

# **Neorealism and Iran's Security Environment.**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the  
National Center for Research on Europe at the University of Canterbury

By Maxim Geoffrey Palmer.

**29/07/2009**

**National Centre for Research on Europe**

**University of Canterbury**

**Supervised by Professor Martin Holland.**

## Acknowledgements:

To my immediate family Jacques and Papitou de Borrekens, Esme and Thomas (Pat) Palmer, David Palmer, Dominique de Borrekens, Jeanette Christensen and Thomas (J) Palmer. Words cannot describe your contributions.

To Martin Holland for his thoughtful supervision, and to the entire staff of the NCRE (National Center for Research on Europe) for providing a place to study, and for providing me with support in undertaking this study.

To Jill Dolby, for her undying service to past and future students of the University of Canterbury as the secretary of the School of Political Science.

To Amy Fletcher, Ron Macintyre, and the entire staff of the University of Canterbury School of Political Science for your excellent undergraduate courses that sparked my interest in this area.

To Jenna Pannkhurst and Phillip Wahrlich, for your friendship and support, including but by no means limited to editing of this thesis.

To Kenneth Waltz, for his Neorealist Theory of international relations, and his lifetime spent in intellectual service to mankind.

To Mark Gasiorowski, for his study of the Iranian coup. This thesis, and many others, are indebted to your work.

To my friends, family and anyone else who has shown me love, guidance, education or support in this or any other time of my life.

I stand on the shoulders of giants.

Thank You.

Maxim Palmer

## Table of contents:

**Acknowledgements: 2**

**Introduction: 5**

– Methodology: 5

### **Chapter One – Theoretical Background: 6**

What is Theory and why do we use it?: 6

Waltzian Structural Realism: 7

- *Introduction to Waltzian Structural Realism/Neorealism:* 7

- *What is the 'structure' of the International System:* 8

- *The Intellectual Roots of Neorealism:*10

- *What is meant by the term 'Security':*12

- *The Security Dilemma:* 12

- *Do States act according to these principles:* 17

What is this Study? 22

How will we apply this theory: 22

### **Chapter 2 – Iranian History in the International System: 19**

*Intoduction: Oil Politics:* 19

*Iran Oil and Geography: History and Security:* 20

*Iran's 20<sup>th</sup> Century History in the International System:* 24

- *Intro:* 24

- *Sources:* 24

- *The Story:* 26

*Early Years:* 32

*The 1919 Agreement:* 32

*The quest for Modernization and Industrialisation:* 34

*European Insanity:* 35

*Oil, Mossadeq and British intrigue:* 37

*1951-53: Oil nationalisation crisis:* 37

*The British Campaign to oust Mossadeq:* 38

*The involvement of the United States:* 43

*The Plot Thickens:* 47

*Operation Ajax:* 50

*The Big Push:*51

*Who were the Iranians involved in the coup and what was there role?*57

*The U.S. Role in the coup summarised:*56

*Britain's role in the coup summarised:* 57

*The motives that led U.S. policymakers to overthrow Mossadeq:* 57

*The Results of Mosaddeq's Overthrow:* 59

*Iran, Lebanon and Hezbollah:* 62

*Iran Iraq War:* 63

*Conclusion:* 68

### **Chapter 3 – Iran in the International System: 63**

Ethnic Diversity in Iran: Limitations of the Nation State Lens: 63

- *Persian Iran*: 63
- *CIA figures on Iran*: 66
- *Arabs of Khuzestan*: 66
- *Iranian Baluchistan*: 68
- *Iranian Kurdistan*: 70
- *Azeri People*: 70
- *Conclusion*: 71

Iran's Neighbour's: 72

- *Iran and Afghanistan*: 73
- *Iran and Iraq*: 77
- *Iran and Israel*: 79
- *Iran and Saudi Arabia*: 83

Great Powers: 87

- *Iran and the U.S.A*: 88
- *Iran and Russia*: 197
- *Iran and China*: 101

#### **Chapter 4 – Conclusions: 105**

Overview of the Iranian Security Situation: 105

- *The History Summarised*: 105
- *Anarchy*: 107
- *Self Help*: 109
- *Balancing/Polarity*: 111
- *Security Dilemma*: 111
- *Implications*: 117
- *Limitations*: 118

#### **Bibliography: 119**

## **Introduction:**

This paper will analyse Iran's security situation through the theory of Neorealism as espoused by Kenneth Waltz. In the following study we will apply this theory to the modern international context of the nation state of Iran. We will see what Neorealism tells us about the case study, and what the case study tells us about Neorealism.

In this study we will operate on, and further investigate/test, the following structural realist presumptions relevance to the case at hand (Iran's international political environment):

- A state of anarchy in the international system.
- That the principle of rational action in this state system is 'self help'.
- That the most important way in which states must help themselves is the provision of security.

### **Methodology:** *How will we apply this Theory?*

We will begin by attempting to ex[lore Waltzian Neorealist Theory. We will then attempt to explore an Iranian perspective on the international system, through the study of Iranian history in the international system. We will also explore the modern context in which Iran (presumably) implements this perspective, by breaking down Iran's modern relations with actors of particular security significance. In doing so, we are attempting to measure the extent to which Iran's experience of the international system resembles the attributes of the system outlined in Waltzian Neorealism, and to investigate how and to what extent this generates insight into understanding the modern dimensions of the Iranian security situation in its international context.

We will not test a presumption that Neorealism entirely explains the behaviour of nation states, for this is at best a straw man not worthy of attention, and not something Waltz himself asserts. We are thus more interested in investigating how and to what extent it does and does not.

Our investigation into 20th century Iranian history and modern international relations will thus focus its lens upon issues related to international security. We will hypothesize upon what role this systemic security experience likely plays on Iranian international action. We will also briefly investigate Iran's issues of internal ethnic instability, as part of a critique Neorealism's separation of the realms of internal from the international politics' effectiveness as a means of generating useful explanations of international conflict and security policy. Beyond this, we will knowingly accept the major limitation that Neorealism fails to cope with any, and all, factors that do not occur at the self-described international (inter state system) level of analysis that impact foreign policy outcomes, as will this paper. This is a limitation of both in explaining a valid picture of reality, or predicting outcomes.

## **Chapter 1: Theoretical background**

### **What theory is and why we use it:**

According to Kenneth Waltz: “What theories do is leave most everything out. You're simplifying, looking for what is really salient. What are those central propelling forces.”<sup>1</sup> Good theory thus presents a mental picture of a part of the world where the causal factors are identified, and specifies the necessary relations among those causal forces (often referred to as variables).<sup>2</sup> In reality, everything is related to everything else, and one domain cannot be separated from others.<sup>3</sup> This means “obviously they're not the only forces at work.”<sup>4</sup> This problem is further compounded by the fact that in politics generally, and in international politics in particular, (as opposed to natural sciences) you cannot control variables coming from outside the system.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in our attempt to use theory to depict the “organization of a domain”<sup>6</sup>, and approximate the nature of “the connections among its parts”<sup>7</sup>, upon which one can infer predictions, we are accepting limitations upon the accuracy of the conclusions reached. However, such sacrifices must be made in order to manage the complexity of systems with near infinite potential forces impacting processes, if we are to achieve even approximate understanding of important issues.

A core limitation of theory is that it deals in regularities and repetitions. Effective theory is thus only possible where and to the extent to which causal factors can be identified and the relationships between them can be effectively outlined.<sup>8</sup> Theories are therefore susceptible to failure to explain what they may define as 'accidental' or 'unexpected events', but which are more likely to be the result of factors unaccounted for factors/factors outside the level of analysis. To an extent, this can be seen as a failing of the theory, that it failed to accurately account for outcomes. However, to an extent it is the nature of theory. It is both its (theories) strength, and its weakness. It allows us approximate understandings of phenomena that are too complex to be analyzed more completely.

Good theory, when properly applied yields substantial insight into factors at work within the field of inquiry. Great theory can be applied to infer accurate predictions regarding behaviour of units within their relevant context, based upon observations of the interactions between significant factors. This is why we seek to develop and refine theory. Regardless of its flaws, theory serves as an indispensable tool in all fields of investigation that are beyond our effective factual understanding.

---

<sup>1</sup> UC Berkeley, [6/2003], Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz, 2003, accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9eV5gPIPZg> on 12/4/2009

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Spring 1988 - The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, MIT Press, pp.615-628 p. 615

<sup>4</sup> UC Berkeley, [6/2003], Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, p. 615

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## **Waltzian Structural Realism/Neorealism:**

*“It is always dangerous to attempt to summarize a few key aspects of rich and varied traditions in a short space; centuries of political thought are not easily reduced to a few sentences”<sup>9</sup>*

### **Introduction to Waltzian Structural Realism/Neorealism**

This theory is about international politics (the interactions of nation states) and the dominant factors (as defined by neorealist theory) that govern their interactions. Of specific concern are issues related to war, peace and international competition. Neorealist theory isolates one realm (international politics) from all others, in order to deal with it intellectually.<sup>10</sup>

This is a major point of critique against Waltzian Structural Realism, and it must be said, many other theories of international relations. This isolation of international politics from 'other' realms is obviously problematic. Any reasonable observation of the world would show that this arbitrary delineation is an over-simplification that undermines the validity of such theories as absolute explainers or predictors of reality. The reality of international and other realms (most notably domestic and transnational politics) are obviously related. The extent to which factors outside this arbitrarily delineated lens of investigation have unaccounted impacts upon outcomes in question (international war, peace and competition) is a limitation to the reliability of the insights gained. However, this delineation of the realm of international politics from all others allows us to better manage the complexity of the system, in the pursuit of functional understandings.

### **What is Waltzian Structural Realism/Neorealism?**

It is a 'System Theory': What is a system theory?

Waltzian Neorealism is a 'System Theory'. Waltz tells us that structural realism attempts to present a systemic portrait of international politics depicting component units according to the manner of their arrangement.<sup>11</sup> That is to say that rather than focusing upon how factors present in 'unit level' actors (nation states) influence international political outcomes, Neorealism attempts to ignore state-centric explanations of international outcomes and instead focuses upon the role of forces present in the structure of the international system in driving state's policies in their relations with others.<sup>12</sup>

Waltz's theory of Neorealism is his core contribution to the field of political science. Waltz's theory of Neorealism (or structural realism, as he calls it) is a theory of International Relations which posits that states' actions can often be explained by the pressures exerted on them by systemic factors in the international system that limit and constrain the choices they make. This “system” approach to international relations theory is based upon a belief that because units (nation states) interact at the level of structure (the anarchic international system), that explanation at the

---

<sup>9</sup> K. Shimko Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 281-301, p.284

<sup>10</sup> K. Waltz, *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*. p. 615

<sup>11</sup> K. Waltz, *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*. p. 615

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

unit level alone (investigation of nation states) is bound to be misleading.<sup>13</sup> This is summarized in Kenneth Waltz' statement that;

“some causes of international outcomes are the result of interactions at the unit level, and, since variations in presumed causes do not correspond very closely to variations in observed outcomes, one must also assume that others are located at the structural level.”<sup>14</sup>

Inherent to this claim is an acknowledgement of the limitations of Waltzian Structural Realism. With its firm focus on the role of the unit within the system, it ignores many specific unit level variables (differences between states). Waltz acknowledges the need for both levels of analysis in his argument that international politics can be understood “only if the effects of structure are added to the unit-level explanations of state behaviour.”<sup>15</sup>

Waltzian Structural Realism is thus not a theory of foreign policy and does not attempt to authoritatively predict or explain specific state actions.<sup>16</sup> It seeks to explain general principles of behaviour that govern relations between states in the international system, rather than predicting specific actions or events.<sup>17</sup> It can thus roughly predict how most states will behave most of the time, but cannot predict with high accuracy how an individual unit will behave in any given instance.

#### **What is the 'structure' of the International System:**

*“..by defining the structure of international political systems, neorealism establishes the autonomy of international politics and thus makes a theory about it possible”<sup>18</sup>*

#### Constituent Units:

For the purpose of developing his theory about the international system, states are taken to be the system's constituent units.<sup>19</sup> This focus on states as the constituent actors ignores all other constituent units operating in the system. A complete picture of international politics would be composed of the sum of all human interaction; domestic, international and transnational. Non-state actors in the international system are plentiful; transnational corporations, Greenpeace, Al Qaeda and the Catholic Church are but a few examples of non-state actors that have at some point had a constraining influence on the foreign policies of states. This state focused lens is thus obviously problematic. We make this simplification for the sake of manageability, attempting to isolate the most significant agents. This limits overall validity and ideal predictive power in exchange for simplicity. It does not offer a full picture of all forces at work within the international system, but it does yield valuable insights into inter-state politics.

---

<sup>13</sup> K. Walt, The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618

<sup>14</sup> K. Walt, The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618

<sup>15</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 617

<sup>16</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618

<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth\\_Waltz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Waltz)

<sup>18</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. pp. 615 616

<sup>19</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618



Waltz was aware of this. In his 1959 book, "Man, the State, and War"<sup>20</sup> he classified theories of international relations into three categories, or levels of analysis.<sup>21</sup> The first level explained international politics as being driven primarily by actions of individuals, or outcomes of psychological forces.<sup>22</sup> The second level explained international politics as being driven by the domestic regimes of states.<sup>23</sup> The third level focused on the role of systemic factors, or the effect that international anarchy was exerting on state behaviour.<sup>24</sup> This third level is the root of his theory of Structural Realism explored in this thesis.

As the example of the Catholic Church demonstrates, the need for a fourth level of analysis is nothing new, but in the era of dramatically increased 'globalization' (increased internationalization of much human life), the need for such an investigation seems increasingly necessary. In light of examples such as international terrorism, NGOs, international religious and/or political movements and multinational corporations, not just the international, but how the realm of transnational politics impacts inter-state outcomes is worthy of further investigation. The extent to which this is not explored undermines our ability to predict outcomes.

#### What are the attributes of these units (nation states)?:

In Waltzian Neorealism, States are cast as unitary (pertaining to a system of government in which the executive, legislative, and judicial powers are vested in a central authority)<sup>25</sup> actors.<sup>26</sup> This is a false assumption. It ignores that states are primarily a vehicle for constituent representation. For example, factors like public opinion and lobby interests clearly influence political decision making, even in dictatorships. Furthermore, states are divided, and power within them frequently changes hands. This perception of a consistent and unitary actor is thus highly problematic. This failing is a result of the systems focus of Waltzian Structural Realism, and is part of the reason why the theory can not be relied upon to produce accurate predictions. As mentioned above, Waltz was aware of this. It is an accepted limitation of our theory.

The second core attribute of these units (states) in a Neorealist theoretical worldview is that they want to at least survive.<sup>27</sup> This presumption seems rather sound, at least in regards to aspects of military security to which it is applied. But only as a general rule. This view will be further discussed later in the section on self help.

#### **What is the nature of the system within which these constituent units operate?**

##### Anarchy:

Neorealism asserts that the fundamental ordering principle of the international system is a state of 'anarchy'.<sup>28</sup> What is meant by that is that there is an absence of a central monopoly of legitimate force able to enforce rules and other behaviour. This implies that in the international system the force of constituent units (nation states) generate the

---

<sup>20</sup> K. Waltz, Man, the State, and War, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/unitary>

<sup>26</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618

<sup>27</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618

<sup>28</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 618

order in the system.<sup>29</sup> This is not a denial of multinational institutions, and the mere existence of such institutions does not refute a Waltzian state-centric approach to international relations. Under Neorealism, such rules and organisations can exist, but they are seen as intergovernmental in nature, created and sustained through consensus or coercion of national powers. Under a Waltzian view, without such backing, they are unable to impose themselves upon nation states.

### Self Help:

As has been mentioned above, Waltzian Structural Realism argues that the most important way in which states must help themselves is by providing for their own security<sup>30</sup>. Based upon the assumption of anarchy in the international system, and this belief that states desire to survive, neorealist theory presumes that self-help is the 'rational' principle of action for states operating in an anarchic order. That is to say that because states desire security, and there is not power above states that can effectively guarantee state survival, that states must themselves pursue security through their own efforts.<sup>31</sup>

This argument that the principle of self help drives state action is in need of further analysis. It is extremely difficult to precisely measure the extent to which a state acts according to the principle of self help. To do so requires analysing the motives of actors that are operating with imperfect data sets, using an imperfect data set to do so. Clear examples critiquing the assumption of self help can be cited, such as modern domestic political pressure to “lead the way” on climate change in ways that do not appear to reflect Waltzian zero sum security calculations. Nonetheless, it seems that when military security interests are directly challenged, the principle of self help gains emphasis. We cannot assume that the principle of self help drives all state action, merely that where direct security interests are challenged it becomes the sole means of reliable survival insurance.

### **The Intellectual Roots of Neorealism:**

As its name implies, Waltzian Neorealism is a theory that builds upon earlier theories of international relations. The major point of difference between Waltz and his more classical realist counterparts lies in explanations of state motive in power accumulation. Both Waltz and his classical realist counterparts share a perception that power accumulation by nation states in international politics, Waltz and his classical Realist counterparts attribute the source of power accumulation in the international system in significantly different ways. While accepting that power accumulation dominates national strategic thought and action, Waltz debates the classical realist assumption that the origins of this behaviour lie in the nature of the state, and that the behaviour is thus a certainty, preferring instead to focus upon 'system level' explanations for the prevalence of power accumulation in state behaviour in the international system. Waltz argues that states pursue power primarily to address perceived insecurity. Waltz's explanations for the pursuit and/or use of power beyond the interest of security are most notable in their absence. This is not to argue such incidents do not occur. Merely that such incidents are not explained by neorealism.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 624

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

Under Waltzian neorealism, states that are 'irrational' can even pursue power (or other goals, for that matter) at the expense of security interests. Commonly, this would arise from miscalculation, but there is no reason to presume that this has never occurred or could never occur knowingly. This is a major limitation in Waltzian Neorealism's predictive power, arising from its systemic level of analysis, and lack of consideration for unit level variables. It does not refute the potential for unit level forces such as a lust for power's potential role in facilitating the recurrence of conflict, as outlined in Classical Realism's depictions of 'the nature of man'. Nor does it presume that such factors exist as universals, or that this is a necessary assumption for explaining the factors in question (conflict and competition in the international system). He takes this argument one step further, asserting that only very secure powers can afford to indulge in such behaviours as megalomania (or any other behavioural obsession) without regard to security interests for very long without seriously hampering their chances of survival in the international system.<sup>32</sup>

Waltz's understanding of the relationship between security and state behaviour thus marks the main point of difference between Waltzian Neorealist international relations theory and the theory of his Classical Realist counterparts. Where many 'realist' thinkers throughout the years have referred to innate and unbounded desires in man, or at least in political man to expand power, Waltz argues that "it is not necessary to assume an innate lust for power in order to account for the sometimes fierce competition that marks the international arena."<sup>33</sup> He bases this statement upon a theory built upon belief in the scarcity of security as a driver of conflict and competition in the anarchic international arena. Unlike Classical Realist counterparts, Neorealist theory argues that although some states may hunger for power for power's sake, it is not a necessary precondition for conflict in the international system.<sup>34</sup>

Although this outlook differs substantially with dominant Classical Realist theories, one can find deep roots of Waltzian Neorealist understandings of international politics in earlier realist traditions. Morgenthau, for example, outlined a relationship between scarcity and anarchy in the international system in the realist tradition, stating that "when there is competition for scarce goods and no-one to serve as arbiter, a struggle for power will ensue among the competitors"<sup>35</sup> and that consequently the struggle for power can be explained without reference to the evil born in men.<sup>36</sup> Neorealism builds upon this perspective, and asserts that international politics is in fact such an arena, and that in this arena, security is in fact a scarce good. Thus, where Classical Realism has traditionally turned away from structural explanations for competition (primarily conceiving of causes "as moving in only one direction, from the interactions of individuals and states to the outcomes that their acts and interactions produce"<sup>37</sup>), in neorealist theory such structural processes are seen to be the primary factors. By emphasising how structures affect actions and outcomes, Neorealism rejects the assumption that man's innate lust for power constitutes a sufficient cause of war in the absence of any other.<sup>38</sup> In doing so, it reconceives the causal link between interacting units and international outcomes.<sup>39</sup> Thus, although retaining the main tenets of *realpolitik*, means and ends are viewed differently, as are causes and effects.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> UC Berkeley, [6/2003], *Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz*,

<sup>33</sup> K. Waltz *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*. pp. 619, 620

<sup>34</sup> K. Waltz *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*. p. 620

<sup>35</sup> K. Waltz *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*. p. 616

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*

## What is meant by the term security?

At this point, further exploration of the term 'security' is necessary. What does Neorealism mean by security, and why is it given such importance as a driver of state behaviour?

Firstly, as to the nature of security, there is no absolute security. Security only exists in the lack of insecurity relative to perceived threats. In the realm of interstate politics, the perceived 'threat' commonly referred to, and the lack of security that Neorealist international relations theorists use the term (in)security to describe, has been military insecurity; the potential for mass violence of 'others'. In this realm of military (in)security Neorealism argues that due to the anarchic order of interstate politics, such threats or seeming threats to the security of nation states abound.<sup>41</sup> In line with the asserted operating principle of self help, Waltz argues that to protect themselves from death or harm states must provide for their own security.<sup>42</sup>

## The Security Dilemma:

As alluded to already, Waltz views security as a scarce resource.<sup>43</sup> This is because as yet, the most widely articulated and accepted pragmatic solution to such threats from others has been to oneself amass weapons of war, and display a sufficient level of martial prowess to deter aggressors. Observation of this phenomenon led Waltz to the conclusion that "measures that enhance one state's security typically diminish that of others."<sup>44</sup> He argues that this relativity of conventional (in)security is how actors traditionally remain suspicious of each other, and often hostile to the motives of the other.<sup>45</sup> Waltz asserts that in this process actions by states that may only be attempting to bolster their security easily serve to create or confirm other state's beliefs that there is cause for concern.<sup>46</sup> According to Waltz, these factors lead to a process which he called the 'Security Dilemma', where competing countries compare their strengths, and in which how secure, and how much of a threat a country is depends on how it compares to others in the quantity and quality of its weaponry, the suitability of its strategy, the resilience of its society and economy and the skill of its leaders.<sup>47</sup> According to Waltz, this typically leads to situations where "a state that is amassing instruments of war, even for its own defence, is [so often] cast by others as a threat requiring a response."<sup>48</sup> Waltz argues that through this process the preoccupation (of nation states) with identifying dangers and counteracting them becomes "a way of life".<sup>49</sup> Neorealism

---

<sup>41</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 619

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 619

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 627

<sup>48</sup> K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 619

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

asserts that this conundrum is a major source of instability and conflict<sup>50</sup>, as “their individual intentions aside, collectively their actions yield arms races and alliances.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus with conventional arms, under a Waltzian view, the structure of international politics (anarchy) is seen to encourage states to arm competitively. This seems to have been the norm throughout human history (even pre nation states), and seems a sound observation.

#### Nuclear Weapons and the security dilemma:

In Waltzian Neorealism, nuclear weapons are seen to be significantly different to conventional weapons in terms of implications to this security dilemma. Waltz observes that in a conventionally armed world, states can believe that they may win an international conflict, and that should they lose, the price of victory, and even defeat would be bearable.<sup>52</sup> Although World Wars I and II called the latter belief into question, even before atomic bombs were dropped it was widely recognised that this wisdom did not prevail. That is to say that armed conflict between great powers seemed to remain an at least significantly probable outcome. The nuclear deterrent however appears far more effective in overwhelming this perception than even history's starkest lessons in deterring conflict<sup>53</sup>, to the point that total war between nation states in their possession has never been fought.

As alluded to above, Waltz presumes this can be explained by mutually assured destruction (MAD) theory.<sup>54</sup> This seems like a sound presumption. This theory argues that due to the destructive power of and the lack of any effective mitigation for nuclear weapons, they are not “relative” but become “absolute” weapons.<sup>55</sup> That is to say that if neither state involved in a standoff is able to launch a disarming attack with high degree of certainty, that comparing the size of strategic forces becomes irrelevant, as both sides possess the capability to annihilate the other.<sup>56</sup> Thus, in matters of nuclear deterrence, when one asks how much is “enough”; unlike with conventional arms where this line of what is considered 'enough' is always moving,; enough is a roughly absolute and constant amount: a second-strike capability.<sup>57</sup> This is because, according to Waltz, nuclear weapons (MAD, second strike) make the implications even of victory too horrible to contemplate.<sup>58</sup> Because of this, according to Waltz, the probability of deliberate direct military conflict among states having nuclear weapons approaches zero.<sup>59</sup>

More generally, speaking outside the context of MAD, Waltz argues that in the anarchy of states, improving the means of defence and deterrence relative to the means of offense increases the chances of peace<sup>60</sup> and that weapons and strategies that make defence and deterrence easier, and offensive strikes harder to mount, decrease the likelihood of war.<sup>61</sup> The raw destructive potential of even a small arsenal of low yield weapons with quite basic delivery capacity

---

50 Ibid.  
51 Ibid.  
52 K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 625  
53 Ibid.  
54 Ibid.  
55 K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 626  
56 Ibid.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Ibid.  
59 Ibid.  
60 Ibid  
61 Ibid

presents an effective military deterrent to a nuclear, or non-nuclear armed competitor. Especially as they can be used as blunt force in many different ways. Nuclear weapons are thus appealing to states looking for security. They make it possible for a state to limit conventional military build-up so long as other states are unable to achieve disarming first-strike capabilities.<sup>62</sup> This opens possibilities of deterrent strategies that dampen the security dilemma.<sup>63</sup> Due to their low relative cost, it is also a cheap option. Saving on money, and making it possible for relatively small powers to deter larger ones.

#### Emulation/Proliferation in the security dilemma:

Given the expectation of conflict and the necessity of taking care of one's interests, one may wonder how any state with the economic capability of a great power can refrain from arming itself with the weapons that have served other powers so well as deterrents and tools of defence. Neorealist theory predicts that states will emulate the successful practices of one another in pursuit of security.<sup>64</sup> Specifically, Waltz argues that states emulate successful military weapons and strategies of others.<sup>65</sup> Although possible, for a country to choose not to do so in the face of pressing security threats is considered a structural anomaly<sup>66</sup>, for the choice is a constrained one.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Waltzian Structural Realism predicts that both nuclear weapons and other forms of armament (as well as non-military instruments of power and security) hold a strong appeal (in so far as they are seen to effectively guarantee security) to nation states, particularly those with stark threat perceptions. This makes deterrence very difficult because the more insecure you make such states feel, the greater the appeal of proven instruments of security.<sup>68</sup>

Waltz elaborates on this point with a quote that is of special significance to our study on modern Iran that

“if we declare a country to be a part of an 'axis of evil', and if that country is anyway in a perilously weak position, as obviously North Korea is, then we have to ask ourselves if we were the ruler, no matter how nasty that ruler is. If we were Kim Ill Sung, wouldn't we conclude that: 'my god, we are likely to be attacked, and since we are weak, we'll lose, unless we have nuclear weapons, which have proved to be the greatest and indeed the only reliable deterrent the world has ever known'.”<sup>69</sup>

He also asserts that “If a state badly needs and therefore badly wants nuclear weapons, it is almost impossible in the long run to prevent that country from acquiring a military nuclear capability.”<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> K. Waltz *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*. p. 627

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> J. Resende-Santos, *Neorealism, States and the Modern Mass Army*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007. p. 50

<sup>65</sup> R. Art and D. Waltz, *The Use of Force: International politics and Foreign Policy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland, U.S.A, 1993. p. 66

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> UC Berkeley, [6/2003], *Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

This assumption is worthy of further analysis. It is probably still too soon to test his statements about “the long run”, but the first Iraq war demonstrated negative impacts that having (ever) had a nuclear weapons program can have on a countries security interests. Having had this program attacked by Israel in 1981, and having had the past drive towards nuclear weapons and used as support for an (apparently false) assumption that Iraq retained active nuclear programs, Iraq was invaded, its government deposed and the country occupied. One would thus conclude that the pursuit of nuclear weapons can be an extremely dangerous activity. At least in the case in question. The fact Iraq was invaded without nuclear weapons suggested that it badly needed them, for, ironically enough (arguments Saddam Hussein posed a nuclear threat were given as the prime justifications for this war), had he acquired them, the invasion seems far less likely to have occurred. One presumes that states observing these outcomes would perceive these dangers and difficulties in pursuing nuclear weapons, as well as the vulnerability to foreign aggression entailed in their absence. We thus accept Waltz assertion for a systemic security advantage to the possession of nuclear weapons, but reject his hypothesis that their pursuit is such a simple remedy for ones security problems.

In further critique of these points regarding emulation; in the Iran-Iraq war Iran refrained from employing chemical weapons and spoke against the Iranian pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. This was done apparently on religious grounds. Further still, led by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the nation's "supreme leader," Iranian clerics have repeatedly declared that Islam forbids the development and use of all weapons of mass destruction.<sup>71</sup> Khamenei went on to declare that "The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its fundamental religious and legal beliefs, would never resort to the use of weapons of mass destruction,"<sup>72</sup> and that "In contrast to the propaganda of our enemies, fundamentally we are against any production of weapons of mass destruction in any form."<sup>73</sup> The extent to which this is the case is impossible to measure precisely, but it seems clear that it is not a safe presumption that any given state, or the majority of states will emulate a specific weapon or strategy, merely that there is a systemic pressure to do so. In support of this critique of Waltz's claim, most states in the world do not possess nuclear weapons, yet according to Waltz, all exist in a system where security threats abound. This apparent inconsistency between Neorealist theory and international outcomes is need of addressing. Why do some states facing security problems not pursue or acquire the 'great deterrent'?

One can imagine situations where attempting to achieve nuclear arms would undermine a states security. This could be why some do not. Finland is a good example of a state that has not acquired nuclear weapons, apparently for reasons of security. Finland's “security” outlook has been largely built around maintaining a non-threatening appearance, and not provoking suspicions of other actors. This policy seemed to work very well in the Cold War period, wedged between Soviet and NATO forces.<sup>74</sup> The question of whether non-security factors, like the aforementioned religious grounds, could dissuade a drive to nuclear weapons in the face of security threats is impossible to test for it is a question of motive that we cannot quantify with high precision. But it does not seem safe to presume that all states facing security threats will arm. Regardless, our theoretical lens is too narrow to deal with such non security related factors. We can point only to forces at the system level that encourage or discourage the appeal of certain behaviours. Due to our neglect of unit level variables, we cannot be more predictive than this.

---

<sup>71</sup> R. Collier, Nuclear weapons unholy: Iran says Islam forbids use, clerics proclaim, San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, October 31, 2003, Accessed from [http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/10/31/MNGHJ2NFRE1.DTL&hw=Khamenei+fatwa&sn=001&sc=1000+\(2003\)](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/10/31/MNGHJ2NFRE1.DTL&hw=Khamenei+fatwa&sn=001&sc=1000+(2003)), on 8/06/2006.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> M. Weinsten, Finland keeps its Hairline Distance from NATO, PINR, 08/02/07. Retrieved from [http://www.globalsecuritynews.com/showArticle3.cfm?article\\_id=12546](http://www.globalsecuritynews.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=12546) on 05/06/09

Waltzian understandings of the defensive imperatives to nuclear proliferation are nonetheless supported by quantitative study. Study by S. Singh and C. Way into “The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation” asserts that its findings offer considerable support for a theory of nuclear proliferation in which states go nuclear “when they face a significant military threat to their security that cannot be met through other means.”<sup>75</sup> This is not to say that a state could never acquire nuclear weapons in the absence of a security threat, but they assert that in fact, there are no historical cases of the determined pursuit of nuclear weapons by countries not experiencing a subjectively threatening security environment.<sup>76</sup> Thus, according our authors, our generalizations seem generally valid.

Polarity and the security dilemma:

Waltz attempts to illustrate his presumptions regarding polarity and balancing behaviour in the international system with the following simile: “as nature abhors a vacuum, so international politics abhors unbalanced power.”<sup>77</sup> He asserts that “faced with unbalanced power, some states, to increase their own strength, ally with others to bring the international distribution of power into balance.”<sup>78</sup>

Waltzian Neorealism thus argues that events which dramatically skew the balance of power, such as “victories in major wars”<sup>79</sup>, and I would add (and he would surely not disagree); the collapse of a nation’s economic and/or social institutions leave the balance of power “badly skewed”<sup>80</sup>. That is to say that where one side emerges as a dominant coalition, “the international equilibrium is broken”<sup>81</sup>, which theoretically leads to its “inevitable restoration”<sup>82</sup> through balancing behaviours.<sup>83</sup> He based this hypothesis on arguments that “unbalanced power, whoever wields it, is a potential danger to others.”<sup>84</sup> According to Waltz, this is because a powerful state, even thinking of itself as “acting for the sake of peace, justice and well-being in the world”<sup>85</sup>, defines these terms “to the liking of the powerful, which may conflict with the preferences and interests of others.”<sup>86</sup>

In line with these theories, Waltz predicted that in the post cold war era, a new balance of power would emerge.<sup>87</sup> He asserts that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, “the absence of serious threats to American security”<sup>88</sup> and the “wide latitude” this gives the United States in its foreign policy decision making<sup>89</sup> that the United States has behaved, and until its power is brought into balance, will continue to behave in ways that frighten others.”<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> C. Way and S. Singh, The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation: A Quantitative Test, The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 48, No. 6 (Dec., 2004), pp. 859-885

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> K. Waltz, Structural Realism after the Cold War, p. 28

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> K. Waltz, Structural Realism after the Cold War, p. 29

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



Under a Waltzian view, even aside from clear and grave threats, the mere existence of unbalanced power leaves weaker nations in a state of theoretical insecurity.<sup>91</sup> This is due to the potential of greater powers to threaten or exploit the vulnerable security situation of weaker powers. According to Waltz, this gives weaker powers reason to strengthen their positions.<sup>92</sup> Waltz asserts that this is how, even with benevolent intentions, “in international politics, overwhelming power repels and leads others to try to balance against it.”<sup>93</sup> He argues, “this concentrated power invites mistrust, because it is so easily misused”.<sup>94</sup>

This presumption (that overwhelming power provokes balancing behaviour) is extremely contentious. Studies have been done debating the significance of this assumption as a predictive tool in interstate behaviour<sup>95</sup>, and they seem correct in their claim that there is no universality to such responses. But that it is a commonly occurring phenomenon seems clear. More precisely, in relation to the task at hand, the United States has a strong historical tradition of intervening in weaker states and is widely perceived in this light outside the United States, including by Iran. American behaviour in Central and South America, Asia and the Middle East clearly attest to this perception being built upon a large degree of factual merit. In the absence of countervailing power, American interventions in weak nation states have been frequent<sup>96</sup>, and near unparalleled in destructive impact. Thus, given these perceptions, and based on the presumptions of anarchy in the international system and the goal of survival as a driver of rational state action in the international system, one can at least infer a strong temptation in 'rationally minded' weak actors with whom America has tense relations to balance American power. The case in study, Iran, seems to fit this mould.

### **Do states act according to these principles?**

This is an important question. If states do not follow these principles with any consistency or with primacy over other factors, the ability to use this theory to predict outcomes is low. In short, as has been mentioned above, Neorealism is not extremely effective at predicting specific outcomes.

In terms of predictive power, Neorealism's utility is somewhat limited to its assertion that the foreign policies of 'rational' actors are highly motivated by their security concerns. This is a tautology. To the extent to which one state is seen to conform to these standards, their actions are considered to be rational. To the extent that they do not, these actions are seen to be irrational. Either way, the theory is not tested. This leads one to wonder, if Neorealism can only predict the behaviour of self-described 'rational states' what is the point?

Furthermore, the extent to which a state conforms to these criteria of rationality is extremely difficult to measure. To further explore this point, we must first attempt to understand the relationship between security and perception. For it is not objective reality, but human perception upon which we base our actions, no matter how hard we

---

<sup>91</sup> K. Waltz, *Structural Realism after the Cold War*, p. 13

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> K. Waltz, *Structural Realism after the Cold War*, p. 28

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> V. Tin-Bor Hui, A. Eckstein, D. Deudney, W. Brenner, W. Wohlforth, R. Little, S. Kaufman, D. Kang, Charles A. Jones, *Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History*, *European Journal of International Relations* 2007

<sup>96</sup> Relative to other actors in this period

attempt to find a more accurate perception. It can thus not be one's objective security environment that drives policy, but a state's perception of it. This makes a state's 'security' near impossible to quantify in a meaningful sense. That Neorealism lacks a way to bridge this gap between 'objective' (they do not exist) security measurements and perception is a serious critique for the accuracy of Waltzian Structural Realism's explanatory power in an arena where irrationality or miscalculations apparently abound almost as frequently as credible security threats. We can attempt to draw correlations, but this is the limit. It is thus extremely difficult to test a hypothesis that security drives policy. Waltzian Structural Realism's utility is thus quite limited to exploring how approximations of a state's perception of its position in the international system is likely to impact its policy, presuming it has some concern for its own well being. In this capacity, it is very useful, but beyond this scope, the theory's validity is extremely limited.

In defence of this theory, it seems worth noting that states who do not behave in these manners do not seem to last very long, and seem to find themselves frequently at the whim of the power of others. Anomalies exist, and may even be quite common, but it seems unlikely how long they endure. This regulates the system and makes sure the behavioural principles of structural realism are true for most states most of the time.

Although it is usually 'rogue states' (those states that are severely out of favour with dominant actors) who are argued to be 'irrational'. Kenneth Waltz asserts that it is precisely these states in which rationality is most heavily tested.<sup>97</sup> He argues that surviving as an enemy of the United States, for example, is much more difficult than say, winning a second term as U.S. president.<sup>98</sup> He argues and that if these actors were not at least roughly effective rational calculators and operators, they would simply not survive.<sup>99</sup> He refers to these people as "survivors in a very difficult world"<sup>100</sup>, asserting that "People who are insane do not maintain themselves in power against a host of enemies internally and externally."<sup>101</sup> This is not to say that these states can not act in ways that undermine security, but that they are unlikely to adopt a deliberately suicidal mindset, considering that the care they obviously take of their security, and if they do, their demise is likely nigh. Tactics like deterrence should work on at least most of these powers.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> UC Berkeley, [6/2003], Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> UC Berkeley, [6/2003], Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz

## **Chapter 2: Iranian History in the International System:**

One could quite easily write a doctoral thesis upon the History of the Iranian nation/state in its relations with outside powers. In short, Iran has faced security challenges from extra regional powers throughout its history, as far back as ancient Greece, and beyond. This is important to remember. Iranian national psychology is one of an ancient civilization, with a rightful role as an equal to great powers. We, however lack both the time and the space to trace that far back. This essay will thus instead focus upon Iran's history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, one could write a doctoral thesis on this already substantially refined lens of inquiry. We will thus attempt to focus upon the security (regime survival and/or territorial integrity) related aspects of Iran's historical experience.

### **Introduction: Oil Politics**

When telling the modern history of Iran in its relations with foreign powers, one factor is striking in its significance. That is, the presence of oil reserves in Iran. At the turn of the century, world oil consumption was increasing dramatically.<sup>103</sup> This process was initially driven by Britain, whose consumption per head of population doubled from 7.4 per gallons in 1901 to 15.5 gallon in 1914.<sup>104</sup> It has since become a truly global trade of vast economic, political and military significance for the even remotely developed world. With this increase in consumptions over time, we have seen a dramatic increase in the importance placed upon this commodity by foreign powers. The peculiarity of the Iranian experience has been pivotal in shaping Iran's experiences in the international system.

Importantly, from a Neorealist point of view, initially the lion's share of the consumption of oil was a primarily military affair. In the case of Britain this was the result of a process of naval modernisation embarked upon in 1904 (lasting until January 1910) by Admiral Fisher, First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty. This lengthy process involved the replacement of coal burning ships with oil driven vessels.<sup>105</sup> The American navy was quick to follow suit, and by 1907 all battleships being produced in the U.S. were built with oil driven engines.<sup>106</sup> Thus, for the great naval powers of the Era, the question of oil supply was becoming an important factor in military power. With obvious implications for national security Neorealism would suggest, and historical precedent supports<sup>107</sup> a perception that the military applications of oil gave the foreign policies of these powers vis-à-vis Iran greater imperative than would have been seen if the increased demand for oil was for use as a civilian, rather than military commodity. Historical analysts have gone so far as to argue that this process fundamentally altered the way governments viewed the oil industry.<sup>108</sup> Of particular note is the fact that it has been these 'great' naval powers (namely Great Britain and the United States) that have presented Iran with the most pressing and consistent security threats throughout this period.

The importance of these developments for Iran have been enormous. On the one hand, this process of naval (and later military) modernisation further enhanced the already enormous gunboat diplomacy leverage that great powers enjoyed over nation states as relatively weak as Iran. But more importantly still, the presence of oil in Iran made it a

---

<sup>103</sup> B. McBeth, *British oil policy, 1919-1939*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, London, 1985. p. 1

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security*, *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, No. 4, *Searching for Security in a Global Economy* (Fall, 1991), The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences. pp. 183-206

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

focal point of international interest in its oil reserves, an interest which was swiftly reflected in the foreign policies of great powers. Oil has therefore been an important factor in relations between the great powers and Iran, making it a focus of the foreign policies of world powers that few would argue it would have otherwise been. The extent to which this was driven by the increased capacity to influence the politics of these nations through oil driven gunboat diplomacy, and the extent to which it is their reliance upon oil as a commodity that drives them to become so deeply involved in Iranian politics is unclear. It seems clear that both factors have impacted this relationship.

The development of Iranian oil reserves also made Iran a focus of great power competition between such powers as Britain and Germany and between Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In zero sum neorealist politics, one would expect to find perceptions of zero sum politics in regards to scarce security resources, especially in times of security crisis, and this fits with the Iranian experience. Britain and the United States desired the benefits of engagement with Iran in oil programs, but they have also sought to secure these benefits against foreign powers, and monopolize these benefits. The security implications of this for Iran are clear, having been occupied or had coups supported against it throughout the century, often justified in terms of the threat posed by foreign 'subversion' of Iran. One can see this in World War I and II and Operation Ajax. This section however will (in line with a Waltzian theoretical outlook), investigate this particularity (oil) of Iran's national and regional security environment and assess the significance of this peculiarity (oil) to Iran's international security experience.

### **Iran, Oil and Geography: History and Security**

As has already been alluded to, the early Twentieth Century was a period in which oil had become an important military strategic resource in great power competition, with oil quickly becoming the fuel of choice for naval vessels that had until then been powered by coal.

World War One further underscored this point, and “had a dramatic and long-lasting impact on the way governments viewed the oil industry”.<sup>109</sup> During 1917 severe shortages of oil threatened, on separate occasions, to effectively immobilise both the British navy and the French army.<sup>110</sup> In both cases this was eventually avoided, with the United States responding to urgent requests for help by providing much needed supplies to both powers.<sup>111</sup> Lacking such external assistance, when Germany reached such critical points, it found its military capabilities substantially constrained.<sup>112</sup> This exposed to world powers the significance of oil, and the significance of the lack of it for both ones own military machines, and the effects of oil on the capabilities of others. Furthermore, World War One was a period of massive technological advancement in the realms of military technology. The implementation of tanks, motorised transport, the airplane, and the submarine into arsenals of world militaries began in this era<sup>113</sup>, and all ran on oil, reinforcing its perception as a focal point in the global balance of power and security.

---

<sup>109</sup> David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security*, Daedalus, Vol. 120, No. 4, Searching for Security in a Global Economy (Fall, 1991), The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences. pp. 183-206. p. 183

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

In the post war period, the British navy and the US navy found themselves the most powerful in the world. Britain and the United States thus both found themselves able to pursue access security in overseas oil-producing areas, and in line with their perceived interests, pursued this capability. U.S. and British companies grew to dominate the world oil industry accordingly,<sup>114</sup> and their navies ruled the seas (from a security standpoint).

As was the case in World War One, World War Two further underlined the crucial importance of oil to modern warfare.<sup>115</sup> In World War Two, modern militaries of the time expanded upon the already significant military uses for oil employed in World War One at a staggering pace. Oil driven vessels, such as fighting ships, seagoing freighters, tanks, airplanes, motorised troop transport, and submarines played a major role in deciding the fates of the war.<sup>116</sup> In addition to controlling much of the world's oil production, and enjoying relative energy security accordingly, the United States was also at the forefront of finding and improving military uses for oil,<sup>117</sup> further enhancing its military strength. The Soviet Union too was home to a significant portion of the world's oil reserves, and this clearly played a major role in both powers victory in the war.<sup>118</sup> In contrast, the failure of Germany and Japan to secure access to oil was a major contributing factor in their military defeat.<sup>119</sup> This all further underscored the already clear point that oil had become a key feature in the contestation for power and security in the international system.

In the aftermath of World War Two, a historical confrontation between the two remaining super powers (the United States and the Soviet Union) known as the Cold War quickly emerged. The two superpowers that emerged after World War II were, as was stated above, not coincidentally, the two with large domestic oil reserves<sup>120</sup>, though that they were large industrial powers with modern militaries is obviously of at least equal significance. In line with the broader systemic importance of oil at this stage to world powers, in this era US oil companies became entrenched in all the great oil-producing areas outside the Soviet Union.<sup>121</sup> For the part of the other remaining superpower at this stage, the Soviet Union's expansion into Eastern and Central Europe in its World War Two advance on Berlin and subsequent occupation and/or political domination) left the Soviet Union in control of the vast majority of Europe's known indigenous oil reserves.<sup>122</sup> As well as important sources of coal in Poland and the Soviet zone of Germany.<sup>123</sup>

By this time, we had also seen the emergence of oil as a core economic resource, that even in matters not related to security wielded significant political impact, with significant ramifications for security interests. In line with this claim, in 1945, a Joint Chiefs of Staff report warned that Soviet control of Europe's oil reserves could become "another link ... in the economic chain by which the Western European powers are becoming fettered to the Soviet Union."<sup>124</sup> Although this claim seems sensationalist, it is nonetheless support for my claim that even in matters of peace, perceptions of economic necessity can influence the balance of power politics.

---

114

Ibid.

115

Ibid.

116

Ibid.

117

Ibid.

118

Ibid.

119

Ibid.

120

Ibid.

121

David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security* p. 185

122

Ibid.

123

Ibid.

124

Ibid.

Apart from its military uses, oil's critical economic importance has been enough to give it a special place in the security considerations of industrialised countries. It is generally accepted that cheap oil gave the US major economic and productive advantages over its competitors from the 1920s to the 1960s.<sup>125</sup> It is also believed that cheap oil was a major factor in European and Japanese reconstruction post war, economic reconstruction, and the extended period of sustained economic growth in the decades following World War II.<sup>126</sup> By the same token, expensive oil was an important factor in the less dynamic performance of the industrial economies in the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>127</sup>

In this period perceptions of the necessity (be it economic or military) of oil led key Western block governments to view the Middle East as not only the logical place, but practically the only place from which sufficient could be acquired to meet the growing needs of Western consumer states, particularly Western Europe and Japan.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, development of Middle East oil was also seen to contribute to US security interests in other ways.<sup>129</sup> It was thought that the economic benefits of oil producing states (revenues) would promote prosperity and stability in the region.<sup>130</sup> It was also believed that by controlling Middle Eastern oil production and exportation, one would also deny the region's resources to the Soviet Union.<sup>131</sup> In line with the significance of such and the pursuit of zero sum tactics, it has been claimed that the Soviet Union lacked sufficient oil supplies to carry out offensive military operations for several years after World War II.<sup>132</sup> This suggests that such tactics could, at least in theory have a constraining influence upon even a significant oil holding state such as the USSR.

Beyond oil, a states geographical situation in the international system is an important factor with peculiarities in security implications for the constituent unit. Geographical location has long been a significant factor in its security experience (as it is of all states). Today, this remains the case. Beyond oil, geostrategic factors have played a major role in security dimensions of the international system. The period of the Cold War is a good example of this. In the Cold War, US strategists perceived that the Middle East contained the best defensible locations for launching a strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union in the event of war between the two powers.<sup>133</sup>

Nonetheless, for Iran, this geopolitical reality is highly influenced by the aforementioned factor of oil. Iran is not only an oil producing state, but an oil producing state bordering many oil producing states, several of whom are amongst the largest producing states on earth. Furthermore, it is an oil producing state located in a position that world powers deem important to the transportation of oil, in a prime location to host pipelines from east to west. And furthermore, Iran is located at the mouth of the Persian gulf, within strike range of world oil shipping. Whether fears of this have arisen in relation to indigenous Iranian military threats, or the fear of hostile powers using Iran as a base of operations, it has long been recognized that Iran's geostrategic location could pose a threat to oil supply if it were to decide to be hostile.

---

<sup>125</sup> David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security* p. 186

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security* p. 185

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

This is not an entirely new phenomenon. For centuries, the Persian Gulf has been a site of significant economic trade. However, two factors have served to heighten security related tensions in this area. As time has progressed, we have seen the significance of Persian Gulf shipping to major powers increase as larger ships with longer ranges transport valuable goods to increasingly oil dependant states. We have thus seen the importance placed on the security of such shipping increase. In this period we have also seen the development of longer ranged, more accurate and more destructive weapons, able to more easily and more effectively interfere with such shipping, should Iran desire to do so. In these regards, technology has served to increase the scale and significance of regional trade, and enhanced the ability of a country like Iran to threaten this trade effectively without a large advanced navy. The second factor is obviously the fact that trade from this region is mostly oil. Were it not for this fact, it seems highly unlikely that world powers would place such an emphasis upon freight vulnerability in the Persian gulf.

The existence of oil reserves in Iran and surrounding states is a highly significant feature of its security experience. It is a motivator for foreign security challenges to Iran that is rarely admitted, but appears ever present. Iran is surely aware of this, and it surely influences its security perceptions in the direction of 'cynical'.

## **Iran's 20<sup>th</sup> Century History in the International System:**

Waltzian Neorealism argues that the foreign policy of nation states is driven by their perception of security. This perception is surely both a product not only shaped by distribution of power, but also coloured by historical experiences. This chapter will attempt to explain the role of history in Iranian national (state) security perceptions.

Iran's historical perception in the international system is one of neighbourly hostility, regional instability, aggressive foreign imperialism and repeated let-downs and betrayals.<sup>134</sup> This is clearly evidenced by speeches from leaders of the country since the fall of the Shah, even the 'moderates' (Khatami<sup>135</sup> and Rafsanjani<sup>136</sup> spring to mind) and in modern Iranian cultural discourse. The basis for this perception is clearly observable, which is not to say that Iranians have been angelic and their neighbours the opposite, or even that Iran has always acted entirely 'rationally' in response to this perceived international environment, merely to explore how history has driven this Iranian perception of the international system, with particular regard to the principles of Neorealism.

### **Sources:**

One could write a doctoral thesis on the History of the Iranian nation/state in its relations with outside powers. This would be an interesting and worthwhile task. But to attempt to do so would be well beyond the scope and scale of this thesis. Furthermore, it does not seem necessary to the task at hand. Although work on the topic is not as plentiful as it may be on certain other topics, this topic has been well researched in great detail by highly respected scholars who are regarded as experts on the topic. This is not to say that these works are entirely without fault or omission (this is impossible to know). But these were the best, most complete, most qualified accounts (and most sourced to primary resources)<sup>137</sup> that this author could find.

We rely particularly heavily upon Gasiorowski for his account of the coup. His account seems to present us a more complete account of the coup than others. He argues that the contributions of his new study are new details and the clearing up of some errors and omissions in earlier accounts.<sup>138</sup> Specifically, he tells us that the main details presented here that have not appeared elsewhere are:

- “(1) the British efforts to oust Mossadeq in the period before the coup;
- (2) The closely related British efforts to undermine Mossadeq through covert action carried out by the Rashidians;
- (3) Similar U.S. efforts to undermine Mosaddeq through BEDAMN;

---

<sup>134</sup> Fariborz Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, Middle East Journal, Vol. 59, No. 2, Changing Geopolitics (Spring, 2005), pp. 209-229. p. 216

<sup>135</sup> CNN August 24: Khatami post-9/11 interview, accessed on 5/03/09 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDErOB34lno>

<sup>136</sup> BBC, P1/6: The Pariah State (7/18: Iran & The West - S2/3), accessed on 5/03/09 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOKRbYjgg0&feature=related>

<sup>137</sup> M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Aug., 1987), pp. 261-286.

F. Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 216

<sup>138</sup> M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 19, No. 3 Cambridge University Press. Aug., 1987, pp. 261-286 p. 278



- (4) Zahedi's activities in the year before the coup; and
- (5) Several key details of the coup itself, such as the formulation of the original plan, the decision to evacuate after the original attempt failed the U.S. role in organizing the "fake" Tudeh demonstrations, and the roles of Aramesh and (apparently) Kashani in organizing the crowds that stormed Mosaddeq's home on August 19."<sup>139</sup>

He tells us that sources he cites that others do not include "recently released diplomatic records and interviews with many key participants."<sup>140</sup>

The credentials of this author are lofty.<sup>141</sup> He received a PhD from the University of California in 1984. His ability to read the Farsi language is an essential skill to the conduct of such an investigation that is rather rare in the West. He is extremely well published<sup>142</sup>, has appeared in countless conferences, seminars, consultations and workshops (both academic and policy oriented).<sup>143</sup> He has been awarded several (seven on his CV) grants and awards,<sup>144</sup> and seems well respected in the academic community. This is not to say that we take this individual as an expert above the potential for fault. We are each but human, and when it comes down to interpretative matters especially, we are all prone to fault. But we can reasonably expect to be able to take his academic integrity at good faith. That in matters of factual record, we can presume that he is at least not lying to us, and that he at least attempts to hold his statement to academic rigors of proof. His ready citation of primary research<sup>145</sup> supports this assumption. The depth of his research suggests that even if we were to expend the effort, his study would be better than ours. A brief review supports the observation that this appears to be an accurate and account.

Another author cited heavily, Fariborz Mokhtari is a PhD., Political Science, University of Delaware<sup>146</sup> and his article is both new and consistent with the pictures portrayed elsewhere of this period. This article presents an Iranocentric narrative that is extremely relevant to the topic in question. This article was chosen for this reason its scope and relevance. The quality of its detail seemed high, but where it was found lacking, ulterior sources were sought.

Beyond what has already been done in the formulation of this thesis, one could engage substantial effort fact checking, consulting a wide variety of sources and engaging in much deeper investigation into the historiography and history of the subject. For the purposes of this political science study, we will instead accept these narratives as the public record, or at least as close enough to it to illustrate the matters in question. If I had been able to find any information contradicting these perspectives, this would not be possible. That is to say that although historical record is rarely certain or entirely complete (only for the most simple of events is this even possible), in this case, it seems that the general account of events presented in these core sources is reliable, and that they present a narrative that well

---

<sup>139</sup>

Ibid

<sup>140</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>

Mark J. Gasiorowski, University staff page:

[http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/polisci.nsf/\\$Content/Mark+Gasiorowski?OpenDocument](http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/polisci.nsf/$Content/Mark+Gasiorowski?OpenDocument)

<sup>142</sup>

Mark J. Gasiorowski, Curriculum Vitae, accessed from

[http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/polisci.nsf/\\$Content/Faculty+and+Staff/\\$file/mgas2009.pdf](http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/polisci.nsf/$Content/Faculty+and+Staff/$file/mgas2009.pdf) on 20/4/09

<sup>143</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>144</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>

Mark J. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 19, No. 3 Cambridge University Press. Aug., 1987, pp. 261-286

<sup>146</sup>

Bio: Dr. Fariborz (Fred) Mokhtari, Professor, accessed on 06/06/09 from

[http://www.ndu.edu/nesa/publications/mokhtari\\_bio.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/nesa/publications/mokhtari_bio.pdf)

illustrates the principles focused upon by this thesis. Basing our work on this narrative also gives us several advantages. Namely it allows us to escape the historiography of fine detail, and take what the study needs from the public record. We are also pressed for space, and efficiency in this regard is useful. We borrow heavily, and thankfully from these great works.

### **The Story:**

In short, Iran has faced security challenges from extra regional powers as far back as ancient Greece, and beyond. This is important to remember. Iranian national psychology is one of an ancient civilization, with a rightful role as an equal to great powers.<sup>147</sup> We, however lack both the time and the space to trace that far back. This essay will thus instead focus upon Iran's history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the purposes of the study, we will focus upon the security (regime survival or territorial integrity) related aspects of Iran's historical experience, in line with our Neorealist framework.

### **Early Years:**

We will begin this story of Iran's modern relations with Great Powers in the year 1907, with the signature of a treaty dividing Iran into spheres of influence, signed by Russia and Britain.<sup>148</sup> This moment is deliberately chosen for summing up the general theme of this time period: of foreign subversion of Iranian sovereignty. That Iran was not even invited to these negotiations<sup>149</sup> underscores the lack of concern shown for local sovereignty by imperial powers at this time. This piece will demonstrate the continuance of this theme throughout the century that follows.

Around this time, Britain became increasingly involved in the still emerging production and potential of Iran's oil reserves. This process was formally commenced with the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) in 1908. This company was used by the British government as a "national champion" company to gain assured access to oil,<sup>150</sup> and in return, Britain was used to support its interests. This marked the beginning of a significant and protracted period of British attempts to dictate terms to Iran.

### **The 1919 Agreement:**

This process came to somewhat of a head when Britain attempted to impose the "1919 agreement" upon Iran. This agreement was negotiated in total secrecy.<sup>151</sup> British money was paid for 'oiling the wheels'.<sup>152</sup> The agreement was subsequently upheld, despite both Iranian public opinion, and the 'jealousies and suspicions' of the other world

---

<sup>147</sup> Fariborz Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 216

<sup>148</sup> Fariborz Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 213

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security*, Source: *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, No. 4, *Searching for Security in a Global Economy* (Fall, 1991), pp. 183-206. p. 186

<sup>151</sup> Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (May, 1998), pp. 5-46, p. 5

<sup>152</sup> Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, p.8

powers.<sup>153</sup> The view that the 1919 agreement had been designed by the British government to turn Iran into a British protectorate was felt amongst almost every shade of Iranian political opinion.<sup>154</sup>

The British of course denied this with the following statements:

“[The] essential objects of this agreement ... are: the complete internal and external independence of the Persian State, the preparation of means of strengthening the power of the Persian Government to enable them to maintain internal order and guard against frontier dangers; and finally to devise means for the development and progress the country. In no way has it been the aim of the British Government by this agreement to limit the independence and authority of Persia, on the contrary, it is their desire that this ancient kingdom that has so long been in jeopardy and discord should be made capable of preserving its independence, and (having regard to the important geographical position of Persia) that the mutual interests of the two States should be better respected and safeguarded.”<sup>155</sup>

These statements were met with scepticism in Iran and the uniformly negative responses of America, France and Russia led even moderate Iranians to the conclusion that their rulers had sold out the country to the British Empire.<sup>156</sup> Support for this agreement was limited to a small group of politicians.<sup>157</sup> The Iranian perception of this agreement was that terms were unfair, and the result of disparities in power between Iran and the British Empire, rejecting the rhetoric of the British.<sup>158</sup> Throughout this period, one also saw recurrent challenges to the terms of these agreements and to the depth of foreign influence in Iranian affairs by the Iranian state. But, in this period at least, the Iranian state seemed unable to make these ambitions a reality in the face of the wide power disparities between the two states. Attempts to curtail this foreign influence through institutional and diplomatic means had repeatedly failed.

This event was critical in inspiring the Iranian nationalism and anti-imperialism that characterised the rest of the century in a manner entirely consistent with the Neo Realist theoretical framework. Although this sentiment was unable, in the short term, to repeal this agreement, it endured, shaped, and foreshadowed events to come. It also fuelled anger and suspicion in other great powers, who similarly to the Iranians believed that Iran had lost its independence, and would be ruled by “the combined dictatorship of Britain's Iranian agents and her technical advisers”.<sup>159</sup>

These concerns fit well within Neo Realist international relations theory, and its zero sum understandings of security.

In the 1920s and 1930s we saw this sentiment begin to manifest itself in Iranian policy. The Iranian government embarked upon a process of policies aimed at fostering national unity, restoring national pride, modernizing the state's institutions, and industrial and economic development, and curtailing foreign influence.<sup>160</sup> In this time, military units were reformed into a national army and conscription was introduced in 1926 resulting in a much

---

153

Ibid.

154

Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, p. 36

155

Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, p. 36

156

Ibid

157

Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, p. 7

158

Fariborz Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*

159

Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, p. 7

160

Fariborz Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 215

better equipped, better trained 40,000 man standing army.<sup>161</sup> In efforts to reassert itself against the British, The Iranian state also sought the renegotiation of its contract with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC).<sup>162</sup> Foreign bank's authorization to issue Iranian currency was also withdrawn in this period.<sup>163</sup>

### **The quest for Modernization and Industrialisation:**

In this same period, Iran found itself desiring the benefits of western industrialisation, and saw a need for foreign assistance in this endeavour. Distrustful of the Soviet Union and the British Empire, it sought support in its endeavours from less interested parties, at this stage the United States. In 1922, a group of U.S. financial experts headed by Dr. Arthur C. Millspaugh was approached by the Iranian government to aid in the modernization of the country<sup>164</sup>. This relationship brought much success. A National Bank was established<sup>165</sup>, the country's finances were "put on a sound footing"<sup>166</sup> and American engineers began the undertaking of infrastructure development<sup>167</sup>, surveying, constructing, and maintaining of roads, including the Trans-Iranian Railroad.<sup>168</sup> However this relationship ended sourly, as the Iranian monarch Reza Shah grew to perceive the Americans to be undermining Iranian sovereignty, by challenging his authority.<sup>169</sup>

Following this, Iran approached Germany for assistance in its industrialisation program.<sup>170</sup> The results of this program were staggering, as explained by Fariborz Mokhtari in the following quote:

"German technicians and engineers moved in to construct buildings, roads, bridges, and railways. German firms supplied heavy machinery, manufacturing equipment and advisors. German economic advisors had already arrived in Iran in 1925 and Junkers Airlines granted permission to provide air service in Iran in 1928. A most-favoured-nation treaty was signed with Germany in 1929 and Dr. Kurt Jungblatt hired in 1930 to head the National Bank. The volume of trade between the two countries already on the rise saw a dramatic increase after 1933 and particularly following a visit to Tehran in 1935 by the German economic minister Dr. Hjalmar Schacht. Hundreds more Germans accompanied by their families began to arrive in Iran. They helped build factories, roads, and a national radio network. German professors taught at the newly constructed Tehran University. Manufacturing plants increased from two, employing 462 workers in 1926, to 92 employing 40,000 in 1941. The years 1934-38 constituted a period of substantial industrialisation as 58 new factories employing 27,750 were constructed.<sup>22</sup> German engineers took over construction of the railroad and completed it. The Trans-Iranian Railroad connected the Persian Gulf to the Russian Border and the Caspian Sea going over 2,100 bridges and through 224

---

161 Ibid.  
162 Ibid.  
163 Ibid.  
164 Ibid.  
165 Ibid.  
166 Ibid.  
167 Ibid.  
168 Ibid.  
169 Ibid.  
170 Ibid

tunnels. Reforms and construction manifested themselves on a huge national scale and by 1940 nearly all towns, even small ones, had electricity and power generating plants.”<sup>171</sup>

### **European Insanity:**

As the probability of war in Europe emerged, Iran's government became apprehensive and went to great pains to avoid entanglement in the still emerging European conflict. Eager to abate foreign fear of Iranian partiality, the Iranian government clamped down on opposition<sup>172</sup>, some of whom had begun to show Nazi, Anglophile, Francophile or Russophile/communist 'tendencies'.<sup>173</sup>

In October 1938, still eager to stay out of the still emerging conflict, Iran re-established relations with the United States.<sup>174</sup> In August 23, 1939, with the Announcement of the Nazi-Soviet treaty and the occupation of Poland and the Baltic states, World War II began in Europe. The ensuing British blockade of all German sea commerce dealt a hefty blow to Iran's economy<sup>175</sup>, which significantly depended upon exports including oil for exchange, and upon imports for its industrialisation and development.<sup>176</sup> On September 4, 1939, Iran once again declared its neutrality.<sup>177</sup> Despite these efforts, and despite London's prior assurances to Iran's Prime Minister of “His Majesty's Government's policy of respect for neutral states”<sup>178</sup>, by 1940, Iran found itself in the cross-fire.<sup>179</sup>

“On August 25, 1940 “two black embassy limousines, one with a little British Union Jack and another with a Soviet Hammer & Sickle fluttering on their front fenders, glided through empty streets in northern Tehran at 4:00 a.m. before coming to a slow stop in front of the Iranian Prime Minister's home. Sir Reader Bullard, the Russian-speaking British Minister and Andrei Smirnov, the French-speaking Soviet Ambassador emerged from their limousines, looked at their watches, nodded, shook hands, exchanged pleasantries in Russian and proceeded towards the iron gate of Prime Minister 'Ali Mansur's residence. They rang the bell at exactly 4:15 am. The hurriedly dressed servant upon opening the gate was presented with their business cards and the demand to see the Prime Minister at once. They were ushered into the guest room as the servant rushed to wake up the unfortunate head of government. Prime Minister Mansur dressed in apparent haste appeared shortly, looking dishevelled, surprised and alarmed. His uninvited guests told the Prime Minister in well rehearsed prose that British and Soviet forces had already commenced crossing Iran's borders. They then presented their official notes and departed as abruptly as they had arrived.”<sup>180</sup>

---

171 F. Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 216  
172 Ibid.  
173 Ibid.  
174 F. Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 216  
175 Ibid  
176 Ibid.  
177 Ibid.  
178 F. Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 218  
179 Ibid.  
180 F. Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, p. 217

Further still, and in clear contradiction of the Allies praise for Iran's neutrality, Britain demanded that Iran expel all Germans residing in Iran.<sup>181</sup> The Allies then instead demanded that all Axis citizens working in Iran to be handed over to them as criminals and that their Embassies be closed.<sup>182</sup> The numbers of expatriates living in Iran at the time were approximately 2,590 Britons, 390 Soviets, 690 Germans, 310 Italians, 190 Czechoslovaks, 70 Swiss, 260 Greeks, and 140 Yugoslavs in addition to their families.<sup>183</sup> Adding to Iranian resentment was the reality well known to Reza Shah that many of the German expatriates were Jews who had found a refuge in Iran with their families.<sup>184</sup> This “rounding up” of foreign nationals was not only “in the popular mind a despicable betrayal of the nation's guests, contrary to traditions of honor, hospitality, chivalry, and human decency”<sup>185</sup>, but also a clear contravention of Iran's policy of neutrality. Iranians after all bore no ill will towards its small local German population composed primarily of technocrats who had aided in Iran's development.<sup>186</sup>

When it came to acquiring local currency for the expenses of British occupying troops in Iran, Britain demanded from the Acting Minister of Treasury in Furuqi's Cabinet, trade Iranian currency at the exchange rate of 168 rials per British pound, far below the 68-70 rials per pound official exchange rate of the time.<sup>187</sup> When Iran protested these terms of exchange, the Minister's refusal to “accede to subsidize his country's invaders” was taken as evidence of a lack of cooperation from Iran. Britain had its way, with the final settlement revising the exchange rate from 68 to 140 rials per British pound.<sup>188</sup> At the same time the exchange rate for the US dollar was also revised from 17 rials to 35 rials to the US dollar.<sup>189</sup>

Observers note that Churchill's statements, which won him great support in Britain and the United States, that “small nations must not tie our hands when we are fighting for their rights and freedom,” look different from an Iranian perspective, “who had experienced the indignity of exploitation at the hands of “enemies in friends' clothing.”<sup>190</sup>, and regard such conceptions as “self-serving, prejudicial, dishonest, and profoundly immoral to the Iranians”<sup>191</sup>

### **Oil, Mossadeq and British intrigue:**

In 1949, a new oil agreement favourable to the AIOC was announced, and the then Shah tried to rig the 16th Majlis elections.<sup>192</sup> These actions galvanised opposition, creating a perception amongst Iranians that monarchical power and British exploitation were linked. Large demonstrations ensued and an organisation known as the National Front was formed to coordinate opposition to the Shah and to the British role in Iran.<sup>193</sup> Mosaddeq soon emerged as its 'de facto leader'.<sup>194</sup>

---

181 Ibid.  
 182 F. Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 224  
 183 F. Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 218  
 184 F. Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 224  
 185 Ibid  
 186 Ibid.  
 187 Fariborz Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 224  
 188 Ibid.  
 189 Ibid.  
 190 Ibid.  
 191 Ibid.  
 192 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies. P. 262  
 193 Ibid.  
 194 Ibid.

This movement is described well by Mark J. Gasiorowski in the following quote:

“The National Front was a broad coalition of groups and political parties based mainly on the urban middle and lower classes. Its main components were the progressive, nationalist Iran party, led by Karim Sanjabi and Allahyar Saleh and composed mainly of leftist, anti-Soviet intellectuals; the Toilers' party, led by Mozaffar Baqai and Khalel Maleki and composed of both workers and leftist intellectuals; and the Mojahidin-i-Islam, led by Ayatollah Abul Qassem Kashani and composed mainly of workers, bazaar merchants, and rank-and-file clergy. Associated with the National Front (but not formally affiliated with it) was the Pan-Iranist party, a shadowy, ultra-nationalist group composed mainly of lower class toughs. The National Front also attracted a large number of unaffiliated individuals, particularly among the middle class. The main opposition organisations not affiliated with the National Front were the communist Tudeh party and the Fedayin-i-Islam.”<sup>195</sup>

In 1950, frequent demonstrations against the Shah and the British were led by the National Front, who also enjoyed substantial political gains in this period, managing to elect eight candidates to the 16th Majlis, including Mosaddeq.<sup>196</sup> Once in the Majlis, the National Front deputies continued their campaign for a reduction in the Shah's powers and, after June 1950, campaigned for the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry into the hands of Iranian parliament.<sup>197</sup>

### **1951-53: Oil nationalisation crisis:**

In March 1951, March, the Majlis elected the widely respected statesman and champion of nationalisation, Mohammed Mosaddeq, Prime Minister, and voted to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) and its holdings.<sup>198</sup> Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the late Shah of Iran, appointed Mohammad Mosaddeq to be the new prime minister of Iran.<sup>199</sup> This brought the Iranian parliament into conflict with the programs of both the Shah and the British as by the late 1940s, Mosaddeq had identified himself with two main issues.<sup>200</sup>

- a desire to transfer political power from the royal court to the Majlis<sup>201</sup>,
- a desire to increase Iran's control over its oil industry<sup>202</sup>, which was controlled by the British-owned AIOC<sup>203</sup>,

These two issues were becoming increasingly important cleavages in Iranian domestic politics,<sup>204</sup> and continued to do so in the ensuing decade. These two issues, by this time, had become closely linked<sup>205</sup> as indicated by the widely felt

---

195

Ibid.

196

Ibid.

197

F. Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 22

198

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 262

199

Ibid.

200

Ibid.

201

Ibid.

202

Ibid.

203

Ibid.

204

Ibid.

205

Ibid.

contemporary sentiment in Iran of the Shah as a British puppet.<sup>206</sup> This perception was based at least partially on reality, as the British, through pursuit of their oil interests, had become extremely powerful in Iran, and had used their power to support the Shah<sup>207</sup> particularly against internal challenges to his authority, including democratic movements. Upon his appointment as prime minister on May 1, 1951, Mosaddeq quickly pushed through a bill he had already submitted which called for the nationalisation of the oil industry to the Majlis.<sup>208</sup> This nationalisation law quickly brought Mosaddeq into direct conflict with the British government, which was not prepared to accept nationalisation.<sup>209</sup>

The British made a case for ownership was based on three main factors:

- 1) That the British government owned 50% of the AIOC's stock.<sup>210</sup>
- 2) That Britain had been pivotal in exploring, investing in, and providing technical expertise in developing Iran's oil industry.<sup>211</sup>
- 3) Strategic imperatives, and anticommunism.<sup>212</sup>

This case was pursued was by all means, over a long period.<sup>213</sup>

### **The British Campaign to oust Mossadeq:**

The British responded aggressively with a strategy to re-establish their control over Iran's oil industry by pressuring Mosaddeq into a favourable settlement, or by removing him from office.<sup>214</sup> This strategy began with a series of legal manoeuvres, with Britain seeking International Court of Justice arbitration of the oil dispute.<sup>215</sup> Britain sent a negotiating team to Tehran, with a proposal that recognized the principle of nationalisation but called for the AIOC to market Iran's oil on a 50-50 profit-sharing basis.<sup>216</sup> Mosaddeq rejected this proposal in June 1951.<sup>217</sup> Negotiations were reopened in August under a mission led by Richard Stokes<sup>218</sup> (here after known as the Stokes negotiations), but this proposal differed little from the previous British offer, and was similarly rejected by Mosaddeq.<sup>219</sup> From this point on, the British refused to negotiate directly with Mosaddeq<sup>220</sup>, instead relying upon appeals to the International Court, the United Nations, and on mediation by the United States.<sup>221</sup> These negotiations were carried out under the duress of a trade boycott.<sup>222</sup>

---

206

Ibid.

207

Ibid.

208

Ibid.

209

Ibid.

210

Ibid

211

Ibid.

212

Ibid.

213

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies.

214

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies. p. 263

215

Ibid.

216

Ibid.

217

Ibid.

218

Ibid.

219

Ibid.

220

Ibid.

221

Ibid.

222

Ibid.



Another facet of Britain's strategy to undermine Mosaddeq was the imposition economic sanctions on Iran.<sup>223</sup> Beginning with production slowdowns by the AIOC in May 1951 and prevention of tankers from loading oil at Abadan<sup>224</sup>, but by the end of July, evolving into a full-fledged blockade, which was joined by the other major oil companies.<sup>225</sup> With the collapse of the aforementioned Stokes negotiations, the British owned AIOC announced that it would take legal action against anyone buying Iranian oil.<sup>226</sup> Britain also sought to deprive the newly formed National Iranian Oil Company of skilled labour and expertise, asking its European allies to discourage their citizens from seeking employment with the company.<sup>227</sup> In early September, Britain began an embargo of exports to Iran of iron, steel, sugar, oil processing equipment, and goods that could be resold for dollars.<sup>228</sup> Twenty thousand oil workers were laid off by the AIOC at Abadan.<sup>229</sup> Mossadeq responded by putting them on the government payroll.<sup>230</sup> Sterling conversion privileges were cancelled and other financial restrictions were imposed which violated a 'memorandum of understanding' between the two governments.<sup>231</sup>

Britain also engaged in military manoeuvres in the region<sup>232</sup>, in attempts to intimidate Iran. A British paratroop brigade was sent to Cyprus in mid May and the cruiser Mauritius was sent to Abadan<sup>233</sup>, and British land and air forces in the region were also strengthened.<sup>234</sup> Mosaddeq responded to these actions with an announcement that the first shot fired against Iran would "signal the start of World War III."<sup>235</sup> This did little to dissuade the British military build up and exercises, as four British destroyers joined the Mauritius in September and held firing practice near Abadan.<sup>236</sup>

The other component of the British strategy was to try to remove Mosaddeq from office.<sup>237</sup> This goal was to be pursued mainly through the use of covert political action undertaken with the help of a network of pro-British politicians, businessmen, military officers, and religious figures.<sup>238</sup> Including, among others, Sayyid Zia Tabataba'i, whom the British sought to install as prime minister and Jamal Emami, who headed a pro-British faction in the Majlis.<sup>239</sup>

In this period, and beyond, the removal of Mosaddeq was viewed as "objective number one.", and especially after the collapse of the Stokes negotiations, "all available means were used in attempting to oust Mosaddeq."<sup>240</sup>

---

223 Ibid.  
 224 Ibid.  
 225 Ibid.  
 226 Ibid.  
 227 Ibid.  
 228 Ibid.  
 229 Ibid.  
 230 Ibid.  
 231 Ibid.  
 232 Ibid.  
 233 Ibid.  
 234 Ibid.  
 235 Ibid.  
 236 Ibid.  
 237 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies. p. 263  
 238 Ibid.  
 239 Ibid.  
 240 Ibid.

British pressure upon the Shah to dismiss Mosaddeq was constant throughout this period. The Shah was 'sympathetic' but 'remained paralyzed with indecision.'<sup>241</sup> Britain, however, was fully committed. Behind the scenes the Foreign Office was developing a set of guidelines for dealing with Mosaddeq's successor, presumed at this stage to be Sayyid Zia.<sup>242</sup> This included a loan from the AIOC and the agreement of the return of the AIOC under a different name.<sup>243</sup> The Minister of Fuel and Power optimistically speculated that these measures might just enable Britain to avoid full nationalisation.<sup>244</sup>

These efforts were taken one step further in early September by the British after the receipt of a report from the British Ambassador in Tehran, Sir Francis Shepherd, claiming that the Shah was in favour of a change of government and the opposition was about to overthrow Mosaddeq.<sup>245</sup> The Foreign Office announced that the oil negotiations had been suspended and that it saw no hope of reaching an agreement with Mosaddeq, a statement apparently "designed to encourage the opposition group headed by Sayyid Zia"<sup>246</sup> The actions of the British government discussed above were also accompanied by a new round of economic sanctions and military activities<sup>247</sup> threatening Iran.

Mosaddeq responded with accusations, well grounded in reality it would seem, that the British were trying to overthrow him.<sup>248</sup> But despite vigorous protests from the U.S. (who argued that Mosaddeq was "anxious to reach an agreement,"<sup>249</sup> and advised the British to negotiate with him),<sup>250</sup> the British continued to increase their pressure on Mosaddeq.<sup>251</sup> On September 20, following the expulsion of British workers from the oilfields, plans were made to invade Abadan.<sup>252</sup> The Iranian naval commander at Abadan was persuaded by the British to put up only token resistance.<sup>253</sup> When British Prime Minister Attlee informed U.S. President Truman of the invasion plan<sup>254</sup>, Truman responded that the United States would not support an invasion, again recommending negotiations.<sup>255</sup> In light of this statement, Attlee told his cabinet that "in view of the attitude of the United States Government, [he did not] think it would be expedient to use force to maintain the British staff in Abadan."<sup>256</sup>

The oil dispute was then brought before the United Nations, where Mosaddeq received a warm reception from U.S. officials and enjoyed significant support in the international community.<sup>257</sup> Still seeking to reverse the nationalisation law or to oust Mosaddeq, but with their main candidate for the premiership by now thoroughly discredited, the British began to search for new options in Iran.<sup>258</sup>

---

241 Ibid.  
242 Ibid.  
243 Ibid.  
244 Ibid.  
245 Ibid.  
246 Ibid.  
247 Ibid.  
248 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran* International Journal of Middle East Studies. p. 265.  
249 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran* International Journal of Middle East Studies. p. 264  
250 Ibid.  
251 Ibid.  
252 Ibid.  
253 Ibid.  
254 Ibid.  
255 Ibid.  
256 Ibid.  
257 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran* International Journal of Middle East Studies. p. 268  
258 Ibid

They felt that they had found such a candidate in the form of a man named Ahmad Qavam.<sup>259</sup> Though the British had rejected his overtures in late 1951 and early 1952 by March 1952 Julian Amery, a Conservative MP with considerable experience in the Middle East, was sent by the British to Paris to meet with him unofficially.<sup>260</sup>

In the ensuing discussions Qavam presented a list of possible cabinet ministers to the British for approval<sup>261</sup> and reached an agreement on a plan to end the oil dispute, telling George Middleton, the British Charge in Tehran that he would "ensure that the traditionally cordial relations [between Iran and Britain] were restored, that he wanted [the British] back as partners in the oil industry, that the British must return", and so on.<sup>262</sup> The British responded favourably to his proposals, and assistance was given to Qavam in the form of promises of support from pro-British Majlis members.<sup>263</sup> Seeking to further increase his international support, Qavam subsequently met in early June with U.S. Ambassador Loy Henderson.<sup>264</sup> Opinions in the U.S were mixed, with Henderson being inclined support Qavam as 'the best bet' as a successor to Mosaddeq, but State Department officials were less enthusiastic.<sup>265</sup>

By this time the British were also involved in covert efforts through the Rashidians to create friction among the leaders of the National Front.<sup>266</sup> It is, of course, impossible to determine how much impact these British actions had in creating tensions, but they may have played a significant role.<sup>267</sup> Corroboratory (by correlation) tensions emerged in this period. For instance at the same time Mosaddeq began to criticize Kashani's attempts to rig the 17th Majlis elections.<sup>268</sup> Tensions also emerged between Mosaddeq and Hossein Makki, another key National Front figure.<sup>269</sup> Robin Zaehner, an Oxford professor working for MI6 (the British intelligence service) in Iran at this time, claimed that this tension was "created and directed by the brothers Rashidian."<sup>270</sup>

Mosaddeq was evidently aware of forces arrayed against him<sup>271</sup>, retaliating suddenly on July 16 (after clashing with the Shah over control of the military) by resigning from office.<sup>272</sup> When the Shah then appointed Qavam prime minister, massive demonstrations were organized by the National Front, calling for Mosaddeq's return.<sup>273</sup> Although these demonstrations became violent; (at least 69 people were killed and over 750 were injured), the Shah did not bring the full force of police to crush the demonstrations.<sup>274</sup> It would seem that doing so would have proven extremely problematic (if possible), as Qavam lacked a strong popular following in Iran, and Mosaddeq's supporters effectively dominated the streets of Tehran and other cities.<sup>275</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July Mosaddeq was triumphantly swept back into office.<sup>276</sup>

---

259 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 265

260 Ibid.

261 Ibid.

262 Ibid.

263 Ibid.

264 Ibid.

265 Ibid.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid.

269 Ibid.

270 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 265

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

274 Ibid.

275 Ibid.

276 Ibid.

These events changed perceptions of both Iran and Mossadeq in the eyes of foreign powers, who responded negatively. Middleton reported that the court had been "fatally weakened," and that henceforth it might not be possible "to stop the drift towards communism."<sup>277</sup> He described July 21 as "a turning point in Iranian history". Previously the small ruling class determined the prime minister, with [the] Shah as umpire. Now the consent of the mob is the decisive factor."<sup>278</sup> The British and their supporters were panic-stricken.<sup>279</sup>

The 'Qavam episode' also created serious problems within the National Front,<sup>280</sup> with Mossadeq quarrelling with Kashani and other National Front leaders over cabinet appointments and over Mosaddeq's request for emergency powers.<sup>281</sup> The Tudeh party was also becoming increasingly powerful in this period.<sup>282</sup> Mossadeq desired to contain the growth of this movement, and efforts were being made by the Iranian government to 'bring it under control'.<sup>283</sup> In this period, the Pan-Iranist party began to split into factions.<sup>284</sup> Morale in the army also weakened, particularly as a consequence of purges of the officer corps conducted by Mosaddeq's government<sup>285</sup> These were presumably motivated by a quest for loyalty, but apparently undermined these ends.

Fazlollah Zahedi set a spectacular example. He was a retired general and long time nationalist, a member of the Senate and also the head of the Retired Officers' Association, who had been arrested by the British in 1941 for planning "a concentrated move against allied troops in Persia."<sup>286</sup>, had also been a minister in Mosaddeq's first cabinet and had supported the National Front until the July uprisings.<sup>287</sup> However the resurgence of Tudeh activity and the disintegration of the military apparently drove him into opposition.<sup>288</sup> He began to plot with a group of military officers and the Rashidians against Mossadeq.<sup>289</sup> This plot began shortly after Mosaddeq returned to office on July 21.<sup>290</sup> A Kashani emissary and National Front leaders Makki, Baqai, and Abol Hassan Haerizadeh approached Zahedi and expressed their dissatisfaction with Mosaddeq.<sup>291</sup> Zahedi apparently gained Kashani's support in exchange for a role in the selection of post-coup cabinet members.<sup>292</sup> From this point on, Kashani, Makki, Baqai, and Haerizadeh were among Mosaddeq's staunchest opponents, working against Mosaddeq in loose collaboration with Zahedi.<sup>293</sup>

Looking for British support, Zahedi met with a British embassy official and 'expressed his opposition to the growth of U.S. influence in Iran'.<sup>294</sup> The embassy officer cabled London for advice, saying "I don't want to set [the

---

277

Ibid.

278

Ibid.

279

Ibid.

280

Ibid.

281

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 266

282

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 265

283

Ibid

284

Mark J. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 266

285

Ibid.

286

Ibid.

287

Ibid.

288

Ibid.

289

Ibid.

290

Ibid.

291

Ibid.

292

Ibid.

293

Ibid.

294

Ibid.

Rashidians] off working up a coup d'etat and then have to call it off."<sup>295</sup> After spending August and September trying to build support,<sup>296</sup> Zahedi asked the British for assurances that they would not oppose him, would obtain U.S. acquiescence in the plot, and would agree to an oil settlement on terms similar to those reached with Qavam.<sup>297</sup> Assistance was granted.<sup>298</sup> (Middleton reported this to London and was told to give Zahedi assistance.<sup>299</sup>) Arms were provided to the allied Bakhtiari by MI6.<sup>300</sup> Henderson, the U.S Ambassador, however was less committal than his British counterpart Middleton about Zahedi.<sup>301</sup> On September 8, Henderson was told by Zahedi's people that 'Mosaddeq could not stop the communists, but that a government which could would soon come to power'.<sup>302</sup>

As with the Qavam plot, Mosaddeq evidently learned of Zahedi's plans and moved pre-emptively to stop him before they could be implemented<sup>303</sup>. Arrest warrants were issued on October 13 for the Rashidians and for an ally of Zahedi, General Abdul Hossein Hejazi, who had been dismissed in August as head of the military college.<sup>304</sup> General Aryana was dismissed from the army in connection with the plot, and Zahedi was saved from arrest only by parliamentary immunity.<sup>305</sup> Three days later, on October 16, Mosaddeq broke diplomatic relations with Britain.<sup>306</sup> Lacking a base for operations inside Iran, the British henceforth were forced to rely on the United States to deal with Mosaddeq.<sup>307</sup>

#### **The involvement of the United States:**

In comparison with countries such as Germany, Italy, Greece, and China, Iran was not a high priority concern to U.S. policymakers in the late 1940s.<sup>308</sup> The U.S. saw little significant economic interests in Iran at this time, and with the Tudeh party having been seriously weakened in the 1945-1946 Azerbaijan crisis reducing chances of Soviet influence, Iran was seen from the U.S as relatively stable.<sup>309</sup> Its long border with the Soviet Union made Iran of some interest for espionage and other covert activities, but on a much smaller scale than similar activities elsewhere and of little effect on Iran itself.<sup>310</sup>

This began to change in 1950, with the gradual re-emergence of the Tudeh party, and in the wake of growing unrest caused by the oil dispute, and a severe recession within Iran U.S. policymakers became increasingly concerned about Iran,<sup>311</sup> particularly with the possibility of closer Iranian relations with the Soviet Union<sup>312</sup> In U.S.

---

295

Ibid.

296

Ibid.

297

Ibid.

298

Ibid.

299

Ibid.

300

Ibid.

301

Ibid.

302

Ibid.

303

Ibid.

304

Ibid.

305

Ibid.

306

Ibid.

307

Ibid.

308

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 266

309

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, p. 267

310

Ibid.

311

Ibid.

312

Ibid.

foreign policy circles, Iran was described as "dangerous and explosive," and a possible "second China."<sup>313</sup> and "steps were taken to remedy the situation".<sup>314</sup> In this period U.S. interference in Iran increased accordingly. The initial steps were:

- 1) A \$23 million per year military aid agreement was signed.<sup>315</sup>
- 2) A small Point Four aid program was begun.<sup>316</sup>
- 3) A \$25 million Export-Import Bank loan was approved (although never actually granted) and a \$10 million International Bank loan request was supported.<sup>317</sup>
- 4) The CIA and embassy staffs in Tehran were increased.<sup>318</sup>
- 5) Henry Grady, (who had played a key role in the Greek Civil War), was named Ambassador to Iran.<sup>319</sup>

After Mosaddeq's nationalisation law was enacted, the Truman administration pursued two main goals regarding Iran.<sup>320</sup> Firstly, Iran was to be 'kept in the Western camp at all costs'.<sup>321</sup> Secondly, 'stability was to be maintained in the world oil market'.<sup>322</sup> At this stage, these goals did not call for the undermining or overthrow of the Mosaddeq government,<sup>323</sup> with U.S. officials stating that they had "no intention... of challenging Iran's sovereignty,"<sup>324</sup> and frequently expressing support for Iran's independence.<sup>325</sup>

Although covert actions were undertaken in Iran by the Truman administration (see below), at this stage the program was designed to weaken the Soviet position in Iran rather than that of Mosaddeq.<sup>326</sup> The official policy of the U.S. toward Iran under Truman was one of support for the Mosaddeq government, and the pursuit of an end to the oil dispute through diplomatic means.<sup>327</sup> U.S. officials were, however, aware of British covert activities against Mosaddeq in this period and engaged in discussions about these activities with their British counterparts.<sup>328</sup> One presumes that Mossadeq was never made privy to this information, and wonders how this would work if the roles of Iran and Britain were reversed.

Furthermore, the U.S. also undertook actions to reduce the impacts of the standoff upon its ally, Britain.<sup>329</sup> For example, soon after the AIOC was nationalised, in an effort to ease the effect of the British oil blockade on Iran on U.S. allies, U.S. officials developed a plan where U.S. oil companies were asked to provide oil voluntarily to those allies adversely affected by the blockade.<sup>330</sup> Under this plan approximately 46 million barrels of oil were delivered

---

313 Ibid.  
314 Ibid.  
315 Ibid.  
316 Ibid.  
317 Ibid.  
318 Ibid.  
319 Ibid.  
320 Ibid.  
321 Ibid.  
322 Ibid.  
323 Ibid.  
324 Ibid.  
325 Ibid.  
326 Ibid.  
327 Ibid.  
328 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 268  
329 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 267  
330 Ibid.

in the first year of the blockade.<sup>331</sup> This figure was estimated to be equal to 20% of Iran's total 1950 production.<sup>332</sup> Although this plan was undertaken with the aim of ensuring that oil would be available to U.S. allies in the event of a general war, it also strengthened the British blockade, and apparently inadvertently helping to undermine both the Iranian economy and the Mosaddeq government.<sup>333</sup>

At the same time, diplomatic efforts to try to resolve the oil dispute continued, with U.S. officials once again calling for a negotiated settlement and pledging not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs.<sup>334</sup> The British were advised to pay "lip service" to the principle of nationalisation, accept a 50-50 division of profits, and refrain from using force.<sup>335</sup> British officials were "bothered"<sup>336</sup> and "annoyed"<sup>337</sup> at the "American attitude of relative indifference."<sup>338</sup>, as the U.S continued to pursue a conciliatory role.<sup>339</sup>

The U.S. came up with a plan that recognized Iran's desire for an end to British control over its oil resources and distanced the United States considerably from the British.<sup>340</sup> The establishment of a consortium to market oil purchased from the NIOC was proposed,<sup>341</sup> through a consortium made up of Royal Dutch Shell and other major oil companies.<sup>342</sup> Anti-trust considerations led the U.S. majors to back out so a similar package was arranged involving U.S. independents.<sup>343</sup> When this fell apart in 1952, a third plan was worked out in which anti-trust laws were to be waived to permit the participation of the U.S. majors,<sup>344</sup> this package was rejected by Mosaddeq in late 1952, but was later agreed to in essence by his successor in 1954.<sup>345</sup>

Coincident with these diplomatic activities, however, the United States increased its covert actions aimed at surveillance and direct interference in the political process in Iran.<sup>346</sup> CIA involvement in Iran was not new. Since the late 1940s, the CIA had been carrying out five basic types of covert activity in Iran:

- 1) 'Stay-behind networks' had been organized among the tribes in southern Iran to conduct guerrilla warfare in the event of a Soviet invasion.<sup>347</sup>
- 2) 'Escape and evasion routes' had been set up for use in a major war.<sup>348</sup>
- 3) 'Cross- border espionage' and subversion operations' were being launched into the Soviet Union using Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and other ethnic groups living on both sides of the border.<sup>349</sup>

---

331 Ibid.  
332 Ibid.  
333 Ibid.  
334 Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 268  
335 Ibid.  
336 Ibid.  
337 Ibid.  
338 Ibid.  
339 Ibid.  
340 Ibid.  
341 Ibid.  
342 Ibid.  
343 Ibid.  
344 Ibid.  
345 Ibid.  
346 Ibid.  
347 Ibid.  
348 Ibid.  
349 Ibid.

- 4) Soviet activities in Iran were being monitored with espionage and counter-espionage operations.<sup>350</sup>
- 5) An operation codenamed BEDAMN had been started in 1948 to counter Soviet and Tudeh influence in Iran.<sup>351</sup>

This operation (BEDAMN) was a propaganda and political action program run through a network headed by two Iranians, codenamed Nerren and Cilley, and was apparently funded at \$1 million per year.<sup>352</sup> CIA participants have described this as "an orchestrated program of destabilization"<sup>353</sup> and "an all-out effort."<sup>354</sup>

It was comprehensive attempt to undermine Mossadeq. Propaganda activities included anticommunist articles and cartoons planted in Iranian newspapers. Books<sup>355</sup> and leaflets critical of the Soviet Union and the Tudeh party were written and distributed<sup>356</sup>; rumours were started, and so on.<sup>357</sup> BEDAMN programs also "involved both direct attacks on Soviet allies in Iran and so-called black operations designed to turn Iranians against the Tudeh"<sup>358</sup>. 'Attacks on Soviet allies' typically involved hiring street gangs to break up Tudeh rallies and funding right-wing, anti-communist organisations such as the Somka and Pan-Iranist parties who fought Tudeh mobs in the streets of Tehran.<sup>359</sup> 'Black operations' included the infiltration of agents provocateur into Tudeh demonstrations to provoke outrageous acts, paying religious figures to denounce the Tudeh as anti-Islamic, and organized attacks on mosques and public figures in the name of the Tudeh.<sup>360</sup> These activities were complemented by less controversial actions of U.S. embassy staff and the U.S. Information Agency<sup>361</sup> aimed at the same goal.

BEDAMN also set out to weaken the National Front by undermining its 'mass base', which consisted mainly of organisations such as the Toilers' and Pan- Iranist parties<sup>362</sup> and crowds led by popular figures such as Kashani.<sup>363</sup> They also used propaganda depicting Mosaddeq as a corrupt and immoral person who was exploiting Kashani<sup>364</sup> to attempt to detach him and his followers from the National Front.<sup>365</sup>

At the same time the U.S. also sought to support a mullah named Mohammad Taqi Falsafi to try to build a clerical alternative to Kashani<sup>366</sup> through the provision of finance.<sup>367</sup> Money was also given to other mullahs, who were encouraged to adopt a more fundamentalist line to drive them away from Mosaddeq.<sup>368</sup>

---

350 Ibid  
 351 Ibid.  
 352 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran. p. 272.  
 353 Ibid.  
 354 Ibid.  
 355 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran. p. 269  
 356 Ibid.  
 357 Ibid.  
 358 Ibid.  
 359 Ibid.  
 360 Ibid  
 361 Ibid.  
 362 Ibid.  
 363 Ibid.  
 364 Ibid.  
 365 Ibid.  
 366 M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran. p. 269  
 367 Ibid.  
 368 Ibid.



Turning the Toilers and the Pan-Iranists against Mosaddeq and provoke splits in these organisations was also pursued through the provision of finance.<sup>369</sup> Approaches were made to leaders in these groups by Iranians in the BEDAMN network who disguised their CIA connections.<sup>370</sup> In a particularly noteworthy case, a CIA contract officer approached Baqai in September or October of 1952 and encouraged him to break with Mosaddeq. Baqai was subsequently given money. Similar approaches may have been made to Kashani, Makki, and Ayatollah Sayyid Mohammad Behbehani.<sup>371</sup>

It is extremely difficult to know how much impact U.S. covert action had in affecting outcomes in this period, and to what degree BEDAMN was influential. Major Iranian political figures at this time were extremely opportunistic and ambitious, and could have had many reasons for turning against Mosaddeq. This was especially true of Kashani, Baqai, and Makki. Furthermore, the Rashidians were carrying out similar activities at this time on behalf of the British. The CIA officers who directed BEDAMN are unsure of its impact. One described it as "important" in encouraging Kashani and Baqai to split with Mosaddeq, while another said it was "limited" in scale. While the CIA thus cannot be credited exclusively with provoking these splits in the National Front, it may well have had a significant role. For whatever mix of reasons, by November 1952, Kashani, Baqai, Makki, and several other National Front leaders had turned against Mosaddeq.<sup>372</sup> Similarly, the Pan-Iranists had split into pro- and anti-Mosaddeq factions by this time, and Khalil Maleki and his followers in the Toilers' party had split with Baqai and formed a pro-Mosaddeq organisation known as the Third Force.<sup>373</sup>

It is of significant interest to the wider context of this thesis, being pertinent to Neorealist presumptions regarding sovereignty and the unitary nature of states, to determine who authorized these attacks against Mosaddeq and the National Front. As has been already discussed, the official position of the Truman administration at this time involved no formal acknowledgment of a desire to undermine Mosaddeq and his government. Quite the opposite. The stated policy was one of support for Mosaddeq.<sup>374</sup> The author cited asserts that the State Department, headed at the time by Dean Acheson, 'unquestionably followed this policy of support for Mossadeq.'<sup>375</sup> Based on this observation, the author cited argues that it thus appears that the decision to undermine Mosaddeq through BEDAMN was taken within the CIA itself.<sup>376</sup> This brings into question the idea of the sovereign monopoly on foreign relations, and the extent to which nation states can rely upon inter-governmental security guarantees. Since the CIA officials with responsibility for covert operations at this time are now either dead or 'unable to recall' (whatever this may mean) who might have authorized these actions, it is impossible to determine where this apparently "rogue elephant" component of BEDAMN originated in the CIA chain of command. However it seems entirely possible that these efforts were undertaken without sovereign knowledge or approval, against stated policy. If this is the case, this serves as a powerful critique of Neorealist assumptions regarding sovereignty, for if a sovereign can not effectively monopolise the foreign policy instruments of his or her nation state, its state can not be considered a unitary actor.

---

369

Ibid.

370

Ibid.

371

Ibid.

372

Ibid.

373

Ibid.

374

M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*. p. 266

375

M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*. p. 268

376

Ibid.

## The Plot Thickens:

By November 1952 the British position in Iran had become very weak, and the staff of the British embassy left Tehran, bringing an end to a protracted period of Britain as a dominant actor in Iran.<sup>377</sup> This is not to say Britain found itself completely without influence in Iran. It retained links with the Rashidian network and several deep-cover operatives had been left behind.<sup>378</sup> Never-the-less after trying every tool in the kit to lever the door open, Britain found itself left with fewer options to achieve its aims than ever before. However, a 'solution' for Britain loomed just over the horizon.

Once again, Britain sought U.S. support where it found itself unable to achieve its aims, with Christopher Montague Woodhouse, the chief MI6 officer in Iran at the time being sent to Washington to seek U.S. support for a tentative plan to overthrow Mosaddeq<sup>379</sup> through a coordinated uprising to be engineered by the Rashidians and certain Bakhtiari tribal leaders, with or without the Shah's approval.<sup>380</sup> Although the British had been conspiring with Zahedi since August, they also put forward several other names as possible leaders of the coup.<sup>381</sup> This underlines a perspective that even co-operation with a major power is a dangerous strategy in this situation which seems to reassemble for these Iranian actors an anarchic international environment full of untrustworthy and unreliable actors. This perspective is consistent with Neorealist theory in its assumptions regarding anarchy and self help.

Woodhouse took his plan first to the CIA where opinion was far from united. Frank Wisner, the head of CIA covert operations, Allen Dulles, Wisner's deputy, and Kermit Roosevelt, Wisner's Middle East division chief, responded favourably to the coup proposal.<sup>382</sup> However, lower-level Iran specialists in the CIA were opposed to the idea, as was the CIA station chief in Tehran, who viewed it as "putting U.S. support behind Anglo-French colonialism."<sup>383</sup> Discussions were also held with State Department officials, in which Woodhouse was told that Truman (the still sitting U.S. President at the time) would not agree to the plan, but that Eisenhower, who had just been elected President, probably would.<sup>384</sup>

Zahedi continued to intrigue in this period, although the departure of the British undoubtedly hampered his efforts.<sup>385</sup> Arms and money continued to flow into the Bakhtiari region, where Abul Qasem Bakhtiari was trying to enlist the support of the other khans.<sup>386</sup> Zahedi reportedly promised to establish a "Free South in Iran," where the Bakhtiari would be given autonomy under the leadership of Abul Qasem.<sup>387</sup> This dynamic of internal division and the role it can play in external security fits well within, and emphasises critiques of Neorealism's firm delineation between realms of intra and inter state politics. This idea and its relevance to the questions at hand will be further explored in a future chapter on Iran's internal dynamics.

---

<sup>377</sup> Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat* in p. 270

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

In January 1953, Zahedi's Majlis allies, led by Kashani, instigated a major dispute in the Majlis, apparently trying to create conditions that would lead to Mosaddeq's ouster.<sup>388</sup> This effort came to an end on January 19, when Mosaddeq received a 59 to 1 vote of confidence.<sup>389</sup> In mid-February, Zahedi approached several army generals about a possible coup.<sup>390</sup> He notified the U.S. and identified his probable cabinet through his son, Ardeshir, who the author in question asserts "told U.S. embassy officials that he was about to seize power."<sup>391</sup> At about the same time, a group of Bakhtiari tribesmen led by Abul Qasem and members of the Retired Officers' Association attacked an army column in Khuzestan province, causing heavy casualties.<sup>392</sup> Whether or not these two events are related is hard to know, but Mosaddeq's response was to (attempt to) arrest Zahedi and several others, and threatening to resign.<sup>393</sup> When the Shah then announced an unexpected foreign vacation, widespread unrest fermented.<sup>394</sup>

In this unrest, a large anti-Mosaddeq crowd organized by Kashani, the Somka party, and pro-Zahedi military officers, after gathering at the Shah's palace, marched toward Mosaddeq's home, calling for his removal.<sup>395</sup> Violent clashes took place with a larger pro-Mosaddeq crowd.<sup>396</sup> At this point the perception in U.S. embassy reports was that the "present probability is that the Mosaddeq Government will fall."<sup>397</sup> Mosaddeq, however avoided the hostile crowd, and loyal army units eventually restored order.<sup>398</sup>

A similar incident occurred in late April, when the chief of the National Police, General Afshartous, was kidnapped and murdered.<sup>399</sup> The kidnapping was planned by MI6 with the goal of provoking a coup, but they had (apparently) not intended that Afshartous be murdered.<sup>400</sup> This act provoked outrage against Zahedi, Baqai, and several of their associates (including Kashani's son) who were each implicated in the killing.<sup>401</sup> Warrants were issued for their arrest.<sup>402</sup> Kashani used his position as president of the Majlis to help Zahedi avoid arrest by giving him 'bast', or sanctuary, in the Majlis.<sup>403</sup> Baqai was protected by parliamentary immunity.<sup>404</sup> Mosaddeq charged that the conspirator's plans extended beyond the incident in question, alleging that they had also intended to kill the Iranian Defence and Foreign Ministers and that their goal was to install Baqai as Prime Minister.<sup>405</sup> The murder of Afshartous dealt a severe blow to the morale of the National Front, amongst whom he had been regarded as brave, uncorrupted, and staunchly loyal to both Mosaddeq and the nationalist cause.<sup>406</sup> This event clearly demonstrated to them the ruthlessness of the conspirators.<sup>407</sup>

---

388 Ibid.  
389 Ibid.  
390 Ibid.  
391 Ibid.  
392 Ibid.  
393 Ibid.  
394 Ibid.  
395 Ibid.  
396 Ibid.  
397 Ibid.  
398 Ibid.  
399 Ibid.  
400 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat* in p. 271  
401 Ibid.  
402 Ibid.  
403 Ibid.  
404 Ibid.  
405 Ibid.  
406 Ibid.  
407 Ibid.

These events led to increasing turmoil that gripped Iran, and throughout this period (after the February riots), society was highly polarized. Rumours of a coup circulated in the army and unrest continued among the Bakhtiari.<sup>408</sup> A pro-Mosaddeq Qashqai tribe had made plans to attack the Bakhtiari and March on Tehran in the event of a coup.<sup>409</sup> Battle lines were drawn. The Tudeh party was very active in the February riots and remained so in the weeks that followed, resulting in a wave of arrests of Tudeh by Mosaddeq.<sup>410</sup> Despite increased visibility, it seems that the Tudeh did not gain in strength during this period.<sup>411</sup> More significantly, Mosaddeq's leadership of the nationalist movement came under increasing pressure.<sup>412</sup> As discussed above, several key National Front figures such as Kashani, Baqai, and Makki had been conspiring against Mosaddeq since the summer of 1952.<sup>413</sup> In-as-much as these figures held populist sway, they weakened Mosaddeq's base of popular support.<sup>414</sup> The defection of these leaders into the opposition also weakened Mosaddeq's hand in the Majlis.<sup>415</sup> For example, in January 1953 Kashani, as speaker of the Majlis, tried to oust Mosaddeq.<sup>416</sup> After the incidents of February and April 1953, further attacks against Mosaddeq were made in the Majlis in debates regarding the causes of the February incident and Baqai's part in the murder of Afshartous.<sup>417</sup>

By the summer of 1953, the National front was divided between Mosaddeq and his supporters in the Iran party and the Third Force, on the one hand, and Zahedi, Kashani, Baqai, and their allies, on the other.<sup>418</sup> It was at this stage that the new Eisenhower administration began the move to a policy of a U.S. supported coup.<sup>419</sup> As mentioned above, top level CIA officials were already of the view that a coup was 'necessary' (in their interests),<sup>420</sup> and unlike previous administrations, the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles brother to Allen Dulles, was also in favour of the coup. These two had been discussing the idea since the November 1952 elections.<sup>421</sup> On February 3, 1953, only two weeks after Eisenhower's inauguration a decision was taken to develop and implement a plan to overthrow Mosaddeq and install Zahedi in a meeting between top U.S. and British officials.<sup>422</sup> Zahedi had previously been described as "unscrupulous" and "an opportunist" in Washington. In this period, he was apparently viewed more favourably "as a strong figure who could take decisive steps to bring Iran back firmly into the Western camp<sup>423</sup>", or at least as good enough to achieve this. CIA officers met frequently with Zahedi in this period, and it seems likely that financial assistance was provided to Zahedi.<sup>424</sup> Close collaboration between the British and Americans ensued,<sup>425</sup> and a plan was finalized in a State Department meeting on June 25.<sup>426</sup>

---

408

Ibid.

409

Ibid.

410

Ibid

411

Ibid.

412

Ibid.

413

Ibid.

414

Ibid.

415

Ibid.

416

Ibid.

417

Ibid.

418

Ibid.

419

Ibid

420

Ibid.

421

Ibid.

422

Ibid.

423

Ibid.

424

Ibid.

425

Ibid.

426

M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran* p. 272

## Operation Ajax:

This planned operation was given the codename AJAX. It consisted of four main components:

- 1) The propaganda and political action capabilities of BEDAMN were to be focused immediately against Mosaddeq.<sup>427</sup> and one would presume were to be intensified.
- 2) Secondly, opposition figures were to be encouraged to create a disturbance that would dramatize the situation by taking bast (sanctuary, asylum<sup>428</sup>) in the Majlis.<sup>429</sup>
- 3) Thirdly, since the Shah had not yet been consulted, his agreement to dismiss Mosaddeq and appoint Zahedi was pursued.<sup>430</sup>
- 4) Finally, the support from key military officers was sought for the planned coup.<sup>431</sup> A CIA paramilitary specialist with recent experience in Korea was subsequently brought in for "liaison with the Iranian military officers involved in the plot."<sup>432</sup>

Somewhere in the development of this plot, the idea of a Bakhtiari uprising was dropped, presumably linked to the arrest of Abul Qasem.<sup>433</sup> The U.S. continued discussions with the Rashidians, who had been turned over to the CIA by MI6 when the British left Tehran in November 1952.<sup>434</sup> In June and July of 1953, with near daily demonstrations by both opposition and Mossaddeq supporters, as well as demonstrations by the Tudeh party.<sup>435</sup> In the Majlis disputes continued between pro and anti Mosaddeq factions over issues such as the February riots, Baqai's role in the Afshartous killing, control over the army, and elections for a new speaker.<sup>436</sup> The Majlis became a scene of fist fights in early June<sup>437</sup> and the situation for Mosaddeq was becoming tenuous. On July 1 Moazami Abdullah, a Mosaddeq supporter, was elected by a vote of 41 to 31 to replace Kashani as speaker,<sup>438</sup> in what was a major victory for Mosaddeq over his opponents.<sup>439</sup>

After further attacks by the opposition, a group of Mosaddeq supporters resigned en masse from the Majlis in protest.<sup>440</sup> In late July, a group of deputies loyal to Haerizadeh and Baqai took bast in the Majlis. With the Majlis thus paralyzed, Mosaddeq decided to close it and seek new elections.<sup>441</sup> Because of the opposition's threat to prevent a quorum, Mosaddeq was forced to hold a public referendum on the issue in early August.<sup>442</sup> Suggestions that the referendum was rigged caused a great public outcry against Mosaddeq.<sup>443</sup>

---

427

Ibid.

428

Definition accessed on 10/05/08 from

<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/index.isc?Article=http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v3f8/v3f8a055.html>

429

Ibid

430

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran p. 272

431

Ibid

432

Ibid.

433

Ibid.

434

M. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran p. 274

435

Ibid.

436

Mark J. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran p. 272.

437

Ibid

438

Ibid

439

Ibid

440

Ibid.

441

Ibid.

442

Ibid.

443

Ibid.

## The Big Push:

By this time the United States had thoroughly committed itself to undermining Mosaddeq through BEDAMN which was responsible for some of the demonstrations and Majlis activity that plagued Mosaddeq at this time.<sup>444</sup> As with the anti-Mosaddeq BEDAMN activities described previously, it is impossible to gage how effective these actions really were; but it seems safe to assume that they were significant.<sup>445</sup>

Several US efforts were made in this period to persuade the Shah to back Zahedi.<sup>446</sup> Henderson met with the Shah on May 30.<sup>447</sup> The Shah told him that Zahedi was not an "intellectual giant,"<sup>448</sup> but that he would be acceptable if he had broad support, would come to power through parliamentary means, and would be given "massive economic aid" by the United States or Britain.<sup>449</sup>

A second attempt was made in late July. A U.S. Army colonel and an MI6 officer were sent to France to locate Princess Ashraf, the Shah's twin sister, who was gambling at the casinos in Deauville. Ashraf agreed to speak to her brother after receiving an unauthorised promise that he would be supported in the style to which he was accustomed by the United States if the coup failed.<sup>450</sup> Ashraf arrived in Tehran on July 25, but Mosaddeq prevented her from seeing her brother.<sup>451</sup> A third attempt was made a week later by U.S. Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, who had commanded the Iranian Gendarmerie in 1942-1948.<sup>452</sup> Schwarzkopf managed to see the Shah, who refused to commit himself to the CIA plan.<sup>453</sup> The Shah later agreed to support the plan after official U.S. and British involvement had been confirmed through a special radio broadcast.

Having obtained the Shah's acquiescence, Roosevelt's team was now able to go ahead with the coup. Firmans (royal decrees) dismissing Mosaddeq and appointing Zahedi were drawn up and signed by the Shah.<sup>454</sup> On the night of Saturday, August 15, the firman dismissing Mosaddeq was delivered to him by Colonel Nematollah Nassiri, commander of the Imperial Guard.<sup>455</sup> Mosaddeq, once again having been warned of the conspiracies against him, denounced the firman as a forgery and had Nassiri arrested.<sup>456</sup>

Troops loyal to Mosaddeq were quickly mobilised.<sup>457</sup> Roadblocks were set up throughout the city.<sup>458</sup> Opposition deputies, military officers suspected of plotting with Zahedi, and the Shah's minister of court were arrested.<sup>459</sup> A massive search was begun for Zahedi and a reward of 100,000 rials was offered for his arrest.<sup>460</sup>

---

444 Ibid.  
445 Ibid.  
446 Ibid.  
447 Ibid.  
448 Ibid.  
449 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran* p. 273  
450 Ibid.  
451 Ibid.  
452 Ibid.  
453 Ibid.  
454 Ibid.  
455 Ibid.  
456 Ibid.  
457 Ibid.  
458 Ibid.  
459 Ibid.

Armoured forces that had been assigned to move into Tehran in conjunction with the delivery of the firmans failed to arrive.<sup>461</sup> Without informing Roosevelt's team, the Shah fled the country in panic, first to Baghdad and then to Rome.<sup>462</sup>

This left the original coup plan in what seemed like ruins. With the arrest of Nassiri and the unforeseen departure of the Shah, Roosevelt and his team improvised a new strategy. Zahedi was transported to a CIA safe house, where he remained until Mosaddeq was finally overthrown.<sup>463</sup> Plans were made for Roosevelt, Zahedi, and a few other key participants to be evacuated in a U.S. military attaché's airplane.<sup>464</sup>

At this stage Roosevelt and his team undertook a variety of actions, in the hope that a second, successful coup could be manufactured.<sup>465</sup> The first such action was an effort to publicise the veracity of the Shah's dismissal of Mosaddeq (who had not yet publicly announced receipt of the firman) and appointment of Zahedi as Prime Minister.<sup>466</sup> Copies of the firmans were made by CIA officers on Sunday, August 16, and were subsequently distributed to news media.<sup>467</sup>

After these firmans were distributed, efforts were made to generate support for Zahedi in the military. A declaration calling for the armed forces to support the Shah was drawn up and circulated.<sup>468</sup> Military supplies were distributed to pro-Zahedi forces by the U.S. military advisory mission.<sup>469</sup> Efforts were also made to gain the support of garrisons in other cities.<sup>470</sup> Messengers were sent to Kermanshah and Isfahan, using forged travel documents previously obtained from CIA headquarters.<sup>471</sup>

Society was polarised. The garrison commander at Kermanshah, Colonel Teimur Bakhtiar, led an armoured column toward Tehran in support of the coup.<sup>472</sup> The Isfahan commander refused to cooperate, however.<sup>473</sup> As these events were unfolding, Western sponsored coup agents, Nerren and Cilley, hired a large crowd to march into central Tehran shouting Tudeh slogans and carrying signs denouncing the Shah.<sup>474</sup> This "fake" Tudeh crowd, which was paid for with \$50,000 given to Nerren and Cilley by a CIA officer the previous evening, was designed to provoke fears of a Tudeh takeover and thus rally support for Zahedi.<sup>475</sup> The crowd was soon joined by real Tudeh members, who were not aware that it was a CIA provocation.<sup>476</sup> The combined crowd attacked the Reza Shah mausoleum and tore down statues of the Shah and his father.<sup>477</sup> When these demonstrations continued the following day, Mosaddeq acquiesced to

---

460 Ibid.  
461 Ibid.  
462 Ibid.  
463 Ibid.  
464 Ibid.  
465 Ibid.  
466 Ibid.  
467 Ibid.  
468 Ibid.  
469 Ibid.  
470 M. The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran, p. 274  
471 Ibid.  
472 Ibid.  
473 Ibid.  
474 Ibid.  
475 Ibid.  
476 Ibid.  
477 Ibid.

demands from Henderson that they be broken up by the police.<sup>478</sup> This was to prove a highly significant decision. On Wednesday of that week, when most police turned against Mossadeq, the Tudeh crowds stayed off the streets, and did not attack the pro-Zahedi crowds that appeared on that day.<sup>479</sup>

After the publication of the firmans, and attempts to build support for Zahedi in the military, Roosevelt's team began to look for ways to instigate an 'internal' uprising against Mosaddeq.<sup>480</sup> In pursuit of this goal, clergy, particularly popular figures like Kashani, could be useful,<sup>481</sup> but as the CIA team had no direct ties with Kashani the Rashidians were asked to make such an arrangement on their behalf.<sup>482</sup> When the Rashidians reported back that such an uprising could be arranged, but not until after Friday prayers, the Americans grew fearful that Mossadeq could counteract given time<sup>483</sup>, as he had done several times before. In light of this, Roosevelt asked the Rashidians how he could contact Kashani directly.<sup>484</sup> The Rashidians directed him to an ally of theirs named Ahmad Aramesh.<sup>485</sup> Two CIA officers gave Aramesh \$10,000 to pass on to Kashani on the morning of Wednesday, August 19.<sup>486</sup> Kashani then mobilised an anti-Mosaddeq crowd which marched from the bazaar area into central Tehran.<sup>487</sup> Gasiorowski asserts that "similar crowds were probably organised independently by the Rashidians and by Nerren and Cilley, possibly through Ayatollah Behbehani and a mob organiser named Shaban Bimokh."<sup>488</sup> Angered by the impostor Tudeh demonstrations of the previous days, which people widely believed to have been legitimate, army, police units and onlookers who had become disillusioned with Mosaddeq joined this crowd.<sup>489</sup> Government office buildings and the offices of pro-Mosaddeq newspapers and political parties were attacked.<sup>490</sup> Mosaddeq refused to send the army or police to break up this crowd.<sup>491</sup>

A pro-Zahedi army detachment seized the radio station and began to broadcast pro-Zahedi bulletins.<sup>492</sup> Air Force General Guilanshah led a column of tanks to the CIA safe house where Zahedi was hiding.<sup>493</sup> Together with a group of pro-Shah demonstrators, these forces then seized the army headquarters and marched on Mosaddeq's home<sup>494</sup> where a nine-hour battle ensued in which roughly 300 people were killed.<sup>495</sup> The walls around Mosaddeq's house were destroyed with tank and artillery fire.<sup>496</sup> The house was stormed, and Mosaddeq escaped over the roof.<sup>497</sup> He surrendered to Zahedi the next day.<sup>498</sup> Mossadeq was overthrown. The coup was regarded as a success.

---

478

Ibid.

479

Ibid.

480

Ibid.

481

Ibid.

482

Ibid.

483

Ibid.

484

Ibid.

485

Ibid.

486

Ibid.

487

Ibid.

488

Ibid.

489

Ibid.

490

Ibid.

491

Ibid.

492

Ibid.

493

Ibid.

494

Ibid.

495

Ibid.

496

Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 275.

497

Ibid.

498

Ibid.



## Who were the Iranians involved in the coup and what was their role?

At this point it seems pertinent to investigate who was responsible for the coup. Was it mostly Iranians using foreign assistance, the British, or the U.S. who were critical in the overthrow of the elected government of Iran? For if this is a question of international relations, the critical component to the coup must be shown to be of foreign origin, or at least be shown to appear to be among Iranian foreign policy actors. We will begin by investigating the roles played by the various Iranians in the coup plot, and then those of foreign powers.

The Iranians deeply involved can be roughly categorized into four main groups. We will analyse each of these separately. First, Zahedi and his immediate allies, including his son, Abul Qasem Bakhtiari, and military officers such as Hejazi, Nassiri, Guilanshah, and Bakhtia, played an obvious role.<sup>499</sup> Zahedi and others amongst them conspired against Mosaddeq for about a year before the coup, and some led military units or played important support roles in the coup itself.<sup>500</sup> Lacking substantial popular support, with the Shah refusing to back him without a commitment from the United States, and with outstanding arrest warrants against him forcing him to operate clandestinely it seems unlikely that Zahedi could have overthrown Mosaddeq at that stage without U.S. support.<sup>501</sup>

The second discernible group are former Mosaddeq allies who turned opposition. This included Kashani and Baqai, who worked to undermine Mosaddeq's base of support in the year before the coup, and Kashani occupied an apparently important role in the coup. Kashani and other popular figures presented the most credible potential internal challenge to Mosaddeq's authority.<sup>502</sup> As has already been discussed above, division in the Nation Front leadership had cost Mossadeq dearly, and his popularity had been significantly eroded by the summer of 1953.<sup>503</sup> Gasiorowski asserts that this was primarily because of the defection of Kashani and other National Front leaders.<sup>504</sup> It is possible that such individuals or organisations might have seized power by co-opting Mosaddeq's base of support, however, in the analysis of the author cited, "while Kashani had been a legitimate contender for the premiership in late 1952, his star had since faded."<sup>505</sup> Although it had cost Mossadeq, breaking with Mossadeq also lost Kashani a great deal of his support, as had associating himself with Zahedi.<sup>506</sup> Gasiorowski cites Kashani's defeat in the July 1953 elections for the Majlis speakership and his virtual disappearance from Iranian politics after the coup as evidence of his decline.<sup>507</sup> With regard to other National Front leaders, Gasiorowski argues that "Although Baqai might once have been able to challenge Mosaddeq, he too had been tarnished by his attacks on Mosaddeq and by his alleged role in the Afshartous murder."<sup>508</sup> He concludes that "No other opposition figure had the popular support necessary to displace Mosaddeq as leader of the nationalist movement at this time."<sup>509</sup>

---

499

Ibid.

500

Ibid.

501

Ibid.

502

Ibid.

503

Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 277.

504

Ibid.

505

Ibid.

506

Ibid.

507

Ibid.

508

Ibid.

509

Ibid.

The third group are Nerren and Cilley and the Rashidians, who provided contacts and intelligence, played key roles in carrying out the coup and in supervising anti-Mosaddeq activities in the period before the coup<sup>510</sup>, but who apparently lacked a credible independent coup generation potential.

The fourth is the Shah himself, who played a “significant, although reluctant, role in acquiescing to the coup.”<sup>511</sup> The Shah seems to have been barely consulted about the decision to undertake the coup, its manner of execution, or about the candidate chosen to replace Mosaddeq. His support was reluctant and he fled the country at the first sign of failure.<sup>512</sup> It seems unlikely that this man would have organized a coup alone. Beyond these specific people, a relatively small but indeterminate number of Iranians either volunteered or were hired to participate in anti-Mosaddeq demonstrations and other activities.<sup>513</sup>

The Tudeh was by this point much weaker than it had been at its peak in 1946,<sup>514</sup> and had decided against a coup as recently as April 1953.<sup>515</sup> U.S. officials were the main source of information suggesting that the Tudeh posed a credible threat of achieving power<sup>516</sup> and the U.S. embassy deliberately overstated<sup>517</sup> the strength of the Tudeh and the extent of cooperation between Mosaddeq and Tudeh in this period.<sup>517</sup> Gasiorowski argues that this “suggests that the threat of a Tudeh takeover was widely overestimated in Iran at this time”<sup>518</sup>, a view shared by Iran specialists in the CIA. The Tudeh party was still illegal, forced to operate clandestinely, and most Iranians were very wary of it.<sup>519</sup> Strong measures came against the Tudeh from Mossadeq as late as August 18, 1953.<sup>520</sup> In short, it seems unlikely that the Tudeh would attempt a coup and that if it had, Mossadeq would presumably have proved as able to check any direct threat advanced upon him by the Tudeh as he had those of Qavam, Zahedi, and Kashani.<sup>521</sup> Furthermore, it seems highly probable that The United States and Britain would act to block Tudeh gaining power.<sup>522</sup> This all supports the view of the Iran specialists in the CIA that the situation in regards to the Tudeh was stable.

This, above all, means that a successful coup was highly unlikely without U.S intervention. Although his position had been weakened, Mosaddeq still “retained considerable support at this time in organisations such as the Iran party and the Third Force, among the urban lower and middle classes in general, and in the military”, and “his situation at this time was not as precarious as is commonly believed.”<sup>523</sup> Furthermore, although the Iranian economic situation had been described by U.S. analysts as "desperate" in late 1951, by May 1953 business was described as "brisk" by the U.S. commercial attaché in Tehran.<sup>524</sup> Stimulative fiscal policies begun in the summer of 1952 had produced a modest

---

510 Ibid.  
511 Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 276  
512 Ibid.  
513 Ibid.  
514 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 277.  
515 Ibid.  
516 Ibid.  
517 Ibid.  
518 Ibid.  
519 Ibid.  
520 Ibid.  
521 Ibid.  
522 Ibid.  
523 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 278  
524 Ibid

recovery. Proposals to sell oil to countries such as Japan and Italy were implemented in early 1953 and both agriculture and non oil exports were reported to be doing well.<sup>525</sup>

### **The U.S. Role in the coup summarised:**

In response to the question of how important the U.S. role was in overthrowing Mosaddeq, and would and could have Iranians done it themselves, the above is to say that the evidence presented here suggests that this coup could not have occurred without considerable U.S. assistance.<sup>526</sup> From the ground up, “U.S. officials planned and directed the coup, and financed it with at least \$60,000.”<sup>527</sup> Zahedi, the coup plans intended leader in waiting was hidden in a CIA safe house until the coup was virtually completed.<sup>528</sup> And as has been shown through this work, this is but the beginnings of the U.S. role. BEDAMN, for example had been pivotal in preparing the groundwork for a possible coup by undermining Mosaddeq’s support.<sup>529</sup> Even with such support from the United States, after such a long line of British and U.S. efforts to undermine Iranian independence and overthrow its government, it was still proved extremely problematic task for Mosaddeq’s combined opponents. This emphasises the importance of U.S. support to the coups eventual success.

### **Britain's role in the coup summarised:**

Despite the massive efforts invested in the earlier period, the British role in the final 'successful' coup attempt seems to have been limited to providing assistance in the formulation of the original coup plan, and the contribution of the Rashidian network.<sup>530</sup> This original plan, of course, had little bearing on how the coup actually occurred, and the Rashidians do not seem to have played a particularly crucial role in the coup itself.<sup>531</sup> The British role in undermining Mosaddeq's position throughout the time he was prime minister was however highly significant. British plots against Mosaddeq were almost continuous, in three major, protracted efforts to oust him.<sup>532</sup> Britain's oil embargo and other economic sanctions against Iran also played a role in the “gradual erosion” of Mosaddeq’s base of support<sup>533</sup> and as such, contributed to his overthrow.

### **The motives that led U.S. policymakers to overthrow Mossadeq:**

Although it is hardly relevant to the topic of the Iranian state actors’ perceptions of the nature of the international system, it is interesting to question exactly what the U.S. motives were in the coup.

It is frequently asserted that a major motivation was access to oil for U.S. companies. This argument is appealing, fitting within the bounds of both the prior historical experience and theoretical assumptions outlined earlier in the section on oil politics. Even outside of the scope of International Relations, one observes that the Eisenhower

---

525 Ibid  
526 M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 277  
527 Ibid.  
528 Ibid.  
529 Ibid.  
530 J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 276  
531 Ibid.  
532 Ibid.  
533 Ibid.

administration, like other administrations, was favourable to U.S. business interests.<sup>534</sup> The final agreement worked out in 1954 with the Zahedi government gave U.S. companies a 40% share in Iranian oil production, and the U.S. took the position once occupied by Britain in that area,<sup>535</sup> so in this sense at least the coup could be seen as successful.

However, it is also claimed that U.S. policymakers were motivated mainly by fears of a communist takeover in Iran. The author cited argues that this is a more plausible explanation of motivation for the U.S. action, seeing the involvement of U.S. companies as being sought mainly as a means to prevent such a takeover.<sup>536</sup> This was the 1950's. The Cold War was at its height. The Soviet Union was perceived as an expansionist power seeking world domination.<sup>537</sup> The Cold War was essentially viewed as a 'war in waiting' with Soviet Russia and U.S. foreign policy actors viewed Iran as a likely battlefield.<sup>538</sup> This argument also fits within the theoretical framework of Neorealism, and relative security driven foreign policy. Eisenhower had accused the Democrats of being soft on communism and of having "lost China." making the Soviet threat a key issue in the 1952 elections,<sup>539</sup> and put these views that communism was a global threat into policy.<sup>540</sup> Such policies included steps to strengthen the Western alliance, initiatives aimed at a bolstering of the U.S. position and opposition to Soviet influence and movements even vaguely resembling communism; in Latin America, the Middle East, and East Asia.<sup>541</sup> The decision to overthrow Mosaddeq appears to at the very least to fit very well with these perceived interests and a strategy of blocking Soviet expansionism.

In support of the hypothesis that the above was more important than oil interests, Gasiorowski asserts that "the major U.S. oil companies were not interested in Iran at this time."<sup>542</sup> U.S majors had accelerated production in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1951, and "a glut existed in the world oil market"<sup>543</sup> to the point that operating in Iran would have necessitated cut backs in production in these countries, resulting in tensions with their leaders.<sup>544</sup> It should also be noted that due to nationalist sentiment, and the protracted history of resistance to foreign control of Iranian oil fields, Iran was regarded as a relatively risky base of production.<sup>545</sup> In support of this argument, Gasiorowski asserts that "U.S. oil companies had shown no interest in Iran in 1951 and 1952."<sup>546</sup> The argument that follows is that by late 1952, "the Truman administration had come to believe that participation by U.S. companies in the production of Iranian oil was essential to maintain stability in Iran and keep Iran out of Soviet hands"<sup>547</sup> and that this belief is where policy was coming from.

Supporting the argument that these anti-communist factors were the larger determinant of policy, Gasiorowski observes that "in order to gain the participation of the major U.S. oil companies, Truman offered to scale back a large anti-trust case then being brought against them"<sup>548</sup> and that "the Eisenhower administration shared

---

<sup>534</sup> J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 275

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 276

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>542</sup> M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 275.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>548</sup> M. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*, p. 276.

Truman's views on the participation of U.S. companies in Iran and also agreed to scale back the anti-trust case."<sup>549</sup> Not only did U.S. majors not want to become involved in Iranian oil production at this time, it took significant incentives from U.S. policy makers before they were persuaded to become involved.<sup>550</sup> This is quite a convincing argument that as Gasiorowski claims, "the Eisenhower administration therefore seems to have been motivated mainly by fears of a communist takeover in Iran"<sup>551</sup> in the wider context of the cold war, rather than by a desire to promote U.S. commercial interests.<sup>552</sup>

This is not to say that the coup was not motivated by oil. Without oil, it is questionable whether people would care much. But the Soviet Union's expansion into Eastern and Central Europe in its World War Two advance on Berlin and subsequent occupation and/or political domination) left the Soviet Union in control of the vast majority of Europe's known indigenous oil reserves,<sup>553</sup> as well as important sources of coal in Poland and the Soviet zone of Germany.<sup>554</sup> In this era US oil companies became entrenched in the great oil-producing regions outside the Soviet Union.<sup>555</sup> This wider expansion was linked to containment of Soviet oil power. In line with this claims significance, in 1945, a Joint Chiefs of Staff report warned that this Soviet control of Europe's oil reserves could become "another link ... in the economic chain by which the Western European powers are becoming fettered to the Soviet Union."<sup>556</sup> Although this claim seems sensationalist, it supports a world view of oil that extends beyond business or consumption, but addresses questions of security implications for control of distribution.

The view that Iran was at risk of communist subversion was, it would seem, concentrated in the minds of a few very influential persons within the U.S., and not widely held by operatives within its intelligence and policy departments. That is to say perceptions regarding the 'necessity' of the coup or the likelihood of a communist take over were not shared by most middle level State Department and CIA officials,<sup>557</sup> nor by Henry Byroade, the Assistant Secretary of State with responsibility for the Middle East, nor Ambassador Henderson.<sup>558</sup> Iran specialists in the CIA and the CIA station chief in Tehran were also opposed to a coup. CIA analysts did not regard Mosaddeq as a communist<sup>559</sup>, or believe that Tudeh was capable of seizing power.<sup>560</sup> The Iranian economy had become more stable by this time and a general collapse was not viewed as imminent.<sup>561</sup> This supports the view that the fears of a communist takeover that motivated the U.S coup "therefore seem to have originated at the highest levels of the CIA and the State Department, and were not shared by lower-level Iran specialists".<sup>562</sup>

---

549 Ibid.  
550 Ibid.  
551 Ibid.  
552 Ibid.  
553 David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security*, p. 185  
554 Ibid.  
555 Ibid.  
556 Ibid.  
557 Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*. p. 276  
558 Ibid.  
559 Ibid.  
560 Ibid.  
561 Ibid.  
562 Ibid.

## The Results of Mosaddeq's Overthrow:

Regardless of what it was motivated by, the perception in Iran was clear. From there point of view, the world seems full of hostile powers with great power willing to use this power against Iran for self gain. Iran was essentially alone in this struggle, in a situation closely resembling hostile anarchy of the international system described by Waltz. It is important to note that this period's history remains highly relevant to Iranian political perception, being the formative years for so many of Iran's leadership since, until now. The need for effective management of the issues exposed by this period must sit at the forefront of their foreign policy consciousness. This supports a case for Neorealism's relevance to the case at hand.

The 1953 coup brought to an end a period of significant movement towards nationalist secular democracy. This movement towards a more representative form of government, and toward freedom from foreign interference seen in Iran in the period from 1900 until 1953 was quashed by a concerted effort by imperialist powers aimed at control over Iranian resource flows through control over the Iranian apparatus of state. This coup ousted Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, in whom the Iranian people had embodied their aspirations of independence and representation.<sup>563</sup> He was the last popular democratically oriented government to hold office in Iran and is seen to this day as somewhat of a martyr to these causes.<sup>564</sup> The regime replacing it was a dictatorship that suppressed all forms of popular political activity.<sup>565</sup> This authoritarian regime consolidated itself harshly, with massive assistance from the United States.<sup>566</sup> Martial law was instituted and remained in effect for several years.<sup>567</sup> Majlis elections in February 1954 were blatantly rigged.<sup>568</sup> Press censorship was imposed.<sup>569</sup> A secret police force was established that soon evolved into the notorious SAVAK.<sup>570</sup> What remained of the nationalist movement was ruthlessly crushed. "Thousands of National Front and Tudeh supporters were arrested. Pro-Mosaddeq demonstrations in the Tehran bazaar and at Tehran University were broken up. A successor to the National Front known as the National Resistance Movement was suppressed. The Qashqai tribe was attacked and its leaders were sent into exile."<sup>571</sup>

Except during a brief period in the early 1960s, "these instruments of dictatorship"<sup>572</sup> were maintained until the Iranian revolution began in 1978.<sup>573</sup> This had a profound impact in producing the tensions that drove the 1978-1979 Iranian revolution<sup>574</sup>, and also in colouring the nature of this revolution. One could speculate that this period had shown many Iranians that secular democratic nationalism had been shown by western powers to be inadequate to the tasks. It had certainly shown them that foreign powers were dangerously interested, and could not be trusted not to interfere in Iranian affairs. It had shown that internal division can be both manufactured and manipulated by outside powers to generate what can reasonably be considered external security threats (conditions for a foreign sponsored

---

<sup>563</sup> Mark J. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran*. p. 279

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

coup) in extremely underhand ways. Had the coup not occurred, Iran's future would undoubtedly have been vastly different.

By this stage, any plight for the peaceful establishment of a liberal democratic alternative to the status quo from within seemed futile<sup>575</sup>, with the state clamping down on all popular opposition.<sup>576</sup> In this way, the nature of the Shahs regime played a very major role in shaping the nature of what challenges, and eventually alternatives to the status quo became. Furthermore, the fact the U.S was involved (pivotal, even) in the coup and in the subsequent consolidation of the Shah's dictatorship was the clear source of the anti- American character of the 1978-1979 revolution, and has continued to be significant in relations between the two powers since.<sup>577</sup> U.S. complicity in these events figured prominently in the attacks on American citizens and installations that occurred in Iran in the early 1970s, and in the many anti-American incidents that emanated from Iran after the revolution, including, most notably, the embassy hostage crisis.

Although it could be argued that for the U.S. the coup was successful in securing twenty-five years of pro-American stability in Iran, in terms of the role this event has had on shaping outcomes since, it did so at an enormous long term cost.<sup>578</sup> In the year 1979 the Shah's regime ended via overthrow by a popular movement calling for an end to the Shah, an end to U.S. influence in Iran and a reassertion of local traditions and rejection of 'western capitalist modernism' as experienced under the Shah. The revolution was composed of 2 main groups: Leftist nationalists who wanted a socialist style secular democracy, and young Islamists, who wanted to form an Islamic Republic under theocratic leadership.<sup>579</sup> The Islamic Republic of Iran was formed and recognized by the Iranian people as their legitimate government, and opposition was crushed or co-opted. During the revolution, the U.S. embassy was stormed and American hostages were seized. Something which is rarely noted in this discourse is the role this embassy had played in imperialist oppression of Iran A period of popular anti Americanism ensued. Western powers responded with a negative perception. From the BEDAM programs, the 1953 coup, support of the shahs rule and training of his secret police. The embassy was central to the U.S. activities in Iran, and the description of it by Khomeini as a 'den of spies'<sup>580</sup> is far from without merit.

This is supported by the following analysis by Mohsen Sazegara, one-time aid to Khomeini and founder of the Revolutionary Guard. "In the aftermath of the revolution we had an immediate problem: its survival,"<sup>581</sup> He argued that there was chaos on the streets, economic problems and the fear that the army could turn at any time.<sup>582</sup> And as for the U.S, he argued that: "This concerned us greatly. The 1953 CIA coup against Mossadeq was still fresh in our minds. We didn't want them to do it again."<sup>583</sup>

---

<sup>575</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>576</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>577</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>578</sup>

Mark J. Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Aug., 1987), pp. 261-286 Published by: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>579</sup>

M. Bowden, Guests of the Ayatollah: The Iran Hostage Crisis, The First Battle in Americas War with Militant Islam, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York. p.11

<sup>580</sup>

BBC News, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4398964.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4398964.stm), 20/04/2006

<sup>581</sup>

D. Patrikarakos, Children of the revolution, New Statesman. London: Jan 26, 2009. Vol.

138, Iss. 4933; pg. 35, 1 pgs

<sup>582</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>583</sup>

Ibid.

Regionally, also, Iran was, rhetorically at least, a direct challenge to the governments of surrounding nation states, and the nature of the international system. For this movement was not nationalist, but theocratic, calling for the dissolution of nations states and their transcendence of authority to a broader 'umma' (Islamic community). Major parallels can be drawn between this ideology and that of Marxist proletarian revolution espoused in Bolshevik Russia. Both of these movements presented neighbouring states with rhetorical, and material challenges to neighbouring states. It seems that in both cases, this ideology provoked balancing behaviours from surrounding nations states. It also seems that over time both these movements found themselves conforming more normally to norms of nation states in this regard.

### **Iran, Lebanon and Hezbollah:**

This process runs concurrently with the Iran Iraq war, beginning after Iraq's invasion, but before its defeat. So as to better analyse it we will isolate it from this context. In reality these two events are highly interrelated, with processes occurring in each impacting parts in the latter. These connections are rather complex in detail, but rather simple in implications. Throughout this process, Iran, Israel and the U.S.'s perceptions of each other were negatively reinforced. This story began when Israel invaded Lebanon, Iran responded by providing training and organisational support for a Lebanese Shi'a resistance, with the intention of training these Lebanese with the ability to themselves train further recruits.<sup>584</sup> This was the founding of Hezbollah. Shortly after this event U.S. Marines, housed in barracks in Lebanon, serving as part of a multinational force sent to Lebanon to 'restore order' were attacked, resulting in the death of 243 Marines.<sup>585</sup> Another bomber hit a French barracks, killing 58.<sup>586</sup> The U.S. responded to this as the "largest terrorist attack in its history."<sup>587</sup> Although Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack, the U.S. blamed Iran and Hezbollah.<sup>588</sup> America withdrew 4 months later to ships in the Mediterranean.<sup>589</sup> A presumably official Iranian position on the matter is explained by Mohsen Rafiqdoust, Revolutionary Guard Commander, in his statements "of course we helped. We don't know if our equipment was used in this operation. A foreign Army occupied Lebanon. So it was right to hit back with martyrs."<sup>590</sup> But this success was costly. Iran was placed on the U.S. list of state sponsors of state terrorism<sup>591</sup>, resulting in economic sanctions and difficulties in buying arms for Tehran.<sup>592</sup> In Lebanon, groups linked to Hezbollah took to kidnapping westerners.<sup>593</sup> Soon, more than 30 hostages were held, and all their governments searched for solutions to the problem.<sup>594</sup> One could go into great depth describing the events preceding this. But it is suffice to say, Iran did not win any friends in the West through this process. Whether it ever could have or wanted to is another question.

---

<sup>584</sup> BBC, Saturday 14th February 2009, The Pariah State, P1/6: The Pariah State (7/18: Iran & The West – S2/3), accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOKRbYjggg0&feature=related> on 06/06/09

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>586</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>587</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>588</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>589</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>590</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>591</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>592</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>593</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>594</sup> Ibid.



## Iran Iraq War:

In this period, challenges to Iranian sovereignty continued. The most obvious and destructive example is Iran's experience of Iraq's war of aggression against it, which Iraq launched on Sept. 22, 1980 when Iraqi armed forces invaded western Iran along the countries' joint border.

The origins of this conflict are several. One explanation lies in Iran's actions. With the coming to power of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the formation of the Islamic republic, Iran began calls for the overthrow of 'corrupt' regional governments by 'true' Muslims, and the formation of a new, Islamocentric regional order, with Iran's theocracy at the centre. In particular, Saddam Hussein found himself the target of Iranian encouragement of revolt among the Shiites of Iraq.<sup>595</sup> In a sense, this war can be considered retaliatory to this act (not to excuse but to help explain), to the extent that an end to Iran's theocracy may have reduced unrest. These policies by Iran can also be seen as a source of external resentment against Iran outside Iraq, and it is important to remember, but not to focus too hard on this dimension. This factor is consistent with a Neorealist understanding of foreign policy. That Iraq felt threatened, and acted to secure itself against the threat. But Iraq also harboured aims of territorial expansion. The main such objectives were the control of both banks of the long disputed Shatt al Arab waterway<sup>596</sup>, and seizing control of the oil production rich Iranian border region of Khuzestan, a territory inhabited largely by ethnic Arabs over which Iraq sought to extend some form of governance.<sup>597</sup> Thus, despite sympathy Saddam Hussein widely enjoyed at this point, this was (from the Iranian point of view and everyone else in their right mind) a war of aggression where Iraq sought to capitalize on the perceived weakness, disorder and isolation of Iran's new government, which was (and has since remained) at loggerheads with the United States, and whose armed forces were seen to be demoralized and disorganized by the preceding period of revolutionary reforms and purges.<sup>598</sup>

The costs of this eight year total war were enormous for Iran. On both sides, most men of military age were under arms. In Iran, quite a liberal definition of both 'man' and 'military age' were taken, with young boys serving on the front line in defence of their country.<sup>599</sup> An entire generation was subjected first hand to the horrors of total war in a manner comparable only to few modern conflicts, and Iran's military capabilities were tested to their very limits.<sup>600</sup> The significance of this war to Iran is most clearly emphasised by the observation that it is, due to the scale of death experienced in this war, a very young country. Examples of civilian slaughter are plentiful. The Kurdish region faced particularly savage killings in the form of indiscriminate shelling, chemical attack and gunmen. Although the Kurdish region received 'special attention' from Saddam Hussein's forces, other Iranian civilians were spared no respite either. Mass civilian death and displacement was the reality of life for a significant portion of Iran's population. Iran's economy too was wrecked.

---

<sup>595</sup> Philip's, "Iran-Iraq War" World Encyclopedia., 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Canterbury University. 24 July 2009 from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t142.e5846>

<sup>596</sup> Ibid.

<sup>597</sup> K. Efraim, The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988. Air & Space Power Journal, 17.4 (Winter 2003): 111(2). Academic OneFile. Gale. University of Canterbury Library NZ. 23 July 2009.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

In terms of long term implications, to say that the experience caused the country enormous ongoing health and psychological damage would be an understatement. Furthermore, both the realities of 'conventional' war, and the particularly destructive techniques employed by Iraq in Iran left significant portions of Iran's ecology a waste land. First hand accounts tell of (inhabited) valleys and swamps being pumped full of gasoline, and ignited.<sup>601</sup> All living creatures in them being incinerated. Iran's ecology was situationally smashed. This land, like much of that contaminated by chemical weapons has still not recovered.<sup>602</sup>

We could expend great detail exploring these costs to Iran. We will call them enormous. Iran suffered the heaviest losses throughout the war.<sup>603</sup> This war, which Iran never sought, but that it won (from a defensive Neorealist's point of view), yielded no reparation, no change of borders and no change of government in Iraq. In short, from Iran's point of view, it defended itself, paid the highest cost imaginable, gained nothing, and (until Iraq attacked Kuwait in 1991, and lost the support of influential nation states) the threat persisted roughly unchecked.

Throughout all of this suffering, the "international community" failed to aid Iran in its self defence, and many amongst them even aided the aggressor in his actions. America did nothing to stop the invasion, aid Iran or even inform it of it. This view is a matter of public record, and is clearly illustrated by statements by Bruce Riedel of the CIA Iran Desk who states that "We were warned that the invasion was imminent. The source told me that he had just been in Iraq where he had been meeting with Saddam Hussein and his senior Iraqi generals and that the Iraqi's were going to invade Iran. This was of course big news and quite an intelligence coup for us."<sup>604</sup> It did nothing to contain Iraq. What the U.S told its allies in the region in terms of intelligence assessments of Iran's military capabilities was done with full knowledge that these assessments would be shared with Iraq<sup>605</sup>, and as the war unfolded, the west continued to supply Saddam Hussein with intelligence and arms.<sup>606</sup> That is to say, that although the world remained officially neutral in this conflict, Middle Eastern states and major Western powers supported Iraq with arms, finance intelligence, and escort for its merchant shipping.<sup>607</sup> Including, on the part of the United States, providing known precursors to deadly chemical weapons.<sup>608</sup> This was to be the "whirlwind War"<sup>609</sup> resulting in a swift toppling of mutual 'enemies', with few non Iranian victims. This whirlwind war was not to be, and as the war progressed Iraq's tactics began to reflect their desperation.<sup>610</sup> Not even this changed the nonchalant attitude on the part of the U.S. This point of view is not even debated, but is justified by the then Secretary of State George Shultz statements that "It's a very hard balance. They're using chemical weapons. So you want them to stop using the chemical weapons. At the same time, you don't want Iran to win the war."<sup>611</sup> And it was not just the West that supported Iraq. Neighbouring Arab states also spoke of neutrality, but Iraq was lent money, and governments eagerly condemned Iranian actions, while remaining woefully silent on

---

<sup>601</sup> R. Fisk., *The Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*, Harper Perennial, London, 2006,  
<sup>602</sup> R. Fisk., *The Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*, Harper Perennial, London, 2006,

p. 219

<sup>603</sup> Karsh, Efraim. "The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988."

<sup>604</sup> BBC , 7th February 2009, *The Man Who Changed the World*, P6/6: *The Man Who Changed The World* (6/18: *Iran & The West - S1/3*) accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apcE9-AC3IM> on 06/06/09

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> R. Fisk., *The Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*, p. 219

<sup>607</sup> Karsh, Efraim. "The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988"

<sup>608</sup> R. Fisk., *The Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*, p. 219

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> BBC, 14th February 2009, *The Pariah State*, (7/18: *Iran & The West - S2/3*), accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOKRbYjgg0&feature=related> on 06/06/09

matters of Iraqi atrocities. Even as Iraq used chemical weapons against fellow Muslim Iranian villages,<sup>612</sup> a practice which Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini strictly forbade throughout the conflict.<sup>613</sup> In so far as Iran may have had geopolitical friends in the region, these groups were either relatively weak as compared to the Arab and Sunni states surrounding them, or were small or relatively powerless subpopulation of such Arab nation states, thus unable to bring the countries political, economic or military might to bear in support of Iranian security.

The extent to which the international community did act to defend Iran was extremely limited. Six days into the war the U.N. called for a ceasefire, but made no demand for an Iraqi withdrawal.<sup>614</sup> In the eyes of Iran, this was seen as a condoning of the Iraqi action,<sup>615</sup> and in the eyes of this analyst, this view seems accurate. Foreign powers hoped for, and widely expected a quick defeat of Iran's newly formed government. Iran found its foreign weapons systems useless, as the supply of spare parts and ammunition were denied.<sup>616</sup> On the battlefield, initially, Iraq seemed dominant, but military ingenuity, a willingness to absorb huge losses in pursuit and defence of objectives, and by mustering its own domestic industry in basic armaments such as rifle ammunition and RPGs, Iran slowly began to take up a substantial counter offensive. Iraqi aggression had also given the newly formed Iranian regime the means to sustain revolutionary and patriotic fervour.<sup>617</sup> This resulted in a solidified position for the regime internally, and although Iran did not display the capability to vanquish Iraq, it showed a capability to sustain this effort for as long as it took, to at least avoid defeat. Iran had begun to show that a miscalculation had been made, and it seemed highly unlikely that Saddam Hussein would emerge victorious. It was not until this context had emerged that significant diplomatic pressure was brought to bear upon the parties to end the conflict. For years, while Iran had suffered at the hands of Iraqi advances, world powers had sat, at best idly by, and in many cases in many ways supported Iraq in its endeavours. Now that it seemed Iraqi victory was impossible, the 'international community' was acting to end the conflict on mutually agreeable terms. This US-led intervention in 1987 was seen by Iran as support for Iraq<sup>618</sup> and Iran was initially reluctant to end the war on these terms. This position is well summarized by Ayatollah Khomeini's statement that "We did not start the war. Iraq attacked us. Iraq now calls for peace. That does not mean that we have to give in."<sup>619</sup> Iran wanted Iraqi surrender. But with major world powers thoroughly opposed to this eventuating, facing the ongoing toll of war, and with Iranian Military commanders and political leaders seeing no way to win the war<sup>620</sup>, the slogan of "Even if it takes 20 years, we fight on"<sup>621</sup> eventually fell by the wayside and Iran joined the UN ceasefire resolution that had been accepted by Iraq in 1987.<sup>622</sup> The war ended in August 1988, when both nations accepted UN Resolution 598. In its aftermath Iran remained isolated and bitter.

---

<sup>612</sup> Robert fisk

<sup>613</sup> Primary footage. Iran-Iraq War Documentary part 2, accessed from, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZrjSZZ8y3g&feature=related>

<sup>614</sup> BBC, 07 February 2009, The Man Who Changed The World, P6/6: The Man Who Changed The World (6/18: Iran & The West - S1/3), accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apcE9-AC3IM> on 06/06/09

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

<sup>616</sup> Fariborz Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p. 217  
<sup>617</sup> Karsh, Efraim. "The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988."

<sup>618</sup> BBC, , 07 February 2009, The Pariah State, P2/6: The Pariah State (8/18: Iran & The West - S2/3) accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDikoLm-Zzc&feature=related> on 06/06/09

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.

The reasoning for this resentment is clear, and the implications of this history for Iran's foreign policy perception are well summarised by the following statement from Rafsanjani (the current 'moderate' cleric in the media spotlight): “The crime went on for years. The great powers turned a blind eye. It brought shame on the Security Council”<sup>623</sup> and that “the West Allowed Iraq to break international law. They even armed Saddam Hussein”<sup>624</sup> and that in contrast that “no one would sell us arms. In any case we didn't have any money.”<sup>625</sup> It seemed that, in this case at least, rather than upholding the principle of U.N. States rights of security, Western powers and Arab states alike preferred to hope for a swift crushing of Iran's newly formed government by Iraq. This clearly illustrated the stakes of the game, and the nature of the actors involved to Iran in a manner heavily supportive of an implicitly Neorealist theoretical understanding on the part of Iran. That is to say, that it exists in an anarchic international system in which the principle of self help is the means of attaining the aim of a more robust sense of security, even in its neighbourly relations with fellow Muslim states. It also underscores the human costs of failing to effectively address ones own security needs. Like Waltz said. Security threats abound.

Soon after the termination of this conflict Khomeini died and George Bush senior was elected. This marked the beginning a new era. The election of George Bush senior was the first presidency of the post cold war era, and Khomeini had been central to decision making in both revolutionary and post revolutionary Iran. Both these moments were both significant changing points in the foreign policy decision making landscape. As Iran entered a new and uncertain era without its core leader Khomeini at the helm, it did not do so with a completely clean slate. It did so with this historical baggage colouring its perceptions of foreign policy, with memories that we may prefer they forget firmly imprinted into their world views. These memories have likely fuelled the following perceptions:

- That these foreign actors are hostile, dangerous and untrustworthy to Iranian security and sovereignty
- That Iran has few if any reliable allies of significant strength able to assist in assuring its security.
- That Iran must act upon the principle of self help if it is to assure greater security.

Many things have happened since this time, but none that seem likely to have dispelled this perception in the eyes of Iranians. And certainly not to the extent that Iranian foreign policy actors would feel safe acting on any other presumption. Considering the history, it is simply too dangerous.

In reflection, one thing that is important to note is that despite the fact that nearly every one of Iran's neighbouring states control land that was once Iranian territory,<sup>626</sup> In contrast, Iran has not harboured territorial ambitions against neighbouring states,<sup>627</sup> quite the contrary. In 1965 Iran signed demarcation agreements with Kuwait<sup>628</sup>, with Saudi Arabia in 1968<sup>629</sup>, with Qatar in 1969<sup>630</sup>, with Bahrain in 1970<sup>631</sup>, and with Iraq in 1975.<sup>632</sup> To

---

<sup>623</sup> BBC, 07 February 2009, The Pariah State, P1/6: The Pariah State (7/18: Iran & The West – S2/3), accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOKRbYjgg0&feature=related>

<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> F. Mokhtari, No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context, p.211

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

this day, it has not at any stage sought to challenge these agreements.<sup>633</sup> The only territorial conflict we have seen Iran engaged in can be described as, and are surely perceived as areas of self and/or collective defence. It checked Iraq's ambitions against Kuwait on several occasions in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>634</sup> It fought a “successful protracted insurgency in Oman in 1963- 1975 that may very well have saved the Sultanate and its Arab neighbours.”<sup>635</sup> And in more recent times, it has provided assistance to both Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Palestine in the face of what is surely perceived as Israeli threat and regional aggression. Iran has faced Arab powers pursuing territorial claims.<sup>636</sup>

---

633 Ibid.

634 Ibid.

635 Ibid.

636 Ibid.

**Conclusion:**

It seems clear that although, as has already been stated, Iran's behaviour has not been entirely 'angelic', or 'rational', generally speaking it has behaved within the bounds of normality in the international system. And that implicitly neorealist considerations sit at the forefront of the Iranian foreign policy consciousness. With clear and sound reason. Iran has, presumably due to the presence of natural resources in it, found itself in a situation where, given its historical experience in apparent anarchy, good will and the following of international community decision making does not seem an effective strategy to Iran in pursuit of security. This is because rules and norms of the international community have proven a poor defence against the power of nation states.

It seems without doubt that Iran as a foreign policy actor shares a perception of the security threats emanating from foreign powers as credibility, and of the need to undertake self help responses to these issues. This is not to argue that Iran has or will always act according to its security interests in response to challenges. Provocative statements by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the international arena, for example, seem to do little to make Iran more secure. Another example could be Iran's condemnation of both chemical weapons and nuclear weapons, the sincerity of which was heavily tested in the Iran Iraq war where Iraq used chemical weapons, and the Islamic republic refrained on religious grounds, at great cost to its military effectiveness and death tolls. Another example of 'irrational' behaviour in regards to security could be cited in the regional outlook of the revolutionary movement in Iran's state in its formation, and the hostility that this internal challenge to neighbouring states generated against Iran. Another example could be Iran's support of fellow Muslim 'resistance movements' around the region, such as the Lebanon crisis and support for Hezbollah, since the inception of this movement. It would at least seem incurring Iran more harm than use in a unilateral security sense. However, security is not a simple matter, and is further clouded by human perception, but if we presume that some, or all of these cases, or some others, in fact reflect a lack of regard for security interests on the part of Iran this can be seen as either a failing of neorealist theory to provide a complete explanation of international relations, due to a failure of Iran to live up to the standards of a neorealist 'rational actor'.

It would however seem foolish to blow this perception beyond proportion. Generally speaking Iran has taken stock of its security interests and undertaken self help behaviour to improve its security. It seems highly unlikely that had it not, the Iranian government that it would have survived this long under a stated American policy of regime change. That is to say, to present Iran as the belligerent aggressor with martyrdom complex in international relations is to present a straw man of this country. Broadly speaking, Iran behaves in line with the descriptions of state behaviour espoused by Waltz.

## Chapter 3: Iran in the International System:

### Ethnic Diversity in Iran: Limitations of the Nation State Lens:

A geopolitical factor of great significance for our study and for Iran, and for assessing the explicatory power of Neorealist theory, is the extent to which its local geopolitical context conforms to the nation state system outlined in Neorealism. This discussion is also heavily influenced by the aforementioned factor of oil. The European interest in the wider region bought on by the discovery of oil resulted in the division of land into oil producing regions, and these geographical distinctions were reinforced with imperial power. Over time, these geographical divisions have become the nation states of the region. The results of this have been extremely significant, as many of the states that have emerged from these divisions suffer from deep ethnic divisions, resulting largely from the arbitrary border creation of this period. Iran is (to an extent) such a state, and is surrounded by such states.

#### **Persian Iran:**

The lands known as Persia have long been governed by a centralized state apparatus reassembling a nation state, and there has been great continuity in this. Today Iran has inherited this nationalism, and at its core, Iran is an ethnically and religiously homogenous nation state. However, on the periphery the story is less black and white. Iran is home to various ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority backgrounds, with Persians comprising only one half of half of Iran's population of 70 million people.<sup>637</sup> Persians (tracing origins from the Indo-European tribes who settled the Iranian plateau and established the ancient Persian empire around 1000 BC.)<sup>638</sup> are dominant in the central government of Iran.<sup>639</sup> The provinces principally inhabited by Persians are the most developed provinces in the country.<sup>640</sup> Furthermore, experts argue of Persian perceptions of a "distinct sense of superiority"<sup>641</sup> over other Iranians, and viewing themselves as the "true heirs of Iran's history and tradition and the guardians and perpetrators of its legacies."<sup>642</sup> Furthermore, the state run radio and television broadcasts are predominantly in Persian, with few programs being run in minority languages.<sup>643</sup> In the eyes of observers, this unusual diversity makes Iran not so much a nation-state as a multinational empire dominated by Persians.<sup>644</sup> This is a sense widely shared amongst some of Iran's minority populations.<sup>645</sup>

---

<sup>637</sup> CIA Factbook, accessed, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html> on 12/4/2008

<sup>638</sup> H. Hassan, Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities, CRC Report for Congress, Nov. 2008, Order Code RL34021, Accessed on 4/3/2009, from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34021.pdf>. p. 2

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

<sup>640</sup> ibid

<sup>641</sup> Ibid

<sup>642</sup> Ibid

<sup>643</sup> Ibid

<sup>644</sup> John R. Bradley, Irans Ethnic Tinderbox, The Washington Quaterly, winter 2006-07. p.181  
Accessed on 12/4/2008, from [http://www.twq.com/07winter/docs/07winter\\_bradley.pdf](http://www.twq.com/07winter/docs/07winter_bradley.pdf)

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

Of significant importance in this argument is the observation that this ethnic diversity is not a product of recent mass migration but is largely concentrated in regions where people identifying as Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Baluchis, and Lors have long been the local majority. Another point of significant note is that these populations inhabit Iran's border areas. Iran's Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Baluchis share strong ties with fellow Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Baluchis in neighboring Azerbaijan, Iraq and Turkey, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, respectively. In these regions, nationalism is thus a far less simple concept than it is in Iran's Persian core. This presents Iran with a whole host of problems, and gives these aspects of Iran's internal politics a distinct external significance.<sup>646</sup> People in these regions do not necessarily accept Iranian sovereignty, the state monopoly on the use of force is actively challenged, borders are extremely difficult to enforce with even a moderate degree of effectiveness and the projection of state influence can be difficult. This is an area of significant difference to the experience of the stereotypical western nation state and is a kind of security problem that Neorealism, with its focus upon international security, fails to grapple with.

If it were not for the international dimensions to these tensions conflicts, this could easily be explained away as 'outside the scope of what the theory is attempting to explain'. This is not the case, because as alluded to above, in Iran, these internal security issues are heavily influenced by, and have a capacity to substantially influence international politics, particularly with neighbouring powers of Iran, and traditional competitors of Iran. At points in time regional and 'great' powers have sought to use these disputes as a tool of international relations, threatening the territorial sovereignty of other states from within. This is extremely problematic from a state violence perspective, as cracking down militarily upon such groups is complicated by the trans-border nature of the conflicts, and by the fact that that pursuit of conventional counter-insurgency strategies further alienate the local population in ways that often seem to exacerbate resistance more than it addresses it.

It has been argued that Neorealism is a theory constructed within the context of the Western 'nation state' experience, and that many polities do not fit this mould. In reality, not all states are nation states and many nations do not have states. Although Iran is, at its core, a (Persian) nation state, one finds many nations within its borders, and the security impacts of this operate in ways that do not fit the neorealist context of nation state sovereignty. These issues of international and internal security are so interrelated that viewing them as separable realms of analysis in the case is severely limiting to generating an effective understanding of the topics at hand.

Applying neorealist theoretical assumptions regarding security to these issues does however yield significant insight. A failure of Iran to achieve and maintain a monopoly on the use of force in these (and all) areas within its state could foreseeably unravel into a security challenge to neighbouring states, and present a security imperative for neighbours to attack and possibly occupy Iranian sovereign territory. Such security imperatives seem compatible with the international context. This claim is supported by the stand offs between Turkey and the occupational government of Iraq regarding the operation of Kurdish nationalist forces within its borders, and the ever present threat of the use of force by Turkey in Iraqi sovereign territory. One would assume that a deteriorating security condition in Iran's boarder provinces could result in heightened international threats. Vice-versa a failure on the part of any of Iran's neighbours to create a climate within its state boundaries where Iranian security is not actively challenged by internal non-state actors

---

<sup>646</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. p.182



would present a security challenge to Iran. This can happen even without any malevolent or even competitive intent on the part of the central government of either state.

Publicly, Iran's ruling elite are quick to blame "outside interference" (typically British and/or American) for non-state political violence in Iran.<sup>647</sup> In this, Iran has clear cause for concern. These internal divisions are of importance to Iran in its relations to the United States. U.S. support for non governmental actors in Iran (be they peaceful or paramilitary) could serve as a potent means of undermining Tehran. In support of more cynical interpretations of U.S. involvement, according to exiled Iranian activists reportedly involved, the U.S. Department of Defense have already begun at least one classified U.S. research project examining the depth and nature of ethnic grievances against central government in Tehran.<sup>648</sup> The Pentagon is reportedly especially interested in investigating Iran's susceptibility to the kinds of violent fragmentation that helped split Iraq, or that helped to tear apart the Soviet Union at the fall of Russia's Bolshevik party in the 1990's.<sup>649</sup> Although it is impossible to know what goes on behind the scenes, Washington's interest in these cleavages is a matter of public record. In early 2006, for instance, the U.S. brought together representatives of Kurdish, Baluchi, Ahvazi, Turkmen, and Azeri organizations aiming to form a strong common front against the Islamic regime.<sup>650</sup> Furthermore, in 2006 the Bush administration asked Congress for \$75 million to promote democratic change in Iran.<sup>651</sup>

Regardless of any role the United States (or other powers) may have in these tensions, these issues are of primarily domestic in origin. Outside of the public relations spotlight one sees supporting evidence for the fact that that Iran is also clearly conscious of the substantial internal dimensions of these cleavages. The Islamic Majlis Center for Research, an Iranian government think tank, for example, projected in a 2005 report that the country will continue to face increasing internal unrest until the government does more to address the needs of its ethnic minorities.<sup>652</sup> This study cites poverty and unemployment amongst non-Persian ethnic groups as root causes of resentment toward Tehran. It also alludes to the idea that non-action on these issues leaves Iran vulnerable to outside manipulation of these populations.<sup>653</sup> These observations are not confined to Iran's (constricted) academic discourse, but have also been reflected in the nation's domestic political climate. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for an example, made an election pledge that he and his ministerial team would visit each of Iran's 30 provinces within their first year in office, to address local problems<sup>654</sup>. On the first anniversary of his presidential administration, however, many regions remained unvisited, and several had effectively become off-limits for him due to escalations in tensions.<sup>655</sup> These factors are of great importance to Iran, which has recently been experiencing substantial ethnic violence.<sup>656</sup>

At this stage, with the possible exception of the Kurds, none of Iran's ethnic groups possess the political will to present a serious risk of succession from the Iranian state, or even making a significant attempt.<sup>657</sup> Furthermore, although the violence in remote regions such as Khuzestan and Baluchistan clearly have ethnic components, the far

---

<sup>647</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>648</sup>

R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. 188

<sup>649</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>650</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p. 181

<sup>651</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p. 188

<sup>652</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p.182

<sup>653</sup>

Ibid

<sup>654</sup>

Ibid

<sup>655</sup>

Ibid

<sup>656</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p.181

<sup>657</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07.

greater causes are poverty and unemployment.<sup>658</sup> These problems that agitate members of these ethnic groups occur within a greater context of dissatisfaction with government corruption, inefficiency, a general sense of lawlessness, and lack of significant economic development across modern Iran more broadly that all Iranians, including Persians, must confront.<sup>659</sup> One should not overstate the case. However, the specifics of these cleavages are worthy of further investigation.

### **CIA figures on Iran:**

Total Population: 70.5 million

Ethnic groups: Persian 51%, Azeri 24%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 8%, Kurd 7%, Arab 3%, Lur 2%, Baloch 2%, Turkmen 2%, other 1%.<sup>660</sup>

Religions: Muslim 98% (Shia 89%, Sunni 9%), other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i) 2%.<sup>661</sup> Shia sects.

Languages: Persian and Persian dialects 58%, Turkic and Turkic dialects 26%, Kurdish 9%, Luri 2%, Balochi 1%, Arabic 1%, Turkish 1%, other 2%.<sup>662</sup>

### **Arabs of Khuzestan:**

Iran is home to a conservatively estimated over 2 million Arabs.<sup>663</sup> These Arabs are predominantly Shiite, and inhabit the southwest of Iran, on its border with southern Iraq<sup>664</sup>, in Iran's Khuzestan province. Ethnic Arabs are the majority population of the province<sup>665</sup> and the province is home to much of Iran's total Arab population.<sup>666</sup> With its huge resources of oil, gas, and water<sup>667</sup>, this region has been described as the nerve center of Iran's economy<sup>668</sup>, providing Tehran with about 80 percent of its crude oil production revenue.<sup>669</sup> However, despite these vast natural resources, Khuzestan currently ranks amongst the poorest and least developed of Iran's provinces.<sup>670</sup> Once amongst Iran's most prosperous regions<sup>671</sup>, the area was devastated by Iran-Iraq war, and reconstruction efforts have been slow in returning the region to prosperity.<sup>672</sup> It is widely perceived that this is the result of ongoing discrimination on the part of

---

<sup>658</sup> John R. Bradley, *Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07.

<sup>659</sup> John R. Bradley, *Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07.

<sup>660</sup> CIA Factbook, accessed, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html> on 12/4/2008

<sup>661</sup> Ibid

<sup>662</sup> Ibid

<sup>663</sup> John R. Bradley, *Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. p.183

<sup>664</sup> Ibid..

<sup>665</sup> Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> John R. Bradley, *Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. p.184

<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

Teheran's political elite. Observers note that during the Iran-Iraq war, many of Khuzestan's Arabs openly backed Iraq, and this is a source of both resentment, and of concern for the implications of a prosperous Khuzestan region.<sup>673</sup>

This region presents Tehran with an especially serious domestic security threat. Violence is common place.<sup>674</sup> In 2005 anti-government riots broke out, in which at least 20 were reported killed, and hundreds more injured.<sup>675</sup> These riots were followed by a series of bombings that killed 21 people.<sup>676</sup> Furthermore, this region threatens Iran's economic security. Khuzestan is home to the Abadan refinery. This refinery represents about 30 percent of Iran's total refining capacity.<sup>677</sup> Attacking this refinery, or its pipelines would severely disrupt both Iran's oil exports and domestic fuel supplies.<sup>678</sup> In this regard Iran has clear cause for concern. Major oil pipelines supplying crude oil to the Abadan refinery on the shore of the Persian Gulf have both caught fire under suspicious circumstances (Iranian officials said they could not rule out sabotage).<sup>679</sup> Pipelines in Khuzestan were bombed in September 2005<sup>680</sup>, resulting in temporary disruption of supply<sup>681</sup> and in October of that year Tehran claimed to have foiled an attempt to bomb the Abadan refinery with five Katyusha rockets.<sup>682</sup>

Disruptions to oil supply in Ahvaz could have global economic and political implications. Global oil prices would be affected the roof if locals were to strike Iran's oil industry with any degree of success. Underscoring that these are not purely domestic issues are claims from Iranian officials that have partly blamed the rise in violence in Khuzestan on exiled separatist groups operating from Iraq<sup>683</sup>, and their anger towards Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States for allowing opposition groups based there to operate freely.<sup>684</sup> Approximately 60 Arabic-language opposition radio and satellite television stations are broadcast into the province from around the world, and in the eyes of Iran "These groups incite terrorist acts and inflame the situation by spreading false reports," says Khuzestan's deputy governor, Mohsen Farokhnejad, who asks "Why do these Western governments allow them to do this when they claim to be fighting terrorism?"<sup>685</sup>

---

673

Ibid.

674

Ibid.

675

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p.185.

676

Ibid.

677

Ibid..

678

Ibid.

679

Ibid.

680

Ibid.

681

Ibid.

682

Ibid..

683

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p. 185

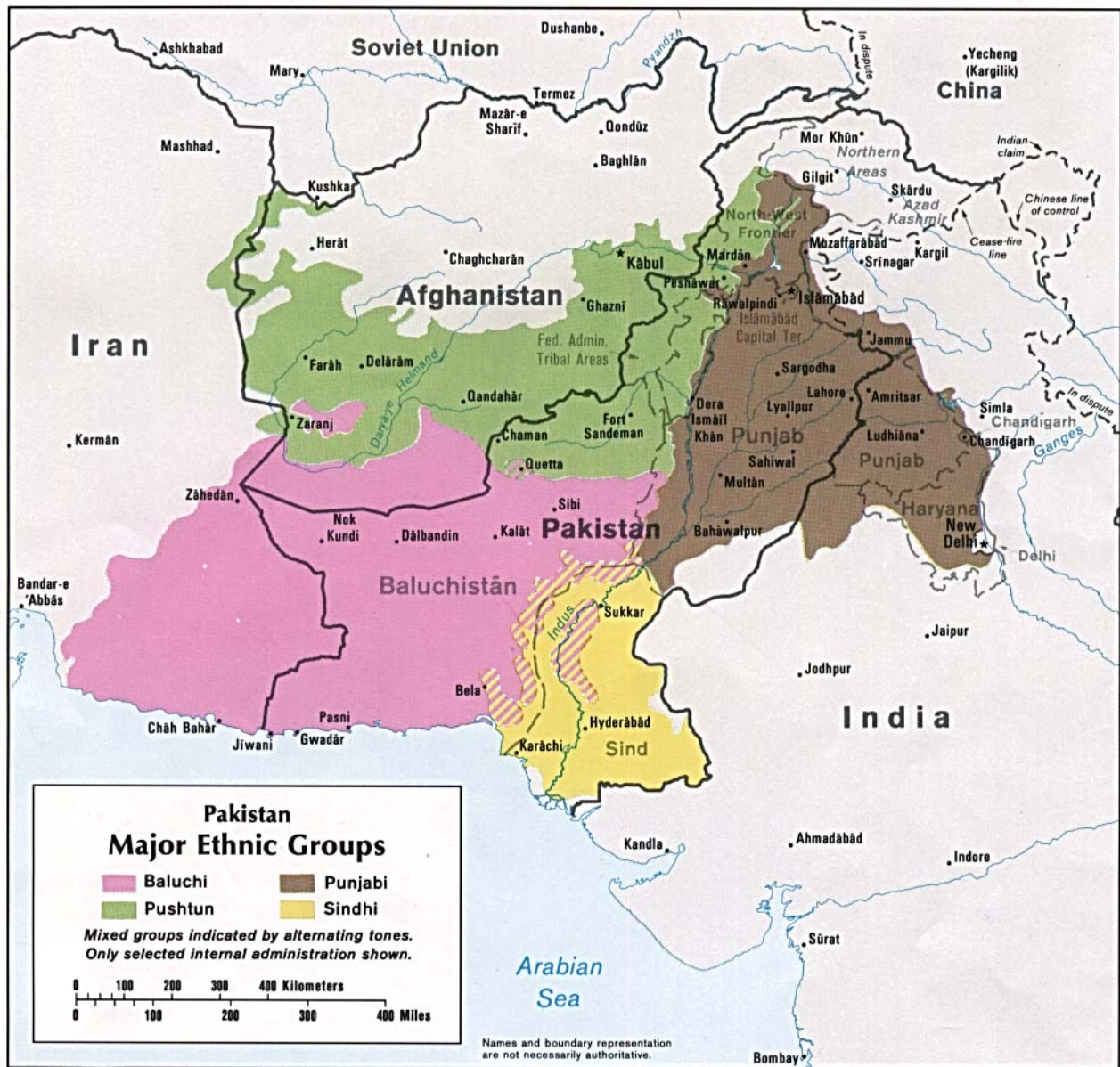
684

Ibid

685

Ibid

**Iranian Baluchistan:**



504491 5-80 (545359)

Iran is home to a population of roughly 1.4 million Baluchis, comprising 2% of Iran's total population.<sup>686</sup> Iran's Baluchi people are predominantly Sunni.<sup>687</sup> Iran's Baluchis reside in the Iranian section of an area known as Baluchistan, a region divided between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Despite holding few resources, this region is militarily important to Iran because of its border with Pakistan and with U.S. occupied Afghanistan.<sup>688</sup> Furthermore, the porous border between the two countries and the close cross-border cultural and tribal affinities of the Baluchis facilitates widespread smuggling of various goods, including both drugs and weapons.<sup>689</sup> For years, the Iranian army has been engaged in the region, fighting a bloody campaign against highly organized and heavily armed drug-smuggling

<sup>686</sup> H. Hassan, *Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities*, CRC Report for Congress, 2008.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid

<sup>688</sup> John R. Bradley, *Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. p. 185

<sup>689</sup> H. Hassan, *Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities*, CRC Report for Congress, 2008. p.6

networks that run the heroin route from Afghanistan to Europe through Baluchistan.<sup>690</sup> This is a major concern for Iran, who is engaged in an internal campaign to reign in its drug addiction rates and drug related crime and corruption.

Baluchi resentment for the regime in Tehran is deep and longstanding. The perception is that the central government of Tehran brutally oppresses and neglects the Baluchistan population.<sup>691</sup> Economically, the region is the least developed part of Iran<sup>692</sup>, with high unemployment rates of 35 to 50 percent.<sup>693</sup> However, alienation also stems from cultural and religious factors. Like Khuzestan's ethnic Arabs, Baluchis complain of discrimination in education and employment and argue that their local cultural practices are oppressed and undermined by Tehran.<sup>694</sup> Furthermore, and as in Khuzestan, locals accuse the Iranian state of a systematic plan to pacify the region by 'changing the ethnic balance in major Baluchi cities'.<sup>695</sup>

Politically, at least two groups, (the leftist Baluchistan Liberation Front and the more centrist Baluchistan Protection Council) lay claim to paramilitary activity in the province.<sup>696</sup> Both of these movements had headquarters in Baghdad before 2003 and, according to one prominent Iranian exile, may now have transferred to Pakistan<sup>697</sup>, once again underscoring the international nature of these domestic security concerns. Iran has solid cause for concern in this region. In 2006 a Sunni rebel group named Jundallah had been operating in 'Iran's borderlands' for 4 years.<sup>698</sup> Jundallah had only 1,000 trained fighters, and was armed only with assorted rifles, hand grenades, and a few anti-aircraft guns<sup>699</sup> yet it claimed to have killed 400 Iranian soldiers in hit-and-run operations<sup>700</sup>, and has taken several others hostage.<sup>701</sup> In January 2006, Abdul Hameed Reeki, the self-declared chief spokesman of the Jundallah called for Western support for its campaign against the Iranian military.<sup>702</sup>

More broadly, the government in Tehran has accused the United States of supporting Sunni insurgents in Baluchistan.<sup>703</sup> It is difficult to attain the veracity of these claims, but the United States maintained close contacts with the Baluchis until 2001<sup>704</sup>, at which point contact was officially withdrawn when Tehran promised to repatriate any U.S. airmen that had to land in Iran due to damage sustained in combat operations in Afghanistan.<sup>705</sup> Furthermore, western foreign policy analysts have at least noted that cooperation between Sunni Baluchi resistance and Western intelligence agencies could be used as a with a destabilizing influence upon the Iranian state indicating that this possibility is at least within the realm of discourse if not policy.<sup>706</sup> One would presume that these contacts could be revived, and could be used to attempt to sow turmoil in Iranian Baluchistan and in pursuit of undermining, or one would presume, in line with

---

<sup>690</sup> John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07, p. 186

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>692</sup> H. Hassan, *Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities*, CRC Report for Congress, 2008. p. 6

<sup>693</sup> John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. p. 186

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*

America's stated policy of regime change in Iran.<sup>707</sup>

In line with the province's status as a major security issue for Iran, in early 2007 the Iranian government built a military base there.<sup>708</sup>

### **Iranian Kurdistan:**

Iran's Kurdish population of around 4 million<sup>709</sup> are a predominantly Sunni Muslim people<sup>710</sup> that reside mostly in the northwest part of the country (so-called Iranian Kurdistan)<sup>711</sup>, and comprise around 7% of Iran's population<sup>712</sup>. On the other side of the Turkish boarder inhabit a further 12 million Kurds<sup>713</sup>, and across the boarder in Iraq a further 6 million.<sup>714</sup> Separatist ambitions are stronger amongst Iran's Kurds than its other minorities.<sup>715</sup> This is not just an internal problem for Iran. Kurdish issues have long been an international issue. Today, the governments of both Turkey and Iran fear that the emergence of a semiautonomous 'state' in northern Iraq might play an agitative role in their own Kurdish minorities calls for greater independence.<sup>716</sup> It is argued that Iran's concern about Kurdish separatism does not approach the level of Turkey<sup>717</sup>, but it is none the less a major concern for Iran in both its internal and external politic calculations.

Kurdish politics are extremely complex, and we do not have the space at our disposal to do them, or there implications to Iran their proper justice, but it is worth briefly alluding to the core issues. Separatist sentiment in Iranian Kurdistan has fuelled repeated clashes between Kurds and Iranian security forces.<sup>718</sup> Furthermore, stand offs between Turkey and the occupational government of Iraq regarding the operation of Kurdish nationalist forces within its borders, and the ever present threat of the use of force by Turkey in Iraqi sovereign territory serve as a telling example of the volatility of Kurdish issues, and the international dangers involved in these 'internal security' problems.

### **Azeri People:**

The Azeri people are a Turkic ethnic group<sup>719</sup> who speak a Turkic language shared by their ethnic compatriots in neighbouring Azerbaijan.<sup>720</sup> Iran's Azeri reside primarily in the northwest Iran along the border with Azerbaijan, and

---

<sup>707</sup> John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

<sup>709</sup> H. Hassan, *Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities*, CRC Report for Congress, 2008. p.5

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid.

<sup>719</sup> H. Hassan, *Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities*, CRC Report for Congress, 2008. p.5

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

in Tehran.<sup>721</sup> With a population of over 18 million, Azeri people are Iran's largest minority, at about one-quarter of Iran's total population.<sup>722</sup>

Especially since the attainment of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Soviet Union in 1991, the level of Azeri nationalism in Iran has risen.<sup>723</sup> However, "Although they have grievances with the current regime in Tehran"<sup>724</sup>, "most Azeris say they are not treated as second-class citizens".<sup>725</sup> Azeri people seem to be more integrated into Iranian society, business, and politics than other minorities in Iran.<sup>726</sup> The Supreme Leader, for example, is an ethnic Azeri.<sup>727</sup> None the less, demands for greater cultural and linguistic rights for Azeri have risen, such as demands for the freedom to operate schools in their own language.<sup>728</sup> In May 2007, for example, hundreds of Iranian Azerbaijani linguistic and cultural rights activists were arrested in connection with demands that they should be allowed to be educated in their own language.<sup>729</sup> Azeri also complain of negative stereotyping of Azeri in Iranian popular culture, most notably the news Media. In May 2006, for example, violent demonstrations broke out in a number of northwest cities after a cartoon published in a state-run newspaper compared Azeris to cockroaches<sup>730</sup>.

### **Conclusion:**

This is by no means an exhaustive account of Iran's internal ethnic division. This would be a thesis in itself. It is merely a brief summary illustrating a few of the internal security problems with external security ramifications that Iran faces. Enough to show that these problems have clear implications for Iranian security, and that they are at least partially international in character. This is a prime example of the kinds of things Neorealism fails to analyse or effectively explain. Consideration of such variables is necessary if we are to develop more complete understandings of Iran's security environment. In short, Neorealism alone is not enough. We can not do much more in this study, but it would be worthwhile. In short, a far more detailed analysis of these and related issues is in order.

---

<sup>721</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>722</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>723</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>724</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>725</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>726</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>727</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>728</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>729</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>730</sup>

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. p. 182.

## **Iran and its Neighbours:**

**This is by no means an exhaustive analysis of Iran's relations with its neighbouring states. We focus attention on what seem to be Iran's primary international threats, in line with our security driven focus. These are Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. Nor is this exhaustive account of the relations between Iran these states, for these are each extremely complex subjects, worthy of more lengthy analysis. These analyses will try and get inside the broad security interests at play in these relationships for modern Iran.**

**Noteworthy absentees from this section include:**

**Pakistan, who we have excluded from this study due to its turbulent nature and current upheaval. That which was written in the era of Pervez Musharaf is no longer seems particularly relevant, and what will come in Pakistan is still anyone's guess.**

**Turkey, who's relations with Iran are not particularly tense, but are complicated by Kurdish issues, Turkey's "Westward" political orientation, and its desire to act as a bridge between civilisations.**

**Syria, who is Iran's most significant nation state ally in the region, but who seems unable to assure Iranian security.**

**One could also dedicate substantial effort to discussing Iran's relations with non state actors, such as Hezbollah. To do so would be outside the scope of this study (other than to critique the accuracy of Neorealist presumptions regarding state primacy in the international system). But this is an extremely complex issue, worthy of its level of analysis in a separate study.**



## Iran and Afghanistan:

For Iran, Afghanistan has been a highly turbulent neighbor. In the period were the Taliban formally ruled the country, despite the religious antagonism between the Taliban's traditional Afghan Sunnism, strongly hostile to the Shi'a<sup>731</sup>, and Iran's Shia revolutionism, Iran had little to fear from its Eastern border.<sup>732</sup> In short, Afghanistan was an unorganized state constantly in the throes of civil war and seemed unable to project credible military force beyond its borders.<sup>733</sup> The Taliban could not pose a conventional military security threat to Iran. It was preoccupied in maintaining some sort territorial control within Afghanistan. Further still, in terms of risks of drug smuggling and related security concerns, the Taliban brought decent outcomes for Iran.

None the less, Iranian engagements in Afghanistan during the Taliban period were far from without tension. In this period Iran's stated policy was that "Anyone standing against the Taliban was a potential asset for Iran in its struggle with the hostile neighbor."<sup>734</sup> Furthermore, in September of 1998 it became known that, after the capture of Mazari-i-Sharif, the Taliban militia forces had murdered hundreds of Shi'ite Muslims, eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist, and held captive 50 other Iranian nationals.<sup>735</sup> The ensuing crisis brought the two powers to the brink of war.<sup>736</sup> Eventually, under threat of a war by Iran<sup>737</sup>, and under pressure from the United Nations, the Taliban was convinced to return both the bodies of the killed Iranian diplomats and the living Iranian hostages<sup>738</sup>, and the threat of war between the two powers was abated. Throughout this crisis although much stronger than the Taliban<sup>739</sup>, Iran seemed reluctant to start a war. It is impossible to ascertain exactly why this was the case, but it seems clear (as evidenced by the Soviet invasion, and validated after the fact by difficulties experienced by the US in its invasion) that the costs of invading Afghanistan for Iran would have been enormous, and the security benefits marginal. There was also a fear that conflict with Afghanistan could draw, directly or indirectly, other states into the conflict.<sup>740</sup> It also seems likely that given Iran's experiences in the Iran-Iraq war, that it were somewhat wary of engaging in military conflict.

Beyond hard military security, Iran and Afghanistan also found themselves in competition for the role as a conduit for the exit of oil and gas from Central Asia to world markets.<sup>741</sup> In this high stakes contest (the winner of which is expected receive "millions of dollars in investment by oil companies in the construction of the pipelines and in exit-fees received for the transit of energy from Central Asia".<sup>742</sup> In this, the role of Pakistan is important to note. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union particularly,<sup>743</sup> Iran and Pakistan have been competing for political influence and

---

<sup>731</sup> Pinr, 26 April 2007 "Afghanistan's Role in Iranian Foreign Policy", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=644&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=644&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>732</sup> Pinr, 20 August 2003, "Why Nuclear Weapons May Be In Iran's National Interests", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=80&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=80&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>733</sup> Pinr, 26 April 2007 "Afghanistan's Role in Iranian Foreign Policy"

<sup>734</sup> A. Tarock, The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Aug., 1999), pp. 801-81 p.801

<sup>735</sup> Ibid.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> A. Tarock, The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict, p.802

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid

commercial interest in Central Asia<sup>744</sup>, as have Iran and Turkey.<sup>745</sup> In this competition, Iran has several advantages. Its historical, cultural and linguistic ties with Central Asia are generally strong, but more importantly, Iran is well geographically situated to perform the role.<sup>746</sup> Specifically, Iran has direct land access to the region, where as Pakistan has to use Afghanistan as a corridor to get to the region.<sup>747</sup> The downside in Iran's column are Iran's political tensions with the U.S. This goes a long way to explain the blessing initially received from Washington and Islamabad, who supported the Taliban's military campaigns since 1994<sup>748</sup>, and US officials who until September 11 2001 had at different times and on different occasions stated that they saw "nothing objectionable"<sup>749</sup> about the version of Islamic law the Taliban imposed in the areas.<sup>750</sup>

However, in 2001, the relations between the Taliban and the United States were brought to a quick halt, as the Taliban leadership of Afghanistan was overthrown by a United States led NATO invasion, aided by local factional parties and Iran's complicity. With the removal of the Taliban from power, Iran faced a radically altered security landscape. "A border area littered with U.S. troops hostile to Tehran."<sup>751</sup> From an Iranian perspective, there are several core security security interests at stake in this situation.

First and foremost, Iran is gravely concerned about the presence of U.S. troops near its Eastern borders in Afghanistan and seeks to avoid a scenario in which the United States would keep its troops in Afghanistan and Iraq for a long time. For example, in 2005, the United States and Afghanistan signed a "Memorandum of Understanding" with the aim of creating a "strategic partnership" that could lead to permanent U.S. military bases close to Iran's border.<sup>752</sup> Independent of the direct threat posed by U.S. forces, Iran is also afraid of finding itself sandwiched between two pro-U.S. Governments.<sup>753</sup> The idea of a U.S. sponsored Afghani government, hostile towards Iranian interests and able to govern effectively would be troubling to Iran even without the ongoing deployment of American troops. This suggests that Iran will have seen, and likely continues to see an interest in stirring up instability and disorder against United states forces within Afghanistan. Its stance will be aimed at avoiding a lasting presence of the United States in Afghanistan<sup>754</sup> and undermine U.S. willingness and capability to maintain, or expand its Middle Eastern military operations.<sup>755</sup> In the case of escalating tensions between Iran and the United States, Tehran may even see an interest in promoting internal conflict within Afghanistan to erode central government authority and undermine a pro American regime's capacity to govern. A more unstable Afghanistan could prove a substantial constraining force upon American military capabilities.<sup>756</sup> Although it would stretch Iran's capability to singlehandedly create the emergence of such a situation, one would expect that there is no shortage of people willing to take arms from Iran to attack American forces in Afghanistan's Eastern provinces.

---

<sup>744</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>745</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>746</sup>

A. Tarock, *The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict*, p.814

<sup>747</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>748</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>749</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>750</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>751</sup>

Pinr, 20 August 2003, "Why Nuclear Weapons May Be In Iran's National Interests", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=80&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=80&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>752</sup>

Pinr, 26 April 2007 "Afghanistan's Role in Iranian Foreign Policy",

<sup>753</sup>

bid.

<sup>754</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>755</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>756</sup>

Ibid.

On the other hand, Tehran needs a stable Afghanistan in order to guarantee its internal stability. An unstable Afghanistan could threaten the stability of Iran, especially the stability of those provinces bordering the Afghan Western regions.<sup>757</sup> Such instability could very easily spill over national boundaries and affect Iranian security and/or stability.<sup>758</sup> Further or deepening instability in Afghanistan could also lead to future waves of refugees in Iran.<sup>759</sup> Ongoing instability also undermines Iranian economic interests, by limiting trade. Further still, an unstable Afghanistan has dramatic implications for Iranian border control. In particular, Tehran wants a stable Afghanistan in order to combat drug trafficking<sup>760</sup> and related crime and corruption.

Although co-operation between Tehran and the Taliban could be considered possible, it does not seem likely. Such a strategy would be troublesome for Tehran because the Taliban is a "structural enemy" of the Shi'a and of Persian power.<sup>761</sup> Even if the Taliban were pushed by short-term interests to seek Iranian support, once these interests were satisfied or changed, the Taliban would be an enemy for Tehran again.<sup>762</sup> A return to power of the Taliban when foreign forces leave Afghanistan could be a strategic failure for Iran.<sup>763</sup> This is one area of interest convergence between Iran and the United States. Neither power desires a return to the status quo.

Recent policy<sup>764</sup> is thus bound by kind of "structural contradictoriness", which reflects the complexity of Iranian aims in the Afghan theater.<sup>765</sup> On one hand, having a strong security interest in the emergence of a stable Afghanistan, and on the other having a strong security interest in weakening the U.S. position in the area.<sup>766</sup>

In pursuit of these apparently contradictory goals it appears that the main aim of Tehran in Afghanistan is to consolidate and expand its influence there.<sup>767</sup> It has been argued that the fall of the Taliban regime opened a window of strategic opportunity for Tehran to increase its leverage and influence over its neighbour<sup>768</sup>, Iran seeks to extend its influence over Afghanistan through several means. Iran has offered economic aid and support for reconstruction.<sup>769</sup> Iran is also pursuing deeper economic interdependence between the two nation states. Iran seeks to do this by increasing levels of trade between the two countries and pursuing increased Iranian investments in Afghanistan and through the development of road and rail links in a manner designed to "steer" Afghanistan's economy towards interdependence with that of Iran.<sup>770</sup> Iran's "soft power" levers can also be seen in scholarships given by Tehran to young Afghans, in strengthening its ties with religious and ethnic groups sensitive to Iranian influence; and typical intelligence actions, such as the recruitment of agents, the activity of information-gathering and the use of propaganda - all presumably in order to consolidate Iranian cultural influence over the country.<sup>771</sup>

In Iran's view, this is part of the wider policy of bringing Tehran a stronger role in Afghanistan. A role that Iran

---

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>758</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>759</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>760</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>761</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>762</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>763</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>764</sup> Since the fall of the Taliban  
<sup>765</sup> Pinr, 26 April 2007 "Afghanistan's Role in Iranian Foreign Policy",  
<sup>766</sup> Ibid  
<sup>767</sup> Ibid  
<sup>768</sup> Ibid  
<sup>769</sup> Ibid  
<sup>770</sup> Ibid,  
<sup>771</sup> Ibid

argues must be irreversible and must prevent Iran from being pushed aside on future decisions in Kabul.<sup>772</sup> This can be taken to mean that once NATO forces leave Afghanistan, Iran desires the capability to affect political outcomes there<sup>773</sup>. Such aims necessitate that Teheran's policies be both flexible and pragmatic in approach. It will make little headway dictating terms and making enemies. Similarly, even though Iran is an important ally of President Karzai, if he loses power and authority, Tehran will support other actors in order to maintain its leverage in Afghanistan<sup>774</sup>.

This strategy has several advantages for Iran.

- In the case of a persistent presence of U.S. troops close to its frontiers, it could use this influence to distress the United States
- in the case of a departure of foreign forces from Afghanistan, it could use its proxies to play a role in decisions on the fate of the country.<sup>775</sup>
- In either scenario, it could help Tehran prevent a return to power of the Taliban.<sup>776</sup>

Its dangers are clear and have been already well explored.

---

<sup>772</sup> Ibid  
<sup>773</sup> Ibid  
<sup>774</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>775</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

## Iran and Iraq:

Iraqi-Iranian relations are extremely complex. Historically speaking, Persian Iran has found itself in competition and conflict with its Arab neighbours to the West. Prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq relations between Iran and Iraq could have been described as hostile, and Iraq was considered by Iran to be a grave security threat. A threat underscored by the Iran Iraq war of September 1980 lasting until August 1988, which cost Iranian lives on a scale comparable to those lost in Europe during its 'Great Wars'. However, this threat had been abated by the West's response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Both the Gulf war of 1990, and the ensuing Western containment of Iraq had served an interest of Iran, namely the limitation of security threats emanating from Iraq. In this sense, Tehran was surely glad to see the fall of Saddam Hussein, and the Sunni dominated Iraqi Ba'ath party. However, America's invasion brought new security problems for Iran in place of the old. After this war, Iraq remains a source of great potential security problems for Iran, and effecting an outcome in Iraq that will secure Iranian influence is crucial to Iranian security interests.

First and foremost, Iran is gravely concerned about the U.S. occupational force situated on its Western border and the build-up of supporting American bases in the Gulf and beyond that also pose a direct military threat to Iran. An American force of that magnitude, with the stated intent of regime change in Iran, with immense destructive capability, and with 'all options on the table' is seen as a direct threat to Iranian security,<sup>777</sup> However, as time has progressed, America has become increasingly bogged down in Iraq. In asymmetric combat, relatively basic arms (rifles, RPG's and explosives) have apparently shattered expectations of America's 21<sup>st</sup> century armed forces effectiveness as tools of both occupation and 'nation building'. Relative to the image of an easy victory, American casualties have been high, particularly of seriously wounded survivors. The multinational pretense of the 'Coalition of the Willing'<sup>778</sup> has been dissolved by the toll of combat, and foreign support for a U.S. expansion of its "war on terror" seems limited. Finally, American public opinion has been turned, more or less, against the war. A new president has been elected, and it seems much less likely that this president will see an interest in pursuing such aggressive unilateralism lightly. In this context it seems that American willingness to engage in military conflict with Iran has been reduced, rather than enhanced by its invasion of Iraq. Iran is also surely concerned with the possibility of the emergence of an effective central government with a pro American foreign policy orientation in Baghdad. American success in Iraq was never in Iran's interests. It troubles Iran that a coalition government in Iraq friendly to the United States would allow Washington to maintain bases in that country.<sup>779</sup> The ongoing general state of anarchy in Iraq and the failure of the American backed regime to govern undermines the implementation or sustainability of such outcomes, and can be seen as a boon for Iran.

In such conflict, Iran also fears the victory of several factions, for much of Iraq is hostile to Iran. If, for example, Iraq's Shi'a fail to secure power, and a Sunni Arab government takes control again, that government will likely be hostile to Iran's regional ambitions.<sup>780</sup> For Iraqi Sunni Arabs, (the former power brokers of Iraq), are generally regarded as hostile

---

<sup>777</sup> Pinr, 20 August 2003, "Why Nuclear Weapons May Be In Iran's National Interests", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=80&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=80&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>778</sup> S. Anderson, P. Bennis and J Cavanagh, Coalition of the Willing or Coalition of the Coerced: How the Bush Administration Influences Allies in its war on Iraq, Institute for Policy Studies, Release date: Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2003. Accessed from <http://www.tni.org/mil-docs/coalition.pdf> on 20/04/09

<sup>779</sup> Pinr: 05 March 2007 "Intelligence Brief: Iran's Covert Operations in Iraq" accessed 20/04/2007 from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=625&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=625&language_id=1)

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.

to Iran's Shi'a and Persian population. This Antagonism has endured since long before the 1980-1988 War<sup>781</sup> but the importance of this antagonism to Iranian security today is still heavily underscored by the cost of that war. This war demonstrated that Iraq, with significant support from the U.S. and several other Western powers, was capable of severely threatening Iranian territorial integrity, and impacting enormous human and economic costs upon the State of Iran. Iran's goal is thus to have Shi'a Iraqi actors achieve and maintain state power in Iraq, so that it can reduce the influence of what has traditionally been a hostile Sunni Arab population over Iraqi foreign policy.<sup>782</sup> In pursuit of this end, Iran is likely to be supporting various friendly Shi'a groups in Iraq<sup>783</sup>. Analysts argue that most Iraqi Shi'a factions (such as S.C.I.R.I. and Moqtada al-Sadr's group) have probably received assistance from Iran.<sup>784</sup>

Instability along Iraq's long shared border with Iran presents its own problems for Iran, particularly as much of this, such as Kurdistan, is amongst the most potentially volatile regions in the country.<sup>785</sup> This scenario is out of control, and poses a real danger of spreading violence into Iran.<sup>786</sup> Iran is itself an ethnically and religiously diverse state, and is home to many of the same ethnic and religious factions as its neighbour Iraq. On the Issue of violent separatism in Iran, with the Kurds and Turkmen now playing key roles in the new Iraqi government, and with separatist violence on the rise in post Saddam Iraq, there are fears that if these people were to achieve autonomy in neighbouring countries, that "empowered by Tehran's international isolation and inspired by the gains of their ethnic brothers in neighbouring states", these people may make louder demands or boulder actions in pursuit of their own 'rights'<sup>787</sup>. The potential for the violent rise of violent anti Shiism on the part of Sunni Muslims is also a concern for the nation state of Iran.

Generally speaking, in order to prevent instability from spreading East into Iran, Tehran is attempting to monitor and influence developments so that they do not become dangerous to Iran's internal stability.<sup>788</sup> Thus, in many ways, Iran likely prefers a more orderly and nationalistic resistance, in which there is less internal tension, and a firmer focus upon the U.S occupation than we have seen thus far, albeit a nationalist resistance of a Shi'a orientation. It is, however, imperative to Iran that factions hostile to Iran do not come to power.

Iraq today is and is likely to remain a grave security threat to Iran. It is also an area of particular American vulnerability, and Iranian opportunity. Through the empowerment of Iraq's more friendly Shi'a majority, Iran may find old (Iraqi) and new (occupational forces) threats alleviated alike. Doing so is nonetheless a dangerous game. Iran seems likely to pursue this end, but with caution, preparing for worst case scenarios through self help competition for security.

---

781

Ibid.

782

Pinr: 05 March 2007

783

Ibid.

784

Ibid.

785

Ibid.

786

Ibid.

787

John R. Bradley, *Irans Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quaterly*, winter 2006-07. p.1

788

Pinr: 05 March 2007, "Intelligence Brief: Iran's Covert Operations in

## Iran and Israel:

Rhetorically at least, Iran's relations with Israel are its tensest. These relations are typified by threats and talk of war. Israel has been traditionally regarded as the most powerful state in the Middle East. It possesses modern and well equipped armed forces, and retains a carefully, and where deemed necessary, violently defended nuclear monopoly in the Middle East. For its part, Israel seems extremely concerned with what it deems to be a genuine security threat emanating from Iran. For Iran's part, it is wary of Israeli foreign policy and its military capabilities.

At the center of these tensions is the fact that Iran is pursuing the development of civilian nuclear technologies (at least), and the fact that Israeli foreign policy actors seem to believe that this program is a veil for the covert development of nuclear weapons capabilities. This position is clearly exemplified by the statements of Moshe Yaalon's (former Chief of Staff, Israeli Defense Forces, 2002-2005): "This Iranian regime is determined to have the indigenous know how, in terms of producing nuclear bombs. We should prevent them the know how. Otherwise it will be up to them to decide when and how to produce and to use the bomb."<sup>789</sup> The implications of this extend beyond bilateral relations, as Israeli concerns, and concerns regarding Israeli security have been a prominent feature in the diplomatic relations of other states with Iran.

Given that Iran is pursuing civilian nuclear power, that Israel does not accept that the project is civilian nor that Iran should have nuclear weapons under any circumstances, the situation is very tense, punctuated by serious brinkmanship. Considering Israeli rhetoric, Israeli military capabilities and Israel's proven willingness to use these capabilities in pursuit of its perceived interests (including defence of its regional nuclear hegemony), Israel is Iran's most direct military threat, whether or not Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons.

There is substantial external debate over the credibility of these Israeli security concerns vis a vis Iran because they are conditional upon the presumption of Iranian intent to develop nuclear weapons, and upon Iranian intent vis a vis Israel. Israel cites its understanding of statements made by Iranian President Ahmadinejad as evidence of Iranian (potentially nuclear) genocidal intent. This is a topic of much debate, in which one finds conflicting interpretations that I am not equipped to discern between, for I do not speak farsi. But of the seriousness with which Israeli foreign policy makers regard these possibilities, there is genuinely little doubt.

This locks Iran and Israel into an extremely delicate security dilemma, where Iran seems able to do very little to curtail the security threat posed to it by Israel, and where Israel feels compelled to maintain or increase this security threat to Iran due to its perception of Iranian intentions. Even without a presumption of genocidal intentions on the part of Iran, one can see clear reason for why the containment of an (theoretically) emerging Iranian nuclear weapons capability could be perceived by Israel to be in its interests. Over the years Israel's nuclear weapons capability has enhanced Israel's capacity (when it views it as in its interests) to take drastic military action against its neighbours.<sup>790</sup> Because Israel's main competitors do not have nuclear arms, and Israel does, under the current nuclear order, it is able

---

<sup>789</sup> BBC documentary: Will Israel bomb Iran? Part 1 of 6, accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9W7hoSDuDU> on 23/05/09

<sup>790</sup> Pinr, 11 September 2003, "Can Israel Maintain its Nuclear Superiority in the Middle East?", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=89&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=89&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

to undertake foreign military action with a relatively diminished likelihood of a direct military response from surrounding states. For even if one were to defeat the Israeli conventional non-nuclear military, in a purely defensive (collective or unilateral) war with Israel one has a real chance of getting nuked. This is the reality for all Middle Eastern states today. This reality is reflected in the military tactics employed by those who have experienced war with it.

Regardless as to one's feelings as to the legitimacy or necessity of such Israeli wars as we have seen since its development of a nuclear weapons capability, one thing seems clear. Many of Israel's neighbours feel genuinely threatened by both its conventional and its nuclear weapons capabilities, and feel relatively impotent in matters of unilateral defence, and collective defence of neighbouring states. One would thus reasonably conclude that nuclear weapons hold some appeal to several of Israel's regional competitors, including Iran. In theory, a nuclear-armed Iran would have at its disposal an enhanced capability to challenge Israeli power<sup>791</sup>, with a drastically reduced fear of foreign reprisals. Further still, beyond Iran, the reduction in Israeli power resulting from a nuclear armed Iran could lead to an increase in power for other Middle Eastern states, as Iran may choose, and/or be able to use its nuclear leverage to dissuade Israel from striking surrounding states, such as Lebanon and Syria, with the impunity we have seen in the past. This seems likely to have spillover benefits for Iranian security.

This would constitute a substantial alteration to the status quo for Israel and challenge its perceived interests. In short, if Israel faced a war with a nuclear-armed state, and found itself losing the conflict, it would be extremely risky for it to launch a nuclear attack against said nuclear armed rival<sup>792</sup>; and if Israel were to launch a nuclear attack against another nuclear-armed state, it would likely face nuclear retaliation.<sup>793</sup> For Israel, this deterrence seems near absolute. A nuclear retaliation against a state as small as Israel could result in enormous casualties too intense for the state to handle or, quite simply, annihilation.<sup>794</sup>

However, in the face of the presumed massive nuclear and conventional retaliatory capabilities at the disposal of both Israel and its military ally, the United States, both aggressive military attacks, of a conventional or nuclear nature, against Israel by Iran, or even by groups of hostile powers never-the-less appear irrational, according to Neorealist presumptions. The resultant security dilemma for Israel from a nuclear armed Iran is a scenario of conventional mutually assured destruction, rather than one of looming genocide. Thus, the primary reason for Israel's nuclear weapons program (to protect the small state's survival from more powerful Middle Eastern states<sup>795</sup> does not appear under threat despite the rhetoric (presuming rationality of actors).

None the less, Israeli opposition to the idea of a nuclear armed Iran is fierce, and the credibility of Israeli threats is underscored by Israeli strikes upon Iraq's reactors at Osirak in 1981. However, Israel does not have the same military options or data set at its disposal in Iran as it had in Iraq. For one, Israel learned from its Osirak attack that a simple air power mission is not a particularly effective means of destroying a country's nuclear weapons program.<sup>796</sup> The attack

---

<sup>791</sup> Pinr: 29 September 2004, "Washington's Iran Strategy: Ostracizing Tehran from the International Community", accessed from

[http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=213&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=213&language_id=1), 01/01/08.

<sup>792</sup> Pinr, 11 September 2003, "Can Israel Maintain its Nuclear Superiority in the Middle East?"

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid.

<sup>795</sup> Ibid.

<sup>796</sup> Ibid.



on the Osirak reactor failed to destroy Iraq's other nuclear facilities<sup>797</sup>, and more importantly, it is now widely believed that the attack on Osirak resulted in a hastening in the pace of Baghdad's pursuit of nuclear capabilities.<sup>798</sup> Also, Iran's physical relation to Israel is important. Unlike Iraq, which lies close to Israel's borders, Iran is situated on Iraq's eastern border, relatively far away from Israel.<sup>799</sup> A military strike by Israel, similar to the one launched against the Osirak reactor, would involve greater risks due to the distance and size of Iran and thus has a lower chance of success.<sup>800</sup> Furthermore Iranian policymakers are aware of the Israeli threat and whatever the current policy may be, they appear to preparing for what aggression may come its way. Evidence of these kinds of calculations can be seen in Iran's dispersion of their nuclear development facilities throughout the country, making it difficult for Israel to deal a devastating blow to the Iranian nuclear program<sup>801</sup>, and its commencement of a program to install technologies and procedures to minimize the effects of the release of radiation that would follow a successful strike on Bushehr.<sup>802</sup> As well as diplomatic fallout and the potential for tough words from the international community, an Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities would also have to consider and prepare for the possibility of Iranian retaliation, or at least heightened Iranian assistance to states or organizations focused on reducing Israel's regional power.<sup>803</sup> The Iranian government has gone to great lengths to emphasize the retaliatory actions it would take upon attack from Israel<sup>804</sup>, such as threatening to bomb Israel's nuclear complex at Dimona if Israel attacks Bushehr.

None-the-less, it is reasonable to conclude, based upon historical precedent, statements by influential 'pro Israeli' lobbyist, ideological allies, and state foreign policy representatives, that in a scenario where a military action could be used to eliminate an emerging Iranian nuclear weapons capability, without severe negative repercussions, this action would be undertaken. Israel repeatedly states that it, and/or its interests are highly threatened by Iran, seeing a vital interest in eliminating Iran's nuclear program or at least setting it back seriously<sup>805</sup>. This possibility presents a credible threat to Iranian security.

Beyond the possibility of unilateral strikes, Israel has been searching for international support in its efforts to contain Iran. At the U.N, Israel campaigns for a thorough inspections programs in Iran, and Iranian compliance in these. With the United States, and one can presume with several other key allies, it lobbies heavily for a 'strong' stance on Iran and its nuclear program. Pressure is placed upon arms producing states (such as Russia) to limit their exports of arms (particularly weapons systems of the more advanced varieties) to Iran. Condemnations are sought and are forthcoming from third states regarding Iranian statements, actions and/or policies. In recent years Israel has lobbied its ideological allies in the Bush administration, such as Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz<sup>806</sup> in the hope that the United States would put pressure on Iran similar in the way the U.S. put pressure on Iraq.<sup>807</sup>

---

797

Ibid.

798

Ibid.

799

Ibid.

800

Ibid.

801

Ibid.

802

Pinr: 06 September 2004, "Iran's Bid for Regional Power: Assets and Liabilities", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=205&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=205&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

803

Pinr: 29 September 2004, "Washington's Iran Strategy: Ostracizing Tehran from the International Community",

804

Pinr: 11 September 2003, "Can Israel Maintain its Nuclear Superiority in the Middle East?"

805

Pinr: 20 October 2003, "Can Iran's Pursuit of Nuclear Technology Be Thwarted By Air Strikes?", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=103&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=103&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

806

Pinr: 11 September 2003, "Can Israel Maintain its Nuclear Superiority in the Middle East?",

807

Ibid.

There appears to be a widespread perception that if "regime change" were to occur in Iran, and the country became as weak as Iraq now is, it would also serve Israel's interests.<sup>808</sup> As time has passed, Washington's leverage in the region has steadily eroded, due largely to massive military over extension, and a loss of public support for further wars at this point. In the current political climate, it is not clear how the U.S. political establishment, public or even military would respond to serious U.S. saber rattling on the issue<sup>809</sup> If Israel wants action undertaken, it may perceive that it has to 'help' itself. This however seems rather a dangerous proposition that Israel is reluctant to take alone. Due to Iran's geopolitical situation, military strengths and/or geopolitical influence or perceived consequences of unilateral actions, at this point in time, Israel appears to prefer to rely upon the U.S. and its allies to weaken the Islamic republic. By encouraging Washington to lead moves on Iran, while Israel seems to hope to remain on the sidelines, like it was in Iraq. This would serve to limit Iranian retaliation against Israel, and/or regional interests.

This relationship between Israel and the U.S. is a major threat for Iran, as Israel seems to have substantial lobby power in Washington, and many in Washington seem sympathetic towards Israel's case for action. Considering these factors, and American military power arrayed against Iran, Iran has reason for concern. Considering Israeli military power and the potential for it to exercise it against Iran, even without American backing, Iran has reason for concern. And considering the 2004 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Iran has reason for concern.

Whether or not it is in fact pursuing nuclear weapons. According to neorealist theory, these concerns are likely to be reflected in self help competition for security.

---

<sup>808</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>809</sup>

Pinr: 20 October 2003, "Can Iran's Pursuit of Nuclear Technology Be Thwarted By Air Strikes?",

## Iran and Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia is an extremely influential regional and in many respects (in terms of financial and energy leverage) global power. It is traditionally regarded as the dominant Arab power, and is a regional competitor for influence with Iran. Saudi Arabia is engaged in the strategic containment of Iran with the United States.<sup>810</sup>

Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are deeply rooted in a protracted history of geopolitical competition and cultural (ethnic and religious) antagonism. The roots of conflict and competition between these groupings, go far back, even beyond The Saudi-Wahhabi pact<sup>811</sup> that was formed in the 18th century, and still represents the foundation of the Saud family's formal legitimacy to rule.<sup>812</sup> One principle that this agreement is founded upon is anti-Shi'ism since, according to the orthodox Wahhabi ideology, "Shi'a religious practices are polytheistic and are at odds with the Islamic principle of tawhid, or monotheism"<sup>813</sup>. These tensions were reinforced in 1979, with the coming to political control of Iran by Shi'a religious revolutionaries with a stated ideology of the exportation of Islamic revolution, and the creation of an Islamic region caliphate. Obviously, the Iranian state envisaged the ayatollahs of Iran as the centers of legitimate authority in such regional affairs, and encouraged others to recognize it as such. In such, it provided a political model to follow not just for Iranians, or even just for Shi'a, (although Shi'a do comprise 10-15 percent of Saudi population, heavily concentrated in the oil-rich East of the country and this was a major concern)<sup>814</sup> but also for much of the Islamic world.<sup>815</sup> A model that was in direct opposition to the Saudi model.<sup>816</sup> Iran, had, for example, called upon Muslims to overthrow the Saudi ruling class. In openly challenging Saudi regime legitimacy this Iranian revolution was perceived as a direct threat to both the external security and the internal stability of Saudi Arabia.

Much has changed in this time. In this regard, Iran has more or less normalized its interactions with its Muslim neighbors in this regard, and adopted more conventional approaches to international relations. However, according to realist framework, and based upon analysis of the policies and statements of both actors, one would expect that both Saudi Arabia and Iran have, as their main goal, the aim of attaining some form of regional political hegemony. This intention, for both states, (by definition) requires the limitation or elimination of the influence of the other. Furthermore, Iran is attempting to pursue a strategy of weakening U.S. influence in the Middle East, and this strategy adds further impetus to Iran's interest in eroding Saudi Arabia's regional power, (seeing Saudi Arabia is such a significant regional ally of the United States).<sup>817</sup>

---

<sup>810</sup> Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=624&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=624&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>811</sup> Although it would be extremely worthwhile to pursue the historical interaction of these two centers of power more deeply, to do so effectively would be beyond the scope of this work.

<sup>812</sup> Pinr: 19 January 2007 "Intelligence Brief: Tensions Increase Between Iran and Saudi Arabia", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=604](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=604) on 01/01/08

<sup>813</sup> Ibid.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid.

Upon brief analysis, one finds evidence of such Saudi-Iranian confrontation manifesting itself across the Middle East today. In Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, at the least, one can observe that Tehran and Riyadh are supporting a variety of actors who have different agendas.<sup>818</sup>

In Iraq, Saudi Arabia is offering support to the Sunni Arab's who are fearful of the rise of the majority Shi'a political power in occupation, and one can only presume post occupation of Iraq.<sup>819</sup> Iran, in contrast, is found to be courting influence in Shi'a Iraq. Riyadh appears concerned that a relative loss of power for Iraqi Sunnis vis a vis Iraqi Shi'ites will mean a corresponding loss of Saudi influence in Iraq.<sup>820</sup> As a result, Saudi Arabia sees an interest in attempting to contain Iranian influence in Iraq, and has placed pressure on the United States to this end.<sup>821</sup> Analysts have observed that this concern has grown even more pressing since the publication of the Iraq Study Group's report, which suggested that Washington should attempt engagement with Iran and Syria to the end of achieving security in Iraq.<sup>822</sup>

In Lebanon, Saudi Arabia supported Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's cabinet and the March 14 coalition as the main "political inheritance" of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri (who shared deeper relations with Riyadh).<sup>823</sup> Iran has supported a growing Hezbollah's coalition. Moreover, in Lebanon, Riyadh is also moving to weaken Syria. This Saudi strategy is aimed at breaking the Tehran-Damascus axis so that it can neutralize Iran.<sup>824</sup>

In the Palestinian territories, Iran provides support to Hamas, while Saudi Arabia supports Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.<sup>825</sup> Again, these alliances reflect a wider regional struggle for influence.<sup>826</sup>

Iran's involvement in these ongoing processes of factional sponsorship in the Middle East is of great concern to Saudi Arabia.<sup>827</sup> Of particular concern is the fact that Iran seems to be embarking upon a process of regional partnership and solidarity building that transcends religious sect (Shia vs Sunni), and ethnicity (Arab vs Persian). Where such Iranian gains are sought through diplomatic efforts (such as aid to Palestine and the framing of Hezzboulah as Islamic resistance to the non Islamic other, rather than its Shi'ite roots vis a vis Sunni 'others'), these gains must also be seen by rival geopolitical entities as a reduction of their influence over regional affairs. This is particularly true for Saudi Arabia, threatening its role as the dominant regional Islamic power.<sup>828</sup>

Therefore, as Iran continues to pursue increased power in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is expected to continue its attempts to subvert that power.<sup>829</sup> To this end, Saudi Arabia is engaged in deep cooperation with American policies of containment of Iran's emergence as a regional hegemon. Saudi Arabia has also increased its oil production, in an attempt to lower the price of oil, "as an instrument to weaken Iran's emergence as a major regional power and to

---

818 Ibid.  
819 Ibid.  
820 Ibid.  
821 Ibid.  
822 Ibid.  
823 Ibid.  
824 Ibid.  
825 Ibid.  
826 Ibid.  
827 Ibid.  
828 Ibid.  
829 Ibid.

secure its relations with the West”.<sup>830</sup> Although this policy may seem expensive, by maintaining positive relations with the West, Saudi Arabia earns the protection of the United States and its allies<sup>831</sup>, while aiding in the containment of a rising competitor. Benefits which the Saudi Regime apparently deems worth the cost (in reduced oil profits per barrel).

The nuclear dimension of this standoff is but one aspect of this conflict, and we do not have the space to cover it in great detail here.<sup>832</sup> However, it can be said that it seems highly unlikely that Saudi Arabia will willingly accept a nuclear armed Iran in the foreseeable future. Even outside the realms of their potential use (which would be extremely problematic and not gain a lot), the Saudi monarchy, if faced with a nuclear armed Iran seems likely to find itself losing substantial regional influence to Iran.<sup>833</sup> From an American perspective as well as a Saudi one, this would alter the regional balance of power against their perceived interests.<sup>834</sup> One would thus expect to see a high level of cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi governments on the prevention of of such an emergence.

There is however substantial potential cost in such transactions. The most substantial of which (for the Saudi government) is the internal political division in the state of Saudi Arabia. Across religious, ethnic and class boundaries, Saudi society is highly polarized. Many believe that the Saudi regime is too close to the United States or its "war on terrorism". Some of these groups are comprised of violent revolutionaries. Others by moderate liberals. Across the political spectrum. Amongst the royal family. Even amongst those who support the need for engagement with the United States, one can see a clear resentment for what many Saudi's believe these policies imply for their Arab, and Muslim neighbors. It is possible that if tensions between the U.S and Iran were to escalate to a point approaching or including war, that such tensions could well erode current Saudi policy. Either through revolutionary change, or more moderate alterations emerging through the current political system. It must be said that this would not be a specifically “pro Iranian” movement, and that such an outcome would be unlikely to result in the emergence of a long term ally for Iran, and certainly not a Shi'a theocracy. But Saudi Arabia is an extremely polarized society, and further support for the U.S.'s war on terror would likely further erode Saudi governmental legitimacy and potentially facilitate a loss of geopolitical control for the Saudi government, or significant changes within it. This, however, does not seem a likelihood that the Iranians seem likely to gamble upon. They will prepare for at least a continuation of the status quo. This competition between these two states has the potential to grow in the coming future<sup>835</sup>, and it seems that any escalations in the stand off on the part of the Iran (at least) would likely be met with heightened U.S. military aid to the Saudi regime. This is a major trump card for Saudi Arabia in its relations with Iran.

Independent of its relationship with the United States, Saudi Arabia is a major economic and energy power in its own right. Not only is Saudi Arabia rich in oil, but its drilling, refining and distribution infrastructure is well developed. Its oil fields are plugged directly into the heart of the world economy. It is a major trading partner for the United States, Russia, China, and the EU (among many). Its economy is correspondingly large, and deeply invested in the western capitalist system. Giving Saudi Arabia a large amount of economic clout. Saudi Arabia is also a core player

---

<sup>830</sup> Ibid.

<sup>831</sup> Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf"

<sup>832</sup> Pinr: 28 January 2005, "Nuclear Iran: Repercussions for Turkey and Saudi Arabia", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=261&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=261&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>833</sup> Ibid.

<sup>834</sup> Ibid.

<sup>835</sup> Pinr: 19 January 2007 "Intelligence Brief: Tensions Increase Between Iran and Saudi Arabia",

in Opec, influencing not only its own oil policies, but those of its fellow regional oil producers.<sup>836</sup> Saudi Arabia's influence over world powers is thus substantial. Saudi Arabia finds itself in a position to use this influence to yield substantial constraints upon Iranian (military or otherwise) capabilities. This influence that Saudi Arabia holds with great powers will be further discussed in the China, Russia and U.S. sections. In terms of bilateral relations, Saudi Arabia is a strong strategic competitor of Iran. The two states seem bound to compete for security.

---

<sup>836</sup>

Ibid

## **Great Powers:**

**This section will outline Iran's relations with Great Powers in the international system. This term "great powers" lacks a clear definition. In this section we are using it in quite an arbitrary manner, to refer to 3 principle actors with clear interests at stake in Iran (Russia, The U.S. and China).**

**We ignore Britain in this section, despite its historical importance in relation to Iran, because this relationship is simply not as significant as it once was.**

**Other actors of significant note that are absent in this study include other European Powers, the European Union and India. European powers are neglected because individually, none of their importance for Iran in security matters seems to parallel those of China, Russia or the United States. The European Union is neglected in our analysis for several reason. The main reason being that it is non a nation state. It is a multinational body with foreign policy faculties. Neorealism is an inappropriate tool for explaining this entity. We ignore India simply because in our study of Iran discussion of India seemed most notable in its absence, and present only in discussions of economic implications. If there are strong security implications for Iran in this relationship, I remain ignorant to them.**

## Iran and the U.S.A:

Relations between the U.S.A. and Iran have been tense since the Islamic revolution of Iran and the formation of the Islamic Republic. This tense relationship is characterized by a distinct disparity in force projection capabilities between the United States and Iran. In terms of Iranian capability to threaten U.S. territorial sovereignty, the U.S has little to fear from Iran. The United States is a distant and overwhelmingly superior military, political and economic super power. The U.S. capability to threaten Iranian territorial sovereignty is substantial. In this context, statements policies and actions against the Iranian sovereignty have been, and one can only presume continue to be undertaken by the United States in its relations with Iran. America seems extremely wary of the implications of a more powerful Iranian state for its interests, and seek to contain its capabilities through sanctions, embargo's etc. With the stated goal of regime change in Iran.

### U.S. Interests:

The availability of crude oil is clearly one such motivation for U.S. interest in Iran. Both Tehran and Washington consider the Gulf "vital" to their interests.<sup>837</sup> The Persian Gulf, especially the Straits of Hormuz, is of great strategic importance to both powers, and world shipping. Shipping is extremely vulnerable in this area. Military predominance in this sphere is seen by America as necessary, in order to ensure free movement of more than 40%<sup>838</sup> of the world's oil supply. Both powers desire the capability to defend their shipping interests. America also desires control or influence over the production and distribution of oil. Something which involves a degree of compliance on the part significant holders of oil reserves. A kind of compliance, that for its part, Iran (holding such a cynical view of United States intentions) seems unlikely to give willingly. America is also interested in pipe line politics, and opposed to the emergence of Russian and Chinese biased oil cartels. Like Russia, the U.S.A wants the worlds energy markets to work in its favor. Its interest here could be described as cheap oil flowing to its markets, with U.S. firms receiving the lions share of profit, and with the U.S. able to control or influence quantities and directions of said oil flows. In an era where the projected supply of crude oil flow is insufficient to meet rising international consumption in the minds of U.S. foreign policy thinkers<sup>839</sup>, and with oil remaining as important commodity as it is, this factor seems extremely relevant.

More generally, the Middle East is seen as an extremely important region. One for which America desires a specific economic future for. To state it simply, a future that conforms to U.S. political, economic and military norms and interests. Iran does not share this regional vision, and given the capability seems inclined to challenge it (if only peacefully) with a challenge/alternative. In fact, many (although differing greatly in perceptions of it, including both Iranian and U.S. officials) would argue such a process is already under way. This places Iran and the United States at loggerheads.

---

<sup>837</sup> R. Ramazani, Iran's Foreign Policy: Both North and South, Middle East Journal, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1992), pp. 393-412, p.394.

<sup>838</sup> A. de Guttry, ITPCM (the International Training Program for Conflict Management Newsletter, July 2007, 5th year, n.2. Accessed from [http://www.sssup.it/UploadDocs/1845\\_Newsletter\\_n\\_2\\_July\\_2007.pdf](http://www.sssup.it/UploadDocs/1845_Newsletter_n_2_July_2007.pdf), on 07/06/08, p.

<sup>839</sup> The Project for a New American Century, Rebuilding America's Defences, Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century, The Project for a New American Century, September 2000, accessed from <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf> on 20/6/09



It is also widely argued that the U.S. perceives a genuine threat to Israel's security from a more powerful (and most strongly argued, nuclear armed) Iran and that either for, or due to a combination of national interests and/or normative values, it places a high worth upon preserving this states security. The same could presumably also be said for Saudi Arabia (that the U.S. seeks to ensure its political and economic endurance). More generally, it has been argued that the U.S fears the emergence of a far more 'multi-polar mini-system', resulting in heightened competition amongst nation states in the regional power balance.<sup>840</sup> In this scenario, competition fuelled regional instability could impede the flow of oil to the global economy, and cause oil prices to 'sky rocket'<sup>841</sup>. It is argued that such an eventuality would hurt the economies of oil-dependent countries (of which the United States is one of the largest).<sup>842</sup>

America's policy to the above ends has been to keep the regional power balance tilted in its favour, by keeping opposing powers weak and divided, and where deemed 'justified', policies aimed at the overthrowing of regimes it deems hostile to its regional programs. The above is also an accurate description of U.S. policy vis a vis Iran. It has provided economic support to Iran's regional competitor's (first Iraq), Israel and Saudi Arabia. It has placed Iran under a national economic embargo, has been the driving force in the (often successful, and substantial) pursuit of international economic sanctions against Iran. It pursues regional policies with the stated goal of containing Iranian influence. And it has not stopped short of stating (and one can safely presume pursuing) a policy of regime change in the country. With many senior officials (as high as the U.N. Ambassador, president, and vice president) at points in time calling for the military invasion of Iran. With "all options on the table" (A diplomatic mannerism frequently employed by U.S. Foreign policy representatives to imply that the use of nuclear weapons remain an option).

In its 'conflict of interests' with the United States, Iran is essentially encircled the United States, countries under American occupation and military allies of the United states, as this map of unknown source so well illustrates.



840 Pinar: 29 September 2004, "Washington's Iran Strategy: Ostracizing Tehran from the International Community", accessed from [http://www.pinar.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=213&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinar.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=213&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

841 Ibid.

842 Ibid.

Of particular significance, to its east in Afghanistan lies a substantial presence of U.S. ground forces. To its west lies Iraq, home to U.S. Troops, as well as U.S. naval and air forces in the Persian Gulf. Despite the U.S.'s failures thus far in effectively occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, these two wars clearly exemplified its raw destructive potential, and the willingness to use it of the governing elite. It also brought this military into Iran's immediate proximity, and both of these factors will have heavily influenced Iranian security perceptions.<sup>843</sup> However, it is important to note that Iran may prove able to turn the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan to its advantage.<sup>844</sup> Historically, Iran has had close contact with, and both political and cultural influence in, the regions on its eastern and western borders<sup>845</sup>; the west of Afghanistan and the southeast of Iraq. In an interview with al-Jazeera television on August 19, Iranian Defense Minister Shamkhani observed that the U.S. military presence in its neighbors "is not power for the United States because this power may under certain circumstances become a hostage in our hands."<sup>846</sup> Although such a scenario seems rather dramatic, the implications of Iranian influence in these regions, and the potential support of local resistance to U.S. occupation in fact provides a credible threat to the lives and missions of a significant number of U.S. military and civilian personnel.

Also, beyond the possession of any such deterrent capability on the part of Iran, the U.S. military is overextended from its Iraq and Afghanistan missions, and its continuing needs and commitments to maintain Asian and European presences.<sup>847</sup> Even if the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had proven relatively successful, it would have always been questionable whether or when the United States would find itself militarily, economically or politically capable of mounting an operation against Iran similar to the one that it undertook in Iraq<sup>848</sup>, and as time has passed and this overextension has deepened, such a capability seems further reduced. Furthermore, beyond the direct costs of war lies the geopolitical fact that Iran is a major oil producer bordering other major oil producers, and that the international economic system upon which America is dependent is itself dependent upon oil. A large-scale war undertaken by the United States against Iran would almost surely lead to a disruption of world oil supplies and there is a danger that Iran could use its missiles to attack Saudi or Gulf state oil complexes.<sup>849</sup> In short, resulting in greatly increased oil prices for the United States at a time where the economy seems extremely ill equipped to cope with them.

It must also be said that Iran is a much stronger military power than was Ba'athist Iraq.<sup>850</sup> In its war with Iraq in the 1980s, Iran absorbed heavy losses and eventually repelled an aggressor that had the backing of the United States.<sup>851</sup> Its population of 70 million dwarfs Iraq's 26 million.<sup>852</sup> Iran also much less of a modern construction of colonial rule combining diverse ethnic and religious groups without a common history than is Iraq, and is more of an ethnically and religiously homogeneous society with a long history of independence and a strong sense of

---

<sup>843</sup> Pinr: 06 September 2004 "Iran's Bid for Regional Power: Assets and Liabilities", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=205&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=205&language_id=1) on 01/01/08.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>845</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>846</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>847</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>848</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>849</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>850</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>851</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>852</sup> Ibid.

nationalism.<sup>853</sup> One can thus expect that if the United States attempted to occupy Iran, this population would mobilize an effective military resistance to such an incursion. Furthermore, divide-and-rule strategies employed in Iraq and Afghanistan seem unlikely to prove effective in this environment<sup>854</sup>. Furthermore, Iran may (and according to statements by Iran and reports by media) have developed strategies and technologies that can operate effectively in such an environment. Employing its own brand of asymmetric warfare to, despite taking heavy losses more generally, none the less impact substantial damage upon invading forces. It seems highly likely that Iran would, if invaded, impact enormous costs and casualties upon the U.S. state and eventually repel such an invasion. In line with such a projection; upon brief review of U.S. military history, one observes that there are clear limits to the United States capability to effectively rule countries through 'war'.

However the destructive capacity of U.S. armed forces is without question, and is without known countermeasures (both in the nuclear, and 'conventional' armaments). When the United States deems it appropriate, the United States can (and as we have seen, when it deems 'justified', does), with relative ease (although as we have often seen not without consequence) set back the development of a nation like Iran back years in a matter of hours (presuming a mobilized arsenal). The costs of promoting such outcomes for Iran are thus potentially enormous, and this must weigh heavily upon Iranian foreign policy actors minds. None the less, at this point in time Iran seems determined to resist concessions on its perceived vital interests, and is prepared to risk worst-case and other unfavorable scenarios in order to realize its core ambitions.<sup>855</sup> To the extent that Iran has undertaken this alteration to the status quo, it can be interpreted as Iran taking advantage of military and diplomatic vulnerabilities of the United States that were revealed by Washington's campaign for regime change in Iraq.<sup>856</sup> On the other hand, it can equally be seen as a response to rhetoric advocating Iranian regime change from the United States. Considering the displayed willingness of those in office to use military power in pursuit of these policies in the region, one sees clear impetus for such a heightened sense of insecurity on the part of Iran. The likely truth is that both sets of factors have played a role in the foreign policy formulation, and that although Iran fears U.S. military reprisals, it is none the less seeking to exploit a currently perceived weakness of the United States, relative to the deterrent posed by Iran's military capabilities of its national defense forces, resistance fighters and proxy actors across the region. Factors indicate that the core medium term goal of Iranian foreign policy makers in this policy of resistance to the United States demands in the international arena is a reduced military vulnerability to the United States.

It is worth noting at this point that Iran may well hold a perception that to acquiesce to U.S. demands in the international arena would either a) not result in a reduced security threat from the United States. Or b) unacceptably compromise Iranian defense capabilities. It is not only in the West that people are capable of holding a cynical view of 'appeasement', and given Iran's history with the United States, both would seem quite reasonable conclusions to take.

#### What Can Iran do about it?

As has already been mentioned, Iran has at its disposal a substantial capability to act (politically, economically or militarily) against U.S. forces in Iraq. Accusations of this occurring by the United States (among others) are plentiful.

---

853 Ibid.

854 Ibid.

855 Ibid.

856 Ibid.

To ascertain the validity and extent of such claims is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, we can only hypothesize upon what and why one would be inclined to do vis a vis U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The best case scenario for Iran is a forced U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, and the emergence of substantial Iranian influence over a Shi'a dominated Iraq or a breakaway Shi'a mini-state in the south.<sup>857</sup> Iran thus clearly sees an interest in promoting this situation., and is likely acting (in those ways it deems appropriate) to pursue such an emergence. This seems likely to include at least some kinds of support for those actors over whom Iran sees potential to influence in Iraq.

In Afghanistan, Iran clearly has very similar interests than it does in Iraq. Namely, the removal U.S. forces from its borders, and gaining influence in Afghanistan through those factions that with whom Iran perceives such relations can be effected. However, this is more of an uphill battle for Iran in Afghanistan than in Iraq. Afghanistan is historically a very divided nation state. Many groups within Afghanistan are more or less friendly towards Iran. However, the Ideology of the previously ruling Taliban and substantial portions of the population, was and remains extremely hostile to Shi'a Islam, and by extension, Iran and Iranians. Iran is thus concerned with possibilities of a resurgence of al Qaeda or Taliban factions. None the less, (although to differing extents) such support can also be used as a lever of foreign policy vis a vis the United States and its allies.

Beyond this, Iran is attempting to further advance its domestic defense capabilities, through the import of advanced technology, the development of locally produced alternatives and refinement of its military doctrines and strategies. It is also pursuing a policy of deepened regional cooperation, with intentions of increasing political ramifications of any U.S. attack against Iran, both in the middle east, and also in partnership with extra regional actors.

Iran is also clearly seeking enhanced nuclear energy production capabilities. It strongly professes that these developments are for purely 'peaceful purposes', and denies accusations that it is part of a nuclear weapons program. Observers have however noted that it is not a very large step from running a civilian nuclear energy program, to being able to produce nuclear weapons. Many seem highly skeptical of Iran's intentions in this regard. It must be said, that for Iran, nuclear weapons would hold a very strong appeal, as the most effective manner through which the United States and its allies could be effectively deterred from future military invasion. However, it must also be said that Iran is highly dependent upon Russia in several areas, including both its nuclear energy programs, and its procurement of advanced weapons systems (such as planes and missile delivery systems). Russia does not seem to desire a nuclear armed Iran. One would thus seem wise to exercise great caution in over simplifying this Iranian desire for nuclear weapons. As although it seems likely that they would seem appealing to Iranian security interests, questions of how, and at what cost are still of significance. One must however also acknowledge, that nuclear weapons were first developed over half a century ago, and that since this point the technologies and techniques of creating (and also delivering), nuclear weapons have been well refined. It would seem foolish to presume that Iran is utterly incapable of replicating (or improvising) such technology and techniques of its own accord. But for Iran to do so seems a difficult and dangerous path that we have no evidence Iran has at this stage (or will soon have) embarked upon. Thus, although it is a possibility, it does not seem to be a safe presumption that Iran is in fact developing nuclear weapons. It is however likely that Iran has programs geared towards enhancing its capability to be able to, if it so desires, at some future point, develop nuclear weapons in a shorter time period, or with less international scrutiny. Russia will surely have a hand in much of this, attempting to provide the Iranians with enough of what they want to keep them doing business, but not so much that Russia feels that it is compromising its capability to effectively veto any Iranian nuclear ambitions. Due to the dependent nature of Iran's relationship with Russia, these efforts seem likely to be quite effective.

---

<sup>857</sup>

Ibid.

## American Fears:

U.S. Foreign policy representatives speak often of its fears of a nuclear armed Iran; apparently (accurately, it would argue) viewing the Iranian government as desiring a war of, one can only presume, at best, for Iran; (considering the number of nukes and conventional weapons capable of being arrayed against it), mutual, annihilation against Israel.

Despite the apparent simplicity of Iran undertaking such an action (nuking a nation state) expressed in U.S. rhetoric, the nature of using such weapons within the region is in reality extremely problematic. Even presuming no regard for civilians of an enemies lives or property (an assumption made to illustrate the point), one would need to consider many things before employing nuclear weapons against any state. This is but a brief overview of what Iran would need to consider. It must consider the proximity of blast and fall out to Iran; to its air currents and waterways. It also would need to consider all of the former for its allies. Nuking Israel is one, in my opinion improbable desire/possibility. Slaughtering, Palestinians, or any of Israel's neighbours as 'collateral damage' is quite another. One would also need to consider the possible destruction or degradation of religious sites (in the case of both Israel/Palestine and Saudi Arabia much more of a probability). There is also a high probability of return (nuclear and/or conventional) strike/strikes (presuming the state is nuclear armed, or nuclear or well armed states enter the fight). These considerations alone seem enormous. And there are also broader political implications to consider. As the first state to use nuclear weapons in war since the conclusion of World War Two, and the first ever to use them in a war of aggression, Iran would find itself truly consigned to pariah status, and likely subject at least to some of the harshest political sanctions ever seen, or an indefinite (but one can presume extended) period. Simply put; The ramifications of a nuclear attack would likely outweigh any gains made. Even in a scenario where Iran faced an impending reality of an U.S. naval bombardment and invasion by the U.S.A, and it were to employ nukes against said naval invasion, the spill over implications would seem enormous.

To be short, outside of a self defense scenario against an overwhelming (conventional or nuclear) attack, such an action would defy neorealist strategic logic; ensuring ones own destruction for no material benefit.

There are however, non conventional methods of deployment that arguably differ from some of these generalizations. Much has been made of the potential for Iran to employ proxy actors, or Iranian state forces to deploy such a weapon, using an individual as a delivery system. It is true. It could be done. But it is also true that there are few significant gains to be made by employing such a delivery system over the systems that the west has at its disposal, and many disadvantages. One such advantage is that such a delivery would be (theoretically, if the job were done right) untraceable, or at least less precisely traceable than a missiles trajectory. The other is range. In every other regard listed, other than cost and access, and potentially at some point in the future anti ballistic missile defense), a nuke is a nuke. The size of the explosion and what it hits is whats relevant, not how it got there.

There are also significant drawbacks to employing such a delivery mechanism. There are reasons states keep close guard upon there nuclear weapons. And these reasons are also true for Iran. To hand someone a nuke is to hand them immense power. The amount of trust or coercive power needed for a states policy actors to feel comfortable transferring such a weapon and the capability to deploy it to any given individual, or group of individuals is enormous, and almost impossible to acquire. One would presume that to do so, any actor would need full confidence that once such a nuke were in possession, its use (in all senses) would be submitted to the will of the actor who provided it (Iran).

Beyond this apparently insurmountable obstacle, one would need utmost confidence in said group or individuals and/or groups capability to exercise this mission without fail. This would involve, at least, receiving the weapon, and exiting the country. Going through multiple boarder checks (at least 2. Iran's could theoretically be made

easy, but this would be tested at the destination). This could be done by land, sea, rail or air. Once it arrived in the location state of its deployment, it would need to find refuge, and keep low, or blend in. It would need to do all of the above, without arousing surveillance. With a nuclear weapon. It is a huge gamble, as one can presume that if caught in transit, that Iran would be crippled by other world powers. It does not seem a profitable tactic, even given the most cynical regard for 'the enemy'.

#### Non Use Applications:

Even beyond the extreme case scenario of the attempted destruction of Israel, or the potential for wars of expansion against its neighbours; the United States does not like the foreign policy implications of a nuclear armed Iran for its interests in the Middle Eastern region. Although it is far less often discussed than the former possibility, few of these are directly related to their actual deployment. With a nuclear deterrent, Iran could effectively dissuade a potential invasion of its territory (based upon mutually assured destruction theory), by threatening to risk a nuclear exchange with the other power. This theoretically (based on (mad theory and historical precedent) nullifies U.S. capabilities of imposing regime change through military ends from without.

What nuclear weapons would also provide Iran (theoretically) is a readier hand to act conventionally (non nuclear) in the region, particularly against non nuclear powers, but also (via proxy) against those with nuclear arms. With a reduced fear of repercussions. Iran could increase its support for groups and governments to whom it allies. There is precedent of this, in the cold war. To state it simply, a nuclear weapons armed Iran would be more able to challenge U.S. and Israeli regional ambitions. Iran, the United States and/or Israel could well find themselves competing for regional dominance in Lebanon, or various other parts of the region in struggles not unlike those of Vietnam (for one symbolic example). Either with its military, or via proxy, a nuclear armed Iran would (one would presume based on limited precedent) presumably be able to partake in conventional armed combat against regional power, and even possibly incite regime change, and generally behave in the manner that other nuclear powers (including the U.S.) have set down before it, with a dramatically reduced security perception. However, such outcomes are not exceptional. From an Iranian perspective would obviously cite the fact that the United States and Israel enjoy what many would consider to be a disproportionate amount of military leverage in this department. One would argue that these powers (in this case the United States more specifically) desire to impose regime change upon Iran through violent means. It would point out that it may well, or may at some future point possess the capacity to do so, or at least the capacity to contain its growth through bombardment. One would cite the fact that these powers (once again, most specifically the United States) have been shown to pursue such tactics against non nuclear armed powers (Iraq for example), and argue that such powers using these arguments as explanations for why Iran should not acquire is hypocritical at best. And that this hypocrisy coming from the very same power whose policies and capabilities constitute such a major strategic imperative for their (nuclear weapons) development. Thus in this department, it can be argued that if Iran is seeking nuclear weapons programs, that Iran is only seeking to play the game on the level at which the U.S. and its key ally are already playing it, so as to protect itself from the excesses of their power.

Regardless of all of the above, Iran's nuclear programs seem, for the time being at least to be a matter of extreme concern for U.S. foreign policy officials. And one can clearly see interests in this. What is interesting to note is that this is a very different picture to the interest set found in both popular discourse and official U.S. positions.

Iran has one other security interest in its relationship with the United States. That is the effects of the development of civilian nuclear power upon the Iranian economy, and upon its military programs access to energy. In a world that runs on oil, oil is not just energy, it is money. If one can produce energy through an alternative means, and sell the oil one produces at a profit this is a desirable outcome. Especially for a country as starved for markets as Iran. To the extent that oil production is (political) power, it also frees up more oil, and thus theoretically, more leverage, or at least more sustained leverage than if one were consuming oil domestically. One can only presume that as oil reserves become further and further depleted that the market value of such activities will likely increase. Beyond (presuming profitability) increased oil profits, the acquisition of civilian nuclear energy would be expected to provide ready access to electricity for Iran's engines of economic development (what these may be is outside the scope). These engines of commerce are (combined with the development of human life and labor) the primary engine of military development. Broadly speaking, the bigger an economies access to energy, capital, and labor the greater potential it has to develop more effective capabilities to defend its external security. America may well see and pursue interest in all of the above paragraph not eventuating.

#### Conclusion:

Based upon the above review, it would seem that Iranian military capabilities are extremely constrained by preponderance of U.S. force projection and strike capability. In the face of this relative imbalance it would seem that Iran has only few viable military tactics at its disposal. And even these tactics seem like a dangerous game, where the United States will enjoy the upper hand in any projection of military destructive force of a conventional or nuclear nature, and its ability deliver it to the heart of its opponent. Iran is thus only only really able to flex its capabilities where its opponents expose themselves to targets of opportunities (invasions of neighbours etc), and to a rather limited degree, with an ever present fear of a potentially overwhelming U.S. backlash. If Iran desires to pursue these circumstances, to this point, it must be noted that any such actions that have been undertaken by Iran seem to be somewhat limited, which would seem consistent with the above outlaid scenario. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and even Lebanon and Palestine, it does not seem that Iran is at this stage disposed to provoke aggression.

Iran does however desire regional influence, and an enhanced capability to translate this influence into hard military capability. For were Iran to be invaded, one could find a Hezzzbollah insurgency, inspired by the invasion of its ally, against Israel and/or the United States. Iran would also like to enhance its capability provide effective support to local actors in conflicts in which its enemies are in or become embroiled in with quite cheap and simple, but proven effective in modern warfare, weapons. It would also presumably like that were it to be invaded, it would be flooded with foreign nationals, and that these foreign nationals would support the Iranian state, rather than simply fighting America, but with little regard for Shi'a life or Iranian sovereignty. But such a force is presumably (presuming Iran cares about its destruction) a primarily (in large scale employment) defensive tool. Beyond this, it surely wants to develop its economy and better secure its investments in it against U.S. or its allies attacks. Be they air strikes, full blown land invasion, political or economic attacks. Iran seeks to develop defense, and potentially force projection capabilities against perceived threats to its national development. America clearly seeks to impede such developments, as evident through its program of economic sanctions, embargoes and pressure it places upon other powers with the obvious and stated intent of to limiting such eventualities.

This is not a comprehensive overview of U.S. Iranian relation. For further historical background of this

relationship, please refer to the history chapter. And for further detail, more space would be needed.



## Iran and Russia:

Currently, Russia is a resurgent power, reasserting its roll on the international stage after a post Cold War period of relative international disengagement. This renewed sense of power, and a more confrontational position vis-a-vis the United States does not mean a desire to return to oppositional politics of the Cold War era. It is better viewed as the result of the internal stabilization<sup>858</sup> of a post-Soviet political system where we have seen more effective central governance, combined with increases in Russia's energy leverage. According to Waltzian neorealist systems theory, this is likely motivated (in part at least) by fear of U.S. hegemonic power. Such an understanding is supported by Russian foreign policy statements, where it has expressed such motivations for its desire to balance U.S. international hegemony. Russia frames its opposition to U.S. power in what it sees as "a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law"<sup>859</sup> where "One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way...", and going on to argue that "Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force -- military force -- in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. ..."<sup>860</sup>. Beyond the direct use of force by the United States, Russia is also upset by NATO's ongoing expansion, which, Putin argues, "does not have any relation with the modernization of the alliance...it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust."<sup>861</sup>, by U.S. and European positions over the Kosovo question and U.S. missile defense system initiatives in Poland, the Czech Republic and Georgia.

This process has made more appealing and increased Russian capability to undergo a process of "geopolitical reinforcement"<sup>862</sup> of her "near abroad", including the Persian Gulf. Broadly speaking, the Persian Gulf is of interest to Russia because of a few core factors. These are (i) oil and gas supply, transport, and cartel interests; (ii) emerging markets for Russian contracting; (iii) as a market for Russian arms, (iv) as leverage vis a vis 'Western' powers (The United States, Israel and European nation states). Russia also has an interest in the opinions of its foreign policy held by internal Muslim populations in its Southern regions, and to be seen sympathetic towards Muslim causes. There is also the issue of the involvement of foreign Jihadists in Russian territorial disputes (e.g. Chechnya). Also, from an economic perspective, Russia sees great opportunities in entering Middle Eastern markets<sup>863</sup>. Such a strengthening of Russia's economic role in Iran and the wider region would also strengthen Russia's political influence over Iran and surrounding states.<sup>864</sup> All fo the above has brought Iran into deeper relations with Russia.

One such area Russia seeks to engage with Iran is that of nuclear energy development. In this industry Russia hoped that by offering technical and logistical support for the construction of nuclear facilities, it will be able to create a relationship of Iranian technical, and consequently political, dependence on Moscow.<sup>865</sup> This strategy appears to be working, with Iranian policy makers seeing Russia as their only credible partner in this field, now and in the foreseeable

---

<sup>858</sup> Putin: Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=624&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=624&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>859</sup> Ibid.

<sup>860</sup> Putin: Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf", [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=624&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=624&language_id=1)

<sup>861</sup> Putin: Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf", [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=624&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=624&language_id=1)

<sup>862</sup> 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf",

<sup>863</sup> Ibid.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid.

<sup>865</sup> Ibid.

future<sup>866</sup>, thus securing a Russian monopoly on the (non Iranian) economic benefits from the nuclear program for this period.

The success of this strategy is a major economic boon for Russia, and is driven by a desire for a bigger share in emerging demand for nuclear energy, and related construction in Iran.<sup>867</sup> Leksandr Gluhov, the head of the Russian "Atomstroyeksport" firm, responsible for the Bushehr plant, stated that Russia stands to gain \$25 billion from the construction of power plants.<sup>868</sup> This construction was projected (in 2006) to provide job opportunities for 300 Russian firms and 20,000 people<sup>869</sup>; and at the time of publishing the article in 2006, the authors states that there were 1,500 active workers on the site.<sup>870</sup> In this sector, Russia finds itself Iran's sole partner in this emerging industry since 1995<sup>871</sup>, in what it surely views as an extremely favorable economic position, well insulated from normal market forces. Russia seeks to preserve and solidify this dominant position in this emerging Iranian nuclear market.<sup>872</sup>

This apparent Iranian dependence also seems to put Russia in a very favorable political negotiating position vis a vis Iran. This seems important to Russia. To state it simply, it appears that Russia is not in favor of a nuclear armed Iran. With the goal of maintaining this status quo, Russia has used Iranian dependence upon Russia in related fields to craft policies designed to ensure that an Iranian nuclear weapon does not emerge.<sup>873</sup> In this relationship, Iran is relatively powerless and bound to Russia, able only "to oscillate between the threat of international sanctions and the loss of Russian support for its nuclear program."<sup>874</sup> Should Iran compromise its relationship with its Russian partners in pursuit of nuclear weapons, it risks access to many key resources for its nuclear power program, and which it is unlikely to get elsewhere. It would also likely lose access to Russian armaments, and support in areas such as rocket technology. For Russia's part in this bargain, it seems prepared to use its intergovernmental influence to support Iran's sovereignty against a hypothetical external invasion by Israel and/or the United States so long as Iran maintains the status quo. This support, however, is conditional upon Russian desires, and if, for example, it is not simply civilian nuclear power that Iran desires, Russian support seems unlikely.

To the end of illustrating this point, Russia has made frequent statements that the "Iranian nuclear program was the result of an agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy between Russia and Iran"<sup>875</sup> and that "We don't have any information that Iran is striving to produce nuclear weapons,"<sup>876</sup> as Putin stated at a press conference held with the French President, Sarkosky, on the French leader's first visit to Russia). "We don't have such information, so we think they are not."<sup>877</sup>

---

<sup>866</sup> B. Aras and F. Ozbay. Dances with wolves: Russia, Iran and the nuclear issue. Middle East Policy 13.4 (Winter 2006): p. 132

<sup>867</sup> Ibid.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid.

<sup>869</sup> Ibid.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid.

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid.

<sup>873</sup> Ibid.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid.

<sup>875</sup> Ibid.

<sup>876</sup> Ibid.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

In terms of Russia's interests beyond Iran, The Russo-Iranian experience in nuclear development is also an opportunity for Russia to emerge as a “reliable service provider in nuclear-energy markets”<sup>878</sup>, particularly those that are not dominated by United States and other Western investors.<sup>879</sup> In this endeavor, the success or failure of such projects will serve as a demonstration to other nuclear-energy-seeking countries of Russia's political, technical and economic capability and reliability as a partner in the field of nuclear development. As such, Russia's involvement in Iran's nuclear development can be regarded as somewhat of a 'prestige project'.<sup>880</sup> In particular, by providing a role as a "nuclear technology supplier", Moscow also wants “to show that Russia has the capability to represent an alternative for those regimes allied with the United States.”<sup>881</sup>

Such international 'prestige' is an important interest of Russia, in its efforts to reassert its role in global and more specifically regional politics.<sup>882</sup> In this, Iran is of great importance to Russian policies toward the Caucasus/Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia.<sup>883</sup> These three regions are rich in energy resources and are strategically positioned for energy supply and security.<sup>884</sup> Due to Russian economic dependence on oil and gas exports, the Russian administration clearly desires a strong influence in these regions.<sup>885</sup> Through economic penetration, and the provision of (conditional) support in the international arena, Russia is able to develop friendly and functional relations across these regions that will aid Russia in the negotiation of energy transport agreements, and help greatly if Russia should desire to participate in, challenge or emulate existing energy cartels.

Similarly Russian sale of armaments to Iran is a national interest of Russia, and an area in which Iran finds itself quite dependent on Russia. The armaments industry is a substantial portion of the Russian economy, and a strong tool of political influence. This applies to the state with whom it trades, and competes with the United States and other regional actors, by altering the balance of military power. Such exchanges fuel Russian industry and many, especially more advanced weapons systems also bind the client state (in this case Iran) into a dependent relationship with the supplier, as upgrades and servicing options become quite limited. Increasingly, as modern weapons systems are integrated with very costly (often satellite) external guidance, the dependency continues for access to these systems from Russia.

Because Iran lacks open access to the armaments industries of most Western powers, Russia seems rather free to pick and chose which deals, which weapons, at what price, and in what quantities it does and does not sell weapons to Iran. This dependence is a major problem for Iran, which Iran has very few mechanisms at its disposal to change. This is exemplified by the ongoing desire of Iran to obtain Russia's S-300 and S-400 anti-aircraft weapons systems.<sup>886</sup> The acquisition of such technology would go a long way towards ensuring a credible defence against American or Israeli bombardment. However, such a result for the Iranians has yet to be forthcoming, with Russia meeting with all

---

878

Ibid.

879

Ibid.

880

Ibid.

881

Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf",

882

B. Aras and F. Ozbay. Dances with wolves: Russia, Iran and the nuclear issue. Middle East

Policy 13.4 (Winter 2006): p. 132

883

Ibid.

884

Ibid.

885

Ibid.

886

Oksana Antonenko, Russia's Military Involvement in the Middle East, Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal, Vol. 5 No. 1, March, 2001.

interested parties, presumably using the possibility of its sale to maximize Russian benefit. Iran has few levers to influence Russia beyond the provision of benefits, and it is highly reliant upon Russia for the provision of armaments. Being under an effective arms embargo from the West, without Russian support, Iran is left reliant upon less advanced local arms production and acquisition techniques. Iran also has very few mechanisms through which to influence Russia's arms sales to its regional competitors. The sale of arms to major regional powers is an instrument that can be used as an incentive for major regional powers seeking greater foreign policy autonomy from the U.S., and thus act as an instrument of pressure upon the United States.<sup>887</sup> This is also a potential instrument of leverage by Russia on Iran.

For Russia's part, its interests are far from limited to Iran. And it seeks partnerships with states across the Region. Seeing an interest in, and opportunity to exploit widespread domestic disdain in the Middle East for American hegemonic leadership<sup>888</sup>, Russia hopes to gain influence with them. Many such neighbours of Iran are enemies and/or hostile competitors of Iran. These include the main Arab-Islamic allies of the United States in the region, including Saudi Arabia which is also a substantial trading partner for Russia.

Thus, from an Iranian perspective, one sees a clear dilemma. Any Russian moves to strengthen its material support for Iranian interests are conditional upon a difficult balance between its support for Iran, and its desire to reinforce its relations with those Arab countries that perceive the rise of Tehran as a threat.<sup>889</sup> Once again, Saudi Arabia is the Arab country most concerned about Iran, and through its roll as a substantial economic and energy power, its political moves vis-a-vis Russia are oriented to limit the regional growth of Tehran.<sup>890</sup> If, as it seems, Russia desires a broad roll as a regional player, it needs to engage with other regional powers in a non-dictatorial fashion, displaying a willingness and capability to temper its regional policies to their concerns. One can only presume that such concerns include not radically upsetting the regional balance of power in Iran's favour. This is a moderating force on Russia's support for Iran. Thus, despite Russia's roll as a provider of much needed support for Iran, it seems quite a limited, conditional and potentially unstable ally, and one over whom Iran has little influence beyond the provision of opportunities.

---

887 Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf",

888 Ibid.

889 Ibid.

890 Ibid.

## Iran and China:

China is a relatively new player in the Middle East and in the Persian Gulf in particular.<sup>891</sup> Despite this, it perceives the region to be of great interest, most notably as a source of energy supply. China is the world's second-largest consumer of oil and its third-biggest importer.<sup>892</sup> China's consumption now stands at 6.5 million barrels per day, compared to 20 million barrels per day for the United States.<sup>893</sup> This primarily economic interest is the main driver of Chinese engagement with Iran, and the region more generally.<sup>894</sup> However other factors also drive Iranian engagements with Iran.

During times when Beijing was focused upon the consolidation of its position in Northeast and Southeast Asia, it regarded the Persian Gulf as remote. In this period, it did not pay serious attention to energy security in general and oil security in particular. This changed quickly with China's rapid industrialization and economic development. Since then Chinese oil demand has continued to increase at an astonishing rate, with daily use reportedly increasing by more than one million barrels each year.<sup>895</sup> A figure which analysts estimate to be at around 40 percent of the world's projected increased demand.<sup>896</sup> China currently imports 32 percent of its oil, but this is likely to double between now and the end of the decade.<sup>897</sup> This was clearly articulated in 2006, when the Director of the Energy Economics and Development Strategy at China's National Development and Reform Commission, Gao Shixian, estimated that by 2010 oil will account for between 51.4 percent and 52.6 percent of China's energy needs, up from 29.1 percent in 2000.<sup>898</sup> China's gas consumption is climbing even more quickly, with imports projected to increase from zero in 2000 to 20-25 million cubic meters by 2010.<sup>899</sup> The International Energy Agency (I.E.A.) predicts that by 2030, Chinese imports will equal U.S. imports. These figures demonstrate that foreign oil has become central to China's projected energy needs.

Today, 58 percent of China's oil imports come from the Middle East, mostly from the G.C.C. states.<sup>900</sup> In pursuit of energy security, China has adopted a strategy of "geographical diversification"<sup>901</sup> by investing in foreign oil/gas fields in more than 20 countries including Venezuela, Nigeria and Australia.<sup>902</sup> However these energy sources are likely to be insufficient to satisfy China's energy interests. Since two-thirds of proven oil reserves are located in the Middle East, mostly in the Persian Gulf<sup>903</sup>, and many of the oil reserves in non-Middle Eastern countries are being more

---

<sup>891</sup> Pinar: 27 October 2006, "China's Policy in the Gulf Region: From Neglect to Necessity", accessed from [http://www.pinar.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=575&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinar.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=575&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

<sup>892</sup> Ibid.

<sup>893</sup> Ibid.

<sup>894</sup> David S. Painter, *International Oil and National Security*, Daedalus, Vol. 120, No. 4, Searching for Security in a Global Economy (Fall, 1991), The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences. pp. 183-206

<sup>895</sup> Ibid.

<sup>896</sup> Ibid.

<sup>897</sup> Ibid.

<sup>898</sup> Ibid.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

<sup>901</sup> Ibid.

<sup>902</sup> Ibid.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid.

rapidly depleted than their Middle Eastern counterparts<sup>904</sup>, the Middle East thus seems likely to remain central to Chinese perceived state interests.<sup>905</sup> The I.E.A. predicts that Chinese oil imports from the Middle East will rise to at least 70 percent of its consumption by 2015, underlining the perception that “the future of the Chinese economy is inextricably tied to the Middle East.”<sup>906</sup> Evidence that this perception is reflected in Chinese state policy can be seen in the development of regional relations, which until recently could have been described as “generally lackluster and uneventful”.<sup>907</sup> This is clearly no longer the case. In the past few years Beijing has rapidly expanded its links and strengthened economic ties with regional oil producers.<sup>908</sup>

Its relations with the region, China does not carry the historical baggage of being a colonial power nor has it laid out a vision or a policy to impose revolutionary changes upon the region like the United States, and so many powers before it.<sup>909</sup> Similarly, China has been more willing than other powers to engage with those whom the United States has sought to isolate, including Iran.<sup>910</sup> With such a huge and growing market, so little bad blood, and such few strings attached, China would seem an extremely attractive partner for any state seeking alternative markets.<sup>911</sup> Furthermore, China is in possession of a U.N. Security council veto, and quite a large amount of raw economic, political, and potentially even military clout. And the harder that other global powers squeeze a country like Iran, the stronger China's hand vis a vis Iran becomes.

This Chinese interest in Middle Eastern oil is a great boon for Iran. As a consequence Beijing seems less likely to view a weakened Iran, with American interests enhanced within it, as in its interests. Rather, further U.S. influence in the Middle East and Central Asia is looked upon by Chinese policymakers as a threat to China's growth as a regional<sup>912</sup>, and global<sup>913</sup> power. This is an area of convergence of interest between China and Iran, who share a desire to contain U.S. capabilities to control the flow of oil from the region. Chinese interest in Iran is also linked to pipelines and other infrastructure investments through Central Asia.<sup>914</sup>

Furthermore, although Chinese policies are clearly formulated around the pursuit of access to oil for its energy hungry and rapidly growing economy, “energy is not the only agent that is driving China's diplomatic offensive.”<sup>915</sup> China is also seeking to gain a political and economic “foothold in a region that increasingly resents the U.S. presence”.<sup>916</sup> In Iran, and across the region, China sees an opportunity to “gently challenge American control by having greater influence”<sup>917</sup>, which “would complement and project China's global ambitions”<sup>918</sup> to become an

---

904 Ibid.  
905 Ibid.  
906 Ibid.  
907 Ibid.  
908 Ibid.  
909 Ibid.  
910 Ibid.  
911 Ibid.  
912 Ibid.  
913 Ibid.  
914 Ibid.  
915 Ibid.  
916 Ibid.  
917 Ibid.  
918 Ibid.

autonomous superpower.<sup>919</sup> Although this may seem like a match made in heaven, where Iran is able to compensate for U.S. economic sanctions through its growing relations with China, and China is able to reduce American influence and enhance its own supply without exposing itself to threat, as always Chinese and Iranian interests are not all the same. For Iran, access to Chinese markets is extremely important, and a net gain. But many Gulf neighbours hostile to Iran are undergoing the same process of economic cooperation with the Chinese, and genuinely antagonizing them or the United States on this issue would seem rather costly. Thus, China has broader interest to consider in its relations with Iran.

Of Iran's neighbors, China's closest relations are with Saudi Arabia, The world's largest oil producing country<sup>920</sup>, and China's biggest oil supplier<sup>921</sup>, providing almost 17 percent of China's oil imports.<sup>922</sup> Beyond the supply of oil, Saudi Arabia is China's tenth largest importer<sup>923</sup>, and a significant source of foreign investment capital and investment opportunities. In raw terms trade between the two exceeded \$15 billion in 2005, having grown an average of 41 percent a year since 1999 according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.<sup>924</sup> One would presume that considering the bilateral depth of the relationship between China and Saudi Arabia that this would temper the extent of Chinese willingness to support Iran beyond the bounds that its Saudi partners deem acceptable.

The above conclusions are true for Sino-G.C.C.<sup>925</sup> (Gulf Cooperative Countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) relations more generally. Total region wide Sino-Arab trade stands at \$36.7 billion<sup>926</sup>, and in 2006, Arab countries were China's eighth largest trading partner.<sup>927</sup> This underscores the importance of the G.C.C.'s /Arab trade relationship for the Chinese. In saying all of the above, China seems highly likely to continue to engage with Iran, and likely without substantial consequence from regional powers. It has signed deals with Iran worth more than \$100 billion.<sup>928</sup> However, this behaviour will be tempered by its broader regional interests. For it to behave unilaterally in the region would seem likely to have unacceptably bad consequences for business.

However, there is more than business at stake, and more than regional interests at stake for China. Reports suggest that China is not pursuing a purely soft power approach in its pursuit of energy security. It seeks a strengthening of military capability along its Middle East oil supply routes from Central Asia through to Iran<sup>929</sup> as a response to the Chinese fear that the United States, as the preeminent power in the Middle East, can act as a "check" against Chinese oil imports<sup>930</sup> and severely damage its economy.<sup>931</sup> Thus the Chinese government wishes to reduce the vulnerability of its Middle Eastern oil supply to U.S. power.<sup>932</sup> Of significant note is the observation that these developments coincide with Chinese moves to modernize its navy.<sup>933</sup> Although Beijing has clear intentions to boost its

---

<sup>919</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>920</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>921</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>922</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>923</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>924</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>925</sup>

Members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, founded on [November 11, 1981](#) in [Riyadh](#).

<sup>926</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>927</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>928</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>929</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>930</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>931</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>932</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>933</sup>

Ibid.

presence in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean<sup>934</sup>, it has thus far expressed no desire to police the Persian Gulf. It is none the less plausible that, in line with China's emerging power status, it may someday seek to present a naval presence in the Middle East.<sup>935</sup>

Weather or not this eventuates, it seems clear that China desires a reduced capability for the U.S. to act militarily in neighbouring oil producers against Chinese energy interests, and that this colours China's relations vis-à-vis Iran.

However, despite this apparent desire to challenge and undermine American hegemony, China's global strategy, including in the wider Middle East and Iran more specifically, is also clearly designed to avoid antagonizing the United States.<sup>936</sup> Rather than seeking to engage in overt conflict or competition China has preferred quiet diplomacy, the boosting of trade ties and the creation of economic interdependence<sup>937</sup> “to present itself as an alternative and benign power with a global reach.”<sup>938</sup> Yet, given China's late arrival in the Gulf, and the entrenched regional presence, and unparalleled power<sup>939</sup> of the United States', China seems unlikely to emerge as a “definitive power” in the Gulf<sup>940</sup> for the time being, at least. Instead, China will have to operate as a power among powers<sup>941</sup>, competing constantly to achieve less suboptimal outcomes. In this, Iran can satisfy only a minor portion of China's global or regional interests, and China would thus seem extremely unwilling to undertake any policies that may undermine outcomes for these broader interests. China thus appears to lack both the will, and the capability to assure Iranian security interests in the international system. This suggests that China alone can satisfy core Iranian interests. Due to its relationship with Saudi Arabia, China is unlikely to substantially tilt the regional power distribution dramatically in favour of Iran

---

934 Ibid.  
935 Ibid.  
936 Ibid.  
937 Ibid.  
938 Ibid.  
939 Ibid.  
940 Ibid.  
941 Ibid.



## **Conclusions:**

### **Overview of the Iranian Security Situation:**

In line with Waltz's observations of the international system<sup>942</sup>, for Iran, 'security threats abound'. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, power, including (but far from limited to) violence and covert attempts at regime overthrow, have been recurrently exerted against Iran by foreign states. Furthermore, into the 21st century, Iran's security situation remains dire, and in August 2009, one cannot see this insecurity ending soon. Iran's region remains volatile, and with talk of regime change emanating from major powers with militaries that dwarf Iranian armed forces, it seems that the possibility of external aggression is both credible and fearsome. International security, or the lack thereof, is thus an extremely significant factor in Iran's international experience. Because Iran's security perception is so stark, Neorealism should be a useful tool for understanding its policy. It also provides a context in which to test Neorealism, or Iran's general 'rationality': its concern for its own security, and acting upon these concerns through the principle of self help.

Waltzian Neorealism supports the claim of F. Mokhtari that Iran's policies of deterrence are driven primarily by a perception of insecurity coloured by its historical experience in the international system, and I would add (and he would surely not disagree) because of a sense of enduring international insecurity framed by the balance of threats arrayed against Iran. This chapter will investigate this hypothesis, and its implications.

### **The History:**

Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Iran was deeply penetrated by foreign powers (most substantially by Great Britain) who sought to forcefully challenge Iranian sovereignty and dictate terms. Throughout this period, Iran found itself unable to do very much about this, and found itself victim to what it saw as imperial domination.

In the mid 20th century we saw a resurgence of Iranian nationalism. This nationalism was quite introspective in that it was built upon Iranian desires for freedom from foreign control, as opposed to more expansionist or supremacist nationalisms. This process was supported in Iran by both popular opinion, and by elected representatives. A prime minister (Mossadeq) was elected with a democratic mandate to nationalize Iran's oil fields, to deepen democratic institutions in his country, to reduce foreign influence in Iran, and to challenge the monarchical powers of the Shah.

He was opposed and deposed by a foreign designed coup aimed at reasserting 'Western' (read as U.S. aligned anti communist) control in Iran. The imposition of a dictatorial system ensued, as the Shah was sponsored to sustain a brutally violent and repressive grip on Iranian politics, against popular will.

In 1979, the Shah's regime ended through a process now known as the Islamic Revolution. Throughout his rule, opposition to the Shah was rife in many spheres of Iranian political opinion. As this issue came to boiling point, the Ayatollah Khomeini came to a dominant position as the leader of resistant opposition against the Shah's American supported rule of Iran, crushing, incorporating or surpassing all other resistance factions. This revolution proved

---

<sup>942</sup>

K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. p. 619

successful in both ending the Shah's rule, and instating its leader as the new head of the Iranian state, henceforth known as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This movement carried a strongly anti-American character, and the revolution ended not only the Shah's rule, but the relationship between Iran and the United States experienced under his rule. The U.S. viewed these changes as hostile to its regional interests, and this was exacerbated by a crisis where American diplomatic officials in the U.S. embassy in Tehran (referred to at this stage in Iran, quite accurately, as a 'den of spies'<sup>943</sup>) were taken hostage by Iranian students, and were held for a substantial time.

Quickly, the U.S. imposed sanctions upon Iran. Such U.S. sanctions against Iran have continued since the 1979 revolution, to this day. Examples are a U.S. prohibition of most trade with Iran, the freezing of Iranian international assets, and a general containment policy aimed towards ensuring Iranian political and economic isolation and military weakness.<sup>944</sup> Successive hostile US administrations have sought the overthrow of Iran's government.

In the immediate wake of Iran's Islamic revolution, Iran faced diplomatic isolation and compounding economic problems. It was also attempting to reorganize the state and military. Furthermore, Iran was negatively perceived by several of its neighbours who saw its model of Islamic revolution as a hostile challenge to the legitimacy of their rule of their respective nation states. For Iran claimed not only Iranian, or even Shi'a legitimacy, but Islamic legitimacy, calling for a new regional order with religion at the forefront, and Iran's theocracy in a leadership role. This was taken as a threat, not unlike that 'posed' by Bolshevism. A threat of transnational, rather than international character, manifesting itself not just in opposition to legitimacy of the current rulers, but the legitimacy of the states themselves. These states thus feared both the precedent of a successful alternative model claiming legitimacy in opposition to contemporary elites, and the idea Iran may more actively stir up trouble in their states. In particular, Iranian rhetoric was levelled against Saddam Hussein. In this context, Saddam Hussein seized what he saw as an opportunity to strike militarily at what appeared to be a weak target and invaded Iran.

This war was the most destructive military conflict Iran has ever been involved in, and some of the more brutal violence our planet has seen. Iran was quite literally devastated, but was apparently able to withstand such immense casualties and material devastation. Iran's war dead are impossible to count, but certainly number more than a million. Iran held on, and pushed back. Throughout this devastation, the U.S. and Iran's Arab neighbours failed to aid Iran, actively limited Iranian access to arms, embargoed Iran's shipping, supplied arms to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, aided Iraqi shipping and lent Saddam Hussein money with which to conduct his war, all under an evidently false pretext of 'neutrality'. Eventually, despite all of these odds, Iran ground this conflict to a stalemate, denying Iraqi hopes of achieving territorial gain let alone regime overthrow. Saddam Hussein was not held accountable for this war by the 'international community', and the Iraqi threat persisted until Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, when the Western wrath this incurred crippled his country.

---

<sup>943</sup> [BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4398964.stm, 20/04/2006](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4398964.stm)

<sup>944</sup> A. Malici and A. Buckner, Empathizing with Rogue Leaders: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Asad, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Peace Research* 2008; 45; 783

Since this war, U.S. policy vis-à-vis Iran has remained largely unchanged, as have those of and of Iran's Arab neighbours. Iran has continued to face the active threat of foreign military action or covert attempts at regime change from without.

This threat was further underscored by the U.S.-led military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, which surely displayed to Iran the capabilities of the U.S. military, and its willingness to use it to achieve regime change in the Middle East, albeit in this case for apparently self defensive/retaliatory purposes. This threat perception was then further heightened by the declaration of Iran as a part of an 'axis of evil' (with Iraq and North Korea) and by the Neo-Conservative Doctrine of Pre-emptive War with 'all options on the table' (including force, even nuclear). If any doubt remained in the minds of Iranians regarding the gravity of the threat faced, America's 2003 bombardment, invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq surely dispelled any illusions. In Tehran there was a real and justified fear that the removal of Hussein was but a first of more imposed regime changes, including Iran. Fanning these fears, and supporting a case for their legitimacy soon after the attack on Iraq, Undersecretary of State John Bolton made it clear that this was just the beginning of a wider campaign in statements that 'We are hoping that the elimination of the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein ... would be an important lesson to other countries in the region'. Considering this man's seniority (then ambassador to the U.N.), and its consistency with other statements by senior officials (such as policies of 'regime change' and the aforementioned 'axis of evil' speech) these fears seem well justified.

One would suspect that if it had not already learned it, that Iran did take a lesson from these experiences and statements, even if it were not that which the U.S. desired to impart. That is to say, we can expect that these actions and interventions discussed in this paper to weigh heavily in the thoughts of Iranian foreign policy actors, and based on assumptions of Neorealism, Iran's foreign policy.

### **Anarchy:**

In line with Waltzian presumptions, the international environment in which Iran has operated in, and operates in, either is or seems to be, for all intents and purposes, anarchic. That is to say, Iran has no external guarantor of its states above and beyond the power of the systems constituent units (nation states).

International institutions, for example, have proven themselves unreliable guardians of security in the face of great power hostility. This is best exemplified by the historical example of the lack of serious multinational action against Iraq throughout its 8 year invasion of Iran, beginning 1980. Throughout this conflict, international rules and norms regarding international aggression were suspended by great powers, and by extension by the world's international institutions, as the world more or less ignored Iran's plight. Further still, many states (including major Western powers and Iran's Arab neighbours) even supported Saddam Hussein in various ways throughout the war. This support endured even throughout the Iraqi use of chemical weapons against Iran. If one is to contrast this to the international response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, one can clearly observe the difference in the extent to which national power plays in the enforcement of international norms or rules in the international system. In contrast, such institutions have been very hard on Iran for much less. This inconsistency is the result of disparities in power between nation states, and their perceptions. That is to say that the power of nation states is central to outcomes in international organizations, and the enforcement of international laws or norms.

The presumption of anarchy thus seems to fit the context well. There seems to be no reliable guarantor of Iran's international security other than the power of the system's constituent units (state powers).

### The Character of Iran's Anarchy:

From an Iranian perspective, in this international anarchy, the norms regarding Iranian state rights have not been respected in the international system, throughout the post revolutionary period, or even the wider 20th century. By this, we mean that in this anarchy of nation states, Iran is particularly alienated.

As alluded to above, great power influence in international institutions has led to a strong hypocrisy in their relationships with Iran. Condemnations of Iran, for example, are frequently made with references to the same international laws that its adversaries have repeatedly contravened in dealing with Iran, without significant negative consequence. Iran, by contrast, lacking veto powers in international institutions and strong allies has found itself victim to crippling sanctions for its international 'transgressions'. Institutions like the U.N. are thus seen more as levers of foreign power than as neutral organizations.

Having had foreign sponsored coups led against it, foreign invasion waged against it, the use of chemical weapons against it, and the covert acquisition of nuclear weapons by both and Pakistan, with no significant repercussions being imposed against these countries for these acts, it seems little wonder that appeals to the sanctity of international norms or laws to Iran are met with great scepticism.

Furthermore, in its anarchy, Iran lacks strong allies. In terms of sovereign security partners of significant strength and proximity, Syria stands alone. Syria is no military weakling, but nor is it a major military power. Furthermore, this 'partnership' seems somewhat fragile. China and Russia both provide Iran with limited and conditional support, but this too seems unreliable. Furthermore, Iran lacks relative leverage vis-à-vis these powers who are thus able to pick and chose how, where, when and at what cost assistance is provided to Iran. Iran is also relatively unable to apply conditions upon these actors. Considering that these great powers also see a major interest in business with Iran's regional security competitors, often at better terms than the Iranians receive, the relative security gained seems marginal. None of these states appear willingly able to defend Iranian security in the face of a credible invasion force.

Iran does however have allies, largely in the form of non-state actors who appear outside our state-centric level of analysis. As was discussed in our Saudi Arabia section, and various other sections, Iran maintains links to cultural, political and militant movements throughout the region. Although some of these groups may prove able to stir up significant trouble for would be aggressors, these movements too seem unable to guarantee Iranian security.

Iran is thus quite alone in its anarchic state system, which underscores its significance as a factor of policy.

### **Self Help:**

Considering that the system is, or appears to be anarchic, that Iran is quite alone in its anarchic state system, and that the threats it faces are so substantial, one would predict that for Iran, self help towards the goal of security accumulation would be the rational principle of action for Iran in the international arena.

Generally speaking, Iran seems to act in this manner. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have seen Iran act to assert Iranian sovereignty and security against foreign challenges. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, also, Iran seems to act in a manner that displays it is concerned with insecurity in the international arena. One could cite examples of words or even policies that have not had this effect, or even have had the opposite, and I would not be surprised. Generally speaking though, Iran seems inclined towards defending itself and deterring aggressors. That is to say, that counteracting such security threats has become 'a way of life' for Iran. Had it not done so, it is unlikely Iran's regime would have survived. It thus seems that Iran generally behaves according to the principle of self help.

### **Emulation and Asymmetry:**

**Conventional Arms:** Simply put, Iran is unable to compete with its major strategic competitors through policies of emulation. The reasons for this are several. The two critical factors are that it cannot afford it, and that even if it could, its access to international arms markets is restricted. Iran seems aware of this, and is pursuing asymmetric defensive strategies that are designed to counter American forces at relatively low cost, with relatively simple technology.

For example, unable to emulate the U.S. heavily supported carrier group approach to naval battle (or even anything approximating it), Iran's naval doctrine is one of asymmetry. This naval doctrine is reflective of a wider Iranian strategic outlook, oriented towards using appropriate tools, local knowledge, and knowledge of the enemies capabilities to exploit the vulnerabilities of enemy forces and attempt to secure key objectives.

Thus, in its navy, it does not pursue large scale battleship capability, but is instead amassing a force of smaller craft, more resembling speedboats than conventional battleships. These craft are equipped with relatively basic weapons, such as machine guns, rocket launchers and mines.<sup>945</sup> Larger vessels carry torpedoes and larger guns with longer ranges than their lighter counterparts<sup>946</sup>, but even they are very small and relatively basic compared to vessels of Iran's likely adversaries. Even these slightly larger vessels are regarded as far less likely to survive engagement than their smaller counterparts<sup>947</sup>. The advantage of this seems two fold. On the one hand, the mobility of these boats enables them to strike quickly, and quietly at vulnerable or isolated forces. Furthermore, these vessels can be used to harass economic interests such as shipping, to great effect. In the case of war, this would be a likely tactic to employ, as Iran would see a clear interest in hampering regional oil trading, so as to cripple its competitors with high oil prices. This is a possibility that America would like to avoid, but countering this threat would be difficult. Secondly, in an open confrontation, a swarm of low cost but effectively armed craft would seem formidable against naval vessels geared towards combat against larger vessels and ground targets. Cruise missiles, cluster bombs and the likes may be

---

<sup>945</sup> F. Haghshenass, Iran's Assymetric Naval Warfare, Policy Focus #87, September 2008, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, accessed from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/5922823/Irans-Asymmetric-Naval-Warfare> on 06/06/08

<sup>946</sup> Ibid.

<sup>947</sup> Ibid.

“overkill”, both costing more than the target to produce, and proving extremely difficult to spread effectively across such heavy target saturation. Other activities such as mine laying could be used to threaten both military and commercial vessels. This was done in the Iran-Iraq war to significant effect, with American naval vessels ending up using the ships they were sent to protect to lead the way through mined areas. Iran also possesses ground based anti-ship missiles, artillery, a modest fleet of submarines and anti-air capabilities, but it is outside the scope of this study to dedicate much time explaining the specifics of Iran's policies of asymmetry. Suffice to say that this small example of a naval doctrine of asymmetry is indicative of a wider asymmetric strategic approach. Iran's policy in regards to emulation can be seen as emulator where it sees benefit, and asymmetric where it sees benefit. This behaviour conforms to the Neorealist theoretical framework.

From a security standpoint, the logic for Iran's asymmetric approach is clear

Iran is not as wealthy as its security competitors

Iran is cut off from advanced weapons purchases, whereas its security competitors are well linked into modern high tech arms networks.

Iran's goals seem primarily defensive, and geared towards defence against specific threats. Its tactics and instruments can thus be tailored more specifically to this task than is possible for powers requiring greater flexibility.

In the realm of conventional arms Iran thus pursues local production of cheap but effective weaponry aimed at specific defensive purposes, while taking what it has access to, and finance for, from foreign arms markets. These asymmetric tactics are extremely interesting, and worthy of further analysis.

**Nuclear dimensions:** Basically speaking, Iran's security dilemma is one that it seems unable to overcome through non nuclear armament. Iran cannot afford a conventional arms race with the United States and its allies, and even if it could, its access to arms is significantly limited. As discussed earlier in the thesis (in the theory section), nuclear weapons are relatively cheap and absolute guarantors of security. Based on the presumption that Iran desires to survive (which seems a reasonable assumption), and the credibility of the threats outlined throughout this thesis, there are systemic imperatives to Iran pursuing nuclear deterrence capabilities.

One should not take this as evidence that Iran is in fact embarking upon such a project. We cannot comment, or even hypothesize on this with the data presented in this thesis. It should be noted that there are many powers whose security situations could be alleviated by the acquisition of nuclear weapons who choose not to pursue nuclear armament. Iran has expressed itself to be such a country, going so far as to stake regime legitimacy on the issue, calling nuclear arms “un-Islamic”. Iran's stated nuclear interests extend only to civilian nuclear power and indigenous control of the fuel cycle, both legitimate goals under the NPT. While there is no firm evidence contradicting these statements, they are rather difficult to verify. This analysis is shared by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency).<sup>948</sup>

---

<sup>948</sup>

A. Malici and A. Buckner, *Empathizing with Rogue Leaders: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Asad.*

But Iranians are surely aware of what nuclear weapons could provide Iran in a defensive capacity. Thus, although we cannot predict behaviour, our assertion is that systemic forces exist that make nuclear weapons appealing to Iran. Whether other factors (be they security or otherwise) may restrict such a policy is difficult to ascertain.

According to Neorealist theory, if Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons capability, it is unlikely that their motivation is to use them offensively. This nuclear capability would rather be employed as a strategic deterrent against an attack by the USA, , or any other power, or at least that it is far from necessary to presume aggressive intent on the part of Iran to explain such a policy.

### **Balancing/Polarity:**

Iran seems actively involved in a process of balancing American influence in the region. This balancing process seems highly correlated with the threat posed to Iran by the United States. With stated hostile intent, and massive military, political and economic instruments with which to bring pressure to bear on Iran, the form of America's current presence in the region seems highly threatening to Iran. Iran seeks to weaken U.S. regional hegemony, and to enhance its own regional power and influence. We see this across the region, in the support of cultural, political and even militant actors who share Iran's desire for a reduction in the power and control of regional actors supportive of the United States and its allies (specifically and Saudi Arabia), in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Lebanon and beyond.

This is entirely consistent with Waltzian theoretical presumptions regarding balance of power behaviour. So long as Iran continues to perceive the form of America's presence in the region to be a security threat, Neorealism predicts Iran is likely to act on this concern through continued balancing behaviours. To the extent that others in the world or region share this perception, Iran is likely to find support in this balancing.

### **Security Dilemma:**

To look at Iran in its context, one sees that Iran is locked into something resembling a security dilemma. This security dilemma is interesting, as in the Waltzian sense of the word, Iran's security competitors (at least those analyzed) seem very secure vis-à-vis any Iranian threat, whereas Iran in contrast seems highly insecure.

### **Is Iran Threatened?**

Discourse in western media and politics regarding this conflict has often framed Iran's security situation as one in which sources of tension originate overwhelmingly from Tehran. Iran's leaders are typically portrayed as ideologically hostile, and generally unreasonable, and unable to be reasoned with. This general denial of historical and contextual realities that drive Iran's perception of its security circumstance ignores the realities of the situation. Iran's regime survival has been repeatedly challenged, and remains clearly and overtly threatened by credible force.

The capability of the U.S. and its allies to impact destructive force upon Iran is enormous. With hugely destructive American forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and enormous naval deployments in the Persian Gulf, Iran is extremely vulnerable to devastating action against it, before we even consider nuclear dimensions to the US arsenal. These countries also have substantial 'intelligence' agencies, trained in covert operations. In the past, such agencies have been used to undermine Iranian regime security through the manipulation of internal politics.

Outside of Iran's own efforts there seem to be no effective guarantors of Iran's security. Iran's defence, deterrence and retaliatory capabilities are extremely limited. Iran near certainly perceives these security threats with a degree of importance, and acts upon them. Unless the Iranian state is entirely without defensive rationality, whatever other effects they may have had, hard power efforts to "contain" or even "liberate" Iran have had the effect of increasing the starkness of the security dilemma for Iran. In the current context, from a Neorealist point of view, for Iran the benefits of armament and suspicion seem relatively clear. Iran feels directly threatened, and seeks to counter this threat.

### Is Iran likely to act offensively?

Iran cannot project its power against America's mainland, and even attempting to harass American interests regionally is an extremely dangerous game likely to result in war Iran can hope to do little better than endure, if that. For Iran to engage in military action against the United States, or even in the wider region would be deeply irrational, from a Neorealist perspective. Considering the forces arrayed against Iran, to do so Iran would need to perceive one of the following:

That gains achieved would be worth the willing sacrifice of mass devastation of Iran, and probable regime overthrow.

A dramatically differing understanding of the balance of power than the conventional wisdom (to the point of delusion), or

To believe Iran could somehow "get away with it", without retaliation.

This extends into the nuclear security dilemma. It seems that Iran would not launch a significant attack against foreign powers without holding one of the above perceptions. It appears unlikely (from a Neorealist and historical precedent perspective) that Iran would hold such perceptions. In short, from a Neorealist point of view, war with the United States is not in Iran's interests.

The case of 's security dilemma is also interesting. Firstly, Israel is an extremely close strategic ally of the United States. If Iran fought Israel, the United States would be presumed by all actors involved to intervene on behalf of Israel. The greater part of that stated about America, thus, by extension, implies to Israel. Furthermore, Israel has a formidable army of its own, heavily domestically funded and produced, and also heavily funded and supplied by the U.S. This Israeli military is presumably fit to the task of inflicting enormous damage upon Iran in the case of open hostilities between the two powers. Furthermore, Israel has nuclear weapons, and Iran does not.

Regardless, in the case of Israel, the security dilemma is often described as highly threatening. There is a certain degree of basis for such observation. Although Iran seems unable to project conventional military force against Israel in a manner that seems directly threatening to Israel's regime survival or territorial integrity, if Iran were to



procure nuclear weapons, and to employ these against Israel, Israel (due to its small size) could be annihilated relatively easily. Fears of this occurring are frequently discussed in the West. It should be noted that many peoples throughout the Middle East, Iran more specifically, feel that the colonization of Palestine by Jews in the aftermath of World War Two and the holocaust was illegitimate, and that the “state of Israel” could be more accurately described as an illegitimate land occupation of significant religious significance. This is the view of Iran. Iran is thus hostile to the idea of an Israeli state (at least in its Jewish dominated form). Israel perceives such ideas as a credible threat to its survival, and evidence of potential genocidal anti-Semitic intent. Other than issues related to the credibility of the threat, this seems quite consistent with the Neorealist framework. Neorealism would argue that for Iran to undertake an active challenge to the survival of the state of Israel would be deeply irrational, likely to result in nuclear annihilation. According to Neorealist theory, presuming Iran is remotely rational, Israel’s military capability (nuclear capability and otherwise) is, and would remain enough to dissuade Iran from physically challenging core Israeli security interests (most specifically survival). We cannot assert that Iran would not with certainty, but upon historical reflection, it seems that nuclear deterrence has always dissuaded such military action against the holder of nuclear weapons, even when both states hold nuclear weapons. Furthermore, Iran has not invaded anyone in well over a century.

Furthermore, for Iran to employ nuclear weapons against Israel would imply destroying holy sites with weapons whose employ is forbidden by their stated interpretation of divine law, slaughtering the areas Muslim population, and wrecking the regions ecology. Such outcomes are unlikely to appear beneficial to Iran's leadership.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, it seems that so long as it retains its strategic oil relationship with the United States, Iranian hostility against Saudi Arabia would be met with American retaliation. This means that although Saudi Arabia will attempt to maintain pace with, or out-do Iran in arms accumulation that even if it did not, the balance of security would be weighted in Saudi Arabia's favour. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is a wealthy, populous and influential state, which enjoys ready access to arms in the world market. A formidable power in its own right. Attack against Saudi Arabia would also resemble suicide. If the United States were to leave the Middle East, or if the Saudi regime were to fall out of favour with Washington, Iran and Saudi Arabia seem likely to remain strategic competitors for security. Iran is thus locked into bilateral strategic competition with Saudi Arabia that is likely to continue into the foreseeable future, but is at this stage unlikely to result in the emergence of war. Based on this observation, Iran seems likely to compete with Saudi Arabia for security. Attacking seems “irrational”, and thus unlikely.

It is very unlikely that unsanctioned Iranian military actions in the region would not be met by all, or a combination of the above powers, as a challenge to their security order. This response would presumably come in the form of devastating force the likes of which Iran would find impossible to mitigate. Such total war with 21st century military powers would certainly result in the devastation of Iran, probable regime change, and possible nuclear annihilation. Neorealism suggests these consequences should deter a rational Iran from international aggression.

Is this Dilemma still relevant?

One could debate whether, today, this security dilemma remains so stark on two fronts:

- 1) The more conventional argument is that a new era has arrived in Washington, and that things will change. That the new Obama administration has seen the follies of the Bush regime, and to a lesser

extent, his presidential predecessors (who it must be said, although tense, relations with whom were not the fever pitch they were with Bush). That with this new outlook the U.S. wishes Iran no harm, and can be trusted to act in good faith. That Iran's regional competitors will now be restrained by the United States, and that all Iran need do is acquiesce to international norms and agreements, and its security interests will be protected.

According to Waltzian Neorealism, it seems difficult for Iran to act upon trust in such a guarantee. In short, the U.S. could be lying, or may, for whatever reason, change tact from this point of view and once again become hostile. Another major question for Iran is the extent to which the United States is in fact a 'unitary actor' where centralized sovereignty dictates its foreign policy. Major questions regarding who authorized the beginnings of the CIA program against former Iranian President Mossadeq remain, and it has been argued that such initiatives began without the knowledge of the president. It is thus not enough for the president to have a change of heart, if he can not be relied upon to exercise his monopoly over the states foreign policy. This may weigh in Iran's thinking. Such difficulties in trusting are entrenched in historical precedent of protracted hostility and untrustworthiness and a balance of power that is stacked firmly against Iran. Such faith is a dangerous luxury that a 'rational actor' seems unlikely to trust in. Iran thus seems likely to continue to pursue self help in its security context.

- 2) One could also argue that the U.S. hand in the region has become weak, and that this weakness is increasing. In short, America is bogged down in Afghanistan. Its allies have largely withdrawn their material support for current conflicts, and are extremely wary of further conflict. Iraq showed the difficulties and costs of regime change and nation building in what was at that stage a relatively (compared to Iran) weak state. Many of America's regional allies are suffering issues of internal legitimacy, and can ill afford to appear further supportive of American violence against Muslims. Its military budget (although enormous) seems stretched, and with its economy in an apparent slump, and rising powers challenging American economic hegemony in the world economy, one could argue that America is on the way out of the region. But this seems unreliable. Once again, faith is a luxury Iran cannot afford. Furthermore, if history has taught Iran anything, it is that security threats abound. Regardless, even if America were to leave the region, Iran would be left to compete for security with its neighbours.

From a Neorealist point of view, a rational Iran can thus not afford to ignore its security dilemma. In line with the theoretical outline, this study does assert that even a benevolent Iranian state would pursue policies that increased their hard power security. So long as this security dilemma remains, there is also a substantial precedent to the idea that there is a security imperative to clamping down on 'pro-western' internal political movements.

This brings into question that if these theories are so commonly accepted, and so simple, why does the United States act in a manner that is so seemingly blind to Iran's security interests? Or more importantly to the thesis at hand, how does Iran perceive American intent vis-à-vis Iran. It seems likely that Iran wonders if the United States does not desire peaceful coexistence with Iran at all, or at least not on terms resembling an equal footing. Upon observation of the historical record, this has been the norm throughout Iran's history. Throughout its 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century history, Iranian sovereignty, and Iranian international state rights have been repeatedly ignored by foreign powers, including the United States. In the modern context, it is debatable to what extent the United States has altered its outlook in this

regard. Based upon historical precedent, and the importance of not underestimating the threat due to its gravity, one would expect Iran to lean towards “cynical” in its analysis.

It seems likely that there is a perception in Iran that it is pursuit of independent domestic and foreign policies that do not comply with U.S. plans for the region that is the true source of U.S. hostility, and hostility from its regional and extra-regional allies rather than any security threat Iran may or may not pose. In this view, the ultimate goal of the U.S. is the creation of an order led by pro-Western, capitalist and effectively secular (where religion does not interfere with business) governments, where unbridled access is assured for western interests to engage in the exploitation of the regional resources and the expansion of consumer markets, and a region where the politico-military order is dominated by these powers. In this view, any power pursuing a competitory leadership role is seen as a threat to this order. Such an understanding would have substantial basis in historical precedent.

Further supporting such perceptions, the official policy of the United States in Iran has not been “containment”, or even reform in Iran, but the goal of “regime change”. In line with this view, one wonders what kind of government that the U.S. would like to see emerge in Iran. Obviously, its official position would be 'democracy'. But one would expect that the core features of such a regime would be a state that is at least acceptable to America's core interests (be they security or otherwise). One who at least implicitly acknowledges American regional hegemony in its behaviour, and does not take a competitive leadership role. It is likely Iran considers this to be America's ideal end goal.

That is to say Iran may regard discussions of the security threat posed by Iran to be disingenuous, aimed at the ultimate goal of generating pressure upon Iran's government, towards this goal; not of reform, or containment, but of roughly unconditional (other than surrender) regime change, and the imposition of a 'pro-American', or even 'American puppet' regime. There is no firm evidence that this is the ultimate goal in the U.S., but such intent is not something one would usually admit to, or that is easily proven.

Loosely supporting such a view, in 2007, John Bolton, former (2005-2006) U.S. ambassador to the U.N. stated that he had hoped that Iran would have thrown out weapons inspectors, and withdrawn from Non Proliferation Treaty, and stated regret that it had not.<sup>949</sup> He presupposed that had Iran undertaken such actions this would generate a counter reaction against Iran that he was in favour of.<sup>950</sup> At the time of making this speech Bolton was no longer the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. This speech can thus not be taken as official state policy, for it was made as a private citizen. Nor should it be readily dismissed. This is the recently retired ambassador to the United Nations frankly discussing the idea he wishes to be able to use Iranian non-compliance as a mechanism through which to generate wider pressure upon Iran. These statements beg the question of whether they are more widely representative of the foreign policy outlook of U.S. foreign policy elites. For example, one must wonder how a person who held such views could achieve and retain positions of influence over such heavily related issues if his outlook was not at least compatible with those who put him in power. Furthermore, the tactics he is discussing, and advocates more generally seem in line with the broader stated

---

<sup>949</sup> they have not rejected the sanctions resolution, they have not done anything more dramatic, such as withdrawing from the nonproliferation treaty, or throwing out inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which I actually hoped they would do – that that kind of reaction would produce a counter-reaction that actually would be more beneficial to us.

<http://www.stopaipac.org/boltontape.htm>

<sup>950</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjSwO54p\\_YQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjSwO54p_YQ)  
ibid

aim of regime change. This begs the question, are such thoughts more widely felt in the state apparatus? Is American policy deliberately hostile and provocative vis-à-vis Iran? We also wonder if he was being more honest (due to a lack of accountability for statements) than official policy statements, and if this has in fact been part of the U.S. broader strategic rationale of 'using' such 'security crises' to facilitate ultimately hostile objectives (regime change).

We cannot answer these questions, and to attempt to do so is somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis. What we are interested in is how this drives Iranian perception. We cannot assert that Iran holds such a cynical perspective, although I think that it is likely. But if it does, it would perceive that it is likely to continue to face hostility from the U.S. and its allies for so long as it continues to pursue a role that it sees in line with its 'rightful place' (independent and influential), regardless of what else goes on. To the extent that this is and remains the case, things do not bode well for policies aimed at anything other than perpetuating zero sum competition on the part of Iran.

## **Implications:**

The contents of this thesis clearly illustrate the deep insecurity that has plagued, and continues to plague Iran's experience in the international system. In Iran's relations with others, the system appears anarchic. Nation state power seems countered only through strength. Neorealism asserts that in this anarchy, Iran desires to survive, and is thus troubled by, and seeks to address its insecurity. Iran is quite alone in this anarchy, with no credible partners willingly able to offer Iran credible security guarantees. In this Anarchy, Iran is also highly threatened. It is located in an unstable region, surrounded by powers that are largely hostile to Persian Iran. Iran is particularly threatened by the United States and its allies Israel, and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia. This study suggests (based on the principles of Neorealist Theory) that Iran will act on the principle of self help to address this insecurity, regardless of what other foreign policy priorities Iran may hold. Where Iran seeks to address this insecurity, foreign states respond with hostility and suspicion. Iran is itself highly cynical of these same foreign powers. This study thus shows that Iran is in a security dilemma.

This thesis also shows that U.S. (among other powers) policy vis-à-vis Iran has likely been counterproductive in dampening Iranian competition and armament in this security dilemma (based on neorealist presumptions), and that the rhetoric surrounding these policies seems either misguided or fraudulent (presuming the relevance of Neorealism to the case in hand). We lack data to make comment upon which of these two it may be, for we can not measure motive. This study also shows that Iran poses little threat of engaging in aggressive war, and that if it did engage in such behaviour; it could be and would be either contained militarily or annihilated. This study supports the case for a reformulation of Western foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran, based upon an acknowledgement of these evident realities that seem so frequently ignored.

## **Limitations:**

Due to limitations in the explicative and predictive power of Neorealism, it is difficult to make specific conclusions about the precise implications of our data set. In particular, our theoretical lens has ignored factors within Iran that drive policy out side of a desire for continued state survival. Further investigation into issues such as 'Iran's internal psychology' and decision making of the Iranian state seems worthwhile, for such factors (among others) seem likely to have an impact on the outcomes in question (Iranian perception and international state behaviour). Further analysis into such factors would thus prove a worthwhile accompaniment to the approaches applied in this thesis.

Furthermore, our Neorealist lens has mostly ignored factors that cannot be considered inter-state. The extent to which domestic and transnational issues may influence the outcomes in question is something our study cannot account for. Further analysis into these areas seems worthwhile. We cannot test Iran's future 'rationality'. We can merely observe and hypothesise on the role that Iran's international insecurity has on influencing and constraining Iranian foreign policy choices, based on this presumption of a desire to survive as a nation state.

## **Bibliography:**

### **Books:**

R. Art and K. Waltz, *The Use of Force: International politics and Foreign Policy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland, U.S.A, 1993

M. Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The Iran Hostage Crisis, The First Battle in Americas War with Millitant Islam*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York. p.11

B. McBeth, *British oil policy, 1919-1939*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, London, 1985

R. Fisk., *The Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*, Harper Perennial, London, 2006

J. Resende-Santos, *Neorealism, States and the Modern Mass Army*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007.

### **Journal Articles:**

Oksana Antonenko, *Russia's Military Involvement in the Middle East*, *Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 1, March, 2001.

B. Aras and F. Ozbay. *Dances with wolves: Russia, Iran and the nuclear issue*. *Middle East Policy* 13.4 (Winter 2006)

John R. Bradley, *Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox*, *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2006-07. pp.181-190

K. Efraim, *The Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*. *Air & Space Power Journal*, 17.4 (Winter 2003): 111(2). Academic OneFile. Gale. University of Canterbury Library NZ. 23 July 2009.

Mark. Gasiorowski, *The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran* *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Aug., 1987), pp. 261-286.

Homa Katouzian, *The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919*, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (May, 1998), pp. 5-46

Akan Malici and Allison L. Buckner, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Empathizing with Rogue Leaders: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Asad*, *Journal of Peace Research* 2008; 45; 783

Fariborz Mokhtari, *No One Will Scratch My Back: Iranian Security Perceptions in Historical Context*, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 2, *Changing Geopolitics* (Spring, 2005), pp. 209-229. p. 216

David S. Painter, International Oil and National Security, Daedalus, Vol. 120, No. 4, Searching for Security in a Global Economy (Fall, 1991), The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences. pp. 183-206

D. Patrikarakos, Children of the revolution, New Statesman. London: Jan 26, 2009. Vol. 138, Iss. 4933; pg. 3, 1 pgs

R. Ramazani, Iran's Foreign Policy: Both North and South, Middle East Journal, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1992), pp. 393-412, p.394

K. Shimko Realism, Neorealism, and American Liberalism, The Review of Politics, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 281-301, p.284

A. Tarock, The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Aug., 1999), pp. 801-81

V. Tin-Bor Hui, A. Eckstein, D. Deudney, W. Brenner, W. Wohlforth, R. Little, S. Kaufman, D. Kang, Charles A. Jones, Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History, European Journal of International Relations 2007

K. Waltz The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory. Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 18, No. 4, Spring 1988 - The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, MIT Press, pp.615-628

C. Way and S. Singh, The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation: A Quantitative Test, The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 48, No. 6 (Dec., 2004), pp. 859-885

### **News Journalism, Intelligence Briefs and Assorted Internet Articles:**

S.Anderson, P. Bennis and J Cavanagh, Coalition of the Willing or Coalition of the Coerced: How the Bush Administration Influences Allies in its war on Iraq, Institute for Policy Studies, Release date: Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2003. Accessed from <http://www.tni.org/mil-docs/coalition.pdf> on 20/04/09

CIA Factbook, accessed, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html> on 12/4/2008

R. Collier, Nuclear weapons unholy: Iran says Islam forbids use, clerics proclaim, San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, October 31, 2003, Accessed from [http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/10/31/MNGHJ2NFRE1.DTL&hw=Khamenei+fatwa&sn=001&sc=1000+\(2003\)](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/10/31/MNGHJ2NFRE1.DTL&hw=Khamenei+fatwa&sn=001&sc=1000+(2003)), on 8/06/2006.

Mark J. Gasiorowski, Curriculum Vitae, accessed from [http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/polisci.nsf/\\$Content/Faculty+and+Staff/\\$file/mgas2009.pdf](http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/polisci.nsf/$Content/Faculty+and+Staff/$file/mgas2009.pdf) on 20/4/09

F. Haghshenass, Iran's Assymetric Naval Warfare, Policy Focus #87, September 2008, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, accessed from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/5922823/Irans-Asymmetric-Naval-Warfare> on 06/06/08



H. Hassan, Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities, CRC Report for Congress, Nov. 2008, Order Code RL34021, Accessed on 4/3/2009, from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34021.pdf>.

Dr. F. Mokhtari, Professor, Bio, accessed on 06/06/09 from [http://www.ndu.edu/nesa/publications/mokhtari\\_bio.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/nesa/publications/mokhtari_bio.pdf)

Pinr, 26 April 2007 "Afghanistan's Role in Iranian Foreign Policy", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=644&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=644&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr, 20 August 2003, "Why Nuclear Weapons May Be In Iran's National Interests", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=80&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=80&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr, 20 August 2003, "Why Nuclear Weapons May Be In Iran's National Interests", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=80&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=80&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 05 March 2007 "Intelligence Brief: Iran's Covert Operations in Iraq" accessed 20/04/2007 from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=625&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=625&language_id=1)

Pinr, 11 September 2003, "Can Israel Maintain its Nuclear Superiority in the Middle East?", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=89&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=89&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 29 September 2004, "Washington's Iran Strategy: Ostracizing Tehran from the International Community", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=213&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=213&language_id=1), on 01/01/08.

Pinr: 06 September 2004, "Iran's Bid for Regional Power: Assets and Liabilities", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=205&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=205&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 20 October 2003, "Can Iran's Pursuit of Nuclear Technology Be Thwarted By Air Strikes?", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=103&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=103&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 01 March 2007, "Russia's New Initiatives in the Persian Gulf", accessed from [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=624&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=624&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 19 January 2007 "Intelligence Brief: Tensions Increase Between Iran and Saudi Arabia", accessed from  
[http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=604](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=604) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 28 January 2005, "Nuclear Iran: Repercussions for Turkey and Saudi Arabia", accessed from  
[http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=261&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=261&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

Pinr: 27 October 2006, "China's Policy in the Gulf Region: From Neglect to Necessity", accessed from  
[http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=575&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=575&language_id=1) on 01/01/08

M. Weinsten, Finland keeps its Hairline Distance from NATO, PINR, 08/02/07. Retrieved from  
[http://www.globalsecuritynews.com/showArticle3.cfm?article\\_id=12546](http://www.globalsecuritynews.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=12546) on 05/06/09

"Iran-Iraq War", Philip's World Encyclopedia., 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Canterbury University. 24 July 2009 from  
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t142.e5846>

### **Documentary Video/Interviews:**

UC Berkeley, [6/2003], Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz, 2003, accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9eV5gPIPZg> on 12/4/2009

BBC, February 2007, Iran and the West, 3 piece documentary series: (The Man Who Changed the World, The Pariah State and Nuclear Confrontation), accessed from  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iar\\_1OKOmc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iar_1OKOmc) on 10/06/09

BBC documentary: Will Israel bomb Iran?, accessed from  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9W7hoSDuDU> on 23/05/09

CNN August 24: Khatami post-9/11 interview, accessed on 5/03/09 from  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDErOB34lno>

John Balton Interview, accessed from  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjSwO54p\\_YQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjSwO54p_YQ) on 10/07/09

Primary footage - Iran-Iraq War: Documentary part 2, accessed from  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZrjSZZ8y3g&feature=related>

