We share the same assessment of the heightened threat posed by Iran. As always we work closely with the US,” Twitter, May 16, 2019, 7:20a.m., [https://twitter.com/Jeremy\\_Hunt/status/1129028971990007808](https://twitter.com/Jeremy_Hunt/status/1129028971990007808)

<sup>405</sup> Catie Coyle, “Abraham Lincoln CSG and Kearsarge ARG Conduct Joint Operations in U.S. 5th Fleet,” U.S. Navy, May 19, 2019, [https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=109633](https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=109633).

<sup>406</sup> Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran. Never threaten the United States again!” Twitter, May 19, 2019 1:25p.m., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1130207891049332737>.

May 20—(Iran) Zarif rejects Trump’s statement to end Iran and points to Trump being is “goaded by B Team... Never Threaten an Iranian. Try respect it works!”<sup>407</sup>

May 20—(Iran) Partial positive statement from Zarif: “Trump rightly deplores ‘military-industrial complex’ pushing U.S. to #ForeverWars // But allowing #B\_Team to trash diplomacy & abet war crimes—by milking despotic butchers via massive arms sales—achieves nothing but empowering that same complex. Time to #DrainTheSwamp?”<sup>408</sup>

May 20—(U.S.) President Trump, before departing on Marine one to attend event in Pennsylvania, remarked “Iran will call us if and when they are ever ready. In the meantime, their economy continues to collapse - very sad for the Iranian people!”<sup>409</sup>

Multiple transmissions without a channel of dialogue hamstring at conciliation. The significance of these recent rounds of banter and quasi-escalating acts are extremely unhelpful as they exacerbate the conflict. There are often differences in communication in relation to the intended (sent) versus perceived (received) messages. Similar to light refracting through a prism, the propensity for statements to be misconstrued is far greater when nations choose to communicate indirectly through media sources. There is something to be said for individuals physically interfacing, joining together in a common location, sharing perspective, debating, concessions on both sides to reach a negotiation. This type of action displays commitment and forms trust.

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<sup>407</sup> Javad Zarif (@JZarif), “Goaded by #B\_Team, @realdonaldTrump hopes to achieve what Alexander, Genghis & other aggressors failed to do. Iranians have stood tall for millennia while aggressors all gone. #EconomicTerrorism & genocidal taunts won’t “end Iran.” // #NeverThreatenAnIranian. Try respect—it works!” Twitter, May 20, 2019 3:27 a.m., <https://twitter.com/JZarif/status/1130419673756049410>.

<sup>408</sup> Javad Zarif (@JZarif), “@realDonaldTrump rightly deplores “military-industrial complex” pushing U.S. to #ForeverWars // But allowing #B\_Team to trash diplomacy & abet war crimes—by milking despotic butchers via massive arms sales—achieves nothing but empowering that same complex.// Time to #DrainTheSwamp?” Twitter, May 20, 2019, 6:15 a.m., <https://twitter.com/JZarif/status/1130462097131880450>.

<sup>409</sup> Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “Iran will call us if and when they are ever ready. In the meantime, their economy continues to collapse - very sad for the Iranian people!” Twitter, May 20, 2019, 10:30 a.m., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1130526243751960576>.

Retired General James Mattis, former Secretary of Defense said, “The United States should buy time to keep peace and stability and allow diplomats to work diplomacy on how to keep peace for one more hour, one more day, one more week, a month or a year.”<sup>410</sup> Mattis’ remarks emphasized diplomacy has the capacity to delay war on the horizon as well as a fight at the doorstep. In the same light that diplomats are needed before nations trade blows, diplomats are also called upon during the fighting to advance positions focused on subsiding violence. Recognizing diplomacy has a role before, during, and after war, should we cringe based on the current status of the diplomatic channel with Iran.

Bottom line—the current position of viewing conflict as a zero-sum problem and using techniques to apply maximum pressure, incorporating sanctions, and threats of military force misses the mark. Dissolving conflict is possible with the revision of the view. A concerted effort incorporating a channel for diplomatic communication enhances the utility of other forms of national power.

### **C. AFFIRMING ASSUMPTIONS**

The two assumptions were identifiable within the examination of United States–Iran conflict. Within multiple segments of the relationship, the simple premise in which the other side has a vote was recognizable, but often overlooked. An Initial assessment, suggesting that one side is being stubborn or illogical must prompt the side to view the exchange from the receiving end. Nations will object and contest if they are being urged to submit to unequivocal concessions. Both sides look for interactions wrapped with respect and sincerity, and they are often unwilling to positively reciprocate in absence of these characteristics. Additionally, the second assumption of addressing security concerns resonates after locating the root cause of United States–Iran conflict. Iran maintains its anti-imperial stance as a topic which harnesses many Iranians and other groups in the region to take security into their own hands. Consideration to address the root cause between the United States and Iran, implies the necessity of interaction between the nations on the security topic. Both assumptions assist with framing the conflict/interactions and orient

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<sup>410</sup> Jared Keller, “Mattis cautions against war with Iran in first public remarks since leaving the Pentagon,” Task & Purpose, May 22, 2019, <https://taskandpurpose.com/mattis-trump-iran-diplomacy>.

discussion of considerations for advancing a concerted effort to improve upon the United States' existing approach.

**D. IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS (REGIONAL AND EXTERNAL)**

The status of multi-national interests and existing bi-lateral relationships are often side debates within the larger topic of relations with Iran. In several instances, the current U.S. approach aids the advancement of goals for several of the nations selected. If the United States refines its approach to the relationship with Iran, what are the implications for other existing relationships? There will be plenty of implications for players on the larger international stage, but this discussion narrows to two clusters split as regional (Israel & Saudi Arabia) and external (Russia and JCPOA stakeholders) relationships.

**1. Regional (Israel and Saudi Arabia)**

The positioning of U.S. forces and the bilateral relationships with the United States embolden Israel and Saudi Arabia to vocalize stances in the Middle East. Over the last several years, a shift occurred with U.S. national interests in the Middle East. The current state of affairs stimulates a notion that likens the pursuit of national interests to a hobby—an exciting topic, ripe for partial overinvestment, and now constrained by limited time to pursue the activity. The pursuit of national interests and hobbies are often thought about but do not fit the schedule as other topics take precedence. A more disconcerting outlook is that U.S. policy makers set aside the pursuit of national interests in favor of economic trade options, centered on foreign military sales and bidding on the civil nuclear projects. Described another way, the Saudi and Israeli interests appear at the forefront of U.S. decision-making while American interests are often absent from conversations. Why are we so keen on placing the interests of Saudi Arabia and Israel ahead of the United States? Aligning interests among nations is often advantageous; however, the current U.S. actions appear to cater to non-mutual Saudi and Israeli interests.

Saudi Arabia and Israel also maintain a measured understanding of their positions in the Middle East. In the eyes of Saudis and Israelis, their relationships with the United States are strong; any positive change in the dynamic between the United States and Iran

yields a decrease in the Arab and Israeli stocks. As such, both nations hold onto a viewpoint in which there is no room for sharing the neighborhood with Iran. In reality, there probably is space to share with Iran, but both have apprehension over the possible loss of a special relationship status and unique privileges of a bilateral relationship. Sorting through several of the Israeli and Saudi fears and identifiers enhances the development of techniques for framing United States' true focus in the Middle East.

(1) Israel

In addition to national pride, Israel holds its special relationship with the United States close. As a unique nation in the Middle East, Israelis often ground their decisions within aspects of security, dealing with “nation’s fundamental defense predicaments.”<sup>411</sup> Based on the size of the nation, they look internally to increase their comparative advantage, over other nations, in terms of technology and human resources. In relation to foreign military sales in the region, U.S. policymakers and defense officials may accept foreign requests and initiate sales of U.S. equipment and arms while only if the proposal adheres to the 2008 established “legal requirement to maintain Israel’s qualitative military edge (QME).”<sup>412</sup> Defense officials and policymakers check Equipment versions and variances of system capabilities in contrast with Israel’s QME before agreeing sales with Arab nations. This measure is one of many references of the special relationship between the United States and Israel.

Expanding on the topic of the special relationship, a senior fellow at the Belfer Center for science and international affairs, Charles D. Freilich notes the “United States provides Israel with a de facto security guarantee, massive military assistance, [and] broad but not complete diplomatic support.”<sup>413</sup> In exchange, the United States expects Israel “to consult with Washington on issues of importance prior to taking action,” to “demonstrate

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<sup>411</sup> Amos Yadlin and Ari Heistein, “Strategic Imperatives,” Jewish Review of Books, Spring 2018, <https://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/3049/strategic-imperatives/>.

<sup>412</sup> “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel: QME and U.S. Arms Sales to the Gulf,” Every CRS Report.com, Last updated April 10, 2018, [https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33222.html#\\_Toc511122783](https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33222.html#_Toc511122783).

<sup>413</sup> Charles D. Freilich, *Israeli National Security: A Strategy for an Era of Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 315.

military restraint and diplomatic moderation.”<sup>414</sup> The familial, constant contact sometimes masks the United States’ status as a global superpower with varying interests and possible differences with Israel’s national interests.<sup>415</sup> Freilich emphasizes U.S. precedence; “The Phalcon affair, West Bank and settlement issues, Israel’s QME, and Iran nuclear deal offer disparate examples of how the United States handles multiple conflicting interests in a given issue.”<sup>416</sup> Although the results of situations frustrate and at times spur Israeli leaders to air their ideas of a more independent approach, the strategic United States–Israeli relationship remains intact. Reiteration of commonly shared interest must focus on both nations maintaining a position against an Iranian nuclear weapons program. The secondary focus championed by Israel would also look to some variation of assurance regarding threats from Lebanon, Syria and/or Palestine.

(2) Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia fears replacement, in the context of the region and their relationship with the United States. Positive change in the United States relationship with Iran increases angst for the Saudis. The Saudis maintain their legitimacy by pointing to Wahhabi, spiritual centers of Mecca and Medina, and their wealth. Saudi leaders share an eagerness for business transactions, using displays of wealth and messages conveying Iran as a threat, to advance purchases of U.S. arms. Jerusalem Post journalist Seth Frantzman suggests, “Riyadh has been shopping for weapons because it views itself as the main bulwark against Iran’s expansion.”<sup>417</sup> Events in 2019 highlight the fractured confidence in Saudi Arabia’s ability to responsibly make decisions.

Earlier this year, in February 2019, CNN correspondents reported, “Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners have transferred American-made weapons to al Qaeda-linked

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<sup>414</sup> Freilich, 315.

<sup>415</sup> Freilich, 315.

<sup>416</sup> Freilich, 315.

<sup>417</sup> Seth J. Frantzman, “Understanding the Saudi, UAE Arms Deals and Iran,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 10, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Understanding-the-Saudi-UAE-arms-deals-and-Iran-591895>.

fighters, hardline Salafi militias, and other factions waging war in Yemen.”<sup>418</sup> Transfer of arms to 3rd parties violates of end user terms for U.S. foreign military sales. The report references the “U.S. made Oshkosh armored vehicles” in the possession of the Abu Abbas brigade, an Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) linked militia, which “receives support from the Saudi Coalition.”<sup>419</sup> In June 2019, Senators attempt a bipartisan effort to block Trump administration’s arms sales to Saudi Arabia; congress points to the Kingdom’s ongoing humanitarian crisis, involvement in the neighboring Yemeni civil war, and the killing of Saudi-born *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey last year—as reasons for concern.<sup>420</sup> A bipartisan congressional effort intends to block the Trump administration’s decision to sell U.S. arms to Saudi Arabia. Some media sources point to the threat of Iran as the justification for the U.S. arms sale.<sup>421</sup> While “[t]he Royal Saudi Air Force has the third largest number of F-15s in its fleet, behind Japan and the United States,” Iran continues to operate the F-14 Tomcat, an aircraft purchased by the Shah of Iran in the late 1970s.<sup>422</sup> If this really is a struggle for Iranian or Saudi hegemony, an interesting point for reflection is the scant media reporting on Iranian purchases, production of arms, or upgrades to their conventional forces.

The headstrong business approach, content on selling U.S. arms and competing over civil nuclear contracts for Saudi Arabia, appears to shoulder Saudi national interests for U.S. short-term economic gains and glosses over the long-term effects on the Middle

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<sup>418</sup> Nima Elbagir, Salma Abdelaziz, Mohamed Abo El Gheit and Laura Smith-Spark, “Sold to an Ally, Lost to an Enemy,” CNN, February 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2019/02/middleeast/yemen-lost-us-arms/>.

<sup>419</sup> Elbagir, Abdelaziz, El Gheit and Smith-Spark.

<sup>420</sup> Burgess Everett, “Senators Make Bi-partisan Push to Halt Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia,” *Politico*, June 9, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/09/arm-sales-senate-saudi-arabia-1358440>.

<sup>421</sup> Zachary Cohen and Ryan Browne, “Trump Declares Emergency to Expedite Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia and UAE,” CNN, May 24, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/24/politics/trump-arms-sales-saudi-arabia-uae/index.html>.

<sup>422</sup> Allen Cone, “Boeing Nets \$11.2M for F-15 Engineering Services in Saudi Arabia, Israel,” UPI, May 13, 2019, <https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2019/05/13/Boeing-nets-112M-for-F-15-engineering-services-in-Saudi-Arabia-Israel/9481557751557/>; Babak Taghvaei, “Iranian Tomcats Still Going Strong,” *Combat Aircraft*, January 11, 2018, <https://combataircraft.keypublishing.com/2018/01/11/iranian-tomcats-still-going-strong/>.

East instability.<sup>423</sup> Dropping the notion of nations vying for a throne of regional hegemony, the United States would establish a better position for prioritizing U.S. national interests.

### (3) Public Virtue—Shifting Relationships

This theme focuses on the greater good and a notion of public virtue. Public virtue does not appear to be specific to religion, but potentially there are Jewish and Islamic concepts that would resonate better. Reiterating the emphasis for sharing the neighborhood. News analysts point to Israel and Saudi Arabia as the two nations maintaining enthusiasm about the United States tensions with Iran.<sup>424</sup> This occurs in the form of overt communication from national leaders as well as discrete efforts of Israeli and Saudi lobbyists concentrating on Washington, DC. The stickiness of the subject relates to the vying of varied interests and actions on whose behalf. While the United States highlights the strengths of alliances and partnerships, the U.S. interests should trump (pun intended for the next several years) the interests of Israel and Saudi Arabia, and other nations in the region. Short-term goals and local action should not blind decision makers of the United States. Adjustment of the status quo in relationships is an energy intensive effort because it requires shifting habitual processes to refine a regional norm. This adjustment is not solely for the United States– (Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia) relationships, but also Iranian interactions with Saudi Arabia and Israel. Shared adjustment of several points is a possibility, but requires larger dialogue. This may take some memory jogging; however, the infrequently publicized history chronicles Israeli and Iranian friendship in pre- and post- Islamic revolution periods. “The ebbs and flows of hostility have not shifted with ideological zeal, but rather with changes in geopolitical landscape. When Iran and Israel’s’ security imperatives dictated collaboration, they did so in spite of the lethal ideological

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<sup>423</sup> Steven Mufson, “Trump Administration Authorized Nuclear Energy Companies to Share Technological Information with Saudi Arabia,” *Washington Post*, March 28, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-authorized-nuclear-energy-companies-to-share-technological-information-with-saudi-arabia/2019/03/28/1b5f0816-5180-11e9-8d28-f5149e5a2fda\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-authorized-nuclear-energy-companies-to-share-technological-information-with-saudi-arabia/2019/03/28/1b5f0816-5180-11e9-8d28-f5149e5a2fda_story.html).

<sup>424</sup> David Wainer, “Trump Isolated on Iran as World Sees Confusion in U.S. Strategy,” *Bloomberg*, May 18, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-18/trump-isolated-on-iran-as-world-sees-confusion-in-u-s-strategy>.



opposition to each other. When Iran’s ideological impulses collided with its strategic interests, the strategic interests always prevailed.”<sup>425</sup> This reflection of history indicates the possibility of shifts in status quo as relationships do not remain in a static state.

## **2. External (Russia and JCPOA Stakeholders)**

Beyond the two selected regional actors, the Russians and the group of partners EU/E3+2 for the nuclear deal, JCPOA stakeholders, maintain unique relationships also worth noting.<sup>426</sup> From the Russian and JCPOA stakeholder positions, mixed benefits exist with the United States changing the approach to United States–Iran relations. In general terms, Russia and other JCPOA stakeholders advocate for the United States to decrease hostility towards Iran. A slight distinction in the positions is that Russia gains in at least three ways from the aggressive American approach.

### **(1) Russia**

First, the current U.S. approach presents Russia an option to expand its influence in the region in the role of mediation participant. This is somewhat of a self-publicized role; however, Russia consistently participated in Syrian discussions and expanded involvement with Yemen discussions.<sup>427</sup> With respect to an aggressive U.S. stance, Russia “exploits the region’s pre-existing disappointment with the latter through practical moves that contrast with U.S. (and European) behavior.”<sup>428</sup> They maintain their connection to engage with the outsiders in the region, Iran and Syria. Through Russia’s participation in other forums, interaction with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and other nations is

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<sup>425</sup> Trita Parsi, “Iran and Israel: Peace is Possible,” June 2013, in TEDGlobal 2013, streaming video, transcript, 0:08:20, [https://www.ted.com/talks/trita\\_parsi\\_iran\\_and\\_israel\\_peace\\_is\\_possible](https://www.ted.com/talks/trita_parsi_iran_and_israel_peace_is_possible).

<sup>426</sup> JCPOA stakeholders (EU/E3+2), as of May 9, 2018, includes the EU, UK, France, Germany, China and Russia.

<sup>427</sup> Samuel Ramani, “Russia’s Strategic Balancing Act in Yemen,” Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, May 1, 2019, <https://agsiw.org/russias-strategic-balancing-act-in-yemen/>.

<sup>428</sup> Nikolay Kozhanov, “Russian Policy and the Middle East Motivations and Methods,” (research paper, Chatham House, 2018), 24, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-02-21-russian-policy-middle-east-kozhanov.pdf>

possible. The current aggressive United States' approach enhances Russia's ability expand influence and walk on both sides of the forum floor.

Second, there is a correlation between sanctions on Iran's export of crude oil and Russia's increased participation and earnings in the energy sector. Initially described as "geopolitical uncertainties," China reduced imports to receive less from countries such as Iran and Venezuela."<sup>429</sup> As of December 2018, Russia exported "7.04 million tons [crude oil] ... up 40 percent from 5.03 million tons a year earlier."<sup>430</sup> In May 2019, initiated the end of U.S. waivers for purchasing Iranian crude oil, which further diminished China's import from Iran. The elimination of waivers eliminated Iran from a short list of crude oil supplier that included Russia, Saudi Arabia, United States, and Venezuela.<sup>431</sup> Based on the proximity to China and reduction of one crude oil supplier, it is likely Russia will increase exports. In addition to influencing current Russian exports, an improvement to the Western-Iranian relationship "could jeopardize Russia's much larger role as the main gas supplier to Europe."<sup>432</sup>

Third, the current U.S. stance against Iran increases fissures in the NATO alliance. From the European and Russian point of view, Iranians maintain compliance and the United States bears a confrontational position and an isolated view. U.S. unilateral sanctions on other nations trading with Iran alienates the United States. The United States' decision to withdraw from the JCPOA and European position against the aggressive stance "furthers Putin's goal of fostering divisions within the NATO alliance."<sup>433</sup> Mark N. Katz, professor of Government and Politics at George Mason University, suggests if United States heightens tensions, "European opposition to U.S. policy may result in greater

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<sup>429</sup> "Russia Seals Position as Top Crude Oil Supplier to China, Holds off Saudi Arabia, Reuters, January 25, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-trade-crude/russia-seals-position-as-top-crude-oil-supplier-to-china-holds-off-saudi-arabia-idUSKCN1PJ05W>.

<sup>430</sup> "Russia Seals Position."

<sup>431</sup> "Russia Seals Position."

<sup>432</sup> Sverre Lodgaard, "Challenge from Within: The Case of Iran," in *Nuclear Proliferation and International Order: Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Treaty*, ed. Olav Njølstad (London: Routledge, 2010), 94, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203844823>.

<sup>433</sup> Mark N. Katz, "Russia and the Iran Crisis," Lobe Log, May 17, 2019, <https://lobelog.com/russia-and-the-iran-crisis/>

European willingness to decrease U.S.–backed sanctions related to Ukraine and other issues—a key Russian goal.”<sup>434</sup> The United States’ aggressive approach applies stressors and fatigue to the NATO alliance and presents an opportunity for Russia to exploit.

## (2) JCPOA Stakeholders

Reducing possibility of Iranian non-compliance and economic progress are two prime reasons the JCPOA stakeholders advocate for the United States to change the aggressive approach toward Iran. The United States’ withdrawal and the application of unilateral sanctions sows the Iranian frustration. More than a year elapsed and Iran maintained adherence to the stipulations of the JCPOA. Iran operates on good faith based on the continued verbal commitment and the championing of a special purpose vehicle for trade advanced by JCPOA stakeholders; however, the JCPOA commitment has not stimulated any of the economic relief. Considerations of non-compliance with one or more JCPOA stipulations remains as a regressive method to withdrawal concessions and possibly stimulate a more positive response from the United States and other JCPOA stakeholders. The unfortunate aspect is that a decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran to refrain from JCPOA compliance escalates tension and heightens the possibility of confrontation.

A positive adjustment to the United States’ approach with Iran would carry potential for multiple nation-states to benefit from economic progress. There are multiple areas for improvement. Adjustment of sanctions would enable China, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey, and if not others to trade for crude oil.<sup>435</sup> Expanding upon the energy sector topic, would also include reversing some of the other delays sanctions caused. Before the United States’ withdrawal from JCPOA; Total, the French energy company, focused development on the expansion of natural gas infrastructure in Iran’s South Pars II

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<sup>434</sup> Mark N. Katz, “Russia and the Iran Crisis,” Lobe Log, May 17, 2019, <https://lobelog.com/russia-and-the-iran-crisis/>

<sup>435</sup> Five of the eight nations who previously received sanction waivers from the United States for crude oil imports from Iran.

project<sup>436</sup> The reactivation of U.S. unilateral sanctions steered the French company to halt the commitment of funds for the development project.

Advancement of a concerted effort to improve U.S.–Iran relation benefits the existing JCPOA stakeholders, retunes U.S.–NATO consensus, and reduces the significance of independent Russian efforts in the Middle East. The stock of bilateral relationships is worth acknowledging; however, the most significant point from Section D—none of the existing bilateral relationships are insurmountable hurdles. In the instances of regional players, it is possible to address certain fears and emphasize collaborative efforts towards truly mutual interests. Described another way, there is room in the Middle East neighborhood to maintain certain aspects of existing bilateral relationships and to advance United States relations with Iran.

## **E. THE WAY FORWARD**

When dealing with complex problems, there is a hopefulness of regressing, a problem to a more simplified state allows for the discovery of a remedy. Unfortunately, a false premise exists—

adding more of something does not always make things better. Recall “more cowbell.”<sup>437</sup>

American conservatives prescribe sanctions and threats of military use of force against Iran while Americans with liberal views advocate for diplomacy. A caveat, for the warning of adding more, surfaces after we look at the current state of diplomatic channels between Iran and the United States. The diplomatic channel is non-existent; to wit, after Trump’s offer to speak with Iran aired on CNN (May 9, 2019), the White House had to ask

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<sup>436</sup> Francois De Beaupuy, “Total Strops Iran Gas Project as Risk from Sanctions Too High,” Bloomberg, May 16, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-16/total-stops-iran-investments-as-risk-from-sanctions-too-high>.

<sup>437</sup> Sketch explaining the progression and overuse of cowbell in 1976 recording of Blue Öyster Cult hit song “(Don’t Fear) The Reaper.” After increased popularity, “More Cowbell” became an American catchphrase. “More Cowbell,” NBC, video, 00:05:32, April 8, 2000, in *Saturday Night Live: Season 25 Episode 16*, produced by Lorne Michaels, <https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/more-cowbell-with-will-ferrell-on-snl--video--saturday-night-live--nbc/n41046>.

the Swiss government to relay a telephone number to Iran for contact.<sup>438</sup> The conflict between the United States and Iran is undoubtedly complex, but a long-term, concerted effort which intertwines multiple aspects of national power has a greater probability of increasing trust and advancing future relations; much more so than continued approach (i.e., military threats with a side of bilateral sanctions). A zero-sum view of problems short changes the options truly available. The current absence of a channel for diplomatic dialogue must change.

The final chapter provides conclusions and implication for advancing United States–Iran relations. Specifically, the chapter reemphasizes the flaws of maintaining rigid, zero-sum assessment of problems and draws upon other perceived intractable conflicts in U.S. history as analogies regarding the condition of conflict between the United States and Iran. Appreciation of both similarities and differences from history enables greater understanding of the United States–Iran relationship. The previously successful endeavors offer insights to integrate with a future concerted effort for United States–Iran relations.

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<sup>438</sup> Middle East Monitor, “No diplomatic channel between Tehran and Washington, says Iran,” July 28, 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180728-no-diplomatic-channel-between-tehran-and-washington-says-iran/>. ; Kaveh L. Afrasaibi, “Iran Debates Trump’s invite,” Lobe Log, May 13, 2019, <https://lobelog.com/iran-debates-trumps-invite/>.

## VI. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

“In a speech Abraham Lincoln delivered at the height of the Civil War, he referred to the Southerners as fellow human beings who were in error. An elderly lady chastised him for not calling them irreconcilable enemies who must be destroyed. ‘Why, madam,’ Lincoln replied, ‘do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?’”<sup>439</sup> Instead of crushing an irreconcilable enemy (Confederates) with a heavy-handed force, Lincoln’s statement points to an alternative method to destroy (deal with) the nation’s enemies. In present-day context, a United States’ alternative effort “making [Iran] a friend” by incorporating diplomatic national power into a concerted effort also has the capacity to end a seemingly irreconcilable rift.

This thesis emphasizes four implication and conclusion areas. Issues with the zero-sum view of problems increase the inertia churning conflict and the symptoms often mask the root cause/s of conflict. Turning away from this zero-sum assessment of a problem enhances the ability to see interactions in a light which mitigates intractable conflict and advances relations. The comparative examples of previously successful endeavors offered similarities and differences to enhance the understanding of the United States–Iran relationship. The examination of the current approach to conflict with Iran notes an absence of diplomacy; as such, the future concerted effort requires the engagement tool of diplomacy in conjunction with the elements of national power. The closing section provides considerations for establishing a concerted effort to relations with Iran. This section incorporates relation-building considerations, as well as discussing utility for engagement with Iran and addressing United States’ regionally existing relationships.

### A. TURNING AWAY FROM A RIGID ZERO-SUM ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEMS

Zero-sum assessment of problems stimulates tit-for-tat action and demands full concessions from one side or the other. Conflict extends between the United States and

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<sup>439</sup> Robert Greene, *the 48 Laws of Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 12.

Iran as each side attempts to reaffirm their standing by taking action to punish the other side and express their position. Looking for other venues to convey their position, the tit-for-tat action reverberates in other symptom areas. Near-constant signatures in periphery symptom areas (hostage-taking, use of proxies, human rights, anti-Semite rhetoric, flow of oil in strait of Hormuz, nuclear weapons capability) draw increased attention. The problem of the present —focus on symptoms— or more accurately, the nearsightedness of this view masks the root issue from receiving attention. A greater official role of Iran in the Middle East remains the root issue absent from discussion. Dimming the fixation of zero-sum assessments in the past enabled the United States to advance other relationships in history.

## **B. INSIGHTS GLEANED FROM OTHER SUCCESSFUL ENDEAVORS**

Through the unpacking of other seemingly intractable historical examples, the discernments prompt the re-characterization of United States–Iran relations. Several differences and similarities are available from the exploration of comparative examples as analogies. Analogies may not predict the absolute trajectory of Iran, but they should assist with delineating reasoning for actions and suggests the threat of Iran is perhaps lower than speculated or publicized within the media and Washington, DC.

Policy Shift (Differences). The United States views Iran and previously viewed Libya as troublemakers for the West; however, one distinction differing between Libya and Iran was the wiggle room for policy shifts.<sup>440</sup> Qaddafi initiated the focus on the acquisition of nuclear weapons and was the same leader who later called off the work for the program. An assumption is that policy shifts in Iran are very straightforward since the Islamic Republic of Iran has had only two named Supreme leaders. Supreme Leader Khamenei’s title insinuates one individual making the decisions for Iran. However, Iran contends with its own bureaucracy: popularly elected president, legislature, and judiciary. There is overlap of the parliament, Majles, council of guardians, and the expediency council. The

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<sup>440</sup> Expanding beyond January 2002 designation of Axis of Evil (Iraq, Iran, North Korea), the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security in May 2002 gave a speech to the Heritage Foundation which added Libya, Syria, and Cuba to the list of rogue nations. John Bolton, “Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction,” Heritage Foundation, May 6, 2002, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/beyond-the-axis-evil-additional-threats-weapons-mass-destruction-0>.

Majles, often referred to as an assembly of experts, is the 88-member body of Islamic jurists who oversee the Supreme Leader Khamenei while President Hassan Rouhani presides over the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). In addition to the assemblies and councils, the political stances as reformists and right-wing hardliners impart their influence on the policy decision(s). Much in the same light as United States bureaucracy, the policy in Iran for responses to U.S. engagement or nuclear stances, have many hoops to jump before a shift occurs. Current U.S. approach heightening tensions squishes reformists and hardliners into the same room where it is illogical to view the United States as anything but an enemy. Iranian reformists are in a constrained state; they lack energy to reframe and influence Iranian policy partially due to the U.S. emphasis on military and economic national power that reinforces the perceptions and narrative of Iranian hardliners. Described another way, there is not an equivalent Augusto Pinochet or Kim Jung Un dictating the shots for Iranian foreign policy decisions. Iran, through its own bureaucratic complexities, currently possesses less latitude for wiggle room in instantaneous policy shifts than that of Qaddafi's Libya.

Geography. The physical location of Libya detracted from Qaddafi's message of Arab significance and Libya's claim as a regional leader. Many scholars refer to Libya as a nation in the Maghreb region of North Africa, not in the Middle East. Residing to the west of Egypt hindered Qaddafi's interest to display and embody central significance in the Arab world. Military cooperation occurred between Egypt and Libya, in which Libya provided armored tanks and air assets, during the 1973 October War with Israel. After October War, President Sadat refined a policy of Israeli accommodation, a stance morphed to align with Western perspective which alienated Arab nations.<sup>441</sup> Deteriorated relations continued between Egypt and Libya and in 1977, tensions erupted with several battles along the border. After heavy losses on both sides, the nations established a cease-fire. Libya maintained they were unwilling to restore diplomatic interaction with Egypt due to

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<sup>441</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "A Coming of Age: The Foreign Policy of Anwar Sadat," Memorandum, April 8-9, 1975, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00865A002500320001-0.pdf>.



relations with Israel.<sup>442</sup> Qaddafi's Libya, possessing less influence than desired, sat on the periphery of the Middle East where it failed to harness the regional significance on the world stage.

The geography and cultural connections are different for Iran. Iran holds a more significant geographic position within the Middle East along the Persian Gulf. In addition to the physical geography of Iran, another unique aspect is the religious connection with other Shia minorities in neighboring nations. Comparatively speaking, the location of Iran in relation to Libya suggests Iran should have greater involvement and representation in the Middle East. Now shifting slightly to the topic of regional stability, nations which are generally in the center of the region, and have at least a medium sized population, are included in regional stability and security discussions. In the examples of Asia and Europe, discussion of security and stability would not be fruitful without China and Germany, respectively. Considering the Middle East, discussions of stability and security require larger inclusion, such as the addition of Iran. As discussed previously with the Oslo process, isolation from discussion and projected isolation in the region amplified Iran's interest to wreck the deal. Future discussions of Middle East stability and security must bring together Arabs, Persians, Israelis, etc. Larger inclusion requires additional patience, but that aspect reduces the potential for other neighboring nations to wreck the deal. Additionally, when bringing together regional representatives for dialogue of security and stability more must be gained from staying with the group than earned from walking out on the group.

Economic Prowess. Iran does not and most likely will not have the same economic capacity as China. Nixon and later administrations note advancement of industry production occurred due to the size of the PRC population base. Many companies invested in manufacturing and industry which enhanced China's economic position. Iran's population base for industrial production would potentially be comparable to a nation like Japan. The point of the initial statement reemphasizes the comparative

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<sup>442</sup> "Libya Spurns Ties to Egypt," *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-11-26-mn-109-story.html>.

example of U.S. China relations is only an analogy. Engaging Iran in a friendlier manner will not instantly make Iran into the economic player that China became after 1972. Investment in the Iranian economy presents opportunities for growth on a similar, but different scale.

While moderates in Iran share an interest in the improvement of economic relations and the reintroduction of foreign business investment, if trade or sanctions relief occurs too rapidly, it could crush local traders with the influx of goods at cheaper prices. Sanctions for a number of years have entrenched a reliance on the Iran's black market. Weaning reliance of black market must occur. Another note is the possibility for spikes in unemployment. Expansion and economic development will take time to implement while preventing significant shocks to the economic system.

Spoilers. An additional insight, regardless of the approach, is the achievement of reducing problems or conflict to zero is difficult to reach. Violent extermination or total political appeasement may advance a relative comparison, but it is not likely to completely eradicate dissidence. Spoiler groups often form to counter diplomatic engagements and other foreign policy advancements. Tonge's 2014 article, "A Campaign Without End?" pointed out that "dissident" Irish Republicanism remained evident even after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.<sup>443</sup> A new group of republican dissidents formed, their signature over a 15-year period between 1998 and 2013 was the killing of more than 50 people.<sup>444</sup> Tonge promoted an understanding that "'Spoiler' groups are common in peace process" and "Northern Ireland is no exception."<sup>445</sup> The deaths in Northern Ireland themselves were significant; however, the republican dissidents' level of influence may be more appropriately assessed with a tempered understanding of peace processes and political engagements. An action that counters a newly formed stance of discourse and engagement often requires further inspection before establishing a final assessment. Spoiler groups convey their beliefs and shroud their actions as a more progressive stance to be a voice for the populace unable to speak of the injustice and grievances. While the

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<sup>443</sup> Jon Tonge, "A Campaign without End?: 'Dissident' Republican Violence in Northern Ireland," *Political Insight* 5, no. 1 (April 2014): 14, doi:10.1111/2041-9066.12042.

<sup>444</sup> Tonge, 14.

<sup>445</sup> Tonge, 14.

notion of the counter action to dialogue may be an indicator of grievances, there are some instances where the small group is nothing more than a spoiler group. Carrying this awareness of spoiler groups forward to the United States–Iran conflict enhances the understanding of the environmental exchanges in which an outside group such as MEK or internal political groups of Iran may attempt to spoil or influence larger foreign policy engagements.

### Similarities (China | Iran)

Inspection of similarities between China and Iran assists with forming a better understanding of Iranian actions as resemblances between the two nations highlight that Iran’s behavior is not necessarily unique. Both nations hark to ancient greatness to reinforce their self/group identity.<sup>446</sup> The sense of a cultured civilization enhanced the confidence and sense of righteousness in their respective revolutionary paths. This section emphasizes historical timelines, commonality between root causes of conflict, and similar response(s) of China/Iran to United States’ stances/actions. Noticeable similarities exist between the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Historical Timelines. The development of both current nations stemmed from revolutions. Previously, the United States supported KMT in mainland china and the Shah in Iran. The revolutions of 1949 (People’s Republic of China) and 1979 (Islamic Republic of Iran) were deemed as unacceptable challenges to United States ambitions and interests in their strategically vital regions. Other common events were the slights against diplomatic and consulate postings of the United States in each respective region. The 1948 confinement and isolation of 22 American consulate members by Mao’s organization in Shenyang lasted more than a year.<sup>447</sup> The 1979 U.S. embassy hostage crisis in Tehran, occurred in the early stages of the Iranian revolution and lasted 444 days.<sup>448</sup> The United States consulate and its embassy were representative postings, which signaled U.S.

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<sup>446</sup> John W. Garver, *China and Iran Ancient Partners in a Post-Imperial World* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>447</sup> Chen Jian, “The Ward Case and the Emergence of Sino-American Confrontation, 1948–1950,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 30 (1993): 149. doi:10.2307/2949995.

<sup>448</sup> Albright, Remarks before the American–Iranian Council.

influence in the respective regions. In both instances, the CCP and Iranian hardliners captured and held the U.S. representatives for more than a year.

Root Cause Overlap. Next, there are also common threads woven among the root cause for both nations. In the instance of the conflict between the United States and China, the root cause was the absence of recognition regarding sovereignty or their positions of authority within the Pacific.<sup>449</sup> The root cause for the conflict between the United States and Iran is the denial of a greater official role in the Middle East.<sup>450</sup> In both instances, the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran perceived they were not treated as sovereign nations. As the United States–China relationship advanced, China’s inclusion in regional discussions increased. In this line of thought, the point of regional security and stability is easier to comprehend. Just as discussions of Indo-Pacific security include China, discussions of Middle East regional security warrant the inclusion of Iran. Again, the commonality of the root cause emphasizes Iranian actions are not wholly independent from the spectrum of nation-states interacting with the United States.

Responses of China / Iran to the United States. Third, United States often maintains stances/actions that prompt similar adversarial responses from both Iran and China. In relation to the group identity previously discussed, Iran and China emphasize anti-imperial positions. Iranian Majlis speaker Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visited China for the first time in 1985 and, during the engagement the Chairman of China’s Parliament, Peng Zhen, noted that both China and Iran “had had similar experiences as victims of imperialism and colonialism and were subjected to hegemonic threat today.”<sup>451</sup> From their regional positions, both have a significant role in countering Western influence. Reinforcing the

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<sup>449</sup> “Proclamation of the Central People’s Government of the PRC,” October 01, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Renmin ribao (People’s Daily), October 2, 1949. English translation from Michael Y. M. Kau, ed., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976, Volume I, September 1949–December 1955* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 10–11. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121557>

<sup>450</sup> Sverre Lodgaard, “Challenge from Within: The Case of Iran,” in *Nuclear Proliferation and International Order: Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Treaty*, ed. Olav Njølstad (London: Routledge, 2010), 90, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203844823>.

<sup>451</sup> “Iran’s Rafsanjani Meet PRC Leaders, Ends Tour,” Xinhua, June 28, 1985, Foreign Broadcast Information service– China, July 1, 1985, I-1.

anti-imperial stances, Iranians and other groups in the Middle East found their method for advancing security.

Some incidents stirred aggressive reciprocal responses which were sometimes escalatory in nature. For an extended period, the United States skipped the actual names of nations colloquially referred to the People's Republic of China as "Red China" and the Islamic Republic of Iran as "Axis of Evil." In line with the prestigious titles, but more so as an effort to constrain U.S. involvement in the respective regions, both nations looked to supporting national liberation movements...and dissident groups. For at least the first decade after China's 1949 revolution, the Chinese strategy aimed to thwart United States containment strategy by placing a greater reliance on ties to proxy allies. According to a 1966 Long Range Study on China, the Johnson administration assessed the mainland's objective to become "the center and guiding light of a Communist World" by relying on a low-risk strategy to foment "militant dissidence."<sup>452</sup> The dissidence was in addition to the China's large-force involvement in Korea and Vietnam. One distinction based on the differences in population mass, China worked a combination of conventional forces and military dissidence, but in comparison, Iran invested much more heavily in unconventional forces. Iran, with a smaller population, discovered greater strategic utility with the IRGC-QF. Iran's leadership places considerable emphasis on IRGC-QF development of proxy forces. In addition to Iran's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, proxy elements are also active in other areas. Akin to the assessment of China desiring to be the "guiding light of a Communist World" there are oversimplified assessments prescribing Iran is on a "quest for regional hegemony."<sup>453</sup> As described previously in Chapter V, factoring Iranian action requires an acknowledgement of complex behavior.

Commitments to Build Upon. In spite of the on going fighting in Vietnam and China's continued fomenting of dissidents, the United States advanced a relationship in the

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<sup>452</sup> "Communist China-Long Range Study," June 1966, National Security Files, Country File, Box 245, Lyndon Bains Johnson Library, pp. 35-38, 203. In Michael Lumbers, "Piercing the bamboo curtain: Tentative bridge-building to China during the Johnson years" (PhD diss., University of London, 2005), 85-86. <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/1860/1/U210370.pdf>

<sup>453</sup> Galip Dalay, "The Iran Question, Again," Robert Bosch Academy, February 20, 2019, [http://www.robertboschacademy.de/content/language2/html/57754\\_58216.asp](http://www.robertboschacademy.de/content/language2/html/57754_58216.asp).

1970s with the People's Republic of China. In particular, the joint 1972 Shanghai Communiqué affirmed the interest of establishing a constructive effort, for the United States and China to agree one day. The long-term effort advanced with back channel diplomacy and both nations achieved results seven years later. The Shanghai Communiqué (United States–China) and the JCPOA (United States–Iran) were commitments that contained bilateral components useful for advancing agreement in the future.

Again, reviewing the exchanges between the United States–China provides another window to reflect on analogous Iranian behavior. Most analogies offer a number of similarities and differences for reflection. Within the current grouping of four cases, the United States–China comparative example offers a cluster of similarities for others to appraise. This analogy may not predict the trajectory of Iran, completely correctly; however, it should assist with delineating reasoning for actions and suggest the threat of Iran is perhaps lower than speculated or publicized within the media and Washington, DC. Previously, the United States perceived an intractable conflict with an ideologically motivated, irrational opponent (China). Although there is currently trade tension between the United States and China, this is a marked improvement to the conflict before the late 1960s. Recognizing Iran's behavior post-1979 is not unique, in fact, it is in many ways similar to China, should enhance optimism for advancing the United States–Iran relationship.

### **C. THE SEEMINGLY MISSING TOOL—DIPLOMACY**

Diplomacy is undervalued in the current approach, and often in the history of previous approaches, toward Iran over the past 66 years. Again, this is not to say that diplomacy is the one and only tool required for advancing the relationship, as all elements of national power have relevance. Diplomacy, in concert with other elements of national power enables the United States to mitigate conflict and advance relations with Iran. While it may appear odd from the perspective of job security, General Votel the commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dunford and National Defense Secretary (Retired General) Mattis all held and shared

position to maintain participation in the JCPOA.<sup>454</sup> Layering diplomacy provided off ramps to conflict; however, the United States withdrew after 30 months of participation in the JCPOA and voided regularly scheduled windows for diplomatic engagements and trust-building efforts. Between the short period of adoption and withdrawal, the United States cited minimal changes to Iranian bad behavior and sunset provisions as points for stepping away.<sup>455</sup> Assessing the state of JCPOA progress using a snapshot of less than three years makes sense in relation to four-year democratic cycles, but it is also pragmatic to understand the actions to enhance trust may not expeditiously unravel the many layers of a problem—especially 66 years of conflict.

Unfortunately, the limited emphasis regarding the diplomatic channel is an issue which perpetuates the problem by fracturing energy to address larger problems. Another round of media banter in May 23, 2019, included speculation of collusion and excitement after reports of Senator Dianne Feinstein of California meeting with Iran’s Foreign Minister Zarif for dinner earlier in May.<sup>456</sup> News sources point out the action for hardline points of view in both nations undercuts both Trump and Khamenei. Maybe the dinner meeting did contain notes of malice or Democratic recommendations to wait out President Trump, but the larger point is the lack of an effective mechanism for diplomatically interacting and engaging. Both nations are circling around a pink Cadillac in used car lot

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<sup>454</sup> Joseph L. Votel, United States Central Command and United States Africa Command, Testimony (Washington, DC: Senate Armed Services Committee, March 13, 2018), 26–27, [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/18-24\\_03-13-18.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/18-24_03-13-18.pdf).

Daniel R. Coats, “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” Statement for the Record (Washington, DC: Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 29, 2019), 10, <https://www.odni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>.

<sup>455</sup> Ali Vaez, “The Iranian Nuclear Deals’ Sunset Clauses,” *Foreign Policy*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2017-10-03/iranian-nuclear-deals-sunset-clauses>.

<sup>456</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, Interview by Steve Doocy, Brian Kilmeade, and Ainsley Earhardt, Fox & Friends, May 23, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/interview-with-steve-doocy-brian-kilmeade-and-ainsley-earhardt-of-fox-friends-2/>; Mark Moore, “Dianne Feinstein had Dinner Meeting with Iranian Minister amid U.S. Tensions,” *New York Post*, May 23, 2019, <https://nypost.com/2019/05/23/dianne-feinstein-had-dinner-meeting-with-iranian-minister-amid-us-tensions/>; Bonchie, “Dianne Feinstein Secretly Met with the Iranians Last Week and People Have Questions,” *Red State* (blog), May 25, 2019, <https://www.redstate.com/bonchie/2019/05/25/dianne-feinstein-secretly-met-iranians-people-questions/>; Seth J. Frantzman, “Controversy in Iran amid Reports Zarif Met U.S. Senator,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 26, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Controversy-in-Iran-amid-reports-Zarif-met-US-Senator-590615>.

waiting for the other side to make the first move. The current U.S. approach relies on the application of military, economic, and informational elements of national power. A more appropriate concerted effort to United States–Iran relations also requires an aspect of diplomatic engagement. While at times the engagements may vex U.S. leaders, the constant engagement expands the purview of Iran’s positions and this knowledge enables leaders to refine approaches increasing the likelihood of short, medium, and long-term results. U.S. leaders must reinvigorate diplomacy among the elements of national power when developing a future concerted effort to advance United States–Iran relations.

**D. CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENDING AN ENEMY / ADVANCING UNITED STATES–IRAN RELATIONSHIP**

The comparative examples offer useful perspectives for future engagement with Iran. A productive effort to enhance United States–Iran relations must emphasize long-term focus, the use of red lines as tokens, and dialogue regarding low-hanging fruit. Long-term focus captivates commitment and sets opportunities for generating trust. Red-line stances established should serve as a token to shift with dialogue and interaction. Low-hanging fruit enables both nations to achieve consensus. Possible items for discussion include: the continued targeting of ISIS and other similar groups in the Middle East; involvement in Yemen; gulf (Arab and Persian) oil movements and sales occur in a free-flowing manner; nonproliferation; Israel/Palestine; Syria; etc. Success with lower items may enhance the future of tackling larger problems. Looking for common ground, “The threat of chaos and Islamic radicalism” is a concern in the Middle East and South Asia.<sup>457</sup> Similar to the idea of low hanging fruit is the concept of agreeance that a shared threat presents possibilities of achieving a sustainable agreement. Cohen and Malter emphasized, “The United States, Iran Saudi Arabia, India, China and most Pakistanis and many Palestinians and Israelis, as well as every European state, do not want to see either region succumb to a genuine revolutionary Sunni Islamic movement.”<sup>458</sup> Pursuit and

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<sup>457</sup> Stephen P. Kohen and Maayan Malter, “Managing Intractable Conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia,” Brookings, July 23, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2015/07/23/managing-intractable-conflicts-in-the-middle-east-and-south-asia/>.

<sup>458</sup> Kohen and Malter.



engagement regarding common interests against a common threat of ISIS may enhance trust between nations, United States and Iran, as well as forge more inclusiveness for advancing Middle East stability.

In terms of the United States' other existing regional relationships, a review of Morgenthau's nine rules of diplomacy assists with framing an approach. In particular, we use number three, "Diplomacy should look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations" and number seven, "A nation should not allow a weak ally to make decisions for it" for further discussion.<sup>459</sup> Overreliance on an ally's assessment or getting tangled up in the pursuit of their national interests may have an adverse effect on U.S. national interests. An objective stance, absent of perceptions of religious or ethnic bias, offers greater leverage for incorporating Iran into an approach for Middle East stability.

#### (1) Areas for Future Research

This thesis suggests three opportunities for future research. First, research should focus on bolstering resilience of European defense through the invigorated cooperation of EU and NATO and the employment of a comprehensive approach which expands interactions with Iran. Integrating and employing tools from the diplomatic, informational, military and economic domains will increase the likelihood of dampening Russian threats connected to the European energy sector. Iran possesses a natural resource capacity and desire for greater advancement in the world's economic arena. Potentially, this is the junction in which "Iran shifts from being a problem to being a solution to other problems."<sup>460</sup> In the instance of Europe's reliance on Russian natural gas, Europe could foster improved competition in the energy sector by tapping Iran's geographic location and undedicated natural gas resources. In other words, would the potential gains from European Union's defense against eastern threats necessitate diplomatic and economic investment in Iran to counter influence of Russian natural gas in Europe?

The second topic relates to Russia's participation and involvement in the Middle East. Russia possesses several relationships, but it also maintains a stance in the Middle

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<sup>459</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 561–567.

<sup>460</sup> Siamak Naficy, Relationships and Missed Opportunities (US- Iran), Small Discussion (In person), November 16, 2018.

East without committing to any one country and/or ethnic group. What would the United States learn from the exploration of policy and Russian diplomacy?

The third area should re-evaluate the United States' connections within both Saudi and Iranian nuclear programs. For many analysts, Iran and Saudi Arabia will continue variations of jousting as they strive to gain a marked advantage over their foe. The possibility of the United States messaging parity among Iran and Saudi Arabia increases the probability of neutralizing tension surrounding the nuclear issue. While the initial thought sounds volatile, the United States messaging a level of parity between Iran and Saudi Arabia would likely narrow the actions of both nations to focus strictly on the civil nuclear programs. This in turn, would stifle images of Pakistan and India or the concerns of foes saber rattling with nuclear weapons on either side of the Persian Gulf. Phrased as another question, focused on civil nuclear capacity, for future research: what would a neutral United States engagement conveying parity between Saudi Arabia and Iran look like? A supplementary question for the region: How does the Israeli relationship with Saudi Arabia change when Saudis begin work on civilian nuclear capacity or attempt development of nuclear weapon?

## (2) Conclusion

The relationship between the United States and Iran is often emotionally charged on both sides, grievances cloud judgement and leaders propagate a belief in an irreconcilable conflict. The issues with the zero-sum view of problems increase the inertia churning conflict and the symptoms mask the root cause/s of conflict. Refining the problem to consider ecology emphasizes weight of actions over words and accentuates the significance of the interplay between local politics and foreign policy for both nations. Simply put, the rigid zero-sum assessment is a flawed technique for analyzing nation-states and developing strategy. Through the examination of three other seemingly intractable conflicts, we discovered the comparative examples offered insights as similarities and differences to enhance the understanding of the United States–Iran relationship. Again, the JCPOA was intended as a stepping-stone to larger talks and compromises. Iran's continued commitment to the current JCPOA stakeholders and incremental actions within and slightly

above the margins corresponding to United States national interests should illuminate the value of engagement to communicate with Iran and encourage further positive actions. The United States does not have much grip to alter Iranian behavior, as the current approach does not contain a diplomatic channel for dialogue or emphasis on diplomacy. The future concerted effort requires application of diplomacy in conjunction with the elements of national power. Moreover, a productive effort to enhance United States–Iran relations should emphasize a long-term focus, the use of red lines as tokens, and dialogue on lesser issues. Advancing a friendship with Islamic Republic of Iran may sound like a bridge too far at this juncture, or awkward idea when first repeated, but this type of idea was similarly frowned upon when the United States considered advancing a relationship with the People’s Republic of China. Bilateral engagement is just one aspect of a concerted effort needed to advance United States–Iran relations for “Ending an Enemy.”

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